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THE

ORACLE OF REASON:

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

THOMAS PATERSON, 8, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

1842.

PREFACE.

THE *Oracle of Reason* is the only exclusively ATHEISTICAL print that has appeared in any age or country—and in offering a First Volume to the public, its Editor feels the most lively and triumphant satisfaction. Its publication, in face of much difficulty and danger, constitutes a memorable epoch in the history of philosophy. In its columns, for the first time, supernaturalism has been *honestly attacked, upon right principles*—we say, *honestly* attacked, because no Atheists, with whom we are acquainted, have thought it prudent so to teach their principles that none could mistake their real import.

The ancients were far more bold than the moderns, or rather, perhaps, philosophers of old had less to fear from a free and intelligible expression of their opinions, than those who have the *advantage* of living under christian governments. Among the Greeks, atheism was not only tolerated, but applauded—in civilised and free Europe, down to the last century, he who dared to broach atheistical truths, did so with his life in his hand. The fact is notorious, that since the incorporation of christianity with state policy, freedom of discussion has been uniformly prohibited, and freedom of conscience, so much boasted about, none have enjoyed. There must be something essentially detestable in a religion which has produced such results. We are gravely told, by certain apologists of christianity, that all enjoy freedom of conscience, and that the opponents of christian *truth* are *only* denied freedom of expression—which is, no doubt, stupendously liberal on the part of infallible christians. They will allow us to think, but not to speak—our thoughts. Now, it seems to us, that permission to think is quite superfluous, as it happens no laws can possibly prevent *thinking*—the most stringent of them can only reach *action*. *Freedom of conscience* presupposes *freedom of expression*—and every one now knows that freedom of expression has never been tolerated since the establishment of that tissue of anomalies and contradictions—called christianity. It is well known, besides, that christians, in all ages, have been the bitterest enemies of freedom and virtue. Long before *power* was in their grasp, they displayed the *will* to outrage conscience, and bring down right to the low level of their accursed superstition. If they were once meek and lowly, the reason is—they dared not be otherwise. No thanks to them for not being persecuting tyrants, when they were the powerless, and justly despised, serfs of Rome. The apostles and their despicable followers were humble and tolerant—from *necessity*, not from *principle*. As it was, *Saint Paul* did not hesitate to recommend that the mouths of unruly and vain talkers should be stopped, *especially* they of the circumcision.* The short is, the genius and precepts of christianity are, and, as far as their influence extended, ever have been, hostile to the highest interests of humanity.

We deny not there were isolated instances of persecution, for conscience sake, in Greece and Rome—but, be it remembered, they were *isolated* instances. Anaxagoras was punished for impiety, Aristotle banished for unbelief, Socrates poisoned for atheism—and here ends the short catalogue of Grecian *martyrs* to truth. In Rome's palmy days, its leading statesmen and warriors laughed to scorn the fanciful notions, held by certain imbecile enthusiasts, about immortal souls. Atheism was openly avowed by the most illustrious senators, and that death was an eternal rest, all philosophers then believed. Voltaire tells us, that the Roman senate, including the unequalled names of Cato, Cicero, and Cæsar, was an assembly of Atheists. We are not aware that there can be found half-a-dozen

* See the Epistle of Paul to Titus, i. 10-11.

cases of *purely religious* persecution in the history of Rome. The "*masters of the world*" allowed their vanquished enemies to make public profession of *any* religion, or of *no* religion. The gods of conquered nations were, with courteous liberality, honourably received at Rome. The Roman rulers acted upon the principle, that it was of little consequence what sort of gods were worshipped, or if none were worshipped, always providing the people could be fully amused and employed. Even "the scum of cities," as Cicero styled the Roman populace, never thought the gods of their neighbours less respectable than their own. Gibbon truly says, with *them*, religion was an affair of *habit* rather than *opinion*—and happy would it be for *us*, if the scum of christian cities displayed the practical wisdom of their Roman prototypes. But, alas, no! Thousands, in these times, who can scarce read their bibles, arrogantly stand forward as infallible judges of its contents, and philosophers are compelled to conceal their thoughts, or, what is worse, timidly allow them to be seen through a distorted medium, lest plain truth should offend the prejudices, and arouse the slumbering fanaticism of stupid, opinionated christians.

Epicurus taught atheism openly in Greece, and none molested him. He was, perhaps, the most popular, and certainly his fame was the most lasting, of Grecian philosophers. The poet Lucretius, who so luminously expounded Epicurean doctrine, was neither disgraced nor punished for singing the eternity of matter, the material origin of thought, and the non-existence of god. It is true, the *crowd* were unable to read his high-toned poetry; but the few who could, admired his freedom and genius. The short is, that what is properly *opinion*, was, in ancient times, confined to the educated few, who, not at all fearing that the *expedient* superstitions of the unthinking, *ignorant* many, would be disturbed, highly relished the ingenious and profound speculations of distinguished poets and philosophers. Now, every conventicle frequenter has "a call," and feels it as an essential part of his spiritual duty to vindicate god's honour, and maintain the ineffable divine character of the ever blessed and glorious trinity.

Priestcraft poisons all—nothing escapes its polluting—its withering touch. To destroy that monster, the *Oracle of Reason* was set on foot. Those who originated it, may have failed in many minor particulars, but none can charge them with lacking the essential qualities of courage and honesty. They have pronounced their oracles with an energy and boldness rarely equalled—and never surpassed. From first to last there has been no attempt at subterfuge—no expediency-mongering—no rascally double doctrine—or cowardly skulking from those consequences—which, in this *free country*, follow, with unerring certainty, the expression of prohibited opinions. Their principle was not the better-to-be-*safe*, but the better-to-be-*honest*—a principle which, even their bitterest enemies must allow, they have neither betrayed nor deserted—and if policy, however seemingly rash or reckless, is justified by success, why the justification of those who originated the *Oracle of Reason* is complete. Their success, in a commercial sense, it is true, has been but trifling, when compared with the overwhelming moral influence which their exertions have called into existence. It has not, however, been success cheaply achieved. Two of atheism's foremost and most enthusiastic champions, are now paying, in dungeons, the penalty of their glorious efforts to dig up the foundations of priestcraft, and establish the reign of reason upon earth. But let us rejoice in the reflection, that *they* neither fear the present nor regret the past, and would not, if they could, change *places* with the judges who condemned them, unless, at the same time, they changed *consciences*. They are men—

To stand amid the silent dungeon-depths,
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind their impassive spirits.

The present age needed a few examples of sterling integrity and unflinching courage. SOUTHWELL and HOLYOAKE have furnished *two*, that will not soon be forgotten, and must fire every manly heart with a spirit of noble emulation. SOUTHWELL, single-handed, attacked the monster, superstition, in its very den. He challenged the *big beast* to mortal combat, and, though a prisoner, not a bone of his body is broken, not a drop of his blood chilled, and now, as at first, his resolution is to destroy or be destroyed. Imprisonment will but give him ample leisure to *grind his weapons*, and train his body for another and more decisive encounter.

It is well known that HOLYOAKE was a Theist when the *Oracle* was started, but *he* was not the man to see the truth, and hesitate to act upon it—*he* was not the man to coldly acknowledge the righteousness of a course, and leave others to pursue it—*he* was not the man to prate about what ought to be done, but nobly did—and giving to the winds expediency, and its appendage of humbug and deception, without bargaining for safety, higgling for pelf, or pathetically whining about wife and family, insisted upon being the *second* to brave the religious monster's fury. Give me, said SOUTHWELL, before his trial, but twelve enthusiastic men, who will go all honourable lengths in the promulgation of sound philosophy, and I will speedily tame, if not annihilate, the spirit of persecution. Who can doubt that twelve such men as HOLYOAKE would accomplish that most glorious of all tasks? The reformers of our times don't deserve to be free, and, therefore, they are not so. Freedom is to be won by hard fighting, it never has yet, and never will, drop into men's mouths. It is not praying, nor talking, nor fine scribbling will obtain it—it is action—honest, determined action. He who prefers a prison with honour, to a palace with disgrace, is alone fit to lead others the dangerous path which ends in liberty and happiness. The half-starved scheming reformers, and forsaken "*la ! la !*" politicians, who now infest society, are its bane—its nuisance. The former class are always liberal enough to do what is right—when they can *conveniently*—but if offered a tolerable price for their honesty, they part with it *toute suite*, and, like the lean vender of poison in *Romeo and Juliet*, excuse themselves, by urging, that their poverty and not their will consents. The latter class, the *dandy* politicians, have commonly more money than brains, and more conceit than either. Their hobby is an affectation of all possible peculiarities, in the vain hope that eccentricity of language and conduct, will be mistaken for genius. They sweat with anxiety to write superfine, and ape a verbose obscurity, scarcely endurable in men of *real* genius, such as Kant, Fichte, and Schlegel. Plain truth they reject, with the same feelings of nausea and disgust as the sated epicure rejects plain wholesome food—and a homely exposition of principles, which *ought* to be brought home to men's business and bosoms, is no less awful to their moral optics, than would be the direct rays of a tropical sun to the diseased eyesight of an Albino. The reason is obvious, they care not one straw how little the people *know*, if they do but *admire*. Oh, 'tis disgusting to see would-be leaders of sects, trafficking in such vanities. We have hitherto been merciful to these political abortions, but let them look to themselves, and "*put their houses in order,*" for our next volume will not spare them. Forbearance is sometimes a crime, and those writers or speakers whose ambition it is to benefit the human race, should allow no consideration for individuals make them desert the post of public duty. According to the *cant* of liberalism, we should always attack systems, not men—but honest philosophers will not hesitate to allow, that sometimes *men* should be exposed, as well as *systems*. It frequently happens, that systems can only be advantageously attacked through the sides of its champions—nor can we at all sympathise with the morbid sensitiveness, which shrinkers from personalities are so prone to display. No honest public man ought to dread truth—and when that is rigidly adhered to,

he can have no cause to complain. All good men have to fear is calumny, and never shall calumny or misrepresentation disgrace the *Oracle's* pages—but, we repeat, no quarter shall be given to rascally time-serving deceivers, be they priests or laymen—Whigs, Tories, Chartists, Socialists, or no ists at all—if they merit the lash, we will lay it on.

There are, besides schemers and fops, just alluded to, politicians who either can't or won't understand that freedom of thought must precede freedom of action, and real reform have sound knowledge for its basis. They talk loudly about reforming the Commons' House of Parliament, without offering any definite principles, the honest application of which would infallibly work out such reform. Now, we are prepared to maintain, that the commons' can only be reformed after the people have been reformed, and that it is impossible to reform any people, without thoroughly purging them of superstition. Superstition is the great evil—all other evils, incidental or necessary to human society, are no match for it. It infects the life-blood of civilisation. Morals, politics, physical science—all are polluted by superstition. Nothing which concerns the highest interests of individual or aggregate man, can possibly escape its pestiferous influence. Its ministers have been, through all recorded time, and are, at this moment, from pole to pole, the legalised prime demoralisers of our species. They pour their poison of lies into the ear of cradled infancy—nay, they debauch reason in the very womb, and only in the grave can their multitudinous dupes find repose for their terrified and exhausted sensibilities. Superstition is the tyranny of tyrannies, and its priests the tyrants of tyrants. If every priest was at the bottom of the Red Sea, society would be infinitely more happy than it is at the present moment.

These are not crude or peculiar notions. The wisest men of all climes and parties have protested against the vices—the horrors of superstition! But then, unfortunately, the majority of these wise men, while denouncing the superstitions of others, cling fast to their own. They see clearly the mote in their neighbour's eye, without dreaming of the beam in their own—and thus may everywhere be noted the painfully ludicrous spectacle, of all men sneering at or pitying the superstitious, and almost all supporting and lauding superstition. The Protestant despises the superstitious Catholic—the Catholic wonders at the spiritual blindness of her irreverent offspring—the Dissenter is ashamed of both Catholic and Protestant superstition—while the Deist is astonished that people can be so mad, as not to acknowledge the simplicity and grandeur of *pure* belief in one infinite, eternal, glorious, marvellous, creator and preserver of the universe. Every one must know, there are at least as many kinds of christianity as days in the year, and as many sorts of faith as conventicles. Of course, all the various interpreters of genuine religion, stigmatise every interpretation, save their own, as ungentle, and the interpreters thereof gross and diabolical superstitionists. If disposed to write a lengthy preface, we could introduce to the reader a roll of true religions, each claiming to be of divine origin, that would fill a score pages; nor do we comprehend why the supernaturalism of China, of India, or of Arabia, may not have as good a claim to divine character as the supernaturalism of Europe. Every section of supernaturalists, or, as they call themselves, true religionists, differs from every other section of true religionists. They laugh at each other, of course (would that they never did more than laugh), and Atheists laugh at them all. Atheists reject supernaturalism *in toto*, as a *principle* and a *thing*—holding deism to be just as much a rank superstition, as any other form of supernaturalism.

Wild and most mischievous notions about supernatural beings and supernatural agency, constitute the very essence of all superstitions, deism included. Deists are only the more contemptible, because they affect the *language*, while they ruthlessly sacrifice the only admissible *principles*, of philosophy. It is obvious,

there can be no halting between naturalism and supernaturalism—as Chalmers expresses it, the *knowable* and the *unknowable*—and all who pretend to the character of reasonable men, are imperatively called upon to choose their ground, for take their stand they must upon one, and one only, of these grounds.

Every religion now taught, every religion that has been taught, was invented by men. They all bear incontestable marks of a human origin. The monstrous absurdity, that a being, eternally existing, created, in time, the universe, and governed it by a *posse* of angels, devils, and other *superior* intelligences—was early taught by crafty men, perhaps with a view to benefit their species, perhaps to benefit themselves. They personified their own imagination of what might be, and called their random notions Jupiter, Apollo, Bacchus, Brahma, Jehovah, and other names, to be found in dictionaries by the score. Having “invented most serious names to hide their ignorance,” nothing more was necessary, than to repeat them incessantly, and with great show of solemnity, to the crowd of fools—as it is well known, that what uninstructed men hear or see, at regular and oft recurring intervals, however absurd or revolting in itself, soon ceases to amuse or offend. Habit, in this sense, *is* stronger than nature, and Addison was not very wide of the true mark, when he said, “tell a man anything, however absurd, every morning, before breakfast, and rely upon it, he will believe you in the long run.”

Now, atheism, or anti-supernaturalism (for both terms mean precisely the same thing), is, in our view, the only consistent, the only useful, and the only justifiable conclusion, to which those who take reason for their guide can arrive at—and we are of opinion, that in the volume of the *Oracle of Reason*, now submitted to the investigation of all, who dare to read and think, there are arguments against the existence of superuatural being or agency, that may safely defy, and will ultimately bear down, all opposition. That the clergy are of this opinion, is manifest, from their desperate exertions to crush us, as they always conscientiously abstain from meddling with periodicals not likely to do them any mischief. When the clergy make a stir, and persecution follows upon the heels of persecution, then the people may conclude there is cheap and sound sense in the market. Had our *Oracles of Reason* not gone, to use a Cameronian phrase, “to the root of the matter”—had they temporised, and given to the multitude the milk-and-water, namby-pamby infidelity, to which they have so long been accustomed, neither SOUTHWELL nor HOLYOAKE would now be enjoying lodgments, provided at the state’s charge, in the gaols of Bristol and Gloucester. Only the writers or speakers of really dangerous truths, are thus carefully provided for by christian authorities. This volume of Reason’s Oracles is studded with *such* truths, hence the terror—the rage of priests, who well know, that every truth *popularised*, is just so much subtracted from their power—who feel, and thoroughly understand, that the most dangerous of all truths, is the truth of atheism, which none, save the *Oracles of Reason*, have dared plainly, honestly, and consistently to pronounce.

We say, then, to those reformers who seek to establish political justice, without striving or caring to destroy every vestige of superstition—you *must fail*. It is idle to dream of arresting the course of political or moral corruption, while superstition, which is the source of *all* corruption, lords it over human destiny. No nation under the domination of priests can be free. Such shallow talkers about human regeneration, remind us of the sapient official, who, when James the First smelt gunpowder, was ordered to search the vaults beneath the houses of parliament, and having done so, reported that he found there twenty-five barrels of the explosive material, ten barrels of which he had prudently removed, leaving fifteen barrels, adding, that he sincerely hoped *they would not do any harm*. The wisdom of this prudent official, is just the sort of wisdom displayed by many of our leading politicians. They carefully carry away from the vaults of popular prejudices some superstitious errors, and leave the rest to explode *ad libitum*, no doubt hoping, like their prudent prototype, *they won’t do any harm*. The project of a certain Duchess de Maine, to stay a famine, by buns, was notable, but the project of our political wiseacres, to annihilate slavery, without first annihilating supernaturalism, beats that of *La Duchesse*, all the world to nothing. A famine *might* be stayed by buns—for a superstitious people to be free, is *impossible*.

In conclusion, we will observe, that the many blemishes a critical eye cannot fail to discover in this volume, hardly call for apology on our part, under the peculiar and difficult circumstances connected with its publication. Before the fifth number had gone to press, SOUTHWELL, its first editor, was suddenly arrested, and hurried to prison. The christians forgot not the text, “smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” They chuckled over the delightful idea of stopping the *Oracle*, by an unexpected seizure of its editor. In this, however (the present volume proves), they were doomed to experience disappoint-

ment—and truth demands that we should here state, that if SOUTHWELL could have induced his moneyed partner to follow up the bold line of policy so gloriously commenced, Bristol might, at this moment, be the very focus of atheistical agitation. Nothing more was wanted, *at the time* of SOUTHWELL'S trial, than a little money and much courage, to set at successful defiance the authorities of Bristol—establish a first-rate printing business—and read rampant bigotry such a lesson as it never had read to it before. But nothing good or great can be accomplished by indecision and timidity. After SOUTHWELL'S conviction, the Bristol concern was speedily broken up, and but for the determined enthusiasm of such friends to mental liberty as HOLYOAKE, and others, whose names we are not at liberty to mention, the *Oracle of Reason* must long since have gone the way of all oracles. Under such circumstances, then, we conceive an *apology* for minor defects will not be expected by any candid reader. If, in the pages of this volume, principle has been honestly abided by, and what the writers conceived to be truth, taught in an unflinching spirit, surely all but bigots will allow, they have deserved well of their country. The forthcoming volume will be, in principle and spirit, the counterpart of this; but as it is thought the unreasonableness of supernaturalism has, in this volume, been clearly and fully established, our next efforts will, in part, assume a *political character*, and belief in one or many gods—supernaturalism, *considered as a question of moral influence* (about which so much idle nonsense has been written of late), will be specially and carefully discussed.

THE EDITOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

A SOBER and humble distinction, says Lord Bacon, must be made betwixt the oracles of Sense and Faith; unless mankind had rather choose absurd religions, with fictitious and romantic philosophies. Now, as by an *Oracle of Faith* is meant, something delivered by supernatural wisdom, or above nature: this paper will not pretend to teach *such unteachable things*, it laying no claim to supernatural wisdom; so by "ORACLE of Sense, or REASON," is meant something delivered by natural wisdom; that busies itself with the comprehensible, or as Dr. Chalmers expresses it, the knowable—and leaves the incomprehensible, *alias*, unknowable, to shift for itself: all your mysterious, or *hidden somethings*, belonging, as Hobbes well observed, *to the kingdom of darkness*.

So much by way of explanation as to name and general character of the work; but as to its principle, that cannot be so shortly disposed of,—for this fine word principle, though upon the tip of every tongue, passed from mouth to mouth with wonderful glibness, so thrust forth in every page that familiarity has almost bred contempt for it, yet what it means or involves few seem to know or care. Voltaire said of Rousseau, that he talked so much about truth and virtue, that at last no one knew what truth and virtue were; it may, with a keener eye to truth, be affirmed that our modern liberals have written and talked so much about principle, that no one knows what a principle really is—they have written and declaimed the people out of it; so magnified and glorified it in theory, *and so illustrated it by example*, that, as some one has paradoxically observed, the principle now a-days is to have no principle. Those who admire their artful conduct, will sneer at this paper, the object of which is to illustrate the truth, and abide by it at all hazards; not in season and out of season, for that would be folly; but, in these columns truth never will be *out* of season: like the evergreen, its leaves will know no winter.

The right to preach and publish truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man, like many other grandiloquent phrases, has been much used, but not conscientiously acted upon, or its value fully understood. All the world ought to know, that when we speak of practical rights, we include the idea of practical powers, for power is as necessary to the establishment of a right as to the maintenance of it; hence it follows,

those only have the right to teach truth, who dare do it in the teeth of fanatic prejudice, and public odium. "Every man has a right to do what he will with his own," said my Duke of Newcastle, and he might have added, with anybody else's own, could he enforce it. All abstract rights being pure chimeras, the question of actual rights resolves itself into that of *actual powers*, as it is evident that all are at perfect liberty—and have clearly the right, to fly in the air, *if they can*. Lord De Warren proved his title to certain broad lands by an appeal to his sword, a very sensible kind of appeal, for pens, tongues, and swords, are, and have been, the originators and maintainers of rights, in short, *powers*, physical or mental.

Whether this paper, that will give all kinds of speculation as speculation, all sorts of realities as realities, and deal out Atheism as freely as ever Christianity was dealt out to the people; whether a paper in which there will be no attempt to gloss over, evade, or slide from the whole truth; in which the abandonment of a high position, that a present evil may be avoided at the expense of future good, will be disdained as unworthy of an honest mind; whether a paper that shall cast off the swindling kind of morality, that frames itself to all occasions, including all the abominations of Jesuitry, without its character, grandeur, or consistency; whether such a paper will be permitted by the authorities of this country time alone can determine. If it meet with public support, such support will not be the wages of dishonesty, paid for want of principle, or its abandonment. Starting with the axiom that every human being should be at liberty to express fully and freely his honest convictions, the letter of the text will be adhered to, the battle of philosophy fought inch by inch with its opposers, and the right to publish any and every kind of speculative opinions, coolly but determinedly maintained.

If men have not yet known, they should now be taught, that it is neither creditable nor discreditable, honourable nor dishonourable to be an Atheist, a Christian, or a Mussulman. One man's *speculations* are just as good and no better than any others; and none but the mere lunatic would think of esteeming equally a dishonest believer in the existence of a god, with an honest disbeliever in such existence. Society has not, never had, never can have any right, founded on justice, to dictate to individuals

what they shall believe or disbelieve; and in principle it is just as vile to frown as to rack men into professions of orthodoxy.

It is hardly necessary to add, that all articles admitted into these columns will be studiously plain and simple, for as the subject matter to be treated will involve highly important considerations, growing out of questions at best sufficiently abstruse and difficult, pains will be taken to be intelligible. The least reflection will make it obvious that to convey knowledge, whether by speech or writing, a definite and fixed meaning should be attached to the words used; for the wretched practice of employing the same words in every kind of sense, breeds endless confusion, and at least nine-tenths of blunders in philosophy. This, and the senseless affection of cant terms, and a very outlandish mystical jargon, have gone far to drive the people crazy, to the great regret of honest men, and the glory of knaves.

The mental foppery above alluded to reduces the art of writing to a mere trade of sentence concocting, where sense lies buried beneath the weight of ornament, and the mind, called off from its proper functions, is attracted by the tinsel and glare of language, whilst the solid gold of idea is neglected. By this it is not meant that no art is to be used in the most sublime of arts, but plainness and force are the essentials; besides, the grandest triumph of art, is not to appear as art, and any laboured attempt to astonish or excite admiration is ever offensive. The happy use of terms is an essential talent to the orator or writer, for what expression is to a picture, significant phrases are to writing, which may be called a picture of human ideas; nor can it be denied, that the eye of the mind, like the eye of the body, is strangely affected by the colouring of the artist. Words being but pictures of human ideas, their right use stamps character and expression upon the production, and where, in the use either of the pen or the brush, genius is displayed, it excites the sense of the sublime, warming the beholder into admiration. Even smoothness of diction and polished phrase, if it want clearness and strength, depraves the taste and weakens the understanding, leaving the mind no firm resting place, as it were floating on a sea of wordy uncertainty; but to continue our analogy, as, in a picture, the roughness of outline or carelessness of filling up is lost or forgotten in admiration of the bold and vigorous touches of a master hand, so nervous and clear writing often seems to acquire additional lustre from sentences which, though conveying a noble idea, are yet, in themselves, rough and rugged.

Truth is, or ought to be, the grand object of all teaching, by which word truth should be understood an exact image of things, set forth in speech or writing; by speech, when the sound is the echo of the sense, echo being elegantly called by the ancients, wife of Pan, that is nature, as repeating its words; but writing,

a symbol of things, called Syrix, was held to be even more precise and accurate, as copying with *exactness* the lessons of nature.

Philosophy must gain by simplicity and clearness, while Fiction will lose in equal proportion, for if the supernatural or fictional be likened to the kingdom of darkness, philosophy may fairly be to the kingdom of light; it deals with realities, and has no other basis than things known. And whether the rationalist seek to determine the existence or non-existence of God, the truth or falsehood of this or that religion, he takes nothing for granted, save his own existence, as also the existence of that universe of which he forms a part. This is the common ground which each is at liberty to appropriate—the rest can only become the property of those who search, with an ardent and unquenchable love of truth, into the nature of things.

As the opinions to be set forth in these columns will be anything but palatable to authority, and perhaps involve consequences of a serious nature, all articles without *name* or *initial* attached to them the reader will please to place to the account of the Editor, who is perfectly willing to bear the brunt of the battle and champion what he conceives to be truth, in defiance of all opposition.

IS THERE A GOD?

I.

“Men believe in God, only upon the word of those who have no more idea of any such being than themselves. Our nurses are our first theologians.”

COMMON SENSE.

OUR treatment of this question will at least have one merit, there will not be the shadow of equivocation in it; no attempt at subterfuge; no taking refuge behind the coward's defence, a loose and mean-anything phraseology. We agree with a writer in the *Foreign Quarterly*, that an *esprit fort* (strong mind) should be *fort* throughout; and that he ought to have no mental weakness who, like Spinoza and Strauss, can man his heart and say, that he not only imagines but understands the Eternity of the Godhead. For ourselves, who see no solid reason to believe in a *godhead*, or the eternity of anything but *matter*, our heart is manned to make the declaration, which Spinoza and Strauss, it is more than probable, would have made had they not feared the opinions of the multitude, the three-headed monster, that most hellish Cerberus called public orthodoxy, who requires a sop of absurdity, however small, before he will permit any to pass the portal leading to private honours and public respectability. The truth is, Spinoza did not believe in, and, therefore, could not pretend to understand, the eternity of the godhead; but he felt the weight of public prejudice, and bent beneath it. As Voltaire has remarked, “Spinoza did not acknowledge a God; he probably used the

expression, and said that we ought to serve and to love God, *only that he might not frighten mankind.*" As to Dr. Strauss, who calls what is written by divines about creation from nothing a "*weightless definition* for speculative thinkers;" who contends that in eternity there is no fixed point from which a beginning could depart; who labours hard to prove a substantial, *material* God, and then asserts that the whole root of the supposition which made the *real* nature of God as the matter out of which he made all things, was destroyed by Spinozism; how far such a philosopher is from being an Atheist, let those judge who please, but certainly the writer in the *Quarterly* is not far out when he declares, that the author has at once boldly thrown off the mask, and from the Deist, which the "*Leben Jesu*" (Life of Jesus) demonstrated him to be, he has, by an easy mutation, passed into the Atheist. Thus it is that men intellectually but not morally great suffer all the odium that attaches to an honest declaration of truth, without the reward of conscious integrity; for stopping short in the midst of their career, they cover themselves with the mantle of mystical jargon and absurd conceit, instead of taking the bolder and more honourable course of daring all things in the cause of right reason; gallantly pressing forward and reaching that goal or rock of truth, against which the surges of sophistry and fanaticism may dash in vain.

To reason, says Burlamaqui, is to calculate, and, as it were, draw up an account, after balancing all arguments, in order to see on which side the advantage lies; and can any who admit the right to inquire, show good reason why reason should not be employed to determine on which side of the argument the advantage lies with regard to the question—Is there, or is there not, a God? or, to state it with even more explicitness—Is there more reason to believe than to disbelieve in the existence of a deity? The belief in angels, says Schleirmacher, is now a "*dead tradition*"; a belief in a god or gods will, one day or other, share the same fate; and it is our deliberate conviction, that neither of these beliefs, nor indeed belief of any kind, is necessary for the peace, preservation, and general happiness of society. We may be told that the discussion will only produce vexation of spirit, irritate and unsettle, not soothe or convince; that it is, besides, a question with which reason has nothing whatever to do; and all sorts of abuse will be pressed into the service of true religion, that is Christianity, the believers in which will find no difficulty in collecting excellent christian authority to prove their religion is the sheet anchor of happiness, without which all would be wrecked amid the storms and tempests of life; while philosophy will be scouted, or borne along by a whirlwind of contempt and indignation, and all being fish that comes into the sacred net, every kind of authority will be let

loose against us; even the noble debauchée, my Lord Rochester's lines—

Men, before certain instinct will prefer
Reason, which fifty times for one doth err;
Books bear them up awhile, and make them try
To swim with bladders of philosophy—

will be quoted with ecstatic delight for the benefit of souls in general and christian souls in particular. All of which excellent authority, with sundry charges of presumption, lewdness, horrible profanity, and so on will be levelled against us, which certainly cannot be justified on the ground of decency or consistency; for not to dwell upon scriptural injunctions, *to prove all things*, if reason cannot grapple with the subject, why do our systematic divinitarians—*theologasters*, as an old writer terms them, attempt to prove the existence of God by reason, why have they challenged inquiry into the matter? for, in the name of sense, if a Fontenelle, a Clark, or a Paley pretend to demonstrate the existence of a god; if they protest that they have *shown*, and the honest Atheist equally protests that *he has not seen*; why is he to be denied the right of sincerely stating his conviction and the reasons which sustain it; not seeing the flood of light such writers cast upon the great deep of the mystery, is it unreasonable that they should be allowed to say so much? What are the laboured reasonings of your Clarks, Newtons, and others, but attempts to prove, logically and morally, that there is an uncaused god, who caused by his will everything else. An eternal, infinite, unchangeable, uncaused being the cause of all things else! for, as Dr. Clark says, in his reply to Leibnitz—"Tis very true that nothing is without a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is rather than otherwise; and therefore, where there is no cause there can be no effect. But this sufficient reason is sometimes no other than the mere will of God." How he came at a knowledge of the mere will of God, except by way of experience, evidence, and observation, a man's head may split before his brain would work well enough to determine, but it is clear, the sufficiency of a reason can only be pronounced by reason; and if it be objected that revelation came to the aid of the worthy doctor and gave him insight, or second sight, into the supernatural, the difficulty will not by that be shuffled off; for talk as we may about revelation proving the existence of a god, reason must, after all, determine which is or is not revelation. Bolingbroke asks, "Can he be less than mad, who boast a revelation superadded to reason, to supply its defects, and who superadds reason to revelation to supply the defects of this, too, at the same time?" No wonder Addison called him "*the cankered Bolingbroke*," after asking such unpleasant and unanswered questions. How, then, can those who appeal to reason refuse to abide by its decisions? and surely, to use the lightest kind of censure, it is nothing less than indecent in those who pretend that

the existence of a god is demonstrable by reason, not to be content with the weapons drawn from its armoury; but your divinitarians, like cowardly cocks upon their own dunghill, crow lustily over those who, not having the law on their side, cannot, like Mahomet, when the heap wont come to them, go to the heap; or, to cut short this cock and heap part of the story, it is strangely inconsistent and absurd in such reasoners to check discussion, when they pretend to long so ardently for it; or to shun the most searching investigation of the arguments in favour of their god, creeds, and systems, if they amount to a moral demonstration.

The existence of a god, it is allowed is a knotty point to prove; but those who think by the rood upon these subjects, have a knack of *cutting* all knots they can't untie by the tongue or the teeth; but when wagging the tongue or showing the teeth, or doing both together, don't answer, then our divines ape Alexander in their dexterous use of the long sword called the sword of state, which speedily settles all questions, and removes every kind of difficulty that hangs about such vulgar things as logic and argument; nothing so demonstrating the truth of their demonstrations as the sword of state and the strong arm of the law.

For ourselves, not desiring any armour but that of evidence and experience, no sword but the long and sharp one of reason, no kind of shelter save that of wit, evidence, and logic, we without scruple throw aside the ingenious objection of Wyttenbach, that no man can properly be called an Atheist, till it is declared what is meant by the term god; because the derivation of the term Atheist shows it to apply to one who is without god in the world. This indirect apology for the Atheist is rejected, not because it is insufficient, but because Atheism needs no apology. Christians as well as Deists admit that no one hath seen their god at any time, Moses and the hinderparts notwithstanding, or can by searching prove such existence, so that those who pretend to have ideas of god, if they have them, have ideas without an archetype, which is an impossibility. Supposing the existence of an uncaused being, the cause and support of the visible universe, which may be called God, or anything else; the idea of such existence must first be produced in the mind before it is possible such a being could be known to exist; so that those who are atheistically inclined, and do not choose to avow it, may safely defy the whole world of intellect and faith conjoined, logically to show that they are so, though every man of sense may be morally sure of it; for, as before shown, proving a man to be an Atheist *logically*, is contingent upon a clear certainty that he is without a god in the world. This nice little quibble of logicians, we disclaim to make use of; at once agreeing to the definition of an Atheist given by Lord Shaftesbury, as being complete, intelligible, and quite in harmony with our own

idea. "A perfect Atheist (says he) is one who believes nothing of a designing principle or mind, nor any cause, rule, or measure of things, but *chance*, so that in nature neither the interest of the whole nor of any particulars can be said to be in the least designed, pursued, or aimed at." Not ourselves believing in any designing principle, mind, intelligence, cause, or what you will, distinct from the material world; believing, on the contrary, that something must have been from all eternity, therefore uncaused, and that uncaused something the universe—we are *perfect Atheists*. But to guard against a misconception of the above definition, it may be well to warn the reader that the word *chance* is not accepted by the Atheist as meaning an effect without a cause; for if we allowed such a stupid notion as that to prevail, theologasters would speedily lay us by the heels; no, no, the weazel is not to be caught asleep; this word *chance* means nothing so absurd as an effect without a cause, but an effect the cause of which is not perceivable by our senses. According to Voltaire, we have invented the word to express the known effect of an unknown cause.

If the word *chance* be used in any other sense, it is by religionists not Atheists; *perfect Atheists* having no objection to make them a present of it; but reserve to themselves the right not to use words in a manner so wildly absurd. The Atheist does not deny that the word *cause* always implies an effect, the term effect equally implying a cause; but the error of supernaturalists lies here, *they presume the universe to be an effect, and argue as though their presumption amounted to proof*. Spinoza, Vanini, Bacon, Locke, Voltaire, in short all who have written for or against the existence of a god, agree that something is uncaused, and therefore eternal. Spinoza establishes clearly that something exists, and from its existence argues its eternal existence. When Dr. Clark tells us, in his fourth reply to Leibnitz, that the Epicurean *chance* is not a *choice of will*, but a *blind necessity of fate*, he wrote at random; for though *chance* can never be a choice of will, the word meaning as above noted, a perceived effect of an unknown cause, it is foolish as unjust to talk of the Epicurean notion of *chance* as signifying a blind necessity of fate; all Epicureans knowing that necessity is neither *blind* nor *seeing*. The word *necessity* is expressive of the general truth, that matter does now, ever did, and ever must act *definitely* and *uniformly*.

So much for the word *chance*, which has been dragged forward upon all occasions by supernaturalists as positive proof of the absurdities of Atheism; but if they had taken the pains to *understand* Atheism, they would have known that its advocates contend that in nature there is no such thing as confusion, the whole being necessarily what it is, and acting in virtue of its inherent properties. A chaos, as remarked by Voltaire, never having existed, except in the minds of a Homer or a Hesiod.

who, in the professed interests of true religion, labour to prove that the bodily structure of man differs essentially from that of the ape may indeed be right. And especially they may be right in affirming that the brain of the lowest man possesses a horn-shaped lobe (called, we think, by anatomists the *Hippocampus minor*) of which the brain of the highest ape has scarcely a rudiment. But whether they are right or wrong, we confess we feel very little interest in the controversy. We should be sorry to rest our belief of the essential difference between men and beasts on the question of bodily structure.

As far as the body is concerned, man is one of the animals,—a little more nobly proportioned, it may be, but possessed of the same organs, fed on the same food, formed therefore of the same materials, and destined to be resolved at death into

restless until it rests in Him. "The spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth." Its highest fellowship is of the earth. The dog attains the end of its being, the highest dignity and enjoyment of which its nature is capable, as the servant and companion of man. But man fails of *his* end, and is unhappy, until he becomes the servant and friend of God. When wholly ignorant of God, he sinks, as we have seen, lower than the brutes. Yet even in its most degraded state, the human soul indicates its divine origin and destiny by craving—it knows not what. It has an appetite for the supernatural. Even those African tribes have some superstition; they believe in sorcerers. And, accordingly, even they are capable of *learning* the existence and character of God, their responsibility to Him, and the blessed tidings of His saving grace. Let the philosopher try, if he can,

sins.

Alas, then, for those who cultivate the body and the intellect only, but neglect the soul! What will their earthly civilization and science avail at death, if they have no communion with God through Christ? When they die, wherein will they differ from the brutes? Nay, the brutes have served the end of their being; but man, if he has lived without God in the world, has utterly failed of *his*; and what shall then become of the *soul*, which, because made for God, must exist for ever?

LIFE'S MYSTERY.

"Let my soul calm itself in Thee; I say, let the great sea of my soul, that swelleth with waves, calm itself in Thee."—*St. Augustine.*

LIFE'S mystery—deep, restless as the ocean,
Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro;


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BEASTS AND MEN.

"How like to us, that ugliest beast the ape!" said an old Latin poet. "No wonder," say some modern men of science; "for he is our blood-relation, descended from the same ancestry with ourselves. Our forefathers of long generations past were but apes; and give the apes a suitable climate and time sufficient, their descendants will, in the course of ages, develop themselves into negroes, and improve themselves into civilized men."

Revolting as this theory is to the common feelings of mankind, it has recently obtained a certain run of mischievous popularity. Not, we suspect, that there are almost any who seriously believe it: but daring speculation is the order of the day; and a materialistic dream of this kind, when supported by one or two influential names, is just what some men like to take up and play with, because it serves the purpose of a temporary shelter from the sense of moral responsibility to the God that made them. Now no opinion that is doing mischief to souls is quite beneath condemnatory notice, if the exposure of it can be made suggestive of profitable thoughts.

Beyond all question, some beasts approximate far more nearly to men in their general forms, than we should like to think of, did we suppose the fact to have the slightest bearing on the doctrine of human immortality, or on any other part of Christian truth. Those men of science who, in the professed interests of true religion, labour to prove that the bodily structure of man differs essentially from that of the ape may indeed be right. And especially they may be right in affirming that the brain of the lowest man possesses a horn-shaped lobe (called, we think, by anatomists the *Hippocampus minor*) of which the brain of the highest ape has scarcely a rudiment. But whether they are right or wrong, we confess we feel very little interest in the controversy. We should be sorry to rest our belief of the essential difference between men and beasts on the question of bodily structure.

As far as the body is concerned, man is one of the animals,—a little more nobly proportioned, it may be, but possessed of the same organs, fed on the same food, formed therefore of the same materials, and destined to be resolved at death into

the same elements as they. It is not even in mere intellect—in the faculties of which the brain is the organ—that the essential difference consists. The intellect of some brutes,—of man's friend the dog, for example,—is considerable; and it is difficult to show where it differs from our own save in degree. Nor does the difference lie in mere improbability, or in actual improvement. The very brutes can learn, and some of the domestic animals have improved greatly under human care; while on the other hand, if recent travellers tell us truly, some of the savage tribes in Central Africa are in point of degradation lower than the brutes. "My monkey *Wallady*," writes Sir Samuel Baker in his *Explorations of the Great Basin of the Nile*, "looks like a civilized being compared to the Nuehr savages." Nor yet—and we now touch on the most important point—is it in the possession of actual morality or religion that the difference consists. The brutes, we know, have no religion;—but, if travellers in Africa speak true, neither have some of its savage tribes. "The tribes of the White Nile have no idea of a God, no idea of the existence of the soul after death. And in morality they are far below the brutes; as the latter show signs of affection to those who are kind to them; while the natives, on the contrary, are utterly obtuse to all feelings of gratitude. They are lying and deceitful, cruel and greedy to a superlative degree."

Yet between man and the beasts there is a difference that is absolutely essential. Man alone of all the animals has, as Scripture tells us, "a spirit that goeth upward"—a soul made for communion with God, capable accordingly of knowing Him, and restless until it rests in Him. "The spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth." Its highest fellowship is of the earth. The dog attains the end of its being, the highest dignity and enjoyment of which its nature is capable, as the servant and companion of man. But man fails of *his* end, and is unhappy, until he becomes the servant and friend of God. When wholly ignorant of God, he sinks, as we have seen, lower than the brutes. Yet even in its most degraded state, the human soul indicates its divine origin and destiny by craving—it knows not what. It has an appetite for the supernatural. Even those African tribes have some superstition; they believe in sorcerers. And, accordingly, even they are capable of *learning* the existence and character of God, their responsibility to Him, and the blessed tidings of His saving grace. Let the philosopher try, if he can,

to teach to his favourite dog these things, which little children and the most un-intellectual savages have learned.

We are quite aware indeed that some men who believe themselves not unfavourable to religion tell us, that we must wait until the savage tribes have been first civilized by commerce and education, before we attempt to Christianize them. We remember once hearing a clergyman in prayer actually dictate to the all-wise God the method of His procedure in the following fashion:—"Send the blessings of *education* to the barbarous nations of the earth, to prepare them for Christianity." But experience has already amply proved, that it needs no antecedent civilization of the savage to prepare him for the knowledge of God and of Christ. It needs not many words of human wisdom to *prove* to him that there is a God; *for he has a soul*; and the true God fits in to that craving of the human soul, which will otherwise feed on superstition. So Christ fits in to all those cravings which spring up in the soul that, having learned that there is a God, has begun to feel also its own guilt and alienation from Him. Alas! there is indeed a tremendous obstacle in the way of the true Christianization of the world,—the depravity of the human heart. But neither education nor commerce is the cure for this. What neither philosophy, nor civilization, nor education can do, the Spirit of Christ has done, not only to civilized men, but to savages; even as he has to children, nay, to idiots. He has spoken to the *soul*, to that part of man that was made in the image of God; He has cleansed it; He has given it peace; He has satisfied it with the knowledge and the love and the communion of God; He has saved it from its sins.

Alas, then, for those who cultivate the body and the intellect only, but neglect the soul! What will their earthly civilization and science avail at death, if they have no communion with God through Christ? When they die, wherein will they differ from the brutes? Nay, the brutes have served the end of their being; but man, if he has lived without God in the world, has utterly failed of *his*; and what shall then become of the *soul*, which, because made for God, must exist for ever?

LIFE'S MYSTERY.

"Let my soul calm itself in Thee; I say, let the great sea of my soul, that swelleth with waves, calm itself in Thee."—*St. Augustine*.

LIFE'S mystery—deep, restless as the ocean,
Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro;

Christ really meant that if ever I am to be really happy, and if ever I am to get to heaven, I must be born again."

A. H. had entered on life with many advantages. Having received a good education, and having proved himself an excellent scholar, he had, within a few years after leaving school, succeeded, on the death of his father, to a flourishing business. Judging from appearances, his friends thought that he would soon occupy an influential position in the neighbourhood, but their hopes were doomed to bitter disappointment. The companions with whom he loved to associate were not distinguished for their piety. He frequently remained out with them till late in the night, and sharing in their sinful pleasures, he became, before many years had elapsed, a most pitiable victim of intemperance. Had it not been for the energies of a pious mother, who looked after his business, blank ruin would have stared him in the face. Vain had all the efforts of that pious mother been to gain him over to the paths of righteousness. When she attempted to give him any good advice, he had always a clever answer ready. When she asked him to accompany her to a religious meeting, the reply she received was, "Such meetings are only for the uneducated or weak-minded. Persons of an intellectual disposition could easily find better instruction at home." When she mentioned to him any book that she loved, saying, "I have found this book very precious to my soul, perhaps, A., you will find in it a blessing," he had his answer ready. "I have far better books of my own, mother; it would only be wasting time to read such as these." Thus he lived on neglecting his business, despising the means of grace, a reproach to his friends, and an outcast among society.

Such a period of darkness in the life of A. H. did not, however, last very long. Days of gloom were in their turn succeeded by days of bright and genial sunshine. The first symptoms of the dawn might have been traced in the appearance of a little cousin who came to spend her holidays with his mother. Barbara S., though only a school-girl, had been led to a knowledge of the truth. Like Mary, she had chosen the good part, and in her daily life she was exhibiting that most lovely of all spectacles—youthful piety. Having seen Jesus Christ as her Saviour, and constrained by the love of Christ to desire the welfare of others, it was not without concern that she observed the careless and ungodly life of her cousin A. She remembered him in her prayers, and she ardently longed to tell him of Jesus, the loving Saviour; but she had not courage thus to speak in the way of instruction to one so much superior to herself in knowledge and other attainments. A willing heart, however, soon discovered a method of usefulness. One evening when her cousin was away in one of his usual haunts of dissipation, she deposited the tract on *Conversion* we have already mentioned in a place where he was likely soon to find it, and on the following morning the

scene occurred which has been described at the commencement of this narrative.

To A. H. the doctrine of the new birth seemed as strange as it did to Nicodemus when he heard it from the lips of Jesus. Confused a little by the dissipation of the previous evening, it was a considerable time before the clouds of mystery were rolled away, and he grasped the full meaning of that important truth which had impressed him so forcibly. Thinking of his past life, he could not but feel that he himself had never been born again, and that unless he underwent some great change, he could never expect to see the kingdom. He had read of this before, he had heard of it in sermons, but never till that moment did he feel it in all its dread reality. With eager eyes, therefore, he scanned the sacred pages, seeking rest for his troubled soul. Gladly he welcomed that precious statement recorded in the same third chapter of the Gospel of John, "God so loved the world," &c. He prayed frequently and earnestly that God would pardon his sins, and give him a new heart, so that he might love Him more, and serve Him better. In the use of these, the appointed means, rays of the better light soon began to shine on his dark heart, and he thought he had good reason to say that he had found peace in believing. His course of life now was that of a changed man. The intoxicating cup was untouched, and the haunts of vice forsaken. The once neglected Bible was cherished as his dearest treasure, and the house of prayer as his place of most delightful resort.

Such was the great discovery made by A. H., and such the blessing that resulted from it. But the blessing was not confined to himself alone. His brother, too, was led to make a similar discovery. Though he had not lived the same life of open ungodliness, yet he seemed to care as little for the ways of religion as his brother A. When, therefore, he was led, through his brother's distress of mind, to reflect on the words, "Ye must be born again," he saw that a great change was spoken of which he had not experienced, and having made this discovery, he could find no rest till he had sought for pardon through the blood of Jesus.

The family of the H—, composed of a mother and her two sons, had thus become, to all appearances, a Christian family; and, from the position which they occupied in that part of the country where they lived, there went forth from them an influence for good that was felt by all the neighbourhood, and not a few poor wanderers, we have reason to believe, were, through means of their labours of love, gathered into the Redeemer's fold.

Some of the readers of this narrative may have been in the habit of mourning over the circumstance that, from want of talents or opportunities, they could do of so little service for the advancement of their Saviour's cause. When, therefore, they see what good was accomplished by the humble endeavour of Bar-

bara S., a little school-girl, let them take courage and go forward. If only they seek, with the desire of their hearts, for an opportunity of doing good, they may find it sooner than they expected.

Others may read this narrative to whom the doctrine contained in the words, "Ye must be born again," is a great discovery. It would indeed be a blessed discovery to them, if it made them feel the evil of their own hearts, and led them with the burden of their unpardoned sins to the cross of Jesus.

J. G.

OUR WORST ENEMIES.

BEYOND all doubt, the worst of our enemies are those which we carry about in our hearts. Adam fell in paradise, Lucifer in heaven; while Lot continued righteous among the people of Sodom.

Indifference to little sins and mistakes, the self-flattering voice of the heart, ever ready to sing its lullaby the moment conscience is aroused, the subtle question of the serpent, "Hath God indeed said?"—these are unquestionably the adversaries we have most to fear. There never was a fire but it began with smoke.

I beseech thee, therefore, dear Master, to give me a sensitive conscience, that I may take alarm at even small sins. O, it is not merely great transgressions which bring a man to ruin. Little and imperceptible ones are perhaps even more deadly; according to the beautiful figure of Tauler, who says, "The stag, when attacked, tosses from him the great dogs, and dashes them to pieces upon the trees; but the little ones seize him from below, and tear open his body."—*Tholuck*.

WHAT DO YOUR CHILDREN READ?

A LAD of sixteen lay upon his death-bed. A wasting consumption was slowly but surely doing its fatal work. He was a former pupil of mine. I approached his bedside, took him by the hand, and gazed a moment on his thin, emaciated form, pale, hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes—all telling me that his sojourn on earth must be brief.

"How are you to-day, Arthur?" I asked.

"About as usual," he replied.

"Do you suffer much lying here?"

"Sometimes I suffer a good deal, especially from difficulty in breathing."

"Do you think you will get well?"

"No, sir."

"Would you like to get well?"

"It makes but little difference with me whether I do or not."

"Does the thought of approaching death give you any anxiety or alarm?"

"I have no fears nor care about it."

"Do you feel willing to die?"

"I have wished I were dead a hundred times since I have been sick, to get rid of my sufferings."

"What is your hope for the future?"

"I do not concern myself at all about the future."

Afterwards I asked him if I should pray.

"I do not care, if you want to pray," he replied.

In two or three days he died. His father made this remark in my hearing: "My son lies in yonder cemetery—an INFIDEL—from the effects of novel reading!"

Parents, what do your children read?—*Christian Treasury*.

Christ really meant that if ever I am to be really happy, and if ever I am to get to heaven, I must be born again."

A. H. had entered on life with many advantages. Having received a good education, and having proved himself an excellent scholar, he had, within a few years after leaving school, succeeded, on the death of his father, to a flourishing business. Judging from appearances, his friends thought that he would soon occupy an influential position in the neighbourhood, but their hopes were doomed to bitter disappointment. The companions with whom he loved to associate were not distinguished for their piety. He frequently remained out with them till late in the night, and sharing in their sinful pleasures, he became, before many years had elapsed, a most pitiable victim of intemperance. Had it not been for the energies of a pious mother, who looked after his business, blank ruin would have stared him in the face. Vain had all the efforts of

scene occurred which has been described at the commencement of this narrative.

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(Fossil Man.)

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

I.

"I will show you how the earth has been peopled, how organic formation after organic formation has taken place, passing gradually from simple to compound bodies, and covering itself, as at this hour we find it, with plants and animals. In following matter through all its changes, noting its metamorphoses, from the most simple organization to the most complex, we shall find, without doubt, that point where man, brutish and savage, as at first he must have been, took rank among the creatures of the universe."—Free Translation from "L'HOMME FOSSILE," (Fossil Man) of Boitard.

NOTHING is more fatal to a common sense view of things, than the very prevalent habit of considering consequences before investigating and determining principles. It is not only illogical but absurd, and highly prejudicial to the cause of truth; for it fills timid minds with alarm, lest by a resolute and persevering search into the properties of matter and the nature of opinions, they may light upon results disastrous to their prejudices and perhaps fatal to their hopes of "singing hallelujah above the clouds." The rightly balanced, well ordered mind has the strongest assurance—an assurance drawn from the great fountain of human experience and the general analogies of things, that neither truth nor virtue are empty names, but real substantial blessings, whatever clerical obstructives may preach to the contrary. Take the question, the regular gradation of the human species, and note how philosophers have

occupied themselves in the solution of it; and if you do not say that merry andrews would have gone a better way to work it will be odd indeed; for like those creatures that by a certain sort of instinct to avoid pursuit darken the medium through which they pass, so have our clerical swimmers in the sea of knowledge a happy knack of leaving a long tail of obscurity behind. Instead of carefully collecting facts, and opening their mental exchequer to receive something solid in the way of experience, they in general rest contented in most shameful ignorance, rather than their pride should be mortified by any discoveries in science, hostile to their cherished opinions. Solicitous, for their own advantage, to maintain what they call the honour of the human species, and its superiority over the brutes, all that could flatter and soothe the delightful idea is that alone which has been said and collected. Any attempt to establish a relationship, however remote, between man and the inferior animals, has always been scouted as impious, an insult to the creator, in whose image they tell us we are made, and little short of blasphemy against the holy ghost. Hundreds of sermons have been preached against the unlucky Bulliver, who insisted that in his day there was a Kentish family all tailed. Anathema after anathema was heaped upon Lochner, who in his *Miscellanea Curiosa* relates with great gravity and minuteness the case of a boy with a monstrous tail. As to Dr. Ferriar, who considered that the os coccygis must sometimes have an accidental elongation; and Dr. Grindant, who published many cases tending to give strength to the opinion that our forefathers were tailed animals also at first; both those gentlemen have been very roughly handled. The last-named doctor states, among other facts, as he styled them, that the islands of Moluccas, Formosa, and the Philippines, were at one time inhabited by whole races of men with tails. But to pass by all these, and the flagellations they received from our spiritual whips, for setting forth such *degrading* opinions, we need only refresh the reader's memory with the case of the famous Monboddo, who had such a predilection for monkey men that he has taken vast pains to prove that they formerly did wear tails; for insisting upon which anti-poetic notion he has been as soundly abused as any man that ever lived. That his theory was incomplete and erroneous in many important particulars, it is presumed these papers will show; but that there is *some* truth in it will be as clearly proved. Lord Monboddo was ignorant of many particulars, without a knowledge of which he could not but blunder, as the following, from the "Origin and Progress of Language," will show: "A whole nation, if I may call them so, have been found without the use of speech. This is the case of the ourang-outangs that are found in the kingdom of Angola, in Africa, and in several parts of Asia. They are exactly of the human form, walking erect,

WAS MAN ORIGINALLY SAVAGE?

not upon all fours; they use sticks for weapons, they live in society, they carry off negro girls, whom they make slaves of, and use both for work and pleasure." This, it must be confessed, is anything but "asserting the dignity of human nature," but it is of far more consequence than asserting human dignity, to know that when Lord Monboddo talks of whole nations of *monkey men*, without the use of speech, who walked erect, and not upon all fours; he gave us a legacy of nonsense, and bad men having possession of the precious relic use it most unscrupulously as a sharp weapon against those who maintain the substance and sense of Monboddo's theory, without its outrageous nonsense. To our minds one simple fact is sufficient to overturn the theory of Monboddo, a fact mentioned by White, which is, that the law of gradation, that philosophers of his school so strenuously maintain, would be destroyed if the hypothesis of tailed men were correct; for in descending through the species of apes, we meet with no tails till we reach the baboons, which are further removed from man than the apes are; but surely it is much better to state the fact or facts, and cure the delusion, than to persecute or abuse its author. It will hereafter be proved that Lord Monboddo is sufficiently refuted by a reference to the relative structure of men and monkeys; but enough has already been said to free us from the imputation of supposing that real *bona fide* men or women ever did wear so unsightly an appendage. The tendency of the multitude to be gratified with all that flatters their prejudices and puffs them up with the notion that they are in action like angels, in form, apprehension, &c. like gods, has strangely affected philosophers, especially modern ones, who, though at fitting opportunities will preach and moralize to admiration about corrupt, degraded, and fallen human nature, will yet insist that there is in that nature something divine, angelic, and the like; so that he had better been born a dog who, notwithstanding all this fuss, should affirm that man is but a two-legged, two-handed animal, less swift than the hare, less strong than the lion, and, though better organized for all the purposes of intelligence and happiness, has been perhaps less reasonable than either. But it is evident that in a state of society where it is treason to expose bad governments, however vile and corrupt, and flat blasphemy to propagate any opinions against a hireling priesthood and law-made religions; it is natural to suppose that the people should be systematically deceived, and reduced to that state of servile vassalage, both of mind and body, that wholesome truth is an abomination to them; and the public orator, who is loaded with popular applause, has good reason to demand, like Phocion, whether he have not given birth to something foolish. Between doctors for the body, and doctors for the soul, the credulous multitude have been physicked out of all plain sense. The

divine has to administer to the soul, that is his profession; and whatever may be thought of its utility, it makes all that concerns the dignity of the soul the peculiar care of the divine, who would feel much scandalized were it proved that his flock were, after all, but the fiftieth cousins of sheep. While physicians, who in the practice of their honourable profession are as little interested in the entire cure of bodies as the divines are in the entire cure of souls, are shrewd enough to understand the real state of the question, which is this, that did correct and sober ideas prevail with regard to the nature of man, his rights, duties, and real position as a member of the great commonwealth, physic would be thrown to the dogs, for assuredly man would have none on't. So that these two brothers in the medicinal art have long made common cause together, most artfully raising such a cloud of prejudice that the patients can't see an inch in advance of their noses, but are led by that useful organ, to borrow an expression from the poet, "as asses are." If, however, which is not very common, a Taylor or a Lawrence steps forward to expose these peccadillos, why their mouths are stopped with a sop or a sword; they having the alternative, poverty and independence in prison, riches and degradation in a palace; for whatever may be said of individuals, it is certain that associated bodies act to the letter upon the scripture injunction, "if thine eye offend thee pluck it out"—for if any member offend them *they thrust him out*.

SYMBOL WORSHIP.

I.

"The Egyptians assigned to their gods certain animals, as their symbols. They were introduced into the temples, as were the images into the churches of the Christians, and afterwards they were adored. Clement of Alexandria says that the Egyptians regarded the ibis and ichneumon as the statues of the gods. That is to say, as their symbols."—Jurieu's *Histoire des Dogmes et des Cultes de l'Eglise*.

It is intended to devote a portion of these pages to a consideration of the nature and origin of symbolic worship. An attempt will be made to trace its moral influence upon the social and political condition of nations. A concise, plainly written series of papers upon a subject so pregnant with important considerations will, it is hoped, be acceptable to general readers, who may not be in a condition to purchase, nor even to afford so much of leisure as would enable them to wade through, bulky and expensive folios. The aim here is to popularise, by smoothing the difficulties which in many learned works beset the path of the student, and thus bring the mysteries, or hidden things, of the world of symbols within the reach of the simplest understanding. There is no want of admirable matter for a full and complete history of symbolic worship, but the narrow limits of this paper render it necessary to crowd much that is useful into a small space, to do which

with effect demands some skill ; it commonly happening with the book as with the palace, that abundance of excellent material is rendered worse than useless by a bungling architect. The end to be attained is concentration, not diffusion ; a bringing close together facts of peculiar interest, which bear with force upon the question ; and not as is usual to spread those facts over a large surface, so that by collecting, or as it were drawing, into one focus the rays of information which are now dispersed over the pages of many authors, light may be thrown upon a subject hitherto so much obscured by national vanities, party violence, and sectarian prejudice.

All that concerns the religion, the learning, the virtues, and vices of antiquity opens to our view a field of investigation of almost unlimited extent, with no other boundary line than that presented by the great globe itself, and suggests the idea of periods of time which seem to mock all ordinary chronologic computation. The facts which relate thereto are confined to books which, from their costliness, are as completely sealed books to the poorer and more numerous classes of society as though printed and published in the planet Jupiter ; and even could they be placed at the disposal of the mass of the population, few would have sufficient courage to commence the investigation, or if they made the attempt would fail to grow weary and disgusted ; weary of the drudgery inseparable from such a pursuit, and disgusted with the sophisms, gratuitous hypotheses, and wild imaginings so pompously paraded by theologic historians as sacred truths. Many of these writers, who have so largely contributed to bring this species of literature into merited contempt, seem to have no other object in view, when treating of the religions of antiquity, than studiedly to depreciate and misrepresent them ; when they illustrate the religions of India and Egypt, it is with a view to throw in the foreground what they call the divine truth of their own holy religion ; so that their stories amount to little more than special pleadings in favour of certain cherished dogmas, and if they succeed in establishing for a season some fanciful hypothesis, or give a colour of reasonableness in favour of some systematic theology, they are then reckless as to what becomes of truth, reason, or any thing so vulgar as common sense.

Making the inspiration of Moses the fixed point from whence to set out in search of philosophy, *taking it for granted* that he was a divine legislator, and the account of beginnings of creation, as given in Genesis, as the only *that can be true*, these doughty reasoners make everything satisfactorily square with their assumptions. Having upon their own authority determined, not only that Moses wrote the books of Genesis, but also that they were written by the express command of God, the ideas subsequent thereupon form the substratum upon

which rests the clumsy superstructure of their divine logic ; and not merely so, but their anathemas are pronounced against those shocking infidels who scruple to receive their assumptions as the only standard by which the truth or falsehood of all other ideas and all other systems of theology are to be determined. If the discussion turn upon the relative antiquity of the Sanscreeet and Jewish histories ; if the disputed point be whether the Indian Geeta or the Jewish Bible has most claim to the respect and veneration of mankind, it is at once decided by these self-sufficient logicians, that as it is clear God wrote the Jewish Bible, and as it is equally clear that the account given of creation in the sacred books of the Hindoos flatly contradicts that furnished by the great Jehovah himself, *ergo*, what is written in the Hindoo books must be false. Their conduct admirably illustrates the judicious remark of Sir Thos. Brown, that those who would obtain a clear and warrantable body of truth, must be content to forget or part with much they know ; for how can all truth be obtained by a partial pursuit of it?—how, unless they forget or part with the prejudices of cast, sect, and nation, can philosophers, Christian or Hindoo, obtain a clear and warrantable body of truth?—or how, in reason's name, can any writer who assumes that to be true which is the very point in dispute, lay claim to the character of an accurate investigator or an impartial historian ? Mr. Maurice, a writer respectable by his talent, is the fairest and least offensive specimen of this genus, yet his *History of Hindostan*, and his *Indian Antiquities*, are both greatly disfigured by an unnecessary obtrusion of his religious opinions and gratuitous impertinences levelled against those whose orthodoxy is not his doxy. The animus of this writer is shown in the following passage from the introduction to *Indian Antiquities*, p. 22 : “ I have entered further into their astronomical disquisitions than my friends may think was either necessary or, in regard to the sale of my book, *prudent* ; but this particular subject was intimately connected with others of a higher nature and more momentous research. The daring assertions of certain sceptical French philosophers with respect to the age of the world, whose arguments I have attempted to refute ; arguments, principally founded on the high assumptions of the Brahmins and other eastern nations, in point of chronology and astronomy, could their extravagant claims be substantiated, *have a direct tendency to overturn the Mosaic system, and with it Christianity*. I have, therefore, with what success the reader must hereafter determine, laboured to invalidate those claims with all the persevering assiduity which a hearty belief in the truth of the former (the Mosaic system), and an unshaken attachment, not merely professional, to the latter system (Christianity), could not fail of exciting and animating.” The above passage shows that while Mr. Maurice, wedded

to system, and fettered by the prejudices of his nation, was quite unfitted to treat fully and impartially the important subject he had engaged to develop, that nevertheless he was one of those men to whom Bacon alludes, who know how to sound the sharps and flats of discourse; for the strain of his work was well adapted to tickle the ears of the honourable directors of the East India Company, to whom it was dedicated.

If the high assumptions of the Brahmins and other eastern nations in point of chronology and astronomy be an erroneous assumption; if their claim to a superior wisdom be "extravagant," let such assumptions and claim be shown to be such by fact and argument. The assumption of an Indian or Egyptian priest is just as good, to our thinking, as the assumption of a Christian priest; the claim of the Hindoo philosophers for priority in point of time and moral superiority, may or may not be *extravagant*, but if they are the extravagance should be exposed, and let us not violate the plainest rules of justice and right reason by pronouncing them to be such because they have a direct tendency to overturn the Mosaic system and with it Christianity. Away with the Mosaic system, if it require falsehood and injustice for its support; perish Christianity, if it harmonise not with the cultivated reason of man. The plain truth is, that Mr. Maurice, and all writers of his dogmatic school, fully agree with Sir Wm. Jones, that "either the first eleven chapters of Genesis (all due allowance being made for a figurative, eastern style) are true, or the whole fabric of the Christian religion is false," which accounts for their terrible wrath and fierce declamation against the philosophers who flourished during the eventful period of the first French revolution; the Volneys, Dupuis, and others of the same school, whose writings have so largely contributed to destroy all belief in the literal text of Genesis; reducing it to a mere allegoric fiction, and thereby aiding, it is true, to overturn the Mosaic system, and with it Christianity.

The soul was supposed by the Cartesians to be snugly quartered in the penal gland (*glándulis penealis*); granting that to be true, a dexterous operator, with a sharp dissecting knife, would be enabled to cut out the apartment containing the soul, and show the soul's house upon a plate, for the satisfaction of the curious; the thinking principle being carried about like a monkey in a box. The Jewish Rabbins declared that the souls of men were comfortably located in the back bone, which highly honoured back bone they called *luz*, and if we may believe Manesses Ben Israel, is incorruptible, and so tough as to set fire, water, hammers, and everything else at defiance. Our men of science teach that the brain is the sensorium or seat of sensation, the size and activity of which phrenologists consider a safe

criterion of intelligence. They inform us that size indicates power, *ceterus paribus*, that is, other conditions being equal; arguing that large heads always have and always will rule the small ones, which opinion may be very good, but it is in direct opposition to that held by Aristotle, who insisted that small headed men are by far the most knowing, so it is likely that Aristotle had the same idea of a large head that we, in these more enlightened times, have of thick ones. Aristotle, like the phrenologists, mapped out the head; or, to speak with accuracy, the phrenologists map out the head like Aristotle; so that organology is by no means a modern science—Aristotle and the phrenologists only differing as to the number and place of the organs, which, with all due submission to Coombe, Deville, and others, is a ticklish point to determine. We leave the reader to take one hypothesis, both, or neither, as he finds it convenient; as our object now is to show by facts and figures that men have not more brains than many other creatures, biped or quadruped, the assertion of the phrenologists notwithstanding. That the elephant, the dolphin, and the whale have more brain than man is well known, and we believe the patient laborious ass has the like advantage over the "lord of the creation." So that, as regards absolute size, human beings have no advantage over many creatures of an inferior species; while with respect to the relative size, a summary of the result of Cuvier's investigation is shown in the following table:—

MAN	1.30	QUADS. CONTINUED.	
MONKEYS.		Elephant	1.500
Gibbon	1.48	Sheep, from 1.192 to 1.351	
Saimiri	1.22	Ox	1.300
Sai	1.25	Horse	1.400
Ouistiti	1.28	CETACEOUS ANIMALS.	
Coaita	1.41	Dolphin, fr. 1.25 to 1.102	
Young Malbrook..	1.24	Porpoise	1.903
Callitriche	1.41	BIRDS.	
Mone	1.44	Eagle	1.200
Mongabay	1.48	Goose	1.300
QUADRUPEDS.		Cock	1.25
Mole	1.36	Parrow	1.25
Dogs, different spe.		Canary birds	1.14
from 1.47 to 1.305		REPTILES.	
Cat " 1.82 to 1.156		Land Turtle	1.2240
Beaver	1.290	Frog	1.170
Rat	1.76	FISHES.	
Mouse	1.43	Shark	1.2496
Field Mouse	1.31	Carp	1.500

Cuvier considers the brain in man in proportion to his body, as one to thirty, but the correctness of this has been disputed, Professor Sewall and others calculating it as one to forty or fifty.

It was a saying of Cæsar's, that "It is the common vice of nature, that we have the most confidence in, and the greatest fear of, things unseen, concealed, and unknown.

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THE

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 2.]

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FREE INQUIRY.

WE propose in this article briefly to consider the nature and use of Free Inquiry. First, as to its nature, for a knowledge of what it really is will aid us in our investigation of its utility. A man may be called free, in a physical sense, when he has the power to perform those actions he *wills* to perform. Any other kind of physical freedom must be chimerical. Human beings, equally with all other existences, are subject not only to skiey, but to earthy, influences; and where what is vulgarly called the law, properly the mode, of nature begins, absolute liberty ends. This is an acknowledged truth with regard to the physical, and is no less so in respect to the moral, man. He may be called morally free who searches into the nature and value of all opinions; who never abandons principle, nor swerves from the path of truth, nor flatters in the expression of it; one who speaks as well as thinks, thought only being valuable when it leads to honest action. There are few free inquirers in this, the only true sense, though many put in their claim to be considered as such. The spirit of the martyrs for truth's sake, the Vaninis, Servetuses, and Brunanos, is not to be seen in modern practice. *Sauve qui peut* (save himself who can) is now the practical principle; premature cowardice is nicknamed prudence; courage, foolhardihood; all reforms are now to be obtained, according to modern teaching, in so smooth, gentle, and pacific a manner, that men in authority will suffer no sort of uneasiness; the full measure of liberty arrived at by talking about it; superstition rooted out of men's minds without so much as shaking the nerves of "shovel-hatted orthodoxy;" all battles for truth so skilfully and *carefully* fought that the soldiers engaged therein, like Satan and his troops, are to use their weapons desperately, without the most remote possibility of receiving so much as a scratch; nothing now being wanted but peace, charity, justice, truth, reason, and common sense to throw the whole human race into a profuse perspiration of sympathy, and make even the domestic animals love each other as themselves. All this moral reformers tell us is to be accomplished by a species of moral "fee faw fumism," with which at present even the prime minds of society are but little acquainted, but may be better informed by becoming as little children. Vanini, and others of greater

moral stamina than any this age can boast, perished at the stake for asserting the right to inquire; but now the man who carries with him a stock of prudence, never spoils the sale of his wares by being long-tongued; for prudence dictates that it is not safe to go out of the road of common opinion, and certainly a prudent politician will agree with plain Machiavel that he who shall pretend to be perfectly honest among so many others who want honesty will infallibly perish. No prudent man ever was a free inquirer; and he who can consistently lay claim to that noble title must give up worldly wisdom, and travel the direct road that leads to truth with patience, perseverance, and dauntless courage, never for one moment hesitating, because the journey is long, or the road rough, hilly, and beset with footpads. A free searcher after truth should be clear of partisanship, nay, even all the delights that spring from love and friendship should be, if necessary, sacrificed upon the altar of principle and consistency. Those who in former ages have nobly endured all for truth's sake, are held up as worthy objects of emulation. A Regulus, who courted death rather than speak falsely, and an Epaminondas, who *never told a lie even in jest*, were the nobles of nature, whose admirable virtues, though they may be beyond our reach, always command our admiration. Whatever an Epaminondas or a Regulus *thought* true, useful, and necessary to be known, they would have spoken in spite of vulgar opinion or unjust authority, and those who would not, or dare not, whatever may be their pretensions, are not free inquirers. A free inquirer is one who, whether he be called Papist, Jew, Protestant, Deist, or Atheist, is more anxious for truth's sake than that of his creed or opinion; one who will not examine his opponent's arguments merely that he may have the glory of refuting, but that he may bring the whole force of his reason to bear upon them, that he may fit himself to judge impartially if they contain valuable truths, profound and useful thoughts that may be plucked from the error by which they are surrounded, and rendered available in the work of human improvement. The free inquirer is he who investigates nature and examines society under all its aspects; seeking to know all that can be known; a citizen of the world, "who sees through its pretensions," and feels that all laws, whether they affect property or opinion, social

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or political life, are of human origin and human growth; that the hands which built up society can pull down or overturn it; and such to be the genius of human nature, that the sacred, the true, and glorious of to-day, may be the ridiculous, the false, and the ignoble of to-morrow. He knows that there is nothing fixed, unchangeable, or eternal, but the properties or nature of things, which, whatever may be human conceptions of them, are, in their essence, ever the same. If nature is the great and only source of truth, and all error of human growth, how but by such an inquiry as will purge the mind of man from the dross of fiction, that weighs down the judgment, and hands it over the willing serf to tyrant imaginings; how, we say, can mind be set free but by an appeal to experience and the analogies of things: in a word, to nature, which is the test or touchstone by which all opinions should be tried? It may be as Rousseau has affirmed, that truths come singly while errors run in crowds; which, if allowed to be a necessary result of inquiry, would justify the inference that the more we gain of truth the larger our share of error; human knowledge of the latter far outstripping that of the former; but this is an incidental, not a necessary, evil attendant upon the acquisition of truth. A knowledge of the cause of disease in morals, as in physics, is half its cure, and if we grant that truths come singlehanded while errors are received by the shoal, still the cause of this may be clearly traced to certain fundamental mistakes, which for countless ages have formed the very pillar and grounds of vulgar metaphysics; mistakes which a little honest plain teaching will speedily expose and destroy. But the teaching must be honest, otherwise it is worse than no teaching at all; as ignorance is far less mischievous and deplorable than error. That there are great evils inseparable from the disposition to inquire, in a condition of society essentially and radically unjust, few will deny; but this argument has no force against free inquiry, however much it may have against such a state of things. This must be acknowledged by those who contend that truth is the great panacea for all human ills. Society is corrupt, and falsehood is essential to support that corruption; truth is, from its very nature, pure and excellent, and free inquiry is necessary to make its unspeakable value manifest. If the choice lie between corruption, semi-barbarism, and falsehood; and truth, independence, and virtue, who could hesitate in the selection? Where the offence is let the sharp axe of opinion fall.

Had the early churches consistently taught men "to prove all things," to *know*, not to believe, to inquire instead of glorifying themselves in a senseless, unreasoning, and most unreasonable faith, Europe would not have been for so many ages the theatre for bigot priests and brutal kings to play their vile and sanguinary parts; had they taught the princi-

ples of liberty and all the delights of freedom, based upon high intelligence, instead of their slavish and demoralizing systems of faith; had the first churches been what they should have been, schools of arts and science, instead of what they were and are, the temples of bigotry and folly, we should never have heard of such Christian kings as Louis IX., to whose savage nature human butchery was a delightful pastime, who put to a cruel death all not of the true faith, and by a refinement of cruelty common to religious fanatics, would have the children of his victims placed upon the fatal scaffold, that they might be sprinkled with their parents' blood!—a right royal monster, who had one maxim everlastingly upon his lips, "*Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare*" (he who knoweth not how to dissemble, knoweth not how to reign); a maxim which, with a slight alteration, would do admirably for many modern reformers, as thus, "He who knoweth not how to lie, knoweth not how to do good."

It is true some few rays of light have entered into the minds of men, but, alas! they are but few and scattered, hardly sufficient to enable them to see the surrounding gloom. If it should still be asked, of what use is free inquiry?—we reply, not many years since in this country a Jew was thought unfit to live; a Nonconformist dared not, but at the peril of his neck, be found within five miles of a corporation; hundreds of pretended witches and sorcerers were put to a cruel death; the Deist had far better have herded with hungry wolves than relied upon the tender consciences of Christians; the heart of the Atheist was torn out and thrown amid the flames, as they played around his agonized limbs, amid the demoniac shrieks of infuriated multitudes. Yes, all this has been done upon our own soil, and would be done again could bigotry succeed in its attempts to fetter the press and stifle free speech. It would be foolishly criminal "to count spoil before the field is won," mistaking the scotched for the killed snake, for nothing but free inquiry, in the true spirit of philosophy, can utterly destroy fanaticism, which, though reeling under the blows it has received, has yet to have the *coup de grace*, and by the help of the thoughtful and courageous we will assist in the good work; for superstition is the curse of states; it fanaticises, corrupts, and enslaves the people; giving birth and strength to that infernal spirit which actuated the murderers of Bishop Sharp, and who, after committing the ferocious act, could imagine they heard the voice of God crying, "Well done good and faithful servants."

It was free inquiry gave France her glorious revolution of 1798; a revolution that gave birth to heroes who "lived like Aristides and died like Sidney;" and but for the emissaries of despotism handsomely paid for working upon the passions of the newly enfranchised multitude, urging them to deeds of blood and shame, would have

been handed down as the noblest effort of enslaved humanity to regenerate itself that the annals of history record. That eventful period scattered to the winds a fabric of despotism which for ages sat like some terrible night-mare upon the energies of France. It was free inquiry, led on by the great PAINE, that gave freedom to America, and placed within the reach of her people all the means of virtue, intelligence, and happiness. Yes! the pen of Pain did more for truth and liberty than the sword of Washington.

IS THERE A GOD ?

II.

"The Atheist supposeth that there are no Gods; and the Superstitionist wishes there were none, and believeth against his will, for he is afraid to disbelieve."
PLUTARCH.

In the former paper the question of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of a belief in a god was fairly laid open, and it is hoped in a manner quite inoffensive, yet not to be mistaken. Those who have not read that article should do so before proceeding with this, for the absurdity of a belief in a god or gods can only be shown by an unbroken chain of fact and argument.

Had men been accustomed to take a common sense view of things, we should have heard nothing of the enormous sophistries which the priests of all nations have arrogantly put forward as sacred truths; nor would it have fallen to our lot to publish, for the first time, the teachings of experience—the matters of fact in opposition to a belief in a god, as a modest and effectual answer to the fiction by which that belief has hitherto been supported. "The belief in angels (says Schleirmacher) has a double source; one is the desire, so natural in human beings, to suppose in the world more of spiritual substances than we commonly behold incorporated in the human kind." The second source he conceives to be in "the idea men form to themselves of God, as of a monarch surrounded by his court; an idea no longer ours, for we know how to explain the natural causes of the changes in the world and in humanity, that in former times were imagined to be the work of god, acting by the ministry of angels." All belief of a religious kind belongs to the supernatural; whether it employ itself about angels, devils, or gods, it is equally beyond the range and limit presented by superior reason. A belief, strong or weak, always implies some doubt, and never can, like actual knowledge, fill and satisfy the mind. The ridiculousness of attaching merit or demerit to the belief or denial of a god is forcibly shown by those who favour the notion—as Leibnitz, who admits that all relating to a god, supposing there to be one, above natural law or science, and therefore supernatural, or beyond the capacity of creatures. If so, how can creatures be expected to

know that which is above their capacity, or believe thoroughly in a being or beings of which they have not a single idea? It is not here pretended that the impossibility of the existence of a god can satisfactorily be proved, but it is pretended that its *improbability* can be demonstrated; and as, in all cases of opposing difficulties it is wise to choose the least, it remains for us to show that a belief in a god is less reasonable, and therefore less likely to be true, than a disbelief in any such being. We cannot prove the impossibility of the existence of angels, devils, witches, or ghosts, yet in these matter-of-fact times there are not a dozen sensible men who credit the reality of such existence; nor is it possible, as Schleirmacher has remarked, that such an opinion should fix itself firmly in the soil of modern ideas.

Those who pretend to demonstrate the existence of a being distinct from the universe, called God, stick at nothing in the way of proofs or arguments; rushing from absurdity to absurdity, with wonderful celerity and self-satisfaction. By the aid of faith, fed by imaginings, without well understanding either faith or imaginings, they dub them self-evident truths, and reason upon them accordingly. Thus they make short work with Atheists, logic, consistency, and common sense. The moderns outbid the ancients in this kind of demonstrative reasoning, and beginning with their Bible, as a rule of faith, the rule of faith is taken as the rule of reason, an infallible standard by which all opinions are to be determined; so that they have a striking, novel, and, to themselves, highly satisfactory way of proving things by the book, instead of the book by things; and in lieu of determining revelation by reason, invert the order and decide reason by revelation, the rule of faith saying which shall or shall not be the rule of reason. Lest we should be accused of burlesquing the mode of proving the existence of a god usually adopted by divines, let us hear one of the cloth, the Rev. Mr. Fish, who in his sermon on Natural Theology observes, that "*revealed religion* teaches that primary and all important truth, the being of a god. It designates him Jehovah, the self-existing being. The being from whom all other beings have derived their being. Some learned men have undertaken to prove the being of a god, and the existence of his perfections, by arguments *a priori*. From his being they have argued his self-existence; from his self-existence they have argued his necessary existence; from his necessary existence *anywhere* they have argued his necessary existence *everywhere*, or omnipresence; from his being omnipresent and possessed of vital and acute energy, they have argued his omnipotence; from his knowledge and power they have argued his infinite wisdom; and from his infinite wisdom they have argued his holiness, justice, and goodness. *But let it be remembered, that they were indebted to divine revelation for the first link*

in the chain; and had it not been for the first link, which was obtained through this medium, they would not have been able to have obtained the successive ones." Surely wit, banter, ridicule, and argument would be thrown away in attempting to expose such clerical logic; for, as before shown, pretending to prove the existence of a god by what is called his revealed will, which revealed will is itself to be proved by reason—is first to show the reason of God's existence by revelation, and then to prove the revelation of his will by reason: which is not a begging of the question, arguing in a circle, or anything else to be dignified by the name of *reasoning*, but the lunacy of logic; yet such are your *a priori* demonstrations in support of the being, the perfections, the self-existence, the necessary existence, the omnipresence, the omnipotence, glory, wisdom, &c., &c. of a god. To divine revelation we are indebted for it all, which divine revelation men of sense shrewdly suspect to be, if divine at all, a divine blunder; but be this as it may, a revelation must be proved a revelation by reason before its authority can be admitted as decisive. Hume has shrewdly remarked, "that theologians have discovered the solution of the famous problem of Archimedes—a point in the heavens whence they move the world." Yes, this fiction about a god is the point whereon they stand to move the world; it is the trump card, the true ace, or one which takes all the rest in the game of public delusion; all revealed religions teaching that primary and all-important truth, the being of a god, for the sufficient reason that the imagined being of a god gives riches, influence, and state honours, to the teachers of imaginary revealed religions. If, however, we were disposed to accept the revelation, what could be said to Lord Brougham who, though a believer in an "immense being," is a singular kind of hobbledohoy, who, if the clergy do not look well to, will certainly be the death of them; for he contends that even the truth of divine revelation, without the prop of natural theology, would have no other basis than mere tradition. So that, even could we admit the bible to be a divine revelation, still, according to his lordship, the truths it contains cannot stand alone, but require the prop of natural theology, which may be briefly defined as ideas of the supernatural derived from a contemplation of the natural.

Having sufficiently confuted the arguments in favour of the existence of a god, drawn from an assumed revelation; the absurdity of the belief in any being, itself uncaused, yet the cause of all things else, will be demonstrated. It is presumed that none but slavish minds will admit that anything fairly open to dispute should be received upon the *ipse dixit* of one or a million, for to fall in with opinions without what metaphysicians call a sufficient reason, is the vice of vulgar minds; and why should we not seek for the *sufficient reason* with re-

gard to the existence of a god? No man in or out of his senses can answer this question to the satisfaction of the clergy. Those who think that to reason so far and so boldly is unsafe, are men of weak minds, and little or no moral stamina, who have imagined a god as weak, vacillating, and inconsistent as themselves, to be flattered, soothed, and cajoled, forsooth! as though a being who could, by his will, create and regulate the universe, call order out of chaos, or more yet, something out of nothing—as though such a being, did it exist, could fail to perceive the mighty difference between the man who denied his existence, because he disbelieved it, and the crawling hypocrite who laboured to persuade himself and others there was a god, *because he thought it safest to do so.** Your believers upon the principle of taking the safe side, pay their god a compliment at the expense of his understanding; and while they call him the searcher of all hearts, foolishly imagine that they can hide behind a thick covering of boobyish duplicity the doubts and petty passions by which they are distracted. As shrewdly remarked by Plutarch, the superstitionists believe against their will; for they are afraid to disbelieve. If we study human beings individually or in the aggregate, we shall find that the fearful are, in almost all cases, the vile, cringing, and inherently base: fear, like poverty, being the fruitful parent of a most hateful progeny.

Proceed we, then, with our investigation of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of a belief in a god. Having shown that no arguments of any force can be drawn by supernaturalists from the bible, it will now be useful to prove that the idea of a god cannot be received by the student of nature. For we cannot conceive of a god the cause of all things, without admitting that things had a beginning, an admission which cannot be made by the natural philosopher, for all philosophy, ancient and modern, has rejected the idea of an absolute creation of matter, or the possibility of its annihilation. That penetrating genius Leibnitz calls the notion of actual beginnings or endings, the puerile conceits of the schoolmen; denying that time, space, or motion are anything of themselves, but mere ideas suggested or excited by the relations, order, and succession of things; observing, that things, which continue always, are eternal. He also asks a question, that it would be useful, we may say a rich treat, for inquirers, if our divines, who affect to believe in a god without parts, would answer, "how can a thing exist eternally, which, to speak exactly, does never exist at all?—or how can a thing exist whereof no part does ever exist?" A question that we take it all the divines in Europe will not answer satisfactorily, though it must be allowed that they have a plough for every soil, and can extract value from the most barren stuff.

* See Dale Owen's Tract, "Safest to Believe."

When philosophers say the world is eternal, they signify that it has existed beyond any assignable time, which if it do not convey a satisfactory idea no better can be given; the eternal, as the infinite, being to the minds of finite creatures that which may be talked of, not understood. Those who run into the fiction of a beginning six thousand years ago, for no other valid reason, as it seems, than the insufficiency of all reason, fall into the ludicrous error of attempting to explain one difficulty by another yet greater. When Cartesius affirmed what, according to Leibnitz, has never been sufficiently confuted, that matter is *unlimited*, of course we must understand, no assignable limit; the reason of man knowing nothing of such—to him it has no limits. The notion of *unlimited* matter belongs to that class of philosophers who are full of imaginings, abstractions, and odd conceits, which have no solid support in superior reasons.

When Leibnitz maintains against Cartesius, that though it be granted to him that matter is unlimited, yet it does not follow that matter would be necessary, nor that it would have existed from all eternity, since that unlimited diffusion of matter would only be an effect of God's choice—he advanced that which was entirely unworthy of a philosopher; for those who hold the notion of unlimited matter, must, if guided by pure reason, either reject the idea of a god, or acknowledge, like the Stoics, a matter or universe god; whereas Leibnitz and reasoners of his school affect to believe in a god, not only indiscernible, but pure spirit, which they call immensity, omnipresence, and other fanciful names. If we view the question in the light of plain reason we shall see that a matter god is no god at all; and we entirely agree with the writer in the *Quarterly*, that this nonstrous matter-god system crumbles to earth before the faintest blows of reason. As to spirit, it is with it as with space, which never had any existence out of the *heads* of metaphysicians. It may be that by abstraction we can conceive of pure space, which, however, we do not grant; but even though we did, abstractions are not realities.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

II.

The man who does not find in animals younger brothers, and in plants cousins more or less removed, is unacquainted with his own nature, and is devoid of the elements of morality."—OLD TREATISE.

SOME one has defined man to be "an animal ashamed of his own body," which definition is not wide of the strict truth, for in all ages human beings have been the dupes of their own vanities which hindered them from appreciating truth. The pride of rationality, which puffs men up with the absurd notion that they are an anomaly among animated existences, and in no sense allied to inferior creatures, is specially

strong in our day, when truth is too often sacrificed to false delicacy, and genuine philosophy made the sport of the most ridiculous conceits. In women, who, as Kotzebue justly remarked, are worse and better than we are, the feeling in favour of what are called the prerogatives of our species, is exceedingly strong; but women are more remarkable for warmth of feeling than solidity of judgment; and it is with regret we add, that both men and women are, in the gross, the creatures of sound rather than sense; and determined more by custom than reason.

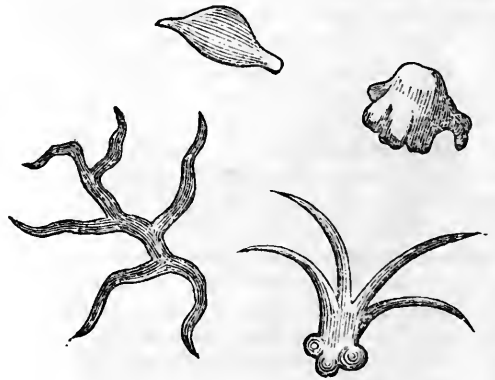
The fatal effects of this spurious shamefacedness is a plentiful crop of folly, with an almost entire ignorance on the part of both sexes as to those subjects which they should be most concerned to know. A distaste for the naked truth, whatever such nakedness may discover to us, shows a depraved & unwholesome state of mind. Besides, false delicacy is not merely the antipodes but direct antagonist of genuine modesty, which revels, but does not glory, in its own perfections. That genuine modesty and such spurious delicacy, aptly called by our French neighbours *mauvaise honte*, are wide as the poles in nature, is abundantly proved by every day experience, which shows your more *nice-than-wise-people*, who would be shocked at the bare supposition that man is but a link in the great chain of animated existences, yet do not hesitate to perform the most vicious and unjust actions. Philosophers, who are obliged to feel the public pulse before they venture to teach, are, in consequence of the sickly condition of the public mind, tempted to prescribe all sorts of quack medicines; for philosophers, like the man who stole the loaf, must live; not to mention that it is a maxim now in much repute, that a man who is one grain more honest than the times he lives in is little better than a fool. This is one of those obvious facts which need no particular illustration, every man by his own experience illustrating them; so we cannot feel surprised that Mr. White, in his admirable Treatise on "The Regular Gradation in Man," found it necessary, or at least thought it prudent, to preface the work by a kind of apology for its contents, to the effect, that he had no desire to elevate the brute creation to the rank of humanity, nor to reduce the human species to a level with the brutes, all of which fine stuff about elevating and reducing, &c., is, or ought to be, quite foreign to the matter contained in the book, which should be judged according to its merits, and its teachings, if true, abided by, whether it elevate or degrade human conceptions of itself. This is what Dr. Samuel Clark calls appealing from reason to vulgar opinion, which he justly contends philosophers should not do, because it is not the rule of truth. Philosophers have no business to confound consequences with principles, such conduct being only admissible in starved men of science, who "turn country parsons and go about de-

ceiving the vulgar." It is evident that neither the wishes of Mr. White, nor any other theory propounder, can possibly affect the truths of science, which are no more disturbed or affected by human wishes than the waves of the sea or the man in the moon. The object of Mr. White's treatise was to show, that from the simplest being up to man, there is a complete and regular gradation; or, as it were, a growing out of creature from creature; that there is a linking together of all the kinds and species; the exact idea of the facetious author, an extract from whose work stands at the head of this article, that men are the elder brothers of inferior animals, and cousins many times removed of plants and flowers. Mr. White remarks in his first page, that "Every one who has made natural history his study, must have been led occasionally to contemplate the beautiful gradation that subsists among created beings from the highest to the lowest. From man down to the smallest reptile, whose existence can be discovered only by the microscope, nature exhibits to our view an immense chain of beings, endued with various degrees of intelligence and active powers, suited to their stations in the general system.

"In the animal kingdom the different classes into which nature seems to have divided her productions, are so blended by creatures apparently anomalous to all system, that it is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, to draw lines of distinction. The inhabitants of the earth and air encroach upon each other; for there are flying *macaucoes*, flying *mice*, flying *squirrels* and *bats*, which, though quadrupeds, have wings to buoy themselves up in the air; and on the other hand, there are some birds that cannot fly at all, as the *ostrich*, the *cassowary*, the *touyou*, and the *dodo*. The porcupine, though a quadruped, has quills. Nor are even the inhabitants of the sea and those of the air much better discriminated, for we meet with the flying fish, and birds that inhabit the waters. Amphibious animals link the terrestrial & aquatic; we find some fish with, and others without, lungs. The distinction of animals into viviparous (brought forth alive) and oviparous (produced from eggs) is not more definite; for vipers and cartilaginous animals produce their eggs within their bodies previous to the expulsion of the live animal; and some animals are like vegetables, propagated by germs, neither viviparous nor oviparous. Bipeds, quadrupeds, and quadrumanuses equally encroach on each other. There are some apes that walk only on their hind legs, and others that walk on all four, and the greatest part of them use their hind feet in the manner of hands. The genus *lacerta*, from the alligator of twenty feet to the lizard of three inches, forms a class of animals connecting the race of quadrupeds with that of reptiles. To those useful facts may be added, one of at least equal importance, that the distinction usually drawn between what are called the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, however use-

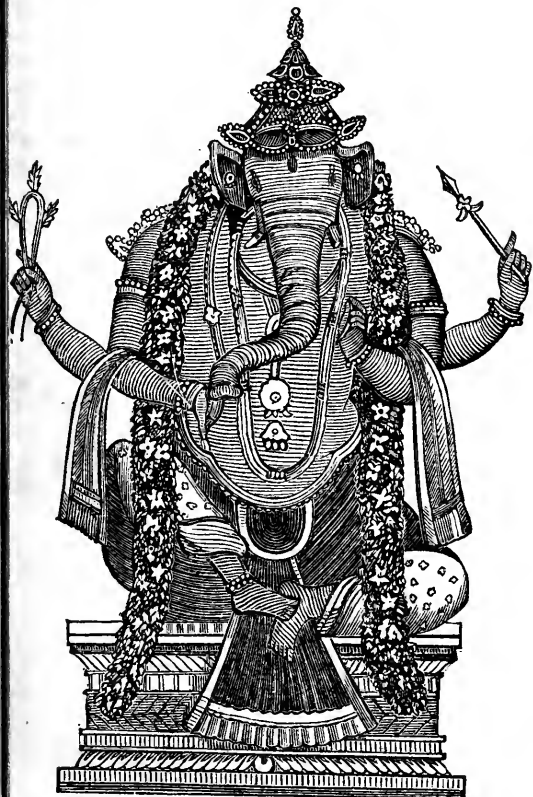
ful, is purely arbitrary. There is no distinction save that which exists in the minds of men; nor is the equally common distinction between what is called the dead and living matter of our globe one whit better founded, or any thing more than one of the many chimeras paraded as science. These fictions of philosophy, when received as facts, are the causes of incredible mischief; for men are led to the conclusion that such distinctions, which are but arbitrary aids to the weakness of human understanding, really exist, a something actually in matter; hence the confusion of ideas that prevails. All will readily admit that men disagree so much, only because they know so little, and that it is the paucity of facts and emptiness of our heads, with regard to the relationship of things, which causes us to arrive at such strange and opposing conclusions.

The reader should therefore be upon his guard and carefully separate the truths of things, that is relations or descriptions of things as they actually exist, from the arbitrary division made by men of science, which, though intended as helps to the understanding, often clog and perplex it.



The above engravings show what is called by naturalists the first type of organization, an infusoria or animalcule. It has been drawn from the original of Boitard, who calls it le protée changeant (proteus diffluens), literally, changing proteus; the term proteus denoting with the ancients, matter; that they held to be oldest or first. The word proteus properly signifying oldest or first. This kind of changeful matter is seen above as through a microscope and prodigiously enlarged. Boitard observes—"It is exceedingly difficult to describe it; for its body changes form every instant and assumes an infinite variety of magnitudes. Sometimes it is of a round or oval figure; presently you may see it, as it were, carried upon four or five tubercles or pimples; an instant after, it divides and subdivides into small and irregular thongs; then it takes the form of a flower with four petals or leaves, perfectly regular and pointed, finally; before I have time to observe its motions it has already assumed a thousand successive and varied forms." In answer to those

who consider that matter capable of such an infinite variety of transformations must be animal matter, living and organized, it is urged, that naturalists have long been of the same opinion, but that the observations and researches of Scopoli Regnier, Otto de Munchausen, Buttner and others, have shown that at a period very remote, when bodies of water were stagnant upon certain parts of the globe, the humidity, heat, &c., caused certain combinations, and matter became organized, in harmony with the modes known by the name of chemical affinities.



(Hindoo God of Wisdom.)

SYMBOL WORSHIP.

II.

There are two kinds of idolatry. By the one men adore the works of God, which is the idolatry of those who have adored the sun, the moon, the stars, angels, dæmons, men and animals. By the other they have adored the works of their own hands; these are the simulacres (counterfeits). To these two kinds of idolatry may be added a third; it is that by which men have sometimes adored God under certain tangible forms."—JURIEU.

In the former article little more was done than to clear the ground for action, by exposing, with a view to make straight, some crooked opinions which have hitherto bewildered philosophers, when treating of ancient worship. We will now proceed to give the net produce of our ideas upon this subject with all possible brevity. The words symbol and emblem are used indiffe-

rently; nor is it easy to understand the precise idea conveyed by each. An emblem, like a symbol, is a sign of a thing or an idea; but a sign more or less dark, obscure, and mysterious. The sacramental bread and wine is properly called by Catholics an emblem of the body and blood of Christ; it being a sign that no one of the five senses can make top or tail of; all Catholics acknowledging that the bread and wine is Christ's body in a divine, ineffable, and unintelligible sense. Herein then lies the difference between a symbol and an emblem; for the symbol, though only a representation or sign of things or human conceptions, is itself devoid of mystery. With the Hindoos and some other nations of the East, Deity was symbolized by a sceptre and an eye; his eye being supposed to see, and his sceptre to rule, all things. It was also their custom to symbolize the moon, which with them was of the masculine gender, by a rabbit, while in Egypt a cat was the symbol or sign. In Egypt it was worshipped as a feminine divinity; which difference of the moon's sex in the two countries, has been adduced as an argument, though certainly a flimsy one, that the theology or worship of Egypt was not borrowed from that of India.

Ancient teaching was principally through the medium of sensible signs, and for these the priests were never at a loss. When they conceived, or by the aid of a glowing imagination thought they conceived, the idea of a god, or eternal being without beginning and without end, they shadowed forth the conception by the figure of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, certainly a most beautiful symbol of boundless time or eternity. The singular looking figure at the head of this article is the Ganesa, or god of wisdom, worshipped by the Hindoos, and seems to divide with Chreeshna, or Krichna, another god, the title and honours of the Greek Apollo. This allegory, says Monsieur Maurey, conveys to our minds the idea, that wisdom as well as imagination should guide the poet. The forms of Ganesa and Chreeshna were worshipped as symbols of wisdom in Hindoo temples, as Apollo in Greece was adored as the god of the wise. Associating the idea of harmony with wisdom is highly poetic, and probably gave birth to the lines of Dryden—

“From harmony, celestial harmony,
The universal frame began,”

which have the very doubtful merit of being far more poetic than true. The account given of the birth, parentage, and adventures of Ganesa, are ridiculously absurd; pretty enough when viewed as an allegory, that is, a relation not literally true, but conveying a truth to those capable of piercing the shell of words and getting at the kernel or spirit.

According to Monsieur Maurey, “Ganesa is the name of that divinity worshipped by the Hindoos as the God of Wisdom. The name is composed of two words, *Isa* signifying *chief*;

and *gana*, meaning *companion of the gods*, doubtless because of the important part played by him among his brothers of the Indian Olympus.

"The mother of Ganesa was Dourga, a great goddess of the Brahmic religion, a strangely compounded divinity, mounted upon a tiger, and furnished with four arms.

"The father of Ganesa was called Shiva, and third member of the Indian Trinity (answering to our Holy Ghost if it may be said he was a father), for Dourga (not unlike the Virgin Mary) was in a bath, and all of a sudden she was seized with a violent desire to have a son; a cold sweat covered her body, and when she dried herself she found a young child in her hands; it was Ganesa. Astonished at that singular conception, Shiva cried with a loud voice, 'what is that infant?' The birth of Ganesa (like that of Christ) was a cause of great joy to all the gods, and the wise men surrounded his cradle, offering him their homage with joy and gladness. Shani, or Shiva, (like Joseph) remained in the background in discontented silence, with his eyes cast upon the earth. Dourga, much offended at seeing such a face, and considering it as a mark of the pride of Deva, who refused to honour the young Ganesa, she ordered Shani to raise his head, and to join his companions. Shani remained immovable; but yielding at last to her lively entreaties, he raised his eyes, being constrained to obey the orders of a goddess, but from his countenance issued flame which speedily consumed the head of Ganesa. The poor virgin mother had forgotten (forgetfulness certainly unpardonable in a divinity) the sad knowledge of the eyes of Shani; she grew desperate, and bitterly reproached herself for her obstinacy. Brahma, the great god, wished to console the afflicted mother, and as a mark of his favour, 'Go, (said he to Shiva) and the first creature you meet with sleeping towards the north, cut off its head, and carry it to Ganesa.' The genius obeyed, an elephant was the first animal he found sleeping; he then cut off its head, which since that period has been firmly fixed upon the shoulders of Ganesa."

The reader will, of course, believe as much or as little of this fine tale as he pleases; but we presume Ganesa will find very few adorers in this country. The thing is not in fashion, and nothing whatever to do with the legacy of wisdom left us by our ancestors, else we should believe by hereditary right. But be this as it may, such is the history of Ganesa, the Hindoo symbol of wisdom; which is to the full as reasonable as that of Tom Thumb, Baron Munchausen, or Jesus Christ.

The reader will now have a clear idea of what a symbol really is, which will be worth considerable in these times of non-understandableness. As the worship of symbols has been common to all the nations of the globe, our consideration of the subject will pass in review that which relates to the origin of worship, as a

shadow of things that were, and these papers form a brief chronicle of ancient times.

That the worship of symbols was the first and only catholic worship yet known among men; that it has been, in the strict sense of the word, universal, and prevailed at one time or other in every part of the habitable globe, has been shown by Dupuis, in his admirable work, "*L'Origine de tous les Cultes*," (The Origin of all Worships) also by Taylor, Higgins, and later yet by the celebrated German Jew, in his masterly disproof of "The Existence of Christ;" for though the bulk and substance of the astronomical portion of his work, and the ideas there set forth on symbol worship, are to be found in Dupuis, Volney, and others; yet no one of these writers has brought within the compass of little more than two hundred pages so compact a body of evidence in favour of the opinion that all religions have one common origin; that Jesus Christ of gospel notoriety never really existed; and that the worship of symbols, or as it is commonly called, idolatry, has been grossly abused, without its origin, true nature, and philosophic character being rightly understood. We shall, from time to time, make free with such portions of the learned Jew's work as will aid us in this development. Enough now has been said as to the *nature* of a symbol; and in our next an explanation will be given of the terms idol and image, their derivation, &c., and idolatry *properly so called*; in contradistinction to that which divines and others have foisted upon us as such.

HINTS ON PARTY SOCIETIES.

It would be idle to conceal, either from ourselves or others, that there is in all *mere* party societies a tendency to cripple individual energy, and make men of genius thinkers by rule and measure; there is a tendency to bear down individual spirit and check a desire of innovation; there is a tendency in all mere party societies to grow rich, vain, and intolerant; and individual interests growing up within them eat into their substance: "a rank corruption, mining all within, infects unseen;" there is a tendency in all rich societies, as in the majority of rich individuals, to sacrifice principle upon the altar of Mammon, and make the lowest and most vulgar expediency the rule of their action. There is, finally, a tendency in all mere party societies to set up within themselves an indomitable authority, which without the check of high individual intelligence becomes unwieldy; *itself a tyranny, professing to pull down all tyranny.*

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Saturday, November 13, 1841.

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 3.]

EDITED BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

[PRICE 1d.]

RELIGION.

THE religious feeling, or frenzy, constitutes an important element in a just consideration of mental action. The Latin root from whence the word religion is derived, meant a binding together again, or rebinding; which sense is not the one now conveyed by the word religion. If it were, the term might be dispensed with, for a rebinding, in a moral sense, is a moral action. Morality is a science, based upon the more or less human knowledge of the true, just, and useful, its basis—experience; whereas religion has no other source and support than the feelings of awe and wonder which are a consequence of the weakness of the human mind, in its attempts to solve the enigma of the universe.

"Of all cants in this canting world, the cant of criticism is the worst," so said Sterne; but by his leave it must give place to the cant of religion, which is the cant of cants: like the rod of Aaron, swallowing up all the rest. To our thinking, it is as wild to talk about radical reforms of society, while the people are religious, as to set about emptying the great Pacific Ocean by means of hand buckets. The ocean might be emptied by hand buckets, so might a religious people be made virtuous. Both are possible, especially by the aid of a miracle; for a miracle makes anything possible, anything true. What is religion? Let us answer in the language of Hobbes, "religion is the superstition which is fashionable, superstition is the religion which is not fashionable;" this definition, if not the law and the prophets, is plain sense.

False religion is but a corruption of the true, says Leslie, which would be capital information had any breathing body know where the true religion is to be found, or in what true religion consists. What a pity it is the Christians cannot find an infallibly sacred standard of truth, and nail down the vagrant opinions of sceptics to the moral plank of the carpenter's son. Then would true religion shine forth in divine splendour, with such effulgent dazzling brightness, that Atheists would hide themselves in caves and holes where its light could not enter; or, what is more likely, glorify such a bright, glowing, and reasonable religion: as the poet says, "kneeling, trembling and adoring." Not only the angels but the Atheists would weep; discontent be swept from the land; religious heart-burnings cease for ever; poverty

be unknown; priests sent to the plough, soldiers turned into millers, bakers, and shipwrights; and lawyers transformed into honest men and good citizens. Oh, blessed times! when all craft would be destroyed, every man becoming his own craftsman; lions lying down with lambs, rich with poor, foxes with geese, tyrants with subjects, fleecers with fleeced, parsons with congregations—all united in one great bond of peace, forgetting their several natures, and filling the air with the song of joy and gladness. Talk of Atheists, indeed! in those days there could be none such; for a true religion would be a miracle, and none but a god can work miracles. Philosophy always leads to Atheism; and far-seeing Catholic divines rightly urge, that there is no halting place between a blind belief in one religion, or disbelief in all religions; no place of refuge for those who demur to church infallibility, but the temple of Atheism. Show us a man who pretends to teach true religion, and we will show you a fool or a knave. All, no matter whether they be called bonzes, mystery men, parsons, or priests, who impudently pretend to know the will of a god or gods, must be either knaves or fools, or both compounded. The people of these kingdoms have been flattered into the notion that they are a thinking people. Psha! does any one suppose that a thinking people would pay many millions sterling for a lot of men called priests to think for them? Of what *earthly* use to a thinking people would be the whole set of puppet shows, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the half-starved curate? A thinking people, forsooth! yes, so are the Hottentots and Caribs, even idiots may be included in the category of thinkers; but thinking is one thing, and thinking justly another. The truth is, we are giants in science and mere babies in religion; priding ourselves in philosophy, yet disgracefully revelling in every species of fiction. Stupendous works of art, and results all but miraculous of science, are the glory of the nation—*its religion is its shame!* for by its accursed influence the multitude are kept in gross ignorance, fit-victims for the vampires of society, men who have but to breathe upon them, and they become corrupt masses of brutalism and sensuality. What has been said of America applies equally to England, it is a home for genius of hand, but a desert for genius of head. All is show, lies, delusion, and imposture: religion, dragging at her golden car

[SECOND EDITION.]

the noble energies, the liberty, and happiness of humanity. Religion is a leprosy which insinuates itself into the veins and arteries of our moral, political, and social being, poisoning the very source of that pure, enlightened, and well-regulated reason, which will, in time to come, be the delight and glory of mankind. What has been falsely charged upon philosophy is admirably illustrative of religion, for religion may be compared to powders which are of so corrosive a nature, that they not only eat away the proud flesh of a wound, but the sound also, rot the bones, and pierce to the very marrow. Will the people never understand, that *religion has no other foundation THAN MERE BELIEF?* that it is unpractical in its nature, and has nothing whatever to do with active virtue or the realities of life. Will it never be comprehended, that there can be no religion without faith, no priests without imposters, no churches and chapels without mummery and delusion? If these things cannot be understood, and knavish imbeciles are paid handsomely to people hell with demons, and heaven with slaves: themselves the model of the former, and their dupes of the latter—if honest men, who will not stoop to say Folly's catechism, or believe in the trash put forward as pure and undefiled religion, are to have their mouths stopped, or be borne down by fanatic intolerance, why then there's an end to freedom and morality; virtue and truth will be but empty names. This is a rich but not a happy nation; it has all the means of enjoyment, but enjoyment is beyond the reach of its people, who, in the midst of superabundance, suffer all the horrors of the fabled Tantalus: perpetual hunger and never-dying thirst assail them, while fruits hang in clusters within their reach, and cool refreshing waters play about their fevered lips. The cause of this is to be found in human error, of which religion, under any or all its forms, is the principal and never-failing support. If religion be this curse, let it be annihilated; for nothing should be maintained, or can long be upheld, that outrages the nature and blasts the happiness of man. "Take the cross, destroy it, it is the priest," says the New Ecce Homo, and so say we; priests are the substance of which religion is the mere shadow; and,

However disguised,
Idol, saint, virgin prophet, crescent cross,
For whatsoever symbol thou art prized,
Thou sacerdotal gain but general loss;
Who from true worship gold, can separate thy dross?

All religions are of equal value, that is, there is none of them of any value, unless we look upon them in the light of crutches for moral cripples. The cripple when restored to the full use of his limbs, throws away his crutches; when society shall be cured of its moral paralysis, it will throw away religions.

It is dangerous to speak out, yet many things are dangerous which ought to be done; besides, it is marvellously pleasant. Of course it is

dangerous, to sneeze, cough, or walk about on a windy day; but we have Shakspeare's word for it, that out of the nettle Danger we pluck the flower Safety. Not having the fear of a god, a devil, temporal or spiritual powers, before our eyes, we venture to declare that all religions are but superstitions respectablis'd, differing only in degree of mischievousness and absurdity. All the religions of the world, as Mr. Robt. Owen once boldly declared, are founded upon falsehood; and he might have added, all the *religions* that ever will be founded or established, whether they be called rational or irrational: for a *rational* religionist would undoubtedly be as curious a being as one calmly violent, rationally absurd, or reasonably lunatic. As to a state religion, it ought to be spoken of in Welsh, or some unspeakable language; for to talk candidly and plainly about it in good old English, would certainly embroil us with her majesty's attorney-general; but thus much may be said without offence, a state religion is a state nuisance, in some cases perhaps a necessary one, but a nuisance notwithstanding. It holds out premiums to hypocrisy, and all the world should hate hypocrisy. It tempts men to advocate certain dogmas and creeds, not so much because they are true, as because such advocacy is a most lucrative employment. It debauches the minds of its professors, and fills them with terror lest too much light should be let in upon the human understanding. It minimizes morality while maximizing itself; preaches men *into* vice instead of *out*; and betrays its countless dupes by the most arrant nonsense that ever fell from the lips of the chained lunatic; it splits up society into fractional parts, little knots of raving imbeciles, who agree in little else than the propriety of squalling and howling one against the other. It divides men's opinions, by making it their interest to differ; proclaims order, justice, truth, and mercy, while itself outrages them all. It has, with regard to humanity, true ubiquity, making the hardly developed infant shake in the mother's womb, watches over its cradle, blasts its budding reason, and, with all the diabolic care of Mephistophiles for Faustus, sticks at the elbow of its fanaticised victims through their weary and horrid pilgrimage to the miserable bed of death. Finally, religion is that engine of craft that makes life a burden, death a fear, reducing men to every species of abjectness; the haters of tyranny they dare not resist, and lickers of feet that tread them to the dust.

It was a saying of Fontenelle, that had he his hand full of truths, he would not open it to the vulgar, thereby intimating,

That the pleasure is as great
In being cheated, as to cheat;

and that the goose with many feathers, called public, likes to be plucked; with such a love of burdens that one cannot fail to be forcibly reminded of a certain well-trained ass, that gave

kicks to those who would lighten his load. The teachers of religion are by no means so bad as many would insinuate: the vice not being in their nature but in their position; so that, could any one hit upon an expedient by which their interests might be reconciled to their duty, and they receive as much honour, consideration, and wealth for preaching sense, as they now do for spouting nonsense, nothing more would be heard of priestcraft. The grand difficulty hanging about the question of religion, arises not only from the phantom-like nature alluded to above, but religion assumes all colours and conditions, like Proteus it cannot be bound, though theologians try their best, assuming all sorts of airy and fantastic shapes, which seem to depend upon the state of the air, the wishes of statesmen, or the nod of the priest.

Such is our reply to the oft-repeated question, what is religion? We have shown it to be folly—the corrupt fruit of diseased human imaginings: its history is a history of wild romance, unfolding tales of such horror that he must indeed be brazen by custom, who does not shudder at the perusal. Religion is a mere delirium, a species of drunkenness—the worst of all; and it is no wonder, as Bacon has remarked, that its rites and ceremonies were, by the ancients, attributed to Bacchus, when almost every un-governable passion grows wanton and luxuriant amid its corruptions.

IS THERE A GOD?

III.

“The manner of God’s existence is above all conception; neither infinite space, nor infinite duration, nor matter infinitely extended or eternally existing, nor any nor all of these taken together, can be God.”

Rev. W. Wollaston’s RELIGION OF NATURE
DELINEATED.

Is there more reason to believe than to disbelieve in the existence of a god?—that is the question; a question only to be satisfactorily determined by evidence and argument. It is the vice of shallow minds to set out in search of philosophy with no other guide than pure reason, which they abandon the moment a shock is given to their prejudices. Such timid readers had better throw aside these papers, for they will not profit by them. The question is vital—the problem of problems; and in our conscience we believe, that upon its right solution, justness of thought, and integrity of action—in short, the happiness of the human race, chiefly depends. Those who can pierce the thick covering of mystery in which the priests of all ages have so carefully enveloped their idol gods; those who dare to imitate the fabled Egyptian youth, by tearing the veil from the statue of truth, and solve this *divine* problem, will have more of reason than Archimedes to run wildly through the streets, exclaiming, “I have found it; I have found it!” Upon the belief of a god hangs nine-tenths of the vice, falsehood, and misery, and all the religious

buffoonery which are the disgrace of civilized societies. An Atlas of error, it bears upon its broad shoulders a world of immoralities. Truth, says Zimmerman, like physic, should be administered according to the capacity of those who are to receive it; but the best medicine is of no use to those who have no swallow, and the sick man who won’t be cured, will remain ill even though prescribed for by Esculapius. Let, then, every reader who has the disposition to be made whole, make sure of the subject, and become truth’s master by taking pains to understand it.

In the first paper the question was broadly stated; Atheism shown to be what it really is; and a perfect Atheist morally as well as logically defined. The reader who has not yet perfectly clear ideas as to the nature of Atheism, and the principles of its professors, their grounds and reasons for a disbelief in a god, should refer to that paper, and satisfy their minds upon the point, before proceeding with the argument. Of course in the paper alluded to are merely the *fundamentals* of Atheism; its magnificent superstructure of argument cannot be crowded into the compass of a few pages. Having searched into these grounds and reasons, the reader will see at once, that upon Shaftesbury’s definition of a perfect Atheist, attaching the *true* and not the *vulgar* meaning to the word chance; the whole question of a god, or no god, turns as it were upon an axis. By proceeding thus we shall imitate the sagacious elephant, who invariably makes one foot secure before he ventures to move the other.

In the last paper we disposed of what is technically called the *a priori* argument in favour of a god; which was proved to have no other source than *assumed revelation*.

The absurdity of that assumption was there shown in such legible characters, so much after the manner of the handwriting on the wall, that no one need mount his spectacles in order to detect its emptiness. Therefore another word upon that part of the question would be worse than thrown away. Thus two things have already been done: genuine Atheism shown in its true colours, and the idea of an unproved revelation, proving the existence of a god, blown into the regions of folly.

We shall now proceed to another branch of the inquiry; and as it is of immense importance, to our minds completely decisive of the question at issue, we shall carefully avoid hair-splitting, and the finely spun stuff drawn from the heir-looms of the sophists. We allude to the assertion made in our last, that abstractions are not realities, which if it can be borne out must destroy the belief in a god. For God, according to leading divines, is not a person, having arms, legs, head, and body, as we have. They reject such an idea with horror, as savouring of anthropomorphism, or flesh and blood goddism, and rashly contend that their god is an abstract principle, in which opinion they are

backed by scripture, wherein it is declared that he who knoweth not love hath not seen God, *for God is love*. Now all the world knows that love is an abstract principle, *not a being* but a *mode* of being. Love was defined by the famous courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos, as a sensation; and what else than a certain series and certain order of sensation can constitute that delightful state of human organism? The idea of motion is a simple idea, but to compare motion with motion, and to say of this it is greater and of that it is less; or by an act of the mind separate one part, either of a subject or a thing, from another; in short, to compare, to reflect, and judge as to nature and relationship of ideas or things, demands a power of abstraction, and all such ideas are properly abstract. It must therefore appear, that those who will have a god, at any expense of sense and reason; who erect their imaginary creature into a nothingless abstract principle, have reached the very outpost of folly, and can no further go; for to erect a principle into a something, conjure up as reality that which is purely ideal, is the consequence of brains set a wool-gathering by doctrinal delirium. There are no lengths this doctrinæ deliramenta will not carry men; and while wisdom is confined within very narrow limits, folly ranges *ad libitum* in and out of universes. By one class of thinkers their god is called motion: motion, say they, is God; by another class of thoughtless space is dignified by the appellation god, but then it must be empty space: an unempty space being equal to a plenum, or full space, which of course would be no space at all. No, say these originals, pure empty space is deity; if so, deity is certainly in their noddles, for they are empty enough. Another class, with the long name of Rationalists, or Rational Religionists, tell us that God is the living, active intelligence; an imponderable, indiscernible, non-understandable nondescript, which manifests itself in the bodies of intelligent organizations—

Puffs out the breezes

Wot blows through the treeses.

Other equally lucid accounts of what God is might be given, but they are deferred for a future occasion. The patience of Job had no doubt some limits; and even though it had not, all readers are not Jobs, nor prepared to read a long list of supernaturalisms and fooleries all at once. Absurdity, like pepper, is good when taken as a sort of seasoning, though nothing but absurdity, as nothing but pepper, is a sorry dish, that certainly spoils the fiercest appetite.

Let us, then, proceed to examine these three fanciful gods—motion, space, and intelligence. We have a clear idea of motion, as clear and definite as of our own existence. We are as sure that certain things, say steam and smoke, change their position with regard to other things, as we are sure that a man is not a horse. This is called local motion; but *motion* is sufficient, for to us there is no other than local motion;

human beings knowing nothing of universals; to *them* there can be no universal motion. When the disciples of Zeno denied local motion, Diogenes moved backward and forward with great rapidity; and being asked his reason for such strange conduct, replied, "I am refuting Zeno;" which reply, we take it was very conclusive, whatever may have been thought of it by the sophists. That motion is not a thing, but the state or condition of a thing, relatively to some other thing, has been demonstrated by Professor Wheatstone, in his admirable experiments made with a view to ascertain the velocity of electric fluid in its passage from one body to another. Mrs. Somerville records the fact in her "Connexion of the Physical Sciences," observing, that the velocity of electricity is so great, that the most rapid motion which can be produced by art *appears to be actual rest when compared with it!* A wheel revolving with celerity sufficient to render its spokes invisible, when illuminated by a flash of lightning, is seen for an instant with all its spokes distinct, as if in a *state of absolute repose*; because, however rapid the rotation may be, the light has come and ceased before the wheel has had time to turn through a sensible space. This beautiful experiment is due to Professor Wheatstone, as well as the following narration of one, which is not less striking: "Since a sunbeam consists of a mixture of blue, yellow, and red light, if a circular piece of pasteboard be divided into three sections, one of which is painted blue, another yellow, and the third red, it will appear to be white when revolving quickly, because of the rapidity with which the impressions of the colours succeed each other on the retina. But the instant it is illuminated by an electric spark *it seems to stand still, and each colour is as distinct as if it were at rest.*"

As with motion, so with the appearances called colours; for whatever may be thought of matter, it must itself be indifferent to all colour, what we call colour being nowhere, and nothing more than the different appearances of matter, when seen from different points of view. The existence of matter is THE fact; forms, colour, motions, and properties are human judgments of the fact. It is only in this sense that man can properly be called "the interpreter of nature."

That colour is not matter, but a state of matter, any one may convince himself by observing the phenomenon called rainbow, which is not, as the Jews supposed, placed in the clouds as a covenant, sign of grace, or anything else, but an optical illusion produced by the sun's rays falling upon drops of rain. The chosen people did not know this, and many other things, which caused them to blunder sadly. It must, therefore, be evident, that what is called rainbow is but a shadow, or appearance of something, not something itself. If the matter god system crumble into dust before the faintest blow of reason, the motion god sys-

em cannot have a better, if so good, a fate ; for, though we may conceive of matter without notion, it would puzzle the Pope to have so much as an idea of motion without matter. When Aristotle says, "that god is a mind immutable and impassible, the eternal and most perfect animal, perpetually employed in imparting motion to the universe," we can make something of it even though it be rank nonsense ; but the idea of a motion god moving every thing else, is rich, surpassingly curious, and worthy to be classed among the *unintelligibles*, not unlike the rainbow colours, pretty, but illusive, seeming to be something, but in reality nothing. We shall presently be on the high road to Wollaston's conclusion, that neither infinite space, nor infinite duration, nor matter infinitely extended, or eternally existing, nor by way of addendum, infinitely extended and eternal motion, can be a god : the last has here been proved, the rest will follow in order ; nor do we fear that when the whole string of negatives are disposed of, the most sceptical believers in a god will be compelled to acknowledge, that a god, neither space nor matter, that is, neither something nor nothing, cannot be a god at all.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

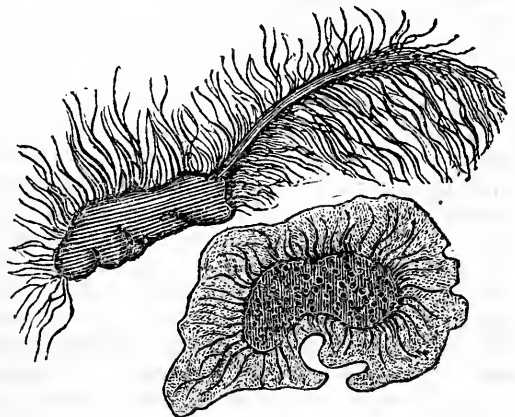
III.

"All living beings have, in the first place, formed part of a body like their own; have been attached to a parent before the period of their independent existence. The new animal, while thus connected, is called a germ; its separation constitutes generation or birth. After this it increases in size according to certain fixed laws for each species and each part."

LAWRENCE.

At the head of our first article upon this interesting subject, is an engraving, a faithful copy from the sketch of Boitard. It represents man *undeveloped*, as we are justified in supposing he was at that stage of his progress, when not exactly either monkey or man, yet combining within himself the general characteristics of each. Probably, like those ambiguous, doubtful kinds of matter, which are sometimes animal and sometimes plant, the human being was a true *oscillatoire*, at one period the character of monkey, at another that of man predominating. The assertion of Lawrence, "that the germs of animals increase in size according to certain fixed laws for each species and each part," will be shown to be groundless, and absurd, by facts of so authentic and convincing a character, that all thinkers will be compelled to conclude that such an assertion is directly opposed to truth. There are no fixed modes (laws as they are styled) for each species and each part, there being nothing *fixed* in the parts of nature, which are in a state of continual flux or change. We also enter our protest against the notion of life that the paragraph at the head of this paper tends to perpetuate. It

is quite unphilosophical; a spurious idea which has crept into the heads of scientific men, in consequence of their very loose and unscientific method of pursuing truth. It is the common error of certain extremely logical minds, when pretending to interpret nature in harmony with the grand principles of philosophy, to talk of living beings; for the use of these terms presuppose dead beings or dead substances. Now, no one is prepared to show that there are such things as dead substances; indeed, the notion of dead matter has long since been discarded by the most eminent physiologists. Life, we are told, is "a property of organization," which will do very well for people who are amused by sounds, thinking they have a new idea, when it is only a new word; but cannot satisfy any reflecting mind, which will require to *understand* words. Life is a property of organization. Well! What is organization? The only reply that can be given is, that organization is an assemblage of organs, made up of organized or living matter: so first we are told, with great gravity, that living matter is organized matter, and then, to clarify the explanation, we are told that organized matter is living matter, life being a property of organization, and organization itself, known by its display of vital properties. The Bishop of Llandaff has some admirable remarks in his "Essays on Chemistry," respecting this fallacious mode of reasoning. "If it be asked," he observes, "what are the discriminative characteristics of mineral, vegetable, and animal life, as opposed to one another, I plainly answer, that I don't know any, either from natural history or chemistry, which can wholly be relied upon." Nor, it may be safely affirmed, does any one else. It would, indeed, be strange, if he did, seeing that there are no such "discriminative characteristics:" the distinctions which are the plague of science, usually drawn between dead and living, earthy, mineral, vegetable, and animal matter, have, as the learned bishop well observes, "no real foundation in nature, and should not be depended upon too far, as they often perplex and impede the progress of a free inquirer."



(*Oscillatoire des murailles.*)

In the last paper was shown the first type or form of what naturalists have thought proper to call living matter. The present engraving displays the hesitating, or living matter, already alluded to. It is considered a plant by some naturalists, and an animal by others, while according to Bory, Saint Vincent, Ingenhouz, and Agardh, its character is very doubtful, being sometimes plant at others animal. It is called by Boitard (*oscillatoire des murailles*) literally balancer of the walls; our word oscillatory, which answers to *oscillatoire*, signifying a something that moves backwards and forwards like a pendulum. "When seen through a microscope," says Boitard, "it displays a multitude of streaked or strongly marked filaments, of a deep green colour, inclosed in small transparent sheaths, bearing some resemblance to a glove, and may be seen to blow, in a brush-like shape, at their openings." It may be found during the rainy periods of spring and autumn, along the walls and terraces, or even upon the trees among the moss. If we suppose a chain of beings, at the one end of which is man, and at the other true monads, that is, creatures without any discernible length, breadth, or thickness, we must be content in our researches to begin with the most minute species of organism, that the microscope makes sensible to sight; at the same time carefully guarding ourselves against the radically erroneous supposition, that the smallest living creatures we behold, are, in fact, *the smallest*; for improvements in every department of science, are now so rapid, that without being deemed hair-brained visionaries, we may hope to see so vast a field of vision opened by improved optical instruments, that substances hitherto deemed dead, as our chalky cliffs, even granite itself, will be seen teeming with life, and its now indiscernible particles, actual moving, breathing bodies, which living things may, according to the beautifully poetic idea of Shelley—

"Think, feel, and live like man."

We are led to believe such will be the result of human progression, by analogy; analogy, that guided Newton to his stupendous discoveries, making the fall of an apple the prelude to a new world of philosophy. It is analogy proclaims that man could not have been always what he now is; and that the mode and character of all existences have resulted from the infinitely varied, and always varying, conditions of the matter which forms our globe. Dr. Johnson said, "he loved a good hater," and we love a good *hoper*; and may we not reasonably hope that the microscope, which has already done so much for man, will yet do more, and that all past discoveries in science may hereafter be eclipsed by the wonder showings of some extraordinary genius now in embryo. Professor Ehrenberg actually *saw*, through a powerful microscope, highly organized animals composed of a sort of living earth, of such a

wonderful smallness, that 41,000 millions of them are often within the volume of *one cubic inch*, the absolute number of which animalculi is certainly greater than that of all other living creatures taken together. Yet, who shall be rash enough to declare that improvement has gone to the end of its tether, and that, as our ancestors would have been astonished could they have looked through Professor Ehrenberg's glasses, ages to come, could we rise from our graves, our children's children might not show *us* even more subject for wonderment? All that relates to the world of intellect is progressive or retrogressive, like the waves of the sea incessantly in motion, never fixed one single instant. Each generation having its wonders, which are spoiled by familiarity; familiarity as certainly destroying wonder as fact destroys fiction. The first form of life, or organized substance, is the *changing proteus*, an engraving of which was given in the last paper, called first, not because there are no forms of life yet more minute, but because we do not see them, so that they are accepted as the first at present perceived link in the organic chain; the second, and rather more complex organic apparatus, is the *oscillatoire* described above.

The *changing proteus* and the *oscillatoire* are the two simplest known kinds of organism. All other forms of life, supposing them to exist, the most powerful microscope cannot discover to us. Proceeding thus, we shall illustrate the whole series of animated existences, from the insect, to which "the blade of grass is an unbounded world," up to man, the microcosm, or little world within himself, confessedly the most compound and re-compounded of all animals. The principle that any distinction between living and dead matter, as that usually drawn between the animal and vegetable kingdoms, is purely arbitrary, should be kept steadily in view. This point is thus strenuously insisted upon, because it is vital, the true pivot of sound philosophy. That rocks, stones, sand, &c., are sensitive or living bodies, cannot be proved in our present state of knowledge; but it has been roundly asserted, that stones *vegetate, grow*, and contain within them germs of other stones. De Boot thought that crystals, amethysts, and rocks, grew like mushrooms, to which opinion the Bishop of Llandaff seems very much inclined, for he says, "rock, crystals, precious stones, and amethysts, often contain in them several heterogeneous particles, a circumstance which proves them to have been once in a fluid state, and induces a suspicion that in their formation they may resemble the germs and resins extravasated (forced out) from various species of vegetables. The vegetation of stones has been admitted by many; and some have contended that *minerals, as well as animals and vegetables, spring from seed; the greatest being nothing but the expansion of the parts of a minute grain of sand.*" Such an authority as this in favour of living, growing stones,

will startle many Christian readers, who think every thing dead that seems to be so. It is careful reasoning by analogy, that is so profitable to man; for it teaches how to judge of things unseen by things seen, enabling us to say with perfect confidence, like the harlequin in the Emperor of the Moon, *as it is here so it is there.*

THE PRESERVING POWER OF INDIA.



(Creeshna, the Indian Apollo.)

SYMBOL WORSHIP.

III.

The worship of nature preceded that of idols: the first is properly natural religion, having nothing whatever to do with any other revelation than that the material universe offers to the senses of man, whereas idol worship grew up with human error."

GERMAN JEW.

HERE are some facts of so obvious a character, that to dwell upon, or give any particular illustration of them, is waste of time and labour. It is the bee-like industry of the man, who "showed the sun with a lantern," though the simile is not exact, as bees *never work on leafless flowers*, while he insists upon every trifling truth, and showers of sun-like facts, remind one of the sacred fishermen, who toiled and caught nothing. Such a fact we hold to be, that idols, or images of gods, angels, or any other of the supernatural gentry, never were honoured, or worshipped, *as idols or images*, but as signs or representations. They were sensible signs of certain ideas, held by the sages of various nations, as to the conduct of the moral or immoral of the gods, and sometimes

symbolic of certain heroes, who really had, or were supposed to have, conferred signal benefits upon their species. To suppose, as the German Jew expresses it, that "blocks of stone ever were worshipped *as* blocks of stone," would be to think more wildly than could even such idolaters. This will more fully appear when we get at the precise meaning of the term idol. A nice distinction has already been drawn between the words symbol and emblem. To some it may appear a distinction without any sensible difference, though to us it seems that less than the fine philological acumen of a Gerard could detect it.

Suidas defines idols to be imitations and representations of things that are not, as tritons, sphinxes, and centaurs, and if we search into the origin of these words, representation, counterfeit, image, and idol, we shall conclude that all these names bear precisely the same signification, though Jurieu is right when he says, that "ecclesiastical writers have always drawn a distinction between the words "idol and image;" contending, as Suidas, that the word idol signified "the representation of a thing which is nothing more than fiction, as syrens, tritons, &c., while the word image signified the representation of a thing which has or had not an actual existence." So that if we believe, and in this case there seems no solid reason to disbelieve these writers, scripture properly says that "all the gods of the nations are idols," for Brahma, the god of the Hindoos; Osiris, the god of the Egyptians; Jupiter, the god of the Greeks; and Jehovah, the god of the Jews and Christians—are all mere idols; and just as much *fictions* as the sirens, tritons, or centaurs..

Paul tells us that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other god but one, whereas it is just the reverse, for an idol is a something itself, which may or may not represent a reality or a fiction; while it is *impossible* there can be a god IN the universe, and of course there can be none *out* of it. But Paul, though dubbed a saint, is wretched authority, who, according to his own account, spoke "after the manner of men;" and we know to our cost in what sort of style religious fanatics speak. We have the testimony of more than one saint to prove that Paul was a *loose character*, and anything but authority. St. Jerome says, that he (Paul) "makes good what he says about speaking after the manner of men; and by his loose and vulgar mode of reasoning might have given offence to understanding men, if he had not prefaced it by signifying that he was delivering only his own human sentiments."

Common sense and experience will be a better guide in these matters than all the saints in the calendar. These two teach that an image is a work of art representing something not to be worshipped, while an idol is a work of human hands representing something that is to be worshipped.

The Hindoo worship is the most ancient of

which we have any positive knowledge, and it is to India we are to look for the first traces of that seeming adoration of sensible signs, or idols, so fiercely denounced by learnedly-ignorant Christian writers. It is now generally conceded, that in point of antiquity India admits of no competitor; though, when civilization first spread among its people, or how far they were indebted for their laws, customs, religion, and general polity, to nations yet more remote, is a question not easily determinable in our present state of knowledge, and perhaps will ever remain involved in obscurity. The Greeks borrowed largely from the Egyptians, the Egyptians from Phenecia and India; but where India and Phenecia borrowed their rites, ceremonies, &c., or whether they originated upon their own soil, cannot now be determined. The spirit of imitation is national as well as individual, and as individuals plunder one another, so do nations. However this may be, it is certain that astronomy was the life and soul of the Indian, as well as the Egyptian religious system. The gods of India and Egypt were transplanted to Greece and Rome, and there worshipped, under other names and other forms. In India the creative, the preservative, and the destructive forces of matter were personified under the imaginary forms of Brahma, Veeshnu, and Mahadeo, or Seeva. As three persons, in some mysterious manner, in the Christian trinity—father, son, and holy ghost, are but one person, so the three divine forces of the Hindoo seemed merged in one grand force. There is, however, a slight difference between the Brahminical account of a trinity and that of the Christians: the former being philosophy, the latter foolery. Brahma is held to be the creative energy of the world; not creative in the usually received stupid and unintelligible sense, but in a sense strictly rational; for creation among the Brahmins was not calling a something out of nothing, but an altering of form, and a destruction at the same time. Therefore it was that the Lingam, or symbol of creative force, was allotted to Seeva, the destroying principle, for according to Brahminical philosophy “to destroy is only to generate and reproduce another way.” Instead of any thing so silly as a real god-father, god-son, and god-ghost, they personified the *generating, preserving, and destroying* principle of matter. Of course this philosophy was known only to the few, the many bowed down to the personified principle as to a genuine flesh and blood god. The god Chreeshna, received the same honours in India as Apollo in Greece. The Apollo of the Greeks is evidently a copy of the Chreeshna of India, which Chreeshna is but one of the forms of Veeshnu. This is placed beyond doubt by Maurice, who observes, “that Veeshnu is often called Chreeshna, the Indian Apollo.” Chreeshna, in the Geeta, is made to say—“Among the Adeetyas I am Veeshnu, and the radiant Ravee among the stars.” All this may easily be accounted for upon philoso-

phical principles, for Veeshnu is the preserving force of the world, which principle of preservation is always associated in our minds with the idea of harmony. Chreeshna seems intended to represent the genius of concord, and conveys the idea that matter must have a certain kind of concordance or agreement, while Seeva, the destructive principle, is an embodiment of the idea that there is a discordance, or repulsiveness, in the particles of matter, these two seemingly opposing, but really harmonizing forces, *destroying, generating, and re-producing*.

Empedocles makes concord and discord the principles of all things; but Empedocles, as the most ancient and enlightened philosophers, was a kind of mystical Atheist, who wished to be unintelligible to the crowd. Concords and discords are certain phenomena resulting from the various states and forms of matter, as, indeed, the word principles here signifieth. The Platonists held the same notion of things; for it is therefore, say they, that in the fictions of poets, Venus loves Mars, for beauty cannot subsist without contrariety; she curbs and moderates him; this temperament allays the strife between these contraries; and in astrology, Venus is placed next Mars, to check his destructive influence, as Jupiter next Saturn to abate his malignancy. If Mars were always subject to Venus (their contrariety of principles to their due temper) nothing would ever be dissolved.

It seems, therefore, that Chreeshna is a personification of the harmonies of nature, or that principle which preserves things in their own state, hindering for a season, dissolution or corruption. What Apollo and Orpheus were in Greece, Ganesa and Chreeshna were in India; and as Orpheus could move even trees and stones by the melodious accents of his lyre; as Apollo renowned for his wisdom, could charm Jupiter and the gods; so was Ganesa the special favourite of all the gods in the Indian Olympus, and Chreeshna produced by his exquisite music, and heavenly harmonies, the most sweet delight in the hearts of gods and men. There are few fables which are purely such, containing no spice of truth, and of this, we may say with Bacon, the fable includes philosophy and philosophy includes the fable; for Chreeshna is nothing more than the representation or sign of the idea, that all matter has a tendency to discordance; a repelling principle, which is counteracted by a principle of attraction, that in the conception of ancient sages, like fine touches of a harp, or the delightful harmony of some heavenly musician, subdued the evil principle, and held together the universal fabric.

ERRATA.—In No. 2, page 2, for “Louis IX.,” READ Louis XI.; for “revolution of 1798,” READ 1789.

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Saturday, November 20, 1841.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 4.]

EDITED BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

[PRICE 1d.]

THE "JEW BOOK."

"The stupid cant, 'He went too far,' despise;
And know that to be BOLD is to be wise."

THAT revoltingly odious Jew production, called BIBLE, has been for ages the idol of all sorts of blockheads, the glory of knaves, and the disgust of wise men. It is a history of lust, sodomies, wholesale slaughtering, and horrible depravity; that the vilest parts of all other histories, collected into one monstrous book, could not parallel! Priests tell us that this concentration of abominations was written by a god; all the world believe priests, or they would rather have thought it the outpourings of some devil!

As in these times even Atheists may write without fear of being roasted, we will briefly expose this choice *morceau*. To our minds the Bible is one of the most contemptible and brutalizing books that ever was penned! From Genesis to Revelations we have one string of blunders. Its heroines are strumpets, an account of whose debaucheries is fit only for the hell of human imagination; assassinating Jezebels, the tale of whose lewdness and infamy would put Fanny Hill or Harriet Wilson to the blush. It is a book which contains passages so outrageously disgusting and scandalously indecent, that were it not called the word of a god, no modest woman would suffer it to be read in her house. Its heroes are cruel, unscrupulous, and (from Moses, the king of the conrursors, to Peter and Paul, the last of the gang)—canting, impudent impostors; slaughtering fanatics, plundering judges, and abominable kings, who if they were to start from their graves and play their villainous pranks in these times, would be strung up to the first lamp-post. The prophets were impudent mouthers, who vomited forth their sublime balderdash, prophesying and numbugging, with a shameful disregard to personal covering, that would be deemed scandalous among decent people; frantic bedlamites, that the Jews, had they not been senseless idiots, would have fastened in the stocks or clapped in a pillory. In short, the character of the old "Jew Book" may be summed up in "the base, bloody, and brutal" of Daniel O'Connell, and needs but to be read to be held in abhorrence. Of course the *better-to-be-safe* "TRUE believers," will call this blasphemy, in which they have our full permission; while *infidels*

who don't like to go *too* far, and have by a little diligence and manœuvring acquired a sort of shabby-genteel character with the orthodox, will shake their crotchety heads, and talk about "respecting prejudices," "public mind not prepared," &c., or, "doing the grand," tell of the splendid diction and overpowering eloquence of the vile thing: probably referring to the fine passages of the ranting Isaiah, who talks of eating his own dung; or the sublime Hosea, of infants being dashed in pieces, and women with child ripped up; or perhaps to the extraordinary language of the old drunken Lot, before and after his incestuous intercourse with his own daughters; or the *exposé* of Absalom, with the concubines of his "holy" father upon the housetop, *before all Israel*. It was a saying of Luther, that "fine language, conveying filthy ideas, might be compared to dung carried about in vessels of gold and silver;" so that the shabby-genteelers who prate about the superb, the magnificent, and the deuce-knows-what language, of the "Jew Book," must, to all but very cloudy reasoners, appear a silly sort of people, and lovers of filth because it is enveloped in scarlet and gold. Nice men, says Swift, are men of nasty ideas;—and none but such nice men can admire this book, *because* the shockingly obscene ideas it sets forth are not seen in all their abomination from being obscured by a pompous and magniloquent phraseology. In that stupid fudge called Genesis, we are told a god said, "Let there be light, and there was light," which Longinus tells is sublime! it may be, but Longinus did not tell us whether it was sublime fact or sublime fiction. The truth is, more rubbish has been written about this rubbishing collection of allegories, lies, murders, rapes, &c., called "bible" (which has filled our jails with felons and our streets with female victims)—than all other books put together. Every one knows that the Jews were literally a nation of vagabonds; such a lot of rascals, runaways, as *Richard* describes making up the army of *Richmond*: "People that o'er-cloyed countries had vomited forth, to desperate adventure and destruction." Here was a fine soil for the flowers of philosophy! A lot of cut-throats, who nicknamed themselves the chosen of some god, whom they pretended to carry about in a kind of sedan chair, called an ark; before which one of their monster-kings, a great favourite with their god, and "one after his own heart,"—danced *naked!* to the great

[SECOND EDITION.]

edification of the virgins of the household. Well might Voltaire say, "that these tales have been written by fools, commented upon by simpletons, taught by knaves, and given to children to be learned by heart; yet the sage is called a blasphemer because he becomes indignant, and is irritated at the most abominable fooleries that ever disgraced human nature."

Are not Catholic divines and Puseyites right in wishing to keep the bible from the people? for *they* know the sort of material it contains, and what the multitude must inevitably think of it, when their eyes shall be opened. The question has been asked how long will knaves make wise men tremble? our reply is, as long as this "Jew Book" is permitted to exercise any influence over the opinions of the mass. The belief in the sacred character of such a horrible detail unsettles human reason, and corrupts the noblest feelings: making this and other nations of Europe a nursery for frantic idiots; the worshippers of an imaginary god, to whom they attribute all the hateful passions, the lusts, jealousies, hates, and fanatical feelings which agitate themselves.

The god of the Jews, could such a being exist, would be a devil—that is, a monster made up of every conceivable enormity. If we can imagine a demon god, then we can suppose that the bible was written through his inspiration.

It is undoubtedly an admirable weapon for all sorts of rascals. It is so exceedingly convenient. Every kind of doctrine may be proved or disproved by it. The burners for religion's sake (see "Holy use of the bible," at the end of this number); the cruel despot; the murderer, either by wholesale or retail; the venomous, serpent-like hypocrite; the slanderer; the liar; the debauchee and heartless seducer; the strumpet; the secret assassin and regicide; the public plotter and private viper—all! *all can find apologies in this famous book!* So that, though we do not agree with Donne, that the "Jew Book" texts, when taken as a whole, concur in one root of beauty and strength, we do agree, that plucked out one by one, they serve the cunning for springs and snares.

Such is the book we are told to believe, or inherit damnation; that we must have faith in, though it outrages the most cherished feelings, the dearest sympathies, most enlightened reason, and noblest human aspirations. Away with the disgusting cant! human virtue is independent of all belief; it is practical or it is nothing. All belief is the vassalage of the human intellect, and mere fanatics are lower in the moral scale than the brutes. The poisonous viper would be a far less dangerous companion than the religious lunatic, had he all the *power* to work the mischief that the demoniac frenzy of fanaticism suggests to him! The book *may* inclose certain hidden meanings, which are valuable to those whose minds are competent to grasp them, but what avail *hidden* meanings to the cause of intellect and virtue? We do

not want mysteries, but plain sense; we do not want faith, but reason; we do not want our brains filled with imaginary notions about gods, angels, and devils, but a correct knowledge of human society; we do not want a worshipful but a free people; not a nation of good believers, but a nation of *nood natures*; finally, we do *not* want cant, hypocrisy, fear, hate, and the horrid crew of hateful passions that this "Jew Book" has given birth to and perpetuates; *but* sincerity, courage, love, and the whole train of active virtues, which would make of earth more than the reality of imagination's heaven. When men cease to be religiously mad, who will care one straw what his neighbour thinks about other worlds or other states of being? The first glimmering of right reason will throw sufficient light upon religious opinions to show their utter worthlessness, nay, wickedness; and all will wonder that any could have been so insane as to make this world a hell, as a kind of preparation for an imaginary heaven.

As an apology for this shockingly immoral book, it has been urged, that there are some good things in it. Heaven help the brains of such apologists! Nothing short of moral disease could make any one suppose it possible that any book, containing such a mass of matter as is to be found from Genesis to Revelations, could be written by a multitude of writers all so utterly depraved as to set down nothing but obscenity and absurdity. There is unquestionably *some* philosophy, and *some* reason in this heap of immoral rubbish, called sacred; but like "the few grains of wheat in the two bushels of chaff, we may search long ere we find them, and when we have found them they are not worth the search." Those who love the employment may satisfy their affection. To our thinking *il ne vaut pas la peine*, the thing really not being worth the pains. Moral Nimrods, mighty hunters after the things of the Lord, will of course think differently, as will certain shrewd, knowing philosophers, to whom an uncommon thing is as the golden apple of fable, diverting them from the true course; men of polished intellects, and wits sharpened almost into nothingness; who always remind one of the Yankee, who clapped his hand out of window every morning, just to *feel* whether it was light, he was so tartation 'cute. Against such 'cuteness we have nothing whatever to say; "better rub than rust;" stagnant intellects, like stagnant waters, always engendering corruption.

Swift defines style to be, the use of proper words in proper places; now those who may be shocked at the coarseness of our language, objecting that the style is rather inelegant, should study the holy fathers and early saints, who if they had entered at St. Giles's and finished their *divine* studies in Billingsgate, could not have been more coarse or indecent. Admirers of these worthies will surely not find fault with us, who, in all that relates to abuse and obscenity, must follow at a very humble and re-

spectful distance. We regret that want of room forbids an extract or two in our own justification, which would infallibly bring all Catholics round to our side, but as we live in a Protestant country one from Luther will free us from the imputation of being the most vulgar writers on divine subjects. He thus strikingly expresses himself: "The Papists are all asses; put them in whatever form you please, boiled, roasted, baked, fried, skinned, beat, hashed, they are always the same—asses! The pope (he says) was born out of the devil's posteriors, full of devils, lies, blasphemies, and idolatries; he is Antichrist, the robber of churches, the ravisher of virgins, the greatest of pimps, the governor of Sodom," &c.

Can any Oracle, lying or true, reasonable or unreasonable, say more than this?

IS THERE A GOD?

IV.

"I call the world by the name of universe, which appellation it obtaineth, in that it is framed out of all things, being an absolute and perfect collection of all natures; for besides the universe there is nothing; and if there be anything, it is contained in the universe, either as a part or excrement thereof."

OCELLUS LUCANUS.

THERE is one spurious and exceedingly shallow notion, which lies at the root of many fallacies, at once their cause and support: we allude to the notion, that in a world where none can know the *essences* of things, and all, from the mustard seed, or merest dust, up to man, is unexplainable, and in the fullest sense of the term, a *mystery*—that any one part, or any one phenomenon displayed by matter, should be considered more or less extraordinary than any other. No one is competent to state nature's case, teach what things are, why they are, as they are, or why they should *not* be as they are. The existence of the universe is a wonder, its non-existence would be one yet greater; something is unexplainable, nothing is unintelligible. The language put into the mouth of a supposed god by ancient priests—"I am all that is, all that was, and all that will be, but no mortal has raised the veil that covers me,"—was written by men who felt that the universe is a stupendous *thing*, and that no mortal has raised the veil that covers it. To escape the mortification of acknowledging their ignorance, philosophers have hidden behind the grossest absurdities, and to avoid the humiliating confession that they knew nothing, they took refuge in a *word*. Justly has it been said the word god was invented by philosophers to hide their ignorance. The startling conclusion to which just reasoning must inevitably lead, that what is universal must be *positive*, few have dared to admit; yet that something must have been *uncaused*, is a truth as clear as any in the whole range of moral science. The universe could not have been made, it must have existed from all eternity. That which creates or generates,

must have something distinct from itself with which to generate; for, as Bacon finely remarks in his Physical Mythology, "the world does not generate by way of a whole, but only by way of its parts, having nothing external to itself wherewith to generate." The folly of taking refuge in a god, that we labour to imagine exists, to explain the universe we know exists, is a consequence of human pride and human fear; shallow pride, that leads us to abhor nothing so much as seeming ignorant, and fear which in the battle of doubts, makes moral cowards prefer the side called *safe* however unreasonable. Yes, it is pride, fear, and the host of follies and prejudices to which they give birth, that prevent men seeing, that if the world is a riddle, at which the wisest of our race can only guess, the existence of a god capable by his fiat of calling it out of nothing, is yet further removed from comprehensibility. It was this fallacy which hung like a pestilence around the genius of Voltaire, who, though the first among Theists, was any thing but a philosopher. He never got over the notion of god *re-munerateur* and *vengeur*, his rewarding and revenging god, which made Grimm say, that he (Voltaire) argued like a baby, a very clever baby to be sure, but a baby notwithstanding. The same writer in reply to Voltaire and others, who maintain that we cannot conceive how the universe should have existed from all eternity, admirably remarks, "true, true, we cannot conceive it, but it is a *fact* nevertheless."

It is really amusing and very instructive to note the ingenious industry of the metaphysicians, sceptical and orthodox, when their wits are sharpened to a razor-like fineness, and their minds on the full stretch to prove the existence of a god. The manner in which they skip from difficulty to difficulty, to use a familiar simile, "like cats upon hot bricks," is laughable in the extreme. The refined ingenuity with which, while escaping from one pitfall, they contrive to open and tumble into three or four, is worthy of Punchinello; and can only be done justice to by the pen of a Dickens or the pencil of a Cruikshank. Of course those who often game will sometimes win; and so it is with our writers on the existence of a god; who being first-rate in their line, and writing so much that no man in his senses would dream of reading it, must needs give something good occasionally; but when they do the purely metaphysic, and scribble away by the volume about the spirit of a god, which they say is nothing, creating the universe, which we all know to be something—all not being exactly all—a god absolute all, not a different being from himself—a natured nature, and a naturing nature—gods wrapped up in a sort of invisible suit of clothes, deliciously amusing themselves in the contemplation of their own perfections—with a string of stuff that would reach round the globe, about conditional *bedings*; "God only knows," as the folks say, what *they* are—God's outpour-

ings, indwellings, and breakings of his own head with projects, devices, &c. we are led to the very threshold of the opinion so happily expressed by the late inimitable comedian Mathews, that these fine metaphysicians are a lot of people who pretend to teach all the world, what no one in the world knows anything about.

God, say some of these shrewd people, is nothing so gross as matter, for to imagine a god with organs or parts would be ridiculous, and here they have some show of reason; for to speak of a god as a weighable, measurable sort of thing, is highly absurd; leading to the questions—what is the length of God, his breadth, thickness, and density; which must be anything but pleasant to the ears of orthodox people, who cannot fail to be shocked at the notion of Mahomet, that a god was a round body, rather big and very cold.

But it is not a little odd, that many clever people who can detect this fallacy, themselves, fall into another equally great, showing that the road of supernaturalism is full of holes and deep ruts, those tumbling therein seldom escaping with undamaged brains. Else it would strike us as something miraculous, that men of acute intellects and shining abilities, should, while discarding the notion of a motion or a matter god, as ridiculous in the extreme, yet gravely insist that their god can be naught else than pure space; which idea, however absurd, it will be worth while to inquire into.

“Space (says Leibnitz) is in itself an *ideal* thing, like *time*. Space out of the world must needs be imaginary, as the schoolmen themselves have acknowledged. The case is the same with empty space within the world, which I also take to be imaginary.” All these chimerical speculations about *without*s and *with*ins, proceed from one false root—the taking for granted, as certain ancient philosophers, and some among the moderns of the Newtonian school, that there is a *real* something-nothing, called space! pure space!! *empty* space!!!—spirit! pure spirit!! (of course far above *proof*) and the like, all which notions are “figments of the mind;” for, as Leibnitz has remarked, “there is no possible reason that can limit the quantity of matter, therefore such limitation can have no place; so space and spirit can have no place but in the disordered intellects of men; for space, or spirit, or both, if different from matter, and have more than an ideal existence, must, wherever they so exist, limit the quantity of matter—a conclusion reason rejects.” God and all, says Schelling, are quite equal ideas; it may be so, but is not all that is *something*, and if something, where is there room, even in human imagination, for pure space, or spirit. Thus, those sophistical reasoners, who will use two words to express the same idea, and insist that their god is all, yet distinct from the universe, separating *upon paper* the whole from itself; are driven, by their poverty of reason, to a desperately foolish con-

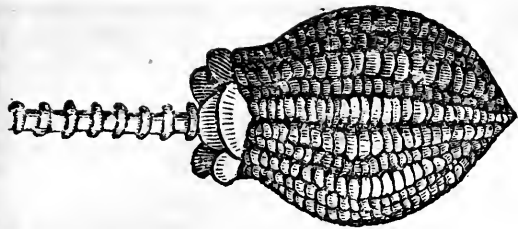
clusion: they refine their god into nothing, making him spirit, space, or *anything* BUT anything! Doughty logicians, who—

Cunningly prove their god an empty space;
But space is nothing!—Ergo, thou,
These men slip into the truth they know not how.

We do not say we *believe* in the existence of matter, we *know* it exists; either this must be granted, or all reasoning is at an end; but the reasoning, if it may be dignified by such a term, of those who believe in a god, like the four elephants that the Indians supposed carried the world upon their backs—rests upon nothing; which it must be acknowledged is a very unsatisfactory basis.

“Metaphysics (says an anonymous writer) teach us that god is a *pure spirit*; but herein is modern theology superior to that of the savages? The savages acknowledge a *great spirit* for the master of the world. The savages, like all ignorant people, attribute to spirits all the effects of which their experience cannot discover the true causes. Ask a savage what moves your watch. He will answer, *it is a spirit*. Ask our divines what moves the universe. They answer, *it is a spirit*.” As it is with those who call god a *great spirit*, so it is with the equally sage mystics who call their ideal god a *great space*—great space being two terms quite unintelligible. Space is something or nothing, a reality or a fiction, that which really exists, or a negation of all existence: if the former, it cannot be a god that Christians will accept, for that which is real must be corporeal; but they reject a matter god and will not agree with the Stoics, that god is a divine animal: if the latter, that is, if those who will have it that space is god, are driven to admit, as they necessarily must, that space is the negation or absence of matter, an absolute nothing, why, then, we fall upon the *ex nihilo nihil fit*: Englished—out of nothing nothing can come. As plain a truth as any to be found in Euclid. Which makes the question stand thus—In the first place, space cannot be a god; if space is an actually existing something, it must be matter; but that a matter god is no god at all, is allowed by the Christian world. In the second place, space cannot be a god, if it signifies pure emptiness or absence of matter, because the absence of matter, could it be conceived, is a nothing; and to refine god into nothing, is to destroy the idea of such an existence, and to proclaim that Atheism we are *labouring to teach*.

Throwing, as we do, an air of ridicule upon the subject, will be mightily condemned; and many good people will say the matter of our argument is excellent, but the manner of it shockingly offensive; like the Austrian general, who complained that Napoleon had beaten him contrary to all the rules of war, we suppose our opponents will complain about being drubbed contrary to all the rules of disputation—but they will be well-drubbed notwithstanding.



(*Encrinite, Lily-shaped animal.*)

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

IV.

“With insects, fishes, birds, and mammiferous animals (so called from their mammæ, or paps: glandular organs, which secrete, and give out nutritious fluid) life is simple, unique, and indivisible. If one member is cut off, the detached member is dead; so if a single organ necessary to life is destroyed, the whole is destroyed. It is impossible to make two living parts in one being; for life is one and indivisible.”

BOITARD.

THERE is no royal road to knowledge, says the proverb, which, intimates that all who have ambition to travel that way, must labour; nevertheless, the road may be smoothed, and thereby the labour lightened, though Cobbett taught wisely that “nothing truly valuable was ever honourably obtained, without labour of some sort or other.”

Our readers have seen in former numbers, engravings representing two kinds of living matter—the *protée changeant*, changing proteus, called infusoria, microscopic animalcule, atoms, monads, &c., and the *oscillatoire des murailles*, balancer of the walls, that is to be found at the bottom of running waters, in shady places, but rarely in dirty or foetid waters. The reader will remember that we described its chief singularity to be doubtfulness of nature, some naturalists classing it among plants, and others among animals. “If this (says Boitard) may be called matter, hesitating as it were upon a border territory, between animals and plants, *L'encrine*, encrinite, an engraving of which is given above, seems as though struggling to determine the phenomena of what we call life.” This, what we call life is worth reflecting upon; for, as before shown, the vulgar idea of life has no foundation in the nature of things—life not being matter, but a property, not a thing or things, but the condition of all things, each molecule, as each man, having its portion. This reflection opens a new and rich mine of philosophy; for the condition, or manifestations of a thing, cannot be the thing itself, any more than the motions of a horse or steam-carriage, are the horse or the steam-carriage. “Death is nothing, and nothing death,” says my lord Rochester; and with equal truth, it may be affirmed, that life is nothing and nothing life; for life, or vital function, is nothing more than a certain series of phenomena matter exhibits, and death is no other; the *kind* of phenomena only, being different. It was observed by

Priestly, that all animal and vegetable organization, took its source in the transformation, or change, of what he called green matter. This is noticed by Boitard, who adds that it was confirmed by Edwards, who taught that green matter is formed of grains, or particles, endowed with motion, and identical with the monads of Muller; and, finally, Treviranus and Dittmar, have recently established, by incontestable facts, that the basis of the most simple vegetables, executes *animal motions*, spontaneously flying the light of the sun and taking refuge in the shade.

A crowd of authorities may be cited to show that all distinctions between animal and vegetable life, is an illusion; nor will it be difficult to prove, that the imaginary line usually drawn between minerals and vegetables, can serve no useful end, or proceed from any other than false assumptions.

Dr. Bell in his work on the Nature or Physiology of Plants, published at Edinburgh in 1777, remarks, “that the chain of beings is continued from animals to plants, and that it is vain to attempt to establish any rules, by which plants may be distinguished from animals in all cases;” while Dr. Percival, in a paper of acknowledged merit, on the “Perceptive Power of Vegetables,” has laboured with great success to establish the opinion, that plants, as well as animals, are endowed with perception in different degrees.

The study of natural history is peculiarly interesting, and more than any other, independent of books, wanting nothing in those who would excel in it than patient and shrewd observation—No book can teach what nature is so well as nature itself. By this we mean, that the best way to know what a thing is, is to examine it thoroughly; and one glance at a lily will give a better idea of what it really is, than all that has been written by the poets.

The lofty follower of the sun,
Sad when he sets, shuts up her yellow leaves,
Drooping her head, and when he warm returns
Points her enamoured bosom to his rays.

Those who have watched the motions of a sun-flower, will gain nothing by reading a dry detail of it in books.

One of the most remarkable plants, is the *dionœa muscipula*, or Venus's fly trap, the leaves of which are so sensitive and irritable, that if a fly alight upon them they close and squeeze it to death; a remarkable fact, when we consider, that when the plant catches the fly, *it feeds upon its victim!* The fresh-water polypus has been regarded by Buffon and others as the last of animals and first of plants, but upon grounds difficult to understand; for the singular kind of matter or creature, called polypus, seems to give no more signs of animal existence than the plant above described, except that it moves from place to place, by a sort of voluntary motion, while the fly-trap of Venus, instead of seeking for its food, waits

for, and after catching, consumes it. Boitard calls the encrinite an animal, which he says is remarkable on account of the long stalk upon which it is carried; that the reader may perceive has a great number of articulations, or joints. Now it sounds oddly to talk about animals with stalks; but this will not appear strange at all by and by, when the reader perfectly understands that what some naturalists call animal others call plant, or vegetable; while a third will have it to be both plant and animal; the fourth, that all *that is* is animated, the only difference being in the degree of vitality—which perhaps will be nearer truth and sound philosophy than the others.

VEESHNU SLUMBERING

During a Calpa, an Astronomical period of a thousand ages, upon the serpent Ananta.



(Copied from a sculptured rock in the Ganges.)

SYMBOL WORSHIP.

IV.

“It is not improbable that this history may contain, like the Mythology of Greece and Rome, a great deal of real matter of fact, though enveloped in dark and figurative representations. Through the disguise of these, we may discern some imperfect records of great events, and of revolutions that have happened in remote times, and they, perhaps, merit our attention the more, as it is not likely that any records of ancient Hindoo history exist, but in this obscure fantastic dress.”—ASIATIC RESEARCHES.

It is related of the famous Solon, that when travelling in Egypt, he was thus addressed by a sage of that ancient nation—“You Greeks are always boys; not one comes to be old. You are young in your minds; for in them is no tenant of the ancients, that comes by ancient tradition; you retain no learning that is *grey with old age*.” We are not informed what was the precise reply of Solon, to the severe remark of the Egyptian sage; but it is certain that, though the Greeks were a witty, they were by no means, an inventive people; with abundance of talent, they were not distinguished by their genius. There was little originality about the Greeks, and almost all that is valuable in their philosophy, was drawn from the rich stores of

the Egyptians. Pythagoras, Solon, and the most distinguished sages of Greece, travelled in Egypt, endeavoured to familiarize themselves with the origin and mysteries of its religion, and listened with eagerness to the teachings of its philosophers, thereby acquiring that wisdom, which enabled them to remodel states, and give laws to Grecian learning.

If it may be said of the Greeks, that, as regarded philosophy, they were always *boys*; or of more modern people, it may justly be urged that they are always *children*, in the leading strings of ignorant fanatics, retaining absolutely nothing of the learning *grey with old age*, and rejecting, with pious horror, every species of philosophy and sense which contradicts what they have the daring effrontery to call a sacred volume.

Moses, according to scripture, was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians; if so, he made very bad use of it. Our own opinion is, that Moses, or whoever wrote the books bearing his name, was an ignorant blockhead, and he who would stuff the heads of the people with his nonsensical trash, more blockish still. No Jew ever was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians: this is fully proved by the Jews' book, and the history of their diabolic religion. We know that a nice little apology has been set up for Moses, by modern delusionists. Maurice gravely informs us, “that it was the ardent and declared purpose of that god who selected the Jews from the surrounding nations, to preserve them uncontaminated with the gross physics, and false philosophy, of the Gentile world, that they might become, in a *peculiar* manner, the people of Jehovah—that they might preserve among them the sacred principles of the true theology inviolable, and practice its sublime precepts with more intense fervour.”

That ignorance is the mother of devotion, we know; but, certainly, the idea of a god keeping his chosen people as stupid as owls, that they might adore and prostrate themselves before him, is worthy of a brainless idiot. Leslie had the hardihood to say, that the bible is the oldest book extant. Oh, Leslie! Leslie! no one need exclaim, when reading your “Short Methods and Demonstrations,” *non persuas debis, etiamsi persuaseris!*—“I will not be persuaded, though I should be persuaded.” One good thing Leslie has said, which is, that the heathens “disdained to borrow from the Jews;” and, for the very satisfactory reason, that the Jews had nothing whatever to lend of the least value, either in art, science, or any thing else, being a nation of fiery, plundering, zealots, who fell into the practice of every species of moral enormity.

The Christians who are, if possible, more stupidly credulous than the Jews, treat, with profound contempt, the writings of the sages of India and Egypt: fancying they know so much, they are ignorant of almost every thing; while the bawling pulpit declaimers, who talk as

familiarly about gods and devils, as though they were their pot companions, forcibly remind us of Æsop's conjurer, who knew all about what was passing in the stars, and in the heavens, but was quite ignorant that his own house was in flames.

The writings of both Hindoo and Egyptian sages repudiate the idea of an absolute creation. The Hindoos have a fabulous account of all things proceeding from eggs. According to Abraham Rogers, an old writer, who had inquired with great diligence into the fables and philosophy of the Brahmins, or Hindoo priests, they affirm that there are several worlds, which do at one and the same time exist in divers regions of the universe; and that there are several successive ones, for that the same worlds destroyed and renewed again, according to certain periods of time. They say also, that our terrestrial world began by a certain golden age, and will perish by fire. Lastly, they remain the doctrine of the *ovum mundanum* (mundane, or world egg), comparing the world to an egg." All acquainted with Asiatic literature in the least degree, are aware that the mundane egg is among the devices which are allusive to the creation of the world.

Brahma, or creating force, and Veeshnu, or preserving force, were the first and second persons of the Hindoo philosophical trinity. Brahma being the personification of goodness, which men have always associated with the idea of creation; while Veeshnu was the personification of light, which all know is necessary to the preservation of bodies, as vegetables, trees, &c. and all living creatures. "Goodness and light (says Mr. Wilford*) create and preserve; and in this reflection we have direct indications of the origin of the respective characters of the Indian deities, Brahma and Veeshnu. On the other hand, evil and darkness desolate and destroy, and therefore are personified by Ahriman (sometimes called Madaeo) and Seeva; but from evil, or what is called and appears to be evil, though in fact only a less degree of attainable good, arising from a change of place or circumstance, supreme and unforeseen felicity frequently results; while from the *apparent destruction* of one being another newly modified springs, as in the dying vegetable the seeds of new life are contained, and generation vigorously germinates from the very bed and bosom of putrefaction." These ideas, which are beautifully simple, and in harmony with the soundest principles of philosophy, were shadowed forth by signs and symbols innumerable, which those who could understand were but few. The priests of all ancient nations, as observed by Drummond, had their esoteric, or *secret*, and their exoteric, or *published* doctrines.†

All kinds of ridiculous stories are related of

Veeshnu, which were readily believed in by the multitude, but smiled at in secret by the priests, who were tempted to connive at every species of deception, in order to maintain their influence and authority. Such a tale is that told of one Hermachen, a gigantic hero, who, say the Hindoo priests, "rolled up the earth into a shapeless mass, and carried it down to the abyss, whither Veeshnu followed him, in the shape of a hog, killed him with his tusks, and replaced the earth in its original situation." The story goes on to state that "Herniakassap, the younger brother of Hermachen, succeeded him in his kingdom, and refused to do homage to Veeshnu. He had a son, named Pralhoud, who at an early age openly disapproved this part of his father's conduct, being under the tuition of Sokeracharj. His father persecuted him on this account, banished, and even sought to kill him, but was prevented by the interposition of heaven, which appeared on the side of Pralhoud. At length Herniakassap was softened, and recalled his son to court, where, as he sat in full assembly, he began to argue with him against the supremacy of Veeshnu, boasted that himself was lord of all the visible world, and asked what Veeshnu could pretend to more. Pralhoud replied that Veeshnu had no fixed abode, but was present everywhere. 'Is he,' said his father, 'in that pillar?' 'Yes,' returned Pralhoud. 'Then let him come forth,' said Herniakassap, and rising from his seat, struck the pillar with his foot; upon which Veeshnu, in the Narasinghah Avatar, that is to say, with a body like a man, but a head like a lion, came out of the pillar, and tore Herniakassap in pieces."

The limits prescribed for these papers forbid that we unnecessarily multiply these stories, which, to quote from a solemn sneerer, were, no doubt, thought by the people equally true, by the philosophers equally false, and by the magistrates equally useful.

In the religious tale above related, there is one observation worthy of notice; we allude to the reply of Pralhoud, "that *Veeshnu had no fixed abode*, but was present everywhere:" a character which can only belong to matter, which is all, with its principle of preservation, shadowed forth under the various forms, or incarnations, of Veeshnu, which explains the philosophical paradox, or seeming contradiction, of Veeshnu having no fixed abode, yet being present everywhere.

Maurice, in his work on Hindostan, has given highly interesting representations of the Agathodaimon, or good genius, symbolized by a serpent circling in its genial embrace the mundane egg. This, and the great golden bull adored at Meaco, in Japan, represented in the attitude of butting with his horn, against the egg of Chaos, together with the mundane egg of Heliopolis, adorned with the lunar crescent, will fall within the plan of our little work, which will successively illustrate, by faithful

* See Essay in Asiatic Researches.

† Preface to *Œdipus Judaicus*.

engravings, all that is singular and extraordinary in the symbol worship of the ancients.

Maurice observes, "that a period of many millions of years, according to the Hindoo historians, has elapsed since the almighty fiat produced creation;" but this sentence of Mr. Maurice, requires qualification, or it will convey a false idea. The truth is, that Mr. Maurice is a writer of that school who are very fond of *almighty fiats*, calling them in upon all sorts of occasions. These people, who always fly to *almighty fiats*, remind us of the Scotch musician, who had played one tune so long upon his fiddle, that not only the fiddler could not play any other, but no other tune could be played out of the fiddle. These words god, almighty fiat, &c., are a refuge for the mentally destitute—a kind of work, or rather, resting house, for the intellectual pauperized. To suppose that the Brahminical, or Egyptian priests, ever acknowledged a universe produced by the word, or fiat, of a being, all, or halfmighty, is nonsense. We know they talked all sorts of mystical stuff for the edification of the multitude, who, it is proverbial, will most admire what they least understand; but they had their secret and true doctrine, which was known only to the few, which doctrine discarded the idea of actual generation, only acknowledging what they called a chaos—that is, the matter of the world as it was before our earth assumed its present shape. As to what is said in the "Jew book," about earth without form and void, it is fine stuff; for earth must have *some form*, and that which has form cannot be *void*; but, of course, in the opinion of devout persons, all is good in the holy book. In the whole range of the scripture, there is not to be found so truly philosophical an idea as that of the Brahmins, quoted in the last paper, "to destroy is to generate, and reproduce another way." It is at once simple and sublime.

If the heathens, as Leslie advances, disdained to borrow from the Jews, the Jews did not disdain either to borrow or plunder from the heathens. The idea of what is called the unity of God, which divines crack up to the skies as awfully sublime, and we call awfully ridiculous, was stolen. Such as it is, it was given birth to long before the Jews had become a nation; for, as to the cock-and-bull stories about the antediluvian people, they only differ from the "Arabian Nights" tales, in being less entertaining, and much more demoralising. Moses was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians, says the Jewish book; but of course that learning must have been in existence before he could become skilled in it; and this we know to be the case; the book of Genesis, and all the philosophical parts of scripture, being a hash more or less seasoned to suit the Jewish palate, of the cosmogonic and other ideas, taught ages before there was a Jew in existence, by the learned priests of India and Egypt. This assertion will stagger the faithful—so much the

better. The language is strong, and will doubtless plunge them into choler, but, as *Hamlet* says, "If we are called upon to prescribe for them, we shall only plunge them into more choler." We would ask any man pretending to sanity, how, if Moses wrote the "Jew Book," and himself received the learning he had from the Egyptians, which Egyptians were preceded by Hindoos, equally, if not more eminently, learned—how, we say, could the books of these learned ancients have been copies of that said to have been written by Moses? This matter is of supreme importance, especially if the reader once get a clear idea of the great truth, that the Jews are *comparatively a modern people!*

HOLY USE OF THE BIBLE.

From the catholic faith, if a man swerved aside,
Inquisition, for argument, fagots supplied;
Such compassionate charity—zeal so refined,
Set the body on fire, to enlighten the mind!

The following *religious* statistics are the illustrations of the holy Catholic Church to the text, "Whosoever doth not abide in me shall be cast out of the vineyard as a branch, and there wither; and men gather those branches and cast them into the fire and burn them;" which, it must be admitted, was an admirable mode of initiating heretics into the mysteries of the "Jew Book."

Epochs.	Grand Inquisitors and Sovereigns.	1st class, burnt alive.	2d class, burnt in effigy.	3d class, imp. with confisca. of property.
1481 to 1498	Torquemada	10220	6860	97321
1498—1507	Archbishop Disa	2592	896	34952
1507—1517	Cardinal Ximenes ..	3564	1232	48059
1517—1522	Car. Adrian, aft. Pope.	1520	560	21845
1522—1523	Interregnum	324	112	4369
1523—1538	Cardinal Manrique ..	250	1125	11250
1538—1545	Cardinal Tavera	840	420	5460
1546	Cardinal Loaisa	120	66	600
1556	Charles V.	1200	600	6000
1556—1597	Philip II.	3690	1845	18450
1597—1621	Philip III.	1840	920	13848
1621—1665	Philip IV.	2816	1408	10386
1665—1700	Charles II.	1728	864	6912
1700—1746	Philip V.	1534	782	11790
1746—1754	Ferdinand VI.	10	5	170
1759—1788	Charles III.	4	—	56
1788—1808	Charles IV.	—	1	42
Totals		32382	17690	291450

To the charge, that the scriptures forbid the shedding of blood, it was facetiously remarked by the inquisitors,—*that BURNING men was not to shed their blood!*

The forthcoming number of the "ORACLE," will contain the first of a series of Letters by the Editor, on "POLICY VERSUS PRINCIPLE," addressed to the "SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND."

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Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

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[PRICE 1d.]

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

To the SOCIALISTS of ENGLAND.

LETTER I.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

FRIENDS,

I OFFER no apology for thus addressing you. Socialists can require none. Stigmatised by bigot enemies as a band of reckless infidel innovators, you are not *now*, and I sincerely trust never will be, *respectable* enough to stifle inquiry; and, as lovers of truth, you consistently and properly court publicity, challenging the most severe investigation of your principles and policy. Whether the investigator be friend or foe, it matters little, if you have a principle, and that principle be sound; if you have a policy, and that policy be useful and honest—you cannot fall. A society with true principle as fundamental, and just practice as super-structure, cannot be permanently injured by any weapon, blunt or sharp, friendly or unfriendly.

My reasons for taking the present course are two-fold. First, because having been one of your missionaries, and thinking it my duty to separate from you, my silence might have been misinterpreted, and placed to the account of treachery or fear, vices incident to human nature, that I heartily abhor. Secondly, because it is criminal to hold back truth, which in our consciences we believe ought to be told. Every right-minded member of your society will agree with me, that if to deceive when we ought to instruct is to act the knave; not to undeceive is to be a practical liar. The virtues are active and passive; it is sometimes good to suffer, it is often criminal not to resist. True Socialists are worthy to be called the advanced guard of the army of politicians. The pure philosophy *taught* by Robert Owen is the very poetry of politics. Now the pure ore is all but lost amid the dross and rubbish by which it is encumbered. Before Socialism was churched, the horn of its consistency, or its preachers be-
reverended, it was, as a theory, more beautiful, unique, and admirable than the wit of man had ever before devised. Those who called socialism "moral Chartism," caught the true idea of what Socialism was, and what it may yet become, if, like the phoenix, it should rise from its own ashes.

I look upon your party, considered as *pro-
gressors*, to be virtually defunct; my reasons for this opinion shall be given in full in this series of letters; and while addressing you, who are so numerous, influential, and generally intelligent a body, my language shall be to the point—sober, plain, and gravity itself. It is my practice to suit the food to the palate, and use one style with canting hypocrites, and another with just and reasonable people. So that you will please to credit me with the absence of all intention to cast ridicule upon your proceedings, whatever reflections I may feel it my duty to make. If by the mere statement of plain truth, such a result be produced, the fault cannot justly be chargeable upon me. My hostility is not towards the principles of your society, but the corruptions of them; not the practices to which you anxiously look forward, but the measures adopted to obtain them. Had principle not been violated; had the association been true to itself; had your talented leaders repudiated, instead of imitated, the vices of *mere* demagogues, I would have fought in the van, in the rear, or side by side, with them: aye, even to the last gasp; my notion of these things having ever been, that in the glorious warfare against error and tyranny, to a mind not spoiled by vanity, it would be held far more honourable to be a corporal in a well-disciplined regiment, than a general among ragamuffins.

There will be nothing invidiously personal in these papers, and though I shall often have to allude to the Social Missionaries, it will be as an independent friend, who scorns to flatter and disdains to abuse. Their talent is undoubted, while their morality, as this world goes, is generally unimpeachable. Public men are public property; and in glancing, as I shall sometimes have occasion to do, at the conduct of your leading missionaries, I wish it to be understood, that as men of genius and excellent moral feeling, who have won the laurel bravely and worn it nobly, I honour and respect them; but as Brutus did not love Cæsar less, but Rome more, so I do not love these excellent friends less, though I love truth much more. Indeed, so far am I from entertaining feelings personally hostile to the Socialists individually or collectively, that all my sympathies, and prejudices, if you will, are knit up and, as it were, entangled with you.

From Mr. Owen I received the first strong ray of light in my benighted intellects, and

[SECOND EDITION.]

from the Social body the Promethean touch that first warmed me into public life. As our enemies would say, I was but the cockatrice's egg, you hatched it into the serpent; so that for me, because the policy of your society is not my policy, to shower abuse and invective upon it, would, as I declared in my farewell lecture, be playing the serpent that stung the hand which warmed it into life. My judgment condemns the abandonment of principle of which the Social representatives have been guilty; my judgment heartily despises the hesitating, shuffling, equivocating, white-feather policy, that has been pursued for some time past, but more especially since the period when the Bishop of Exeter attacked you in the House of Lords; my judgment condemns the taking of oaths by your missionaries, as a miserable, truckling, unprincipled policy, that had nothing in its favour but its immediate convenience, no sort of apology but the wretched one, that those who took it were rescued for a season from the fangs of a vile law. All this, and much more, of which you, the Social body, have been purposely kept in utter ignorance, my deliberate judgment despises and condemns; so that while feeling tugs at my heart-strings with complaining cries to talk me from my purpose; honour and right reason demand that, at all hazards, and any personal sacrifices, the whole truth should be told, "without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man."

All these remarks are preliminary, but essential and highly useful, for without the soil be duly prepared the seed cannot be put in with advantage; and though all who know me will answer for my motives and intentions, there are few in your society who do know what my views, sentiments, opinions, and conduct really are, and this principally in consequence of the narrow policy upon which the now nominal, but formerly actual editor of the *New Moral World* uniformly acted; which was to exclude from its columns those opinions which he thought it unsafe or inexpedient to publish; that is, all opinions which did not fit his paper's Procrustean bed. I never disputed his right, as your editor, to prevent the voice of any heterodox missionary being heard; but I did, and do, dispute its justice and policy; and am fully prepared to show it, either through the press or on any public rostrum. If you have paid missionaries, you ought to know what opinions they hold; if their opinions be sound, there can be no harm; if unsound it is essential they should be known, so that the interests of your society may not be sacrificed to the wild vagaries or peculiar crotchets of any individuals.

So much for matters purely personal, which have stretched over a larger space than I had intended; for bitter experience teaches, that the less said about individuals, and the more about the mass, the better. Had the conductors of the *New Moral World* thought it ex-

pedient, or safe, to do me the simple justice of inserting the substance of what I delivered at the Lambeth Social Institution, upon the occasion of my farewell lecture, much of what is written above would have been unnecessary; but I am driven to take my own affairs into my own hands, and do myself that justice which they have denied me. This shall be done fearlessly and honestly, with a rigid adherence to truth, and full determination not unnecessarily to irritate or wound the feelings of any party.

It is always a bad sign when men shrink from investigation; honesty having nothing to dread so much as concealment. If I should fall into error, and these letters contain falsehood, scurrility, or mischievous sophistry, your society will furnish many able men, who can use the tongue or the pen with equal facility, and drub me for my pains. But if I can show that the policy of your society is not the policy which ought to be pursued; that it is neither just, honourable, nor useful; and that if persisted in it will end in confusion and shame; and you who ought to be the admiration, become the laughing-stock, of Europe; if I can demonstrate this by reason and argument, you should at once abandon so vicious a policy, retrace your steps, and not be ashamed to acknowledge, with the Grecian sage, that you grow old learning many things. It is the fundamental axiom of my policy, that no reforms, no morality can be safe that is not firmly imbedded in principle. That a society, or a nation, to be permanently prosperous, must have integrity. No man can raise a good building with bad materials, no matter what his architectural skill; no society or public body can be stable or secure, the members of which have not a high sense of honour, and perfect faith in principle—not a nominal, but real, faith; men and women in whose moral scales wealth weighs as nothing against principle. I am not fighting shadows but substance, not for empty names but solid benefits, which nothing but union with knowledge can give; and what, I ask, hinders union so much as an affection for pelf, and the readiness of individuals and of public bodies to set their affections upon bricks and mortar, and sacrifice principle, honour, and consistency upon the altar of a time-serving, profitable expediency? It is the want of principle and tendency to corruption of all public bodies, that have hitherto existed, that has brought them into contempt, and filled men of sense and spirit with disgust; and, let me tell you, that your society will go the way of all societies, unless it reforms from within. It has nothing to fear from its enemies, but everything to fear from its friends, who, without sterling integrity, may, if not checked by your intelligence, be reckless of principle, and sacrifice all that is high and noble-minded in policy. There are no essential differences among men, the aggregate, or individual man, is good or bad accord-

ing to the circumstances by which he is surrounded, and all wear more or less the livery of custom. This you, as Socialists, ought to know, and to remember, that for a society to be pure, its members must be persuaded that correct practices cannot grow out of corrupt opinions.

So far for the present. In my next, what was the principle of your society will be stated; what it is, or whether it have or have not a principle, will be inquired into. The policy, past and present, of your body will follow in due course, and every assertion here made, with more to boot, will be justified. The French have a saying, "C'est le premier pas qui coute," literally—It is the first step which costs. I have taken the first step, and please God, as divines say, will take another next week. There is something contemptible in doing things by halves, even though they be mischiefs. If men play the dog, let them, like that of friend Lance, be dog in everything; if they lay claim to the character of honest men, let them be honest and manlike in all their actions.

Your well wisher,

CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

IS THERE A GOD ?

V.

In order to have what we call intelligence, it is necessary to have ideas, thoughts, and will; to have ideas, thoughts, and will, it is necessary to have organs; to have organs, it is necessary to have a body; to act upon bodies, it is necessary to have a body; to experience disorder, it is necessary to be capable of suffering. Whence it evidently follows, that a PURE SPIRIT can neither be intelligent, nor affected by what passes in the universe."—COMMON SENSE.

THE Atheism of these papers is not *insinuate* but *direct*; not *sham* but *real*; and, good or bad, about the opinions we have ventured to broach—there is no mistake; *there can be no mistake*; THERE SHALL BE NO MISTAKE!

We deny the rationality of all belief in a god or gods; in which denial is included the affirmation, that there is good and sufficient reason to disbelieve in any such existences.

By the word god we understand a *personality* (let supernaturalists call it what they will) distinct from, and independent of matter.

It has been proved that neither motion nor space can be a god. By demonstrating that neither motion nor space (supposing there to be space) can be body; and every one knowing that there cannot be personality without body, the conclusion is inevitable.

One class of believers tell us, that they adore the god whom philosophy has taught them to consider as the infinite and eternal mind, that *formed*, and that *sustains* the fair order of nature, and that *created*, and that *preserves*, the universal system."* Such is the god adored by Drummond, which idea of god, when well looked into and seen in all its nakedness, will appear very much like folly on stilts,

See Sir W. Drummond's 'Preface to *Cædipus Judaicus*.'

or philosophy run mad; a god for rationalists, who are sublimated into lunatics, which would be worshipped with great applause within the precincts of St. Luke's. This is severity, but not one whit more severe than true. Let us take the stuff to pieces, so that we may view it at leisure, and with advantage. God, according to the above passage, is "an infinite and eternal mind;" well, what is mind? is it body? Oh no, these reasoning Deists will have it that god is a *something not body*; the *attribute*, without a *subject*; an active existence, without parts or organs wherewith to act; enters *into* all things without its being possible it should ever be *out* of any thing; an infinite eternal mind, intelligence, or power, that though everywhere, is nowhere; an incomprehensible kind of nothing, creating all somethings; co-eternal, co-existent, and co-universal with matter; the two universals in one universe by no means disturbing each others tranquility. This *shadow power* regulates all *substance weakness*, "promulgates laws," and not only created this universe out of nothing, but this wonderful universal-nothing power also publishes laws and *facts*, as the Scotch call them, which are republished and "slightly explained" by Deistical philosophers. Without being itself either an *atom* or an *aggregate*, it magnanimously and most wonderfully "moves the atom and controls the aggregate of nature." With these sentimental Deists, there is no suspense of judgment; for what god is, and what he does, is treated of as though he lived in the next street, which is hardly consistent in those who call god the "*incomprehensible power*;" but consistency is a trifle compared with the building up of a theory, or the deluding of a multitude. An incomprehensible power is one of the oddest things *to make people acquainted with, or allow them to worship*, that can well be imagined.

We should as soon expect that a school-boy well tickled by the whip upon his inferior parts would be perfectly still, as that these fine philosophers of the Drummond school should not wriggle and twist under this infiction, loudly complain of such *ridiculous* sarcasms, turn upon themselves, like dull and heavy lead, and still persist that there *must* be *something not material*, which, if anything at all, is certainly their own folly—a something evidently not material, but very *apparent*. God is a spirit, say these people, and then they quote Shelley, who, after declaring distinctly and unequivocally that

THERE IS NO GOD!

like a poetical rhapsodist, talks about

The inexterminable SPIRIT it contains
Being nature's only god;

which is, with all respect to so great a poet and admirable a man, ridiculous verbiage; for that which is *inexterminable* must have a real existence, and there cannot be a real existence which is not something, for to talk about no-

thing being *inexterminable* or *indestructible*, is to talk more like wild men, than reasonable beings. If, however, these Deists take shelter under the wing of Hobbes, who says that a spirit is determined by its place and figure, and consequently is a body, however thin and intangible: why, then, they save their necks at the expense of their heels; for if mind, spirit, or intelligence, is body, it must be material; but there cannot be two material universes; and if to get out of the difficulty, they slide into Pantheism, making *god all*, and *all god*, why they are caught in their own web of sophistry, as a Pantheist is one who contends that *matter is god*, and *god matter*, the word *all* having *no sense*, if not applied to actual existences. This, however, does not suit the philosophic Deists, who will have it, that the *power, mind, spirit, or intelligence*, which they call *god, forms, sustains, creates, regulates, and preserves* matter, though not matter itself—a mind-god, not material, nothing so gross as body, that enters into all *living* bodies, though they are at present undecided whether it enter into all *dead* ones; indeed, they have not made up their minds whether there be, or be not, any of the latter character. According to these pleasant philosophers, *god, or the spirit, mind, or intelligence* of nature, is unquestionably in every living thing, all intelligent matter being the residence of deity, or the intelligence spirit. Swift, in his “Tale of a Tub,” insinuates that men in general are but “*suits of clothes*,” which idea of Swift’s is not amiss, and suggests another, that Deists will think tolerably good, which is, that the spirit of god is to matter what the body of a man is to his garments, matter and mind being nothing more than a god in full dress; so that if we could but tear off matter from the spirit, which is god’s body, we should see him stripped to the buff.

Butler must surely have had in his mind’s eye, an intelligence god philosopher, when he penned the following:—

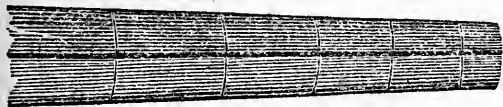
“By help of reasons (he professed),
He had FIRST MATTER seen undressed;
He took him naked—all alone,
Before one rag of form was on.”

Many of these reasoners, who contend that god is *in* all intelligent organisations, stoutly maintain that he is *out* of all non-intelligent matter: that the intelligence-spirit, or god, is in the living, not the dead; which, if we grant, it surely follows, that dead bodies have no god in *them*: so that the *inexterminable spirit* is not *everywhere* or *omnipresent*. Besides, we stumble over consequences vastly funny; for if god don’t occupy all matter, it is plain some must be without him, that is seeable as the nose on one’s face; not to mention that if the world or the universe be *partly* living and *partly* dead—a god tenanting the parts cannot be unity or trinity, but as it were chopped up into pieces, so small and so numerous, that eye could not see, nor tongue enumerate, them.

The mischief of this argument does not end here, for as there are manifestly different degrees of intelligence it follows that there must be different degrees of deity. The intelligence of the Jew abominates pork, while the intelligence of certain Tartars will swallow the excrement of the grand lama, or high priest—a filthy kind of intelligence-god it must be confessed. In Europe, an intelligence-god is Christian; in Turkey, Mohammedan; in India, Brahmin; in China, a worshipper of Fo’s thumb; and so we might run round the globe, and find this intelligence-god playing the most singular pranks we can well conceive—sometimes praying, sometimes cursing, sometimes affirming, sometimes denying his own existence; calling that blasphemy here, which he proclaims to be pure religion somewhere else; promising heaven at the equator for that very conduct and opinion that at the poles he pronounces worthy of hell. Such a god would be everything by turns, and nothing long; at one moment the sanctified sinner, “who plunders widows’ houses, and for a pretence makes long prayers,” and at the very same moment a mocker and a scorner of all prayer, as thrice double ass-ism; a god filling up the knowledge-box of the sentimental Deist, who feels that an intelligence-god exists, and urges on obstinate Atheists, like ourselves, who deny that such a god exists. As intelligence is very fond of praying to god, here we have a god praying to himself, which would be comical enough were it true. Certainly, nothing can be so terribly ludicrous as this notion of a mind or intelligence-god; for as many men, whom Mandeville confesses are studious peaceable men, and, all the world knows, with a tolerable share of some sort of intelligence, who are Atheists and, like ourselves, think all that has been written about a god or gods is the veriest twaddle that ever abused and bemuddled the human intellect; here we have a god denying his own existence, and spitefully abusing those who have scribbled so much in his glorification, which would prove the intelligence-deity not only comical, but very ungrateful. But as though, to use the cant phrase, divine providence had determined, for some cause to us unknown, to make such goddites the laughing-stock of the world; this same intelligence-god must, if there be virtue in their divinity, be a tenant at will in the heads of calves, frogs, toads, asses, and certain insects, useful no doubt, but rather too dirty to mention. That even bugs have intelligence and strong affections for each other, and for us, we have sometimes intolerable proof. So that here we have a pretty kettle of fish—the supreme intelligence, or a piece of him, snugly housed in the tail of a louse, the snout of a hog, the hind-quarters of a frog, or the head of an ass. These fine reasoners, so sublimely ridiculous, who tell us, that the eternal cause is the eternal intelligence, which eternal intelligence constitutes the universality of things called god, must be

ably hobbled with such an intelligent-unintelligible, unless they, like true and genuine poets, reason themselves into a "fine frenzy," when no argument will disturb nor sense be heeded. Having put on the armour of invisibility, any attempt to pierce them with logical arrows, would be the vanity of a dead shot, who, because he had been accustomed to hit when he could see his mark, should hope to hit the bull's eye, which, like god, is neither see-able, hit-able, or understand-able. Must not men who sincerely pretend to believe in such a god as this, be first cousins to fools—as vain as they are foolish; whose ridiculous gibberish has been much admired, because it has not been understood. It is high time the human mind should throw off its load of bigotry, and no longer be disgraced by such fooleries. The vain are invulnerable to the shafts of sarcasm, however just and well directed; for the vain man, if called fool, will receive it as a compliment. If the more sensible Deists complain that the foregoing is a caricature of their opinions, and only calculated to provoke mirth, derision, and contempt, they may be told that these opinions are so broad farcical, and absolutely idiotic, that it is impossible to caricature them, their bare mention being a sufficient caricature of all good sense, and cannot but provoke mirth, derision, and pity.

When the tyrant Appius Claudius, in the play of *Virginius*, complains that the free speech and biting sarcasms of *Siccus Dentatus*, bring the decemvirs into contempt, honest *Dentatus* boldly replies—"The decemvirs bring themselves into contempt, Appius:" so say we to the silly reasoners who pretend that intelligence is a god, *you bring yourselves into contempt*, and therefore need not our assistance. All ridicule is bad; but ridicule and argument are excellent, and should never be separated in reasonings addressed to the popular mind. Ridicule is the test of truth, where it shows the ludicrous features, and, as it were, *sets them off*, without distorting, or misrepresenting them. All argument may do for the wise—all ridicule for fools; but those who most need instruction, are neither absolutely wise nor entirely foolish; and he who would get at the popular mind, must write popularly; always, however, connecting the *ridiculous* and the *serious* by the safe fastening of good sense.



(*Orthoceratite, a horn.*)

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

V.

"The assertion that the solid earth has condensed from a mass of vapour, will seem strange and startling to

the mind unaccustomed to scientific inquiry; but when we reflect that water may be frozen into a substance, ice, which is as hard as a rock, or again may be melted into water, or sublimed into vapour, and again condensed into water, and frozen again into ice; or, finally, may, by chemical decomposition, be reduced to its two component gases, oxygen and hydrogen, we may cease to wonder at phenomena which are produced by the same laws, and may be explained on similar principles."—BRITISH QUEEN AND STATESMAN.

PALEONTOLOGY, is that science which treats of animals, plants, &c., that existed when *solid matter first formed*, and what is called earth, thrust its head above the watery abyss. "Geologists (says Boitard) have given that name to the study of animals that lived before the deluge, and the bones and fossil remains of which are buried in the various beds of earth which form the crust of our globe." He adds, "that geologists have collected seventeen kinds of fossil shells, which characterized that period (before the deluge)." The engraving represents one of these shells, in shape like a cylindrical cone, perfectly straight, with simple exterior or outside, partitioned in the inside, and provided with typhons, a kind of water spouts, without, however, any power of contraction.

"You will remark (observes Boitard) that all living beings, with the exception of some vegetables, were formed in the water, and inhabited it. At the epoch when the *Orthoceratite* was formed, which has nothing analogous to it in nature, there was not a single animal capable of breathing our globe's atmosphere, not one that inhabited the earth. Profound silence reigned over all nature, and no voice had murmured the accents of love or hate, in the solitude of the forests."

The probable formation of these shelly creatures, as, indeed, solids in general, it will be useful to inquire into. Many thinking people, who mistake haste for speed, with impetuous organisms that forbid suspense of judgment, galloping to false conclusions rather than none at all, will, without doubt, at once pronounce this attempt to develop a theory of regular gradation, or account for the formation of solids, as a kind of moral alchemy. For ourselves, we like out-of-the-way thinkers, as Dr. Darwin, for example, who proposed a scheme by which icebergs were to be towed from the poles to the tropics, and the winds to be brought as completely under the control of man, as though the imaginary god, who was said by the ancients to let them out from his cave, had delegated his authority to mortals. The alchymists did not find the philosopher's stone, but something far more valuable, the facts upon which to build the science of chemistry; for as the fictions of astrology, prepared the human soil for the truths of astronomy, so was alchemy the necessary forerunner of chemistry. We grant that a cripple in the right road, will beat a racer in the wrong one; but the man, or beast, that never moves at all, can't reach the winning post: so that while due care should be used

that the right road is taken, let it always be remembered, that mind and matter are wedded, incorporated two in one, and must keep moving, even though like crabs they should go backward. The fabled parent was wise, who, when on his death bed, recommended his sons to dig in the garden, as they would find a hidden treasure there; for, though they were at first deceived, not finding gold, yet they soon discovered that the labour employed upon the soil, cured its barrenness, and yielded a rich treasure of useful commodities. They did not find the gold they sought; but a richer prize that they did not seek: so we who dig for intellectual wealth, in a soil hitherto despised as barren and worthless, if we find not that we look for, may light on treasure of even greater value.

This is not written in defence of idle speculation, which have no practical bearing on the happiness of man, often so vain and useless; but speculation which keeps close to the analogies of nature, that in its boldest flights, is still within the range of reason's vision, and carries into the darkest recesses of imagination's world the torch of analogy: like Heltzer,* who showed that more than all the wonders of fiction may be realized in the world of realities. The great fallacy of the present age, lies in the supposition, that all necessary and useful truth can be concentrated in any single individual, or any one society, however scientific, or however intelligent. The ancients instituted *games of the torch*, in honour of Prometheus, or natre, in which games they who ran for the prize, carried lighted torches; but if any torch went out, the bearer withdrew himself and gave way to some other, who, if more fortunate in keeping his torch a light, won the prize: "which fable (says Lord Bacon) conveys an extremely prudent admonition, directing us to expect the perfection of the sciences from no single person; for he who is fleetest and strongest in the course, may, perhaps, be less fit to keep his torch a light, since there is danger of its going out from too rapid, or too slow, a motion."

While we have a clergy whose business it is to cramp the mind, with a view to fetter the body, the torch of reason is not likely to go out from its too rapid, however dangerous the slowness of its motion may be. This is obvious, especially to the teachers of the incomprehensible, who seem to think that human beings, like cats, can see best in the dark. So great is the darkness, that the simple fact of the matter of our globe existing in various conditions, sometimes solid, at others fluid, at others aerial, or gaseous, is not generally known. The people in general know that there is such a thing as gas, air, fluid, and matter; but they do not know that all is matter, fluid, air, and gas, by turns, and that, as Jacquetot expresses it, "all is in all, and every thing is in every thing." They do not know that bodies pass successively

through all these, which are merely the various states of matter; and, though thousands have lisped at school, that the noble dust of Alexander may now be "stopping a bung hole," how should they understand that philosophic sentence, when the real nature of things is never explained to them? Our public academies, from those great conservatoires of ignorance and corruption, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, down to the village school, the spirit of priestcraft hovers over and darkens the intellects of men.

The ancients taught that, of all things, chaos was the first, which chaos was called by the greater part of ancient philosophers, water. According to which notion, all is chaos, when, as there is good reason to believe, was once the case—

A shoreless ocean tumbled round the globe.

It is well known, that by heat, were it of a certain intensity, the whole of the solid crust of this globe, might be dissolved into steam, or gas. The diamond is one of the hardest bodies; yet Newton made the diamond blaze as though it had been paper; while we are fully aware, that a certain degree of coldness, or absence of heat, would give to gas, air, or water, the hardness of diamond. Whether the sun be, as supposed by Anaxagoras, a huge red-hot stone, or, as believed by others, a perfectly cold body, it is beyond question the cause of heat in us; so that, could our globe be placed beyond the reach of its influence, not only would all the forms of vegetable and animal matter be destroyed, but even mineral existences would assume appearances, and manifest phenomena entirely different from any thing with which our race is at present acquainted. Fluids are but solids in motion; air is nothing more; and what more can gas be? they are all but different conditions of the one thing, called *nature*, *universe*, or *all*, which is precisely the idea conveyed by the "all in all, every thing in every thing," of Jacquetot.

Homer, who, like Thales, supposed all things engendered, or begotten of water, saith—

The ocean, whence all things RECEIVE THEIR BIRTH.

That such was the opinion of Thales, we find in Plutarch, who says, "that he (Thales) conceived water to be the first principle of all natural bodies, whereof they consist, and into which they resolve, for the following reasons: First—Because natural seed, the principle of all living creatures, is humid; whence, it is probable, that humidity is also the principle of all other things; Secondly—Because all kinds of plants are nourished by moisture, wanting which they wither and decay; Thirdly—Because fire, even the sun itself, and the stars, are nourished and maintained by vapours, proceeding from water, and consequently the whole consists of the same."

This opinion of Thales is that of all antiquity,

* See "Paradise within the reach of all men."

and by no means peculiar to him ; for Thales, though affirmed by many to be the first who made disquisitions upon nature, and styled by Cicero, prince of the wise men, was but a retailer of Egyptian learning, as he himself acknowledges in his epistle to Pherycides, where it is stated, that his last journey was into Egypt, to confer with priests and astrologers, who initiated him into the mysteries of their religion, and the truths of their philosophy.

Jamblicus affirms, that he was instructed by the priests, at Memphis ; while Laertius informs us, that he learnt geometry of them. Stanley, in his "History of Philosophy," has given, among other minute and useful information with regard to Thales, that "having studied philosophy in Egypt, he returned to Miletus, and transported that vast stock of learning, which he had there collected, into his own country," which leaves us little reason to doubt, that the idea of water being the first principle of bodies, &c., was taught by the sages of Egypt, as it will be shown in our papers, on "Symbol Worship," was the philosophy of the priests of India. The opinion of Hesiod, that the chaos, whereof all things were made, was water, which settling, became slime, and afterwards condensed into solid earth, it is contended by some writers, was borrowed from the Phœnecians, with whom the Grecians had a very ancient correspondence ; for Orpheus, who had his learning from Phœnecia, taught that—

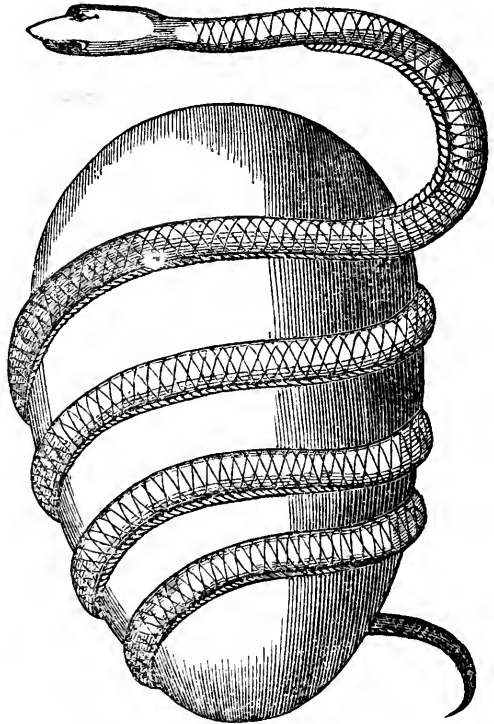
OF WATER SLIME WAS MADE.

So that the notion of a universal deluge is by no means inconsistent with the ancient philosophy ; but then it was a deluge, so far from miraculous, that the miracle would have been, for any to have seen matter, before matter, called solid, was formed ; it was a deluge before man, or any of the animals named as having gone "sweating and stinking into Noah's ark," could have existed. When all the solid matter of the globe on which we stand, was in a fluid state, how could there be anything but a deluge ? or, if we stretch further back, and by the teaching of facts and analogy, are led to conclude, that this earth was at some period incalculably remote—*one huge ball of gas*—is it not certain that nothing, which, in the ordinary acception of the term, now has life, could then have lived ?

Geologists, who have made this subject their peculiar study, have done no more, in many cases, than dress up, as new, the old wisdom of the ancients—the merit of the moderns, rather consisting, as it seems to us, in collecting new facts than in the development of new and bold ideas. Some one has said that it would be impossible to say anything that had not been better said before ; and really we are favourably impressed with the conviction that it would be difficult to think anything that had not been better thought before ; and every hour's experience tends more and more to reconcile us to the opinion of Jeremy Taylor, that more has been forgotten

than is now known—it seeming very probable that only the least weighty and solid parts of ancient learning have come into our possession.

THE AGATHODAIMON, OR GOOD GENIUS,
Symbolized by a Serpent, circling in its genial embrace the Mundane Egg.



SYMBOL WORSHIP.

v.

"It was usual with the less ancient Egyptians, after they had degenerated from the simplicity of their original theology, to represent the supreme being and his attributes by various emblems and hieroglyphics. They depicted Cneph in the form of a serpent, which was with them, AS WITH THE INDIANS, the emblem of eternity, and they added to the body of the serpent the head of the sharp-sighted hawk. Their ideas being thus perverted, they, by degrees, lost sight of the divine original, and at length adored the symbol for the reality. * * * * On the ancient sculptures and medals, allusive to the cosmogony, these hieroglyphic symbols, the egg and the serpent, perpetually occur in great variety, single and combined."—MAURICE.

THE wise and subtle serpent that plays so conspicuous a part in the theological farce called Genesis, was, in Egypt, the symbol of many ideas. It was the symbol of eternity ; for the serpent, with its tail in its mouth, is without beginning and without end. It was the symbol of immortality ; for, by the casting off, and renewal of, its skin, it seemed to throw away old, and take on new, life, which the priests taught was infinite, eternal, and supremely wise. It was the symbol of deity ; for with the Indian and Egyptian philosophers the universe was held to be god, which universe god

may, in a figurative sense, be said to renew itself, casting off its old skin, or covering, only to supply its place with the new—the whole never dying, nor, seemingly, find corruption. We learn, from perusal of the *Hindoo sacred* books, that a sphere, or circle, was a symbol of deity—for, say they, “God is like a perfect sphere, without beginning or end;” which is very natural kind of language, if we substitute for the word god, nature or universe; for the universe, if acknowledged eternal, cannot be supposed an effect, but the grand cause of all effects; itself uncaused, yet the cause of all the changes or appearances we behold, and, therefore, eternal; the idea of which eternity was beautifully shadowed forth by a serpentine sphere. It was also, as just stated, a symbol of wisdom; and, of course, when the mystical priests (with a view to cover their philosophy with the mantle of deceit) personified the universe and called it god, gave birth to the idea, which was very carefully perpetuated by them, that this god was a *big somebody*, and then they left the imaginations of their wretched dupes to do the rest.

The priests called their god—wise; the people echoed them; for all people, thinking themselves wise, imagine gods just as wise as themselves, for which personality no more apt symbol could have been found than the serpent, which, to the intelligence of the ancients, displayed so many marks of wisdom. What made the writer of Geneses in such a pet with the serpent, or brought the reptile into such bad odour with the Jews—after being for so many ages worshipped as a divine symbol by the Indians, Egyptians, and others—it is difficult to say; but it is most likely the Jewish priests wished to render every thing connected with any other delusion than their own, odious in the eyes of the people.

The egg was another apt symbol which, in India and Egypt, was used to convey many ideas of a grand and useful kind to those who were sufficiently unvulgarised as to be safely trusted with such knowledge. The Greeks consecrated an egg in the mysteries of Bacchus; for with them, as with the Hindoos, Phenecians, and Egyptians, the egg was a symbol of the world; this egg others said had been vomited by the god Cneph, which story just as well satisfied the common people as any other.

The following literal translation from the *Manava Sastrá*, by Sir Wm. Jones, will be read with interest—the words are put into the mouth of Menu, the reputed son of Brahma, who is said to have addressed them to the sages of India:—“This world was all darkness, undiscernable, undistinguishable, altogether as in a profound sleep, till the self-existent, invisible god, making it manifest with five elements, and other glorious forms, perfectly dispelled the gloom. Desiring to raise up creatures by an emanation from his own essence, he first created the waters and impressed them with

the power of motion; by that power was produced a golden egg, blazing like a thousand stars, in which was born Brahma, the great parent of all rational beings; *that which is*, the invisible cause, self-existing, but unperceived! That divinity having dwelt in the egg through revolving years, *himself* meditating upon *himself*, divided it into two equal parts, and from those halves he formed the heavens and the earth, placing in the midst, the subtil æther, the eight points of the world, and the permanent receptacle of waters.” All who can extract any value from this sacred stuff will deserve exclusive right and title to it; the juggling nonsense is only quoted here to show what a set of bewildering mystifiers these priests have been. Many Christian writers, filled with the holy ghost, are great admirers of the above, saying, that it is only inferior to the account given by Moses, which they pronounce awfully sublime, and perhaps it is; but whether our bump of veneration is very small, or from any other cause, it is certain that we can never read the Hindoo or Jewish sacred books without pity and contempt: contempt for the awfully ridiculous nonsense they contain, and pity for the poor deluded fanatics who receive such abominable trash as divine. If the people of this and other countries were to read and laugh at such ridiculous tales, as a mere matter of amusement, they would be comparatively innoxious; but to swallow such wild stuff, as sacred and divine, is shockingly immoral.

It is impossible for any one to unravel or make sense of the above passage; but there is little doubt that the priests who wrote it, could make it quite intelligible. All is riddle-me-riddle-me-ree in religions, which are the more respected, the less they are understood; but for millions to *guess* what they really are would be the signal for their destruction. They give it up, and *trust* to the expounders, or the whole fabric of delusion would vanish like some enchanted castle of Eastern romance.

HELPING THE LORD!

“He (God) loveth to OPPRESS.”—HOSEA xii. 7.

ON Saturday afternoon, Nov. 27, the editor of this little work was summarily arrested, on a warrant charging him with—inditing, printing, and publishing, a wicked and blasphemous libel against the Christian religion (as by LAW established, we presume) and the holy bible, contained in an article upon the “*JEW BOOK*,” in No. 4, of the “*Oracle*.” He was speedily conveyed to that receptacle for rare specimens of humanity—a gaol, where, at the time of our going to press, he still remains. The editor having seen but a small portion of this number in print previously to his abduction, should there be any material inaccuracies they will be noticed in our next.—Nov. 30th, 1841.

BRISTOL:—Printed & Published by FIELD, SOUTHWELL, and Co., 6, Narrow Wine-street.—LONDON: Hetherington, Watson.—MANCHESTER: Heywood.—BIRMINGHAM: Guest, Taylor.—LIVERPOOL: Stewart.—GLASGOW: Paton and Love.

Saturday, December 4, 1841.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 6.]

EDITED BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

[PRICE 1d.]

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

To the **SOCIALISTS of ENGLAND.**

LETTER II.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

FRIENDS,

TIME, "that wisest of all things," not having intrusted me with its secrets, I pledged myself in the former letter to consider in this the principle of your party, or, rather, what *was* its principle. Since that pledge was given, the wicked gipsy Fortune has played me strange pranks, a relation of which, you will, I am sure, accept as an ample apology for the non-redemption of my pledge. Even Jupiter, father of gods and men, was submitted to the destinies; how then should I, who am anything but a Jupiter, resist their decrees?

Men are the sport of circumstances,
When circumstances seem the sport of men.

This, poets sing and philosophy teaches; so, without further preface, I will call your attention, and, through you, the attention of the People of England, to matters of even more importance than I had proposed to treat of, at least, matters which touch *me* more nearly.

An enthusiastic preacher once affirmed, that the souls of the damned, though of course very numerous, might be crammed into a nut-shell; which, whether true or not, I leave the bishops to settle; but certainly, to my mind, the events of half-a-century seem to have been forced into the nut-shell period of the last few weeks. In the first place, I was arrested on Saturday, November the 27th, by authority of the warrant of our gracious lady the Queen, setting forth in legible characters that I, Charles Southwell, had unlawfully and wickedly composed, printed, and published a certain scandalous, impious, profane, wicked—and the Lord only knows what beside—libel upon the holy scriptures, vulgarly called bible or "Jew Book." The arrest took place by order of Mr. James Wood, magistrate of the city of Bristol, and a Methodist of the very first water; who, though a *Dissenter*, has manifested a tender concern for the holy "Jew Book," all that relates to the christian religion as by law established, and the honour and glory of his god, which is worthy of much praise—and an immortal, if not a mortal, crown.

The night of the arrest was in keeping with

the act—the weather being dark and gloomy as a bigot's conscience—I was hurried to the council-house before the above-named chief performer in the serio-comic farce of "Killing no Murder;" the curtain soon fell upon the first act, and I, in default of bail, which my friends were allowed forty minutes and as many seconds to obtain, was marched by a *garde du corps* of policemen to Bristol gaol, that coldest and most famous dépôt for thieves and felons. It would be unfair to omit that Mr. Wood said he was sorry, VERY sorry, but he must perform his duty, and protect the christian religion and public morals from the assaults of Infidels, and such horrible articles as that "horrible, most horrible" one, on the "Jew Book." Then he grinned a ghastly grin, which I, being in any but a laughing humour, was not in a condition to relish; and so we parted, never, I trust, to meet again, except at Philippi or Kingdom-come.

When the brave Feargus O'Connor stood for the first time in the cold cell of York castle, 'tis said that, wounded by the indignities he had suffered, and the prospect of a long, cruel, and unjust imprisonment, he burst into tears, and upon his knees prayed God he might die before the morning. I honour and respect such feelings, but cannot participate in them. Whether I am made of sterner stuff, or it be the sheer effect of stupidity, I know not, but when for the first time I was dragged from my home like a felon—not allowed time to refresh my parched lips—thrust cold, hungry, and weary into a cell of Bristol gaol—when stripped like a thief, and hurried to my straw pallet, as one of the vilest criminals that ever swung upon the gallows, I neither wept nor prayed—no! I suffered seventeen days' solitary confinement in all the horrors of suspense, and shed no tears *but once*, and they were tears of joy, sweet tears, *forced* by the kindness of friends, not the malice of my enemies. Yes, it was the kindness of friends made my long pent-up feelings gush out at my eye-lids. As to prayer, I hate it, under all or any of its forms; the idea of praying being associated in my mind with that of human degradation. Did I believe in the existence of superior powers, as they are termed, or had one grain of faith in holy absurdities and religious tales, my creed would be *demonism*: for did I suppose a creator of a world such as this, in which sincerity is a crime, truth a libel, honesty a reproach—where vice rides

triumphant, whilst virtue is pressed into the dust—if, I say, I could believe in the existence of superior powers producing, watching over, perpetuating such a state of things, whatever they might be called, they must have all the attributes of devils; but I believe not in devils, so that I can neither fear nor hope any thing from them.

When a school-boy, the study of fables was most pleasing to me. That of Hercules and the wagoner, delighted me uncommonly, and firmly fixed itself in my memory; a fable teaching the wise lesson, that *action* is better than prayer; that gods, if any, mind their own business, and men *should* mind theirs; and that if we are unlucky enough to get our wagon into a hole, there is nothing like a willing mind and a good brawny shoulder to get it out again. This little bit of wisdom did not forsake me in my prison, where I lay and thought that human deliverance from the bonds of tyranny and error can only be effected by human means, and what men desire to be done they should set about doing for themselves. These were the thoughts I had, as I lay, for the first time, upon my straw bed, the prisoner of fierce bigots, my conscience not accusing me of any crime other than that of expressing freely my honest convictions. I lay neither weeping nor praying, but ardently wishing, not that I might die, but *live* to vindicate my character from the foul aspersions cast upon it, and cover *Jew-Bookers* with confusion.

My friends were soon on the alert, and in the course of a few days bail of a legal and unexceptionable character—I say, and repeat it advisedly, bail, *unexceptionable* and *legal*, sufficient for all honest men, was tendered and refused, as though the spirit of Bonner had taken up its quarters in the carcass of that christian magistrate, Mr. Wood. I do not think that the eloquence of Mercury, no nor the finest touches of an Orphean harp could *then* have softened this cruel old man into compliance,

Sure he in hardened oak his heart did hide,
And safest ribs of iron armed his side.

Such is religious bigotry, that steels the heart and renders it insensible to the groans and misery of suffering humanity. I never yet saw a merciful bigot, and probably never shall; such a creature would be a phenomenon. When Thales was asked what was the strangest sight he ever saw? he answered, “A tyrant old;” it may have been so with Thales, but to me there would be no sight so strange as a merciful bigot. To return to Mr. Wood; having hooked the fish, as above hinted, he was determined that it should not be *his* fault if the iron did not stick well in his gills; and though, as the sequel will show, his exertions were not crowned with success, he deserved to succeed.

'Tis not in mortals to command success;
He did more—endeavoured to deserve it.

One satisfaction he did have; so, “come what

may, he has been blessed” in giving me seventeen days extra solitary confinement, in a damp cell of one of the coldest prisons in England, suffering all the ignominy of the murderer or felon, and the holy companionship of bibles and prayer-books. “Whom the lord loveth he chasteneth,” so was I taught by the gaol chaplain; and though not malicious, I do sincerely hope that the lord, or somebody else, will equally love and chasten my christian friends; and, as the poet says, “Give physic to their fanatic pomp; pluck from them their superflux; and make the heavens more just.” The “Jew Book” says many good things, some of which deserve to live in the memory, such as “Pray for your enemies,” which I, had I not set my face against prayer, would do most heartily: for of charity may sometimes be said what a certain old lady said of honesty, “It was a very fine thing, but thank God she could do very well without it;” yes, I maintain charity is a very fine thing, when well administered; like blisters, its virtue in great part depends upon its right application. Charity should not be particular, but universal; not strained for individuals, but fitted for the whole mass; not merely a family, or society, but a *worldly*, virtue. The “sweet uses of experience” teach me that there are some minds not to be conciliated; that you may kill, but not cure them of their moral infirmities; men that it is good to keep at daggers drawn, whose vileness and infamy it is the highest virtue to denounce and expose. Would you mollify the heart of a bigot?—prove to him the injustice of persecution, make him *feel* its bitterness, let him drink the cup of sorrow to its very dregs, prescribe for him that prison, that scaffold, or that fagot he would prescribe for others. This would not be inhumanity, but mercy; not revenge, but simply an act of justice. If reasonable men are obliged to live in mad-houses, they should protect themselves against unchained *legal* lunatics.

You will perceive that I have tasted one strong spice of persecution's quality, and had, as it were, my infidel body aired, dried, and seasoned for the first propitiary sacrifice of the Bristol Bonner to the god of the Jews and the Gentiles. “The wise man considereth the end to which he is tending; he seeketh to know it before he moves a single step”—so far I had been wise. This is another of the many useful lessons I might have learned, had I not known it before, from a luminous address to *prisoners under charge*; a concoction, I believe, of the gaol chaplain, which address is hung up in the prison cells for the spiritual comfort of thieves, assassins, and writers of blasphemy.

On the seventeenth day of my imprisonment, the deputy-governor told me, to my great astonishment, that an order had come for my release. How to account for this sudden turn of Fortune's wheel I knew not, but that some change had come over the spirit of the magis-

trate's dream was quite evident. I did not, as you may be sure, stop to cogitate upon the matter, or inquire curiously as to the whys and the wherefores of the thing; but with all possible expedition got without the walls, and shook off the dust from my feet as one more testimony against cold-blooded bigots.

I have already mentioned that bail, legally sufficient, had been refused; but I discovered, almost by miracle, that it was the opinion of a legal functionary in connexion with the council-house that the magistrates could not, if the thing were pushed, longer refuse to accept my securities. This was speedily made known to my friends, who did not fail to take advantage of the circumstance, and the result was my liberation. Now mark, Socialists and People of England, I had been kept in prison for ten days *clearly contrary to law*, to satisfy the vindictiveness and lust of cruelty of my persecutors. A charge indisputably proved, by the fact, that the bail subsequently taken by Mr. Wood were the *same parties* who had been, ten days previously, *illegally* refused by him! But this upright judge, this second Daniel, could not do me this tardy justice without first, with *pious* ingenuity, inventing for my friends as much annoyance, and producing as great delay, as possible; he loved me with the love of the boa for its victim; parting with me was "such *bitter* sorrow" he could not bring his mind to't; he, therefore, in order to keep me in his cold and slimy embrace another day, required the production of the deeds by which one of my bondsmen (Mr. Whiting, ironmonger, of Temple-street, whose name had appeared on the freeholders' list for several years) claimed to be worth 1000*l.*, consenting, if they proved valid, to take the bail—which, in law phraseology, means the *whole* bail. The deeds were examined, and they bore witness that nearly double that sum belonged to their owner, free from all incumbrance. Evasion was next tried—what will not a bigotesort to?—and an attempt was made to show, that in saying, with the foregoing proviso he (Mr. W.) would take the bail—he meant Mr. Whiting's *alone*, well-knowing, at the same time, that that gentleman had been declared duly qualified three days after the arrest, and that any examination into his property was unnecessary. Had it not been for the presence of another magistrate, to whom Mr. Wood appealed for an opinion, the promise given on the previous day would have been shuffled off, and I should have remained, until the day of my trial, surrounded by *Christian evidences*.

But after all this, I had been at liberty scarce seventeen hours when I was informed that a *second* warrant was issued for my apprehension, upon the ground that I had printed and published a copy of the first warrant, which contained upon the face of it the *horrible* libel on the "Jew Book." It should be understood, that the warrant in question was printed and

sold whilst I was in prison, without my knowledge, and of course without my consent: my friends having no idea that the act was illegal, or could, in any way, compromise me. The magistrates, however knew all about it; oh, it was a cunning deep-laid scheme, so truly devilish, one would have thought it had been concocted in Hell: not by Wood, but by Satan in council. It is one of the purest specimens of Christian liberality ever placed on record. We will just let him out, thought they, just nicely to fix him in—we will kill two birds by one cunningly-directed arrow; for, by accepting the bail and letting the atheistical and dangerous rascal take an airing for a few hours, we shall ease our shoulders of a disagreeable responsibility, ward off the charge of refusing bail maliciously and illegally, while, by issuing another warrant just in the nick of time, this troublesome dog will be again in our clutches and made perfectly safe; all of which we may do upon christian principles; and, as it will be supposed that he committed some new and heavy crime, we shall, without noise or danger, comfortably get, and as comfortably gag, him.

When I had notice of their intent, I had no particular curiosity to see the warrant, but thought it would be far more pleasant, as well as judicious, to make myself scarce, take a trip, and breathe the country air, rather than stop at home on purpose to jump down tyranny's throat, or be carried back to my old lodgings. Thought I, they out-jockey'd me the first time, and it will but be making things even if I out-jockey them the second, and give them at least a Rowland for an Oliver. A facetious friend of mine has most happily compared me and the Bristol magistrates to an unfortunate mouse and a couple of savage, but playful, cats, who with all their ferocity and cunning, after patting, biting, and scratching, as cats are wont to do, by a little artful dodging on the part of the mouse, were disappointed of their prey. How, dreadful, after letting me out for seventeen hours, that I would not go back for another seventeen days! The case is pitiful and desperate, pray heaven that we hear of no suicides in Bristol! The fact is, that I thought a Christmas dinner would relish better out than in prison; and though, when like the flayed eels, I got used to it, or at all events I became more reconciled each day to its harsh and cruel regulations—as a bird that first flutters against the wires of its cage, yet in time becomes comparatively content—once out, depend upon it I had no disposition to return. With birds it commonly happens, that if by any accident they get from their cages they will return to them of their own accord, but this was not exactly my case. There are of course no perfect analogies between birds with, and birds without, feathers.

My mind once made up, there was no time to be lost; having determined that I would not be maintained at the state's charge before,

whatever might be said about after, trial ; and knowing, as the thief said to the officer, that "distance lends enchantment to the view," I rendered myself invisible, dexterously slipped through the fingers of the Argus-eyed police ; and after "sundry 'scapes in the imminent deadly breach," contrived to baffle all pursuit ; leaving the hounds not the ghost of a scent ; and here I am, once more the priest of the *Oracle*, within the sanctuary of liberty-hall, near the caverns of secrecy, known only to the initiated ; breathing, you will readily believe, a purer air than that of Bristol gaol, with better companions than turnkeys, and food rather more relishable than brown bread and convict gruel.

I may add, for the satisfaction of friends, that my general health is very good, and my character of mind such as will, I trust, enable me to suffer with patience, nay, even with joyfulness, the sharpest punishment furious persecutors may inflict. 'Tis true, as said to me by a friend, within a prison's gloomy walls, hope seldom enters, but, he added, it must have an end. The solitary system is terrible to those who cannot think, or would fly from their own thoughts ; to such, the *ennui* and listlessness inseparable from their situation is more dreaded than any other species of punishment ; it prays upon their spirits, and, as melancholy experience teaches, oft-times drives to madness. I hope to show my persecutors that they can neither break my spirit nor drive me mad ; and that what has been ill-naturedly said of woman's heart, is true of my constitution—it is tender but tough ; they may bend, but will find it difficult to break, it. I know not yet who will be my judge, and cannot even guess what will be the extent *if any* of my punishment. I know not whether I shall be tried by a Bristol, or a London, jury ; whether my trial will be fair or foul, the verdict that of honest men or mere legal butchers—these things must be determined by you, and the friends of mental liberty of every shade of opinion ; or, as quaintly said by my valued friend, G. Jacob Holyoake, "by all persons desirous of securing free expression of opinion to Turk, Jew, Atheist, or Christian—and who do not care which."

One triumph my bitterest enemies cannot rob me of, I am free once more, unshackled in body and mind, prepared to wage a fiercer war than ever against bigotry under all its forms, whether it assume that of liberality, hypocrisy, or audacious and open cruelty. The *Oracle* will again speak, shake orthodoxy's rotten bones, and make priests tremble. This, I say, is one of my triumphs, and even though I never have another it will amply repay me for all I have or may endure. Yes, through the columns of this paper I can now do what, in my gloomy cell, most occupied my thoughts ; and the hope of effecting which, made an otherwise valueless life sweet and desirable : vindicate my character from the foul aspersions, the open

and concealed attacks of bigot foes and insidious friends. The busy malice, the gratuitous vindictiveness of the latter, would provoke a smile, were not such horrible depravity so fatal to the cause of freedom. No sooner was I cast into prison than these apostles of truth began to glorify ; they struck, because they thought me down ; what I knew to be success, they mistook for defeat ; that which was my pride, was rated as humiliation.

When this paper was started, I expected to be cut and mangled by men of all parties, and all sorts of opinion ; setting myself up as a mark, it would be folly to complain of being shot at. I object not to criticism, for whether honest or dishonest, malicious or friendly, ignorant or enlightened, it is to me always pleasant, always profitable.

How often do we find in papers professedly devoted to the advocacy of extreme, that is the *only true*, philosophical principles, that the very first number is made the vehicle of a furious tirade, or the most base and cowardly insinuations, not against the enemies of human liberty, not against the violator of public principle, the public tyrant, or canting hypocrites, but against some individual, probably the editor of another paper, who, as in my case, has committed no other crime than that of being first in the field of great and truly independent moral warfare, and thereby likely to carry away the *profits* and honours which may attach to the bold enunciation of proscribed truths. Whilst themselves, popping their small shot from behind a masked battery, not daring to show their heads ; without the honesty and courage to publish their names ; but skulking behind that of some bold printer, they prate about declaring themselves this, that, and the other ; glorying in openly and unreservedly proclaiming themselves atheists ; they find fault with half-measure half-witted people who, like myself, "will write articles upon the question 'Is there a God ?' in which they pretend to deride the notion of his existence, but in such a way as to leave their readers in doubt as to whether they have not some God of their own behind the curtain," and so on to the end of the chapter, before you reach which you will find me set down as a short-sighted coward, a dealer in bravado, merely for the want of something better, one who mistakes blustering for boldness and decision ; which, together with verbosity, obscurity of meaning, desire to appear *learned*, and being grossly abusive, are set down in the category of my vices. All this gentle reader, and much more, was written of me by a friend, who, though I know him, he did not think I knew him ; dipping his pen in gall, he thought by writing *sub rosa*, and dealing only in *inuendoes*, he could escape detection.

I will not stoop to practice that which I condemn, nor deal in insinuation when the attack should be open ; make large professions of courage, yet skulk from the post of danger. When

proclaiming truth, I know nothing of individual friendships or mere party societies. The *Oracle of Reason* was intended "to maintain the right to publish any and every kind of speculative opinion,"—"to deal out Atheism as freely as ever Christianity was dealt out to the people,"—and to aid the best minds among the liberal party in casting "off the swindling kind of morality that frames itself to every occasion, including all the abominations of jesuitry, without its character, grandeur, or consistency," nor will I allow any pretenders, of mushroom growth, the honour, if there be any, of being the first honestly, without mental reservation of any kind, to proclaim myself a *perfect Atheist*, and teach the whole truth "without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man."

The above remarks refer to a weekly paper, styled the *Atheist and Republican*, the first number of which appeared without date; but as everybody knows, and the paper itself carries internal evidence of, after some three or four numbers of the *Oracle of Reason* were published. When it was announced through the press, that a paper proclaiming the truth, consistency, and moral grandeur of Atheism, with the superiority of republicanism over every, or any other, form of government was about to appear, I was greatly delighted, for my vanity led me to consider it one of the first fruits of my labours; for who could doubt that the *Oracle of Reason* opened, paved, and showed the way for the *Atheist and Republican*? The child proved a froward one, but I will not cast it off or disown it, nevertheless; and though it is a principle with me that in general more is done by love than fear, in this case a little sound chastisement will not be amiss, and this I hope to administer without "bluster," "mere abuse," or "bombastic bravado." Certainly all will acknowledge that I have good reason to be upon my p's and q's, when the great *unknown* of the *Atheist* has been kind enough to inform us that "a gentleman of distinguished talents (himself, gentle reader!) has been engaged as editor, and more than *thirty able writers* in science and literature,"—surely this is enough to scare one out of one's wits; and no one in his wits would willingly provoke this terrible *thirty-headed giant*, not to speak of the editor, who will be a sort of shield-bearer or page to a more than Falstaff; who tells us that *the thirty* will attack existing prejudices in the boldest manner, notwithstanding they "run great risk from bigoted persecution." I strongly suspect, however, that this monstrous moral giant, like Polyphemus, has but one eye, at least only *one* eye that can be depended upon, so that, if unluckily that one should be put out or seriously damaged, the boasted strength of the monster will be worse than weakness, and only fatal to himself.

In the first number the writer finds fault that "yet no one has had the courage to come fairly

and openly before the public and say 'I AM AN ATHEIST, AND I GLORY IN MY PRINCIPLES!'"—now beginning with what is vulgarly called a lie, is a bad beginning for those who affect to teach that truth alone can make men wise and happy. In a case of this kind, there is nothing like appealing to facts—one fact to the purpose being here just as good as a thousand. Now if the reader will look at the article "Is there a God?" in the first number of this paper, printed and published, be it remembered, *four* clear weeks before the *Atheist* was in existence, they will find the following:—

Not ourselves believing in any designing principle, mind, intelligence, cause, or what you will, distinct from the material world; believing, on the contrary, that something must have been from all eternity, therefore uncaused, and that uncaused something the universe—we are PERFECT ATHEISTS.

In the third paper upon the same subject, when speaking of the immorality of the belief in the existence of any kind of god, I observed,

Upon the belief of a god hangs nine-tenths of the vice, falsehood, and misery, and all the religious buffoonery which are the disgrace of civilized societies. An Atlas of error, it bears upon its broad shoulders a world of immoralities.

In the fifth paper I was, if possible, yet more explicit, and lest it should be supposed that it was in consequence of what has appeared in the *Atheist*, I need only say that it was written long before I had any notion that such an attack was to be made, the substance of what appeared having been made known to me by a never to be forgotten friend, through the bars of my prison. The passage to which I allude runs thus—

The Atheism of these papers is not INSINUATIVE but DIRECT; not SHAM but REAL; and, good or bad, about the opinions we have ventured to broach there is no mistake; THERE CAN BE NO MISTAKE; THERE SHALL BE NO MISTAKE!

We DENY the rationality of all belief in a god or gods; in which denial is included the AFFIRMATION, that there is good and sufficient reason to DISBELIEVE in any such existence.

By the word god we understand a PERSONALITY (let supernaturalists call it what they will) distinct from, and independent of, matter.

It may be said, that though I declared myself an Atheist, yet I did not "glory" in being one; I would just hint, that to "glory" in any kind of belief, is the part of a fool, not a philosopher. There is nothing glorious in any kind of belief whatever, and if any of the *thirty-and-one* had taken the trouble to read my "Introduction" they would have seen it declared that "If men have not yet known they should now be taught, that it is neither creditable nor discreditable, honourable nor dishonourable, to be an Atheist, a Christian, or a Mussulman." Surely it would have been better, more honest, and far more *social* of my calumniators, to have attacked the philosophy of the thing, instead of running a tilt at me for not doing that which can only be done by half-bred infidels and thorough bred fanatics.

Having convicted the *Atheist and Republi-*

can of barefaced falsehood, to take any more pains about its moral character would be but slaying the slain, yet I must upbraid them with their want of filial affection. *King Lear* says of the ingratitude of his daughters, that it was as though the mouth should tear the hand for lifting food to it; and so I may say of the *one*, or *thirty-one* who have honoured me and disgraced themselves by foul slander. They tell us that they are tired of the old mode of proceeding, and desirous of seeing Atheism advocated in a proper manner by an organ worthy of it, modestly adding that it will be their "task to supply this desideratum;" they are to "clear the stage of quacks, impostors, and madmen" of all descriptions, never to use fine words, that they may "appear *learned*;" they are to be "perspicuous in composition," and as to all "other faults, the *fact* that they have pointed them out in their contemporaries, is the sufficient guarantee that they will avoid them themselves;" then, by way of a wind-up, it is hinted that "they have opened communication with intelligent correspondents in all parts of our own country, in America, and on the Continent;" adding, that "it will thus be seen that no pains or expense has been spared to ensure ORIGINALITY, VARIETY, and CAREFUL SUPERVISION." Alas, poor *Oracle*! thy Priest must hide his diminished head. Now the sun of atheism has risen all *mere* stars will become invisible. Thirty and one literary cooks! pray heaven they spoil not the broth, nor that this huge mountain, after so much labour, bring not forth a mouse!

Upon the present occasion, I have confined myself exclusively to the lies, conceit, and puffery of this paper; and if I live, out of prison or even in prison, should I be allowed my pen, I will expose the ignorance of these writers, and prove by "*reason* and sound argument" that their first paper, not to speak of the rest, abounds in blunders and errors in philosophy, of the most serious kind. Having been the first openly to teach atheism, it will be my duty to expose those who, not having sufficient knowledge on the subject, bring it into discredit by their swaggering impertinence and ridiculous assertions. I will show, that, in the so-called refutation of the *à posteriori* argument in proof of the existence of a god, the writer has really deserted the atheistical position, and that he is properly what is called in another part of the paper, by the same writer, if I mistake not, a *Causationist*, not an Atheist; and if not a Universal chance-monger, something equally silly—a Universal cause-monger. So far at present the *Atheist and Republican*.

There are other writers whose open and honourable strictures upon my proceedings, though severe, are worthy of the most respectful attention. By many such, the style of my articles has been objected to, as being "diffuse, wordy, loose, and the matter wanting method and

sequence, illogical," to which I demur not; no one is more sensible than myself that my style is wordy, diffuse, &c. I am no logician, and fear I never shall be, for the character of my mind is precisely that of my writings—hasty, irregular, bold, and enthusiastic; I write as I speak, and speak exactly as I think, so that my writings and speeches have always one grand merit, they are the fac-similies of my mind. My style is to have no style; and, as the writer in the *Odd Fellow* shrewdly hinted, being far more apt with my tongue than with my pen, there is in all I have written the vice of oratorship, not close and connected, but rambling and discursive; less likely to please logicians than honest men. The pen is not my *forte*, I am more happy with the tongue; writing clogs my impatient thoughts, which, whatever may be their value, are always in a hurry to display themselves, generally rushing pell-mell, helter-skelter, without regard to order, precision, and the decencies of logic. Therefore it is that I have always loved speaking better than writing, as being less troublesome, and more in harmony with my temper and feelings. I never wrote half-a-dozen lectures in my life, though I have delivered some hundreds, upon a great variety of subjects: the most successful, and decidedly the best, of which cost least in preparation. To be a close reasoner I never pretended, still less to the character of a first-rate logician. I do not despise those who have this happy talent, no one can more admire them, but I admire only, and do not aim at rivalry, or hope to reach the same degree of excellence; at the same time candour, and not vanity, prompts me to say that there are in my writings and speeches excellences of another kind, which the close reasoner and adept in logic may strive in vain to imitate. There are as many kinds of mind as of human faces, and therefore in judging of mind we should, in justice, judge of it *after its kind*. All men cannot fill the same departments, whether of science, of art, or of literature—it is enough that we fill our own department *well*. My department in the work of reform, and my competency to fill it, is not fairly estimated at present, and how should it be, when those who criticise neither know the materials with which I have to deal, nor the great objects I have in view. I am also charged with the use of a "foul admixture of scurrility and abuse." There is nothing more easy than to make such a charge, but it is sometimes exceedingly difficult to determine what is, and is not, scurrility and abuse. Scurrility and abuse forsooth! why there is hardly a modern writer, of any note, who has not been charged by his enemies with being scurrilous and abusive; it is the common cuckoo-cry of all who are well lashed. Expose bigotry in homely phrase, tell the truth in good rough English, you are at once denounced as a low and vulgar-minded fellow. Paine is now acknowledged as the best among political writers,

yet he was anything but choice in his phraseology, or gentlemanlike in his diction. "Publicola" is now our most popular, if not our best, political writer; yet I never heard that he was remarkable for softness and delicacy of expression. Why, who has not heard a thousand times both Paine and Publicola denounced as foul-mouthed, scurrilous, and abusive scamps? The *Dispatch* newspaper is the very pillar of freedom, and greatest terror of evil-doers, unquestionably the most extensively useful that ever was published; but whoever thought of looking into the *Dispatch* for choice flowers of rhetoric or namby-pamby phrase? I could extract sentences and paragraphs by the score from the columns of that paper that my censors would at once acknowledge throw my abuse, &c., far into the shade. And just so with banter and ridicule, which even the clergy, who are such nice men and so easily shocked, have not the slightest objection to, when used against the horrid tribe of infidels; but if used by Deists and Atheists against Christians, it is trumpeted forth as something profane and shockingly immoral. I know fully as well as my censors, that foul language cannot serve any but a bad cause, but I deny most emphatically that a single foul sentence, or even word, has been published in the *Oracle*. There is nothing foul save that which is inimical to morals and human freedom. I do not deny that "the offensively thrusting forward one's opinions—singular or not—without charitable regard to the opinions, prejudices they may be, of others," is not justifiable: that is, I agree that it is sometimes not justifiable; as, for example, I did not think that a certain noted reverend gentleman was justified upon the score of utility (and there can be no other justification for any act), when delivering a mock sermon on the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, he said, in a tone most pathetically ludicrous, "there, my dear friends, there was the blessed saviour nailed upon the cross like a dead rat upon a barn door;" and I am still of the opinion that it was a useless, and therefore unjustifiable, trifling with human feelings. But let us be careful lest criticism degenerate into cant; let us beware lest we strain charity for human prejudice too far; let us be watchful that we make not the weakness of others an apology for our own laziness; and that we hold not back those truths which ought to be told, from fear of being accused of needlessly thrusting forward our opinions. "Truth (says Milton) can no more be soiled by human touch than a sunbeam; though this ill-hap wait on her nativity, that she has never yet been born into the world, except to the ignominy of those who brought her forth." Then away with this cant about liberality, if it is to interfere with our highest and most sacred duty, which manifestly is to "be cruel only to be kind," and to pronounce truth, even though it give pain to morbid human feeling. Who, in the world's history, ever pronounced a great

truth, for the first time, without shocking human prejudices? To shock unnecessarily is cruel; but the science of justice alone can teach whether I have unnecessarily shocked. There are feelings we ought to lacerate—prejudices it is criminal not to expose. Why does a surgeon amputate a mortified limb but to preserve the rest? Amputation is a bad thing but sometimes necessary, nevertheless. Surely mind requires analogous treatment; its errors are its rotten and mortified parts, in poetic phrase, the gangreens of the soul, which should be cut off or out that the sounder parts may be preserved. Who could be so blinded by his charity as not to see that there are prejudices it is criminal not to expose, just the sort of criminality of a man—who, seeing the assassin's arm uplifted to destroy those he should protect and cherish, would hesitate to run him through the body, because, poor fellow, he couldn't help being what he was, and his nerves might be unpleasantly shocked.

But I should not do justice to my feelings, did I not express my gratitude for the acute and manly strictures of such writers as the *Odd Fellow*. I think them what they think me—honest, but mistaken. I would rather have this censure in such a spirit, than the most extravagant praises from the lips of folly. The would-be critics, who are the unclean birds of the press, and in every sense, have hardly a feather to fly with, I heartily despise; in my warfare with such I will neither give nor take quarter.

Such is my defence of the *Oracle*, its leading principles, and the style in which it has been written. It is a mere outline, that I may fill up hereafter. A defence of its principles may be considered superfluous, seeing that none have yet ventured to attack them, all opposition being confined to the manner, and not the matter, of the thing.

Having, for the present, disposed of these subjects, I must, before I conclude, say a few words more particularly to yourselves, to whom this letter is addressed. I have been accused of a desire to break up your party, and from its wreck form one of my own; but for this, as well as other calumnies, I was fully prepared. I most emphatically deny that I ever had any desire to break up your party; for though your present practices by no means square with my notions of the just and useful, I am clearly of opinion that your party, with all its faults, is the most advanced, the most liberal, and decidedly the most useful now in existence—but then I wish it to be known as what it really is, and not to hang out false colours. Your leaders would fain have you thought progressors and free inquirers, whilst you are no such thing, but a mere JOINT-STOCK ASSOCIATION, banded together for the laudable purpose of bettering your physical and moral condition. This, I say, is a laudable, a most admirable object; but, in the name of consistency and honour, be

content to stand before the world in naked truthfulness as what you really are, and pretend not to a character that does not belong to you. If ever I had an interest in flattering you, it is at this moment—but I disdain to do it, and would rather rot in gaol than obtain your support by the crooked ways of falsehood. I hear that your party has nobly exerted itself in my behalf—not directly, but indirectly—not as a party, but as a body of enlightened reformers. This shows that you are sound at the core; it shows that you *feel* there is a great principle at stake, when you thus sacrifice individual differences upon the altar of public liberty. I thank you for myself; I thank you yet more for the sake of the noble cause by which I am prepared to stand or fall; for be assured of this—come what may, I shall remain true to the great principles of civil and religious liberty. You have seen the proclaimers of great truths dragged into prisons and courts of law, like sheep to the slaughter; you have seen men murdered, under colour and pretext of law, legal butcheries and judicial assassinations—yes, such atrocities you have seen or heard of. In this land of boasted liberty scaffolds have streamed with blood, multitudes been mowed down *en masse*, and dungeons crowded with victims, that the *Great Whore*—the worse than Babylonish harlot—might be maintained in all her shameful glory. You will, if opinion be not aroused and shaken from its death-like sleep, see in me one more victim of her brutal lusts and fierce intolerance. It is for you and the People of England to determine whether I am to have the mockery, or the reality, of a trial—the mere forms, or the spirit of justice. There must be money and there must be agitation—these are the ingredients to be thrown into the great cauldron of opinion, before it is possible the charm of mental freedom can be extracted therefrom. Money finds all ways open, aye, even courts of law; let us see if enough cannot be gathered to open that of the Queen's Bench. It is only by a *monied* agitation public liberty can be protected.

Let the public remember that the real question is not whether my opinions are correct or incorrect; or my manner of expressing them vulgar or refined; but this, and this only, is the question—*Shall men suffer persecution for holding any set or kind of opinions, or for any manner of expressing them?* Once admit the moral right of any man or set of men to punish others, either for the matter or manner of their opinions, and you at once unchain a legion of tyrannies, and open wide the door to every species of cruelty. "Liberty of the mind" is all or nothing, to confine, is to crush, it; and like that noble writer "Publicola," "my principles apply with equal force to any and all books, whether the name be Bible, Testament, Talmud, Koran, Milton's Paradise Lost, or Shelley's Queen Mab. *The principle is general, and all cases the same.*" Indeed, all the wisdom of the

question is included in that writer's article of December 19, which is so complete a refutation of vulgar fallacies upon this subject, that I would willingly, did space permit, transcribe the whole. The following passage teaches all that is just in principle and just in action, as regards opinion:—"I know nothing of Mr. S. or his book, nor do I care a fraction about what that book may, or may not, contain; but I hold it an essential principle of liberty, that he has as much right to publish his opinions as any prelate, orthodox divine, or dissenter. If there be error or indecency in his works, which I do not assert, the antidote is not to be found in a prosecution, for the remedy is immeasurably worse than the disease. Where then is the solid remedy to be found, for this real or fancied evil? Educate the people, not in prejudices of any sort, but in principles, with a thorough latitude of inquiry, of expression, and publication. At present the phrase, National Education, is little else than a fraudulent device to continue the old system of supporting prejudices." Aye, truly is it, and well the clergy know the fact; neither really instructing themselves, nor, if they can help it, allowing others to do it. They care very little about errors and indecencies—'tis simple naked truth terrifies them; and it is precisely because they are cunning enough to know that real education would release mankind from the grasp of all tyrannies, that they will not give it to the people. I deny that there is a single *indecent* expression, or a single *philosophical* error to be found in the *Oracle*. From its first to its last page there is not a single paragraph that I would not defend upon any rostrum, or even in any court of law; but let it be remembered, that even though it could be proved to contain the most execrable, indecent, and stupid trash that ever was penned, yet to persecute its author would be to outrage the liberty of the mind, and shock all common sense. As "Publicola" wisely says, "the remedy is not to be found in prosecutions, but in the general diffusion of education."

This number, the reader will please to consider as supplementary; and in future the Priest of the *Oracle* will speak as usual, and proceed with the consideration of those subjects he had proposed to treat, before honoured by a notice from the authorities. Should it happen that my mouth is stopped, the paper will be edited and conducted by friends, whose principles are my principles, and upon whose integrity and talent I have the fullest reliance. So that, whether I am in or out of prison, the *Oracle* will still boldly pronounce nature's decrees, in spite of human decrees, and proclaim philosophy without asking the license of folly.

Your well wisher,

CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

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ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

SUPPLEMENT.]

EDITED BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

[PRICE 1d.]

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

To the SOCIALISTS of ENGLAND.

LETTER III.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

FRIENDS,

THE pressure of new and unforeseen circumstances renders it imperative that I should proceed in this number with a consideration of matters either personal or simply defensive of the principles of the *Oracle*, and the *manner* in which they have been advocated. When the last number went to press, I had no notion that such a step would be unavoidable. "Coming events cast shadows before," and within the last few days shadows have come upon me thick and fast—shadows of events particular and general in their consequences, that are likely not only to affect me as an individual, but the whole human race.

Since I was fortunate enough to be a *prisoner at large*, by virtue of *leg-bail*, a world of business has crowded upon me. The storm raised by the spiritual witches frightened me from my propriety, and things were left undone which ought to have been done; but good fortune is better than riches, the calm succeeded the storm, the thunder-cloud of bigotry has discharged itself without doing me much damage, and I am still in the land of the living. If my readers think me merry in my misfortunes, they will think me what I am, and ever wish to be.—Galba died in a jest; Socrates, just before drinking the fatal potion, rallied his weeping friends for confounding him with his carcass; and the witty Moore, when about to place his head upon the block, was careful to turn aside his beard, "as that had not committed treason." Psha! the goods of life, though not vanities, are much too highly rated; while the evils to be endured are strangely magnified by useless panic terrors. Yet I love not the tombstone philosophy—

Life's a jest, all things show it;
I thought so once, but now I know it;

For life is no jest, but a something too often terribly earnest; a serious jest, an' it be one, now that rank tyranny clothes itself in the robes of justice, fanaticism stalks through the world like a pestilence, and, in the expressive words of Volney, "law is sold to the judge,

and the judge sells justice; religion is sold to the priest, and the priest sells heaven." It is indeed difficult to say, whether the good and wise man, in looking at human conceits, follies, and wickedness, has more reason to laugh like Democritus, or weep as Heraclitus—or join the ranks of laughing or weeping philosophers. I am, from temper and habit, to be classed among the laughers, my practice being to enjoy the good without churlishness, and all unavoidable evil without repining.

To taste the sweets of life with alacrity is virtuous, whatever starched Pharisees may preach to the contrary; to drink, without a tear or sigh, to its very dregs the cup of bitterness, is infinitely more noble. Fortitude is the most sublime of virtues, for while it leaves to the mind its elasticity and zest for enjoyment, arms it against the rudest shocks and sharpest arrows of fortune. Those who object to my cheer and bustle of mind, can find abundance of gravity elsewhere; and though it may be objected, that the pronouncers of oracles should, according to immemorial usage, be solemn men, "whose visages do cream and mantle like a standing pond," yet I do not despair but that a goodly number will agree, that a merry priest, who will work the oracle honestly, would not only be a rare, but most pleasant, phenomenon. The greatest of poets has asked, "why should a man whose blood is warm within, sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster; sleep when he wakes, or creep into the jaundice by being peevish?" This question I leave the snivelling, groaning, and plundering maw-wormers to answer. I am now out of gaol, and am delighted to add, never in the whole course of my life in better health and spirits; certainly never better conditioned to fight the battle for freedom of conscience, the right of expression, and the liberty of the press.

There is a tide in the affairs of *some* men, which taken at the flood leads no one knows where, and by such a mysterious flood are myself and my affairs floated to a new kind of fortune. I am about to commit myself to the winds and waves of popular opinion, but whether I shall reach the sought for haven will depend upon the state of the political atmosphere, my general skill in navigation, and dexterity in the art of trimming the sails. To drop metaphor, it must be obvious, that in my present situation no opportunity of setting myself right with the public should be neglected;

which *desideratum* I can only hope to achieve by a clear statement of my principles and practice; both these have been grossly misrepresented by friends and foes—by sincere folly and interested ignorance. It is now too late to ward off or avoid the blows that have been aimed at me, but it will be quite easy to deaden their effect. The swiftest cannon-ball may be effectually stopped by a few feet of clay, and nothing stops falsehood in its career, and as it were breaks it in pieces, so well as a wall of truth. The next best thing to avoiding a plague, is to counteract its effects; nor can I better counteract the effects of spurious criticism, or so well arm myself against either private malice or public hate, as by the publication of a full and candid reply to all who have in any way noticed my proceedings.

The elements of public agitation are fast gathering, and opinion once aroused will speedily silence bigotry, and make the hearts of persecutors for conscience sake quail within them: It is notorious that John Bull cannot be cudgelled into thought, but once set him a-thinking and action will follow close upon its heels. He will not "mend his pace by beating," but put him in motion, be but lucky or strong enough to overcome his moral inertia, and attempting to stop him will be dangerous sport; while, like the ball of snow, he gathers and strengthens as he rolls. The French directory once expressed their contempt of England by describing it as an island that "the sun seemed to light with regret," and whether it arise from the fogginess of our climate, from physical or moral causes, it is certain that Englishmen are not easily excited, nothing being more rare in this country than strong fits of national enthusiasm. We *have* seen such things, but they are rare moral phenomena, the result of countless abuses and years of incessant agitation; as, for example, the enthusiastic cry for "The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill," which all know we succeeded in obtaining—for nothing *but* the bill we did have. Otway says, "give an Englishman his harlot and ease, his bottle and a sea-coal fire, he is yours for ever," which may be true; and, indeed, I doubt very much whether, in the present lax state of morals and general fanaticism, more than a score or two of true-born Britons could be found at all willing to resist such temptations, or sacrifice their immediate pleasures for distant benefits. There is far more *talk* about the rights of man, than there exists *spirit* to realise them; far more noise and clamour about the rights of conscience and the liberty of the press, than disposition to fight for them. If shouting and bawling could set men free, liberty would have been achieved a thousand times over, and all sorts of tyrannies long since made to bite the dust. Yet, for all this, I do not despair for public liberty, and the great cause of human progression. Corrupt judges may pronounce their iniquitous decrees

—decrees cruel and bloody, as in the olden time, when blasphemers were burnt for an imaginary god's glory; and a brutal Jeffries hung, without remorse, whole scores of political offenders. A pattern judge! who always recommended his victims to plead guilty, that he might hang, without the trouble of trying, them; who treated them with the sweet sounds of flutes and hautboys, when they were struggling in the agonies of death, facetiously observing, that he would treat them with music to their dancing. It was recommended that this upright judge should be raised to the peerage, with the title of *Earl of Flint*, and I seriously recommend that Mr. James Wood, of Bristol, who is quite as deserving as Jeffries, and ought at least to be knighted for his pious efforts against blasphemers—I say, I seriously recommend that, instead of plain Mr. James Wood, he should be styled *Sir James Beech*. But this incidental mention of Judge Wood, reminds me that if I do not defend myself *now* it is rather doubtful whether I shall be in a condition to do so by and by; when if not hanged and treated to music whilst dancing upon nothing, I may be killed by inches, and all possible pains taken that I should go off *quietly*. All that should be said, therefore, it may be wise to say before trial; for trial by jury means, in nine cases out of ten, trial by bigotry. When some noble spirits were carried before the French revolutionary tribunal, they opened their vests and laid bare their necks, as signifying that they came to execution, not to trial; and those who go before a British jury, charged with sedition or blasphemy, should go prepared for the appearance, not the reality of, justice; with a body and mind trained to suffer that torture of which the solemn mockeries of courts are but the prelude. A trial by jury for the impossible crime of blasphemy is, in fact, little more than a sort of judicial prologue to what I have before called the serio-comic farce of "Killing no murder." If then it should happen that a jury of Englishmen can now be found so lost to all sense of what is due to decency, the rights of conscience, and the liberty of the press—so inexpressibly foolish and wicked as to find me guilty of an impossible offence, why the judge may—for it is rather difficult to say what judges may or may not do—shut me up in the cold cell of a felon's prison, denying me the sight of friends, the use of speech, or even the poor solitary satisfaction of wielding my pen, either in my own defence or in furtherance of the great principles of Civil and Religious Liberty. Such are some among the more important reasons which have induced me to attempt in this number a filling up of my *defence*, an outline of which appeared in the last *Oracle*; but more especially am I anxious to defend the article on the famous "Jew Book," both as regards its letter and its spirit; for to me it appears that it will be easy work to brush away the cob-web ob-

jections that have been urged against that article, and prove, to the satisfaction of all reasonable men, that it must take rank among the most useful that ever issued from the press. It was written with a view to the attainment of a grand public object. That object has been attained. The article fully accomplished its mission. Any pains-taking reader may see at a glance that it is not written in my usual style—not in a natural, but forced, manner. It was, in fact, written to try the question, whether a man might or might not, in this free country, publish any opinions, upon any book, in his own or any other manner. Mr. Haslam has been called a low, vulgar, and abusive writer, yet who can calculate the amount of good that his letters to the Clergy and the immortal Bishop have effected? The plain truth is, that anything written against church or state tyranny, church or state humbug, or the books and systems which support it, never can please bad men; the better the writing, the more useful to the cause of freedom, the more they hate and persecute the writer. Had I written against the "Jew Book," not merely with a feather from the wing, but the very finger, of the angel Gabriel himself—if I had written the truth, and in such a manner that the people could understand it, and sent that truth home to the very recesses of human prejudice, who need be told that it would be pronounced by the tools of authority a scandalous, impious, profane, and blasphemous libel.

Yes, great has been the outcry about this terrible article on the "Jew Book," for the writing of which I have received golden abuse from all sorts of critics, infidels, deists—all sorts, kinds, and sizes of regenerators, quarrel as they may about other things, are harmonious and loving as turtle-doves about this. It was, say they, so outrageous; making discussion rather too free; as much as to say to the authorities, "I have said all that can be said about the holy book; now touch me, if you dare." Yet it is strange not a single line has been written against the matter, but only the manner, of the article; as though bad manners were a crime against the state, and those who are not lucky enough, or, like myself, not always willing to use the most choice, smooth, and shabby-genteel language, had offended against the laws of free discussion; surely inquiry has come to a fine pass, now that words, not things, are attended to, and all matter will pass muster if manner be attended to. A fine state of things, truly! when none but holyday and lady terms are to be used, except with the fear of prisons before our eyes, and literary men-milliners can alone escape persecution. There is nothing more easy than to find fault, but to find fault well; to dissect, without murdering, opinions, is a work for intellects ripened and matured by study and experience, and not for half-witted boys; but, as Byron

A man must serve his time to every trade
Save censure—critics all are ready made.

There are, at this moment, connected with the liberal press, some of those small young critics—those raw recruits in the infidel army—who have banded themselves together to watch over their own interests and the interests of philosophy. A ministry of the last century was called, in derision, the ministry of all talents; now this society may be called, in sober truth, the society of all the *imbeciles*. This I know will make them nib their pens, dip them in gall, and do the valarous. Well, come on, come on, gentlemen, but remember the lines of Aristophanes—

Look to your wits, or else you'll meet
Contempt as certain as defeat.

The truth is, and it is one of importance, that as nations refine in their language, they multiply in vices—corruption and fine writing rising and falling together. Why the writer in the *Odd-Fellow*, who has criticised my conduct in so friendly, but severe, a spirit, is strangely at fault, and is himself methinks an outrager of what he calls the *justice of charity*; for that justice demands that the good as well as the evil should be pointed out, and the disease to be cured made of some account, when the value of the prescriptions are to be determined. He does indeed credit me with "honesty and moral worth," though he likes not the "*fashion of my mind*;" but if an *utilitarian*, he is quite abroad, at sea, as the sailors say, in his estimate of my conduct. He does me wrong in supposing that I mistake foul language for strong language, or mere Billingsgate scolding for genuine eloquence; he does me wrong in making such charges, and in my person outrages the *justice of charity*: unless he can show that I have not as much right—*moral right*—to express, in the strongest language I am capable of using, my disgust at the "Jew Book," as well as Christians or Infidels have to express their admiration of it. The book 's a book—and a fine book it doubtless is! I am told to search into it, for no other end surely than to exercise my reason upon it, and determine for myself its fitness or unfitness as an all-sufficient moral guide; and certainly, after having coolly and dispassionately read and reflected upon the article in question, there is not a single sentence contained therein that I would wish to recall, or could conscientiously retract. The real question is, have I, as this writer asserts, while "objecting to your party for your pusillanimity and truckling suppression of your challenged sentiments, fallen into the opposite extreme." This is the real, the true, the only question. Now what does he further say?—*Socialists should mark it well*, "That he has been among you at various times, but has never been able to discover any certain marks, whether of manner, of opinion, or of conduct whereby you might be distinguished from the mass of professing Christians; that in your

innermost sentiments you usually maintain as decent an appearance of conformity with custom as the most worldly orthodox can desire." Now I have long seen and deeply deplored this. I might, had I been a mere adventurer, have found it far more convenient, and certainly more profitable, to have been as orthodox as the most worldly among you, but I decided for another and, I think, a better course; a course the very opposite to the one usually pursued; hoping by bold action and patient suffering, by enlightened precept, and honest practice to give an example to the world of political integrity, based not on the fear of a god, but the love of man—not on the lust of profit and power, but an ardent desire to ameliorate human woes, by utterly destroying, or as it were plucking up by the roots, that detestable spirit of hypocrisy which is at once their parent and support. And how could this be effected but by going to what the world calls extremes? I hope soon to make it manifest to every thinker that my policy in general, but more especially as editor of this paper, has been in nowise extremely bad, if not extremely good; that it has not been speculative merely, but eminently practical. As to the vulgar, they call extreme all that goes beyond their local and shallow notions, having no other opinions than those which are struck and fashioned in the moulds of custom. There are but few who can understand that it is with natures as with reeds, which being long bent or strained in one direction must be forced equally in the opposite direction before they can be made perfectly straight. Those who pity my rashness, and deplore the course I have taken, on the ground that the good resulting therefrom will not be much, that at best it will be but partial, while my personal sacrifice is severe—they may be told, that there is no sacrifice made where no sacrifice is felt; what is a sacrifice to one man may be a pleasure to another. Upon the mind these things depend, there being nothing good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, except in mind. The mind is the supreme and only judge as to the fitness and nature of all things.

It is hard to be condemned by those whose opinions you respect; it tries the mind to be deserted in the hour of need by those very parties for whose cause we have fought and bled; but for such condemnation and such desertion I am fully prepared, so that I am safe from the sting of disappointment. I was prepared for honourable and dishonourable opposition—the fierce assaults of open foes, and the secret dagger of insidious friends. Whatever, therefore, may be done for my cause, or rather, through me, for the sacred cause of human liberty, will be so much of clear gain—a something longed and hoped for, not counted upon. In my most sanguine moments I looked not for the support of the many, but the glorious, the gallant, the thinking few. The *Oracle* was too antagonistic to be popular, not too antagonistic to be just.

It was intended, not merely to pronounce for truth, but against falsehood; not merely to teach men what was right, but fearlessly to expose the wrong, and wage open war with hypocrisy and injustice, whatever form they might assume or by whatever party they might be supported. I felt that it was necessary to expose the cant of liberality which, if not speedily checked, would outbid all others. I felt that in the present struggle for political regeneration, what is called charity is a very common-place virtue; as Napoleon said of courage, so commonly attainable as not to demand special attention; a mere element of human greatness, which should always give way before the perception and practice of justice; and that as to change is not always to reform, to be charitable is not always to be honest. The feeling of charity is good or bad, according to the direction given to it. It may be an admirable virtue or an odious vice. We are told to have charity and love for all that has life; but this is the spurious teaching of hollow moralists, on a par with the "if a man strike thee on thy right cheek turn unto him thy left" of the Jew gospel. We ought not to have charity and love for all that has life, but should hate that which is in its nature hateful; to hate well being a noble, a glorious, virtue; like Dr. Johnson, I love a *good hater*, and most emphatically deny that charity is necessarily good, or that we are called upon, when squaring our conduct in harmony with the science of justice, to love the vicious and depraved. The wicked cannot help being wicked, nor can toads help being toads, yet I always abhor toads. I tell you, friends, this ceaseless talk about charity is the very cant of liberalism. The serpent is a hateful reptile that we tread down without remorse, almost without pity. We hesitate not to destroy the public robber, to preserve our purse; or the secret assassin, in defence of our lives. The serpent cannot help its nature; its poisonous fang and vicious instincts are its gifts; its "character is formed for, and not by, it;" nor can serpents any more help being serpents than robbers and assassins can help being robbers and assassins; but they are no less objects of horror on that account. Mr. Brindley once objected to me that, as according to socialism, he could not help being what he was, or doing what he did, his character being formed for him, it was inconsistent in me to find fault; to which I replied, that I treated him precisely as I did bugs, for although I, and every body else, knew that we ought to be very sorry for bugs, seeing that the poor things have their characters formed for, and not by, them, yet, that they were such nasty, dirty, unpleasant insects that, whenever I caught, I invariably squeezed the life out of them. Mr. Brindley made no answer to this; how should he, though he had had the gift of tongues?

Now I ask, is a serpent, a toad, a highway robber, or midnight assassin more hateful, more

inimical to public weal than the open or secret foes of human liberty? Is there anything more vile that crawls the ground than a persecuting furious bigot, if it be not the insidious pretender to liberality? who shrouding himself in darkness, or under the mask of friendship, strikes a blow at mental freedom through the sides of its advocates; either "damns with faint praise" those who openly attack human errors, or places upon an *equal footing* the conduct of a man who shocks human prejudice by the honest advocacy of proscribed truths, and that of the cruel bigot who, armed with all the terrors of the law, consigns his victim's body to the tortures of a dungeon; violent attacks upon opinions and prejudices being placed in the same category with the fierce intolerance of blood-thirsty bigots. Oh shame, shame, where is thy blush? Alas! for liberty, when such are her chosen advocates! These are the men who *protect*, whilst they pollute, the sanctuary of liberty. The serpent's fang we may guard against, but the poison of an insidious politician is worse than that of asps. Beware of your political Iago's, who kill men in the dark, crying out lustily "Where be these bigot thieves?"

It was my first and last wish, when in prison, that I might once more be permitted to use the pen and expose those who had thus acted.

Who steals my purse, steals trash: 'tis something,
nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

I will proceed to defend that reputation in the true spirit of Socialism, which, if I mistake not, is simply this—to say what is true and do what is right. I know I shall be blamed by prudent men of all shades for speaking out just now, and bringing a fresh host of enemies on my back, when Heaven knows I have enough for an Atlas already; I shall, however, take my own course, as the folks say, "go to the Devil my own road," as undoubtedly, if I wait for a fit and convenient time to be honest, it will be at the sound of the last trumpet; like the old philosopher's marriage, a thing never to happen: when young, not yet; when old, not at all. But as I have read and got by rote, that shallow streams maintain their currents, whilst swelling rivers oft beat down their banks and leave their channels empty, I have determined to play in future the shallow stream, and not the roaring torrent; in short, turn prudent and mealy-mouthed, compared with what I have been; get no more deep wounds, but turn tactician in the great battle with Infidel whitelivers and Christian bigots. I have already said that my constitution is tender but tough, that the Bristol worthies may bend, but find it difficult to break, it; that during my seventeen days' solitary confinement my spirits never flagged; that my body did swell, if not grow fat, upon misery, and that as hogs will greatly enlarge

when fed upon wash, that my corporation enlarged upon the slightly salted water gruel of convicts; perhaps, however, it was rather the kindness of friends, and a good conscience, than the water gruel, that made me thrive so well; I rejoiced in suffering, for I felt that in my case individual suffering would insure universal benefit. It has been supposed that my imprisonment was a defeat. Oh! great mistake, it was my triumph. "All the world's a stage;" my part is to *suffer*; and that of the lovers of freedom to *act*. The character is of my own selection, and it will be my pleasure, as it is my greatest pride, to sustain it well. Let but the Liberals of England now play their part, and success is certain. I have been accused of injuring your cause, by abandoning practical measures, and calling men's attention to mere speculations. If by your cause I am to understand the cause of freedom and general happiness, I say it is false; but if my accusers mean that the local interests of your party will be injured by a course that leads to general good, I shall be glad to injure it. I look to the good of the whole, not to the interests of party; the moral and physical welfare of the masses, not the exclusive interest of any knot of individuals. It is in your organ, *The New Moral World*, that I have been called an unfavourable circumstance, "directing the attention of members to speculative, rather than practical, subjects." This spiteful little bit of "progress" was written and published while I lay in a dungeon, suffering for conscience-sake. It was published in the organ of your party—a party, the principles of which I have advocated publicly and privately, as an independent individual, for more than eleven years—being an accredited missionary during the last fifteen or sixteen months—in an honest, consistent, and unflinching spirit. Surely, there is something more in this than natural, if philosophy could find it out. The truth is, my public conduct has given great offence to the late editor, and now manufacturer of "progress." I am the only missionary who dared to take that social Bashaw by the beard, or ventured to disturb him in what he conceived to be his snug little literary freehold, *The New Moral World*. Those who take the mad bull by the horns, should not complain if he happened to get gored. How then should I whine about this slight laceration? Indeed, the matter is only mentioned here upon public grounds, else would the opinions of the individual himself, considered as an individual, be suffered to pass as the idle wind, which I respect not. It was a saying of Attalus, "that the malicious and the mischievous were not so lucky as poisonous reptiles, for they always swallow a portion of their own poison:" nor is this an idle saying; for the dealers in malice and mischief, always suffer deeply, much more deep mental agony than those they labour to destroy. I know that he will writhe under this infliction, and

only writhe the more because it is so just. He is a very clever, shrewd man, perhaps the cleverest of your party; but I warn the Social body to beware of him: but it is hardly necessary; for, though every member of your body admire his talents, there is not a dozen who think him a safe man; not like Sam Slick's friend, who was too knowing by half for the people's interests, and not half knowing enough for his own. Mr. George Alexander Fleming is rather too knowing for other people's interests, and quite knowing enough for his own; and so I leave him for the present to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," (as the parsons say) what is here written.

Private vices, we have frequently been told, are public benefits, perhaps it may be so where all, from A to Z, in miscalled society, is essentially hollow, false, and corrupt; but I never yet heard it affirmed that public vices were necessarily private benefits, and if I had, I should no more believe one than the other, my conviction being that vice, for no other reason than because it is vice, cannot be either a public, or a private, benefit; I therefore war with vice, whatever form or character it may assume, but particularly with the vices of public men, whose public or private delinquencies are unquestionably the most important in their effects.

This may be called "too antagonistic," but even the worm, when trodden upon, will turn; and this man's self-sufficient arrogance has been too long winked and connived at, nor is he, as I was when he opened the war, in a felon's prison; else would I rather have my hand severed from my body than write a syllable against him; he rejoiced in what he thought my downfall, gloated over my misfortunes, and when he saw the press had neglected to report my case, exultingly exclaimed, "*This must have been the bitterest part of the pill he had to swallow.*" Rare speech for a Social friend! What think you, could a devil have said anything better?

He was mistaken, the pill I had to swallow was not bitter; and as to the press, I did not despair but, sooner or later, they would do me justice; I would not now, with all the terrors of imprisonment hanging over me, change places with Mr. Fleming, or barter away my chances of happiness for his. Principle in a dungeon is sometimes better, and the source of more real joy, than the riches, the honours, the corruptions of a palace. Who would compare the happiness of the just Aristides with that of the rich and cunning Themistocles, or weigh in the scales of the mind the joys of Cræsus against those of Cato. The integrity of Aristides was worth more than the left-handed wisdom of his rival; and while there is virtue in humanity the death of Cato will always claim more of sympathy and admiration, than the proudest triumphs of Cæsar. This is just, and redounds to the honour of our species; for if, with Epicurus, we affirm that "pleasure is the

chief good," it cannot be denied to the stoics that fortitude is the chief virtue. I affirm that the nobles of our race, the details of whose actions cast such brilliant lustre upon the dark pages of history, were men who, like Cato and Sydney, resisted, to the death, the mandates of tyrants, and infused into the breast of their countrymen the warm and generous spirit of truth and justice. Our present degenerate race of pigmy reformers talk of charity when they should practise fortitude, and are thrown into a cold sweat, shivering like men with the palsy, at the bare mention of dangerous resistance. So excessive now is political caution, that one would almost imagine that the reform field was full of pitfalls; while political speeches and infidel writings are so nicely attuned to public prejudices—so much in harmony with popular ideas—that the people are, as it were, completely sounded from "their lowest note to the top of their compass." These men talk of free discussion; but where are they who act upon their talkings? Where are the public men who cast off every rag of hypocrisy, and stand in naked honesty before the eyes of their fellow-creatures? Never had reformers more reason to say, with the eloquent Home,—

Sincerity, thou first of virtues,
Let no mortal quit thy onward path;
Though from the gulph of hell Destruction cry
To take Dissimulation's whining way.

There is hardly a vice that is not born of and nurtured by hypocrisy: yes, hypocrisy is not only the master vice, but the very root and support of all vice. One stream of corruption—political frauds, religious madness—flow from this one source as from an inexhaustible fountain. Politics is reduced to a mere science of villainies; religion is the trade of sharpers; while social deception is the cause of Hydra-headed woes. Such is the state to which civilization has reduced us—a state of madness, disease, and worse than death. Has the rent reached the foundations of society? Are its vices incurable? and if not, how are they to be cured? Is it by telling men what is right merely, or by showing them what is right? Why, the world has been deluged by precepts, and, at the same time, deluged by corruption. Is it by going with, or bravely stemming, the tide of human vices? Is it by asserting or lowering the dignity of human nature? In short: is it by public men showing noble examples of self-sacrifice, dauntless courage, and persevering honesty, or by chiming in with the base crowd of liars, deceivers, and plunderers, that the world is to be radically reformed? Who will be bold enough to say what even one mind entirely devoted to the cause of truth, but one example of integrity of purpose, may effect for the present and future generations? Folly of every kind has had its martyrs; and let but the noble "army of martyrs" for truth's sake once take the field, and victory is certain. Like the sacred band of Thebes, their attack

would be irresistible, and, if destroyed at all, *they must be cut down as one man.*

It is, indeed, free discussion that we want, for that alone will cure all moral evils. Nothing so sharpens our intellectual weapons as what Tuley calls, "the *files* of disputation." But minds cannot, like horses, be well exercised in harness, for mind abhors the bit and the bridle; which, though they may *break in*, cannot strengthen or improve it. No! Discussion should be free, open, generous, and bold; for who can fight well in chains, or discuss with profit in the bonds of fear? Who that reads after dinner speeches, or listens to the declamations of public men, does not feel his humanity degraded by the idol talk about liberty of speech, and that liberty of press, which, "if we have it not we die," all of which is idle rhodomontade, rhetorical rant, or foolish vapouring. We have not liberty of speech and never had. We have not liberty of the press, and never shall have, if some are not prepared to brave fate and all the malice of bigotry. It is because we have not the liberty of the press, that we are morally dead, with no real intellectual vitality. No one, save myself, has dared to try the hazardous experiment, of not only talking about the liberty of the press, but endeavouring to realize it. There are, to my knowledge, many Atheists among your missionaries, yet no one has dared publicly to proclaim Atheism: no! not one. I am not now finding fault, but merely stating the fact; nor is it merely that they are Atheists, but they will also privately and covertly, through the press, declare that nothing short of Atheism will regenerate the world. This, it must be acknowledged, is not the way to "teach truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man;" which, when I have heard them pompously promise from the Social rostrum, it has reminded me of Æsop's crow, that dressed itself up, and swaggered about in the gaudy plumage of the peacock. Nor is it merely in your society that Atheists are to be found, for they are thickly strewn in all directions: there are thousands entirely unconnected with you, or your principles; and yet I am the only man who, without concealing myself behind a printer's name, have frankly and openly avowed myself a *perfect Atheist*. And this is not because I consider it meritorious, or Atheism any thing to be *proud of*, but because I love sincerity, of which I wish to show an example to the world. I do not say as a modern French philosopher, "I have the honor to be an Atheist;" but I do say, that I have the pleasure, the advantage, and the good fortune, to be one. As to pride, were I proud of anything, it would be my *perfect sincerity*, not my perfect Atheism. Those who have ventured to call me coward, will find the best reply in the article on the "Jew Book," which, if not satisfactory, I shall attempt no other; for sure (as Paddy says), such a *cowardly* article never before was written.

Having now balanced all my accounts and settled with my creditors, as becomes an honest tradesman at the close of the year, I shall, in No. 7, commence business anew.

Your well wisher,

CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

[It was the intention of the Editor to have confined the Supplement to his defence; but the copy furnished by him was not sufficient for the purpose; the following short and appropriate essay, intended for another number, has been inserted to supply the deficiency.]

ON FANATICISM AND FANATICS.

THERE are fanatics in all parties; that is, men with more enthusiasm than judgment, who do much mischief, with the very best intention. Fanaticism is the fever of our moral being; in all cases a dangerous disease, but when it assumes the *religious* form, the most odious and dangerous. A fanatic in authority, who thinks he does his god a service by persecuting for opinion's sake, will rejoice in cruelty and glory in human slaughter! He measures his chances of happiness in other worlds, by the mischief he effects in this; seizes upon his unhappy victim, and legally, if he can, or illegally, if he dare, kills him at once, or by inches—by the solitude, the damps, and miseries of a prison, or the sharp and ready axe of the executioner. The fanaticism of politics is strong and virulent, but religious fanaticism is, as observed by a writer in *The Dispatch*, "a poison that tinges and pollutes the human mind on all subjects connected with political institutions and liberty, social or religious." The grasping selfishness, the hatreds and heart burnings of politicians, are bad enough, but the vile hypocrisy, the low cunning, sordid baseness, grovelling vice of religious fanatics, throw all other kinds of moral enormities into the shade. To reason with them is waste of labour, they are deaf, and more loathsome than an adder—reason's voice would never charm them, charm it never so wisely. They seem to be instinctively cruel, and make one ready to say, with *Gratiano*, "They almost make me waver in my faith, and hold opinion with Pythagoras, that the souls of animals infuse themselves into the trunks of men: for their desires are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous."

Fanaticism rarely takes root in the soil of philosophy, the general character of which has hitherto been cold, heartless, and without a spark of enthusiasm. All the beauties of fiction, charms of poetry, and flowers of rhetoric, have been brought to the aid of religion, whilst philosophy has lain neglected, or been treated with contempt, as a suspicious and ill-favoured thing; and taught, if taught at all, in so lukewarm and passionless a spirit, that its teachers might be mistaken for calculating machines, or a corpse newly galvanized.

But that philosophers cannot be offended at the freedom of my expressions, I should fear

to bring another hornets' nest about my ears, seeing that I am tolerably well stung already. The teachers of philosophy, political and social, are unquestionably men of warm heads, but there is a coldness in all their conduct; it has none of the warmth, fervour, and enthusiasm which might be expected to spring from a just appreciation of things. This peculiarity distinguishes, I think not advantageously, what is called the Infidel School of Philosophy. I speak now of the honest men of that school, the best of whom I have found, with some rare exceptions, men of fine intellects, but little warmth or fervour, in poetic phrase, "as though an icy something hung about the heart." As to the dishonest men of the Infidel or Philosophic party, there is not a grain of fanaticism in them, except it be fanaticism in the cause of self: their enthusiasm never reaches higher than their interest; while their mode of teaching is determined by the market price of opinion: playing their own auctioneers, they would knock their own opinions down—or indeed those of any body else, had they the power—to the highest bidder. These are the men of the world; the base money-hunting slaves, who play fast and loose with truth; who turn the field of politics into a stock-exchange, an arena for gamblers, whose business it is to take advantage of the price and fluctuations of public stock. If they make fortunes, it is after the manner of *Sir Pertinus Mac Sycophant*, "by booging, sirs, by booging; and never daring to stand upright in the presence of a great *mon*." They change their party as easily as their gloves, and without one jot more remorse; for, as Churchill says—

Convince they change, can any men do more;
And have not many thousands changed before?
Changed they at once, could any men do less,
Without a single blush that change confess?
Confess it, with an honest kind of pride,
And quit the losing for the winning side.

It was to inspire the lovers of reason with a little enthusiasm; to infuse fresh blood into philosophy; aye, and to make a few fanatics in its cause, that the *Oracle* was published, and that those who pronounced its decrees spoke out so boldly. There is no fear of too much enthusiasm in the cause of truth; and philosophers in general are not the sort of stuff of which fanatics are made. Religious fanatics will dare all in the cause of folly; I should like to see a few more of the same stamp among the teachers of wisdom. A glorious band of thinkers, whose strong thoughts would only be the prelude to strong acts; and whose courage would not require every now and then to be screwed up to the sticking place; or like that of *Bob Acres*, be in danger of oozing out at their fingers' ends.

I would not have them cruel unnecessarily; not without charity, but judicious in the exercise of it; never abusive, but always just; consistent, unflinching advocates of principle, and living examples of the *most* practice.

A DOZEN SUCH FANATICS IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM WOULD INFALLIBLY OBTAIN IT!

It is vain and foolish to look for freedom, while enthusiasm, courage, and principle are all ranged on the side of faith and corruption; and I unhesitatingly declare, that there cannot be free speech or a free press in any country where the most enlightened of its political teachers are reckless of principle and greedy of profit. Let us have one-millionth part of the fanaticism in reason's cause that we have seen enlisted on the side of frantic idiocy, and the work of human redemption will be accomplished.

Let us have but a dozen men politically honest, upon whose integrity suspicion itself may rely—men who, like the North American savage, *cannot lie*, and all tyranny, social, political, or religious, will have received its death-blow.

A ROWLAND FOR AN OLIVER.

HERETICS were first burned in England in the reign of Henry the Fourth, the usurper, in order to please the bishops, who assisted him in deposing Richard the Second. In Smithfield, *Latimer* preached patience, in a pulpit, to Friar Forest, who was hanged in chains round his middle to a gallows, and agonizing under the torture of a slow fire, for denying the king's supremacy; the Lord Mayor, the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, Lord Admiral and Privy Seal, and other nobility, being present; and to this place *Cranmer* compelled the amiable Edward to send Joan Bocher, a silly woman, to the stake. Yet *Latimer* (says Pennant) never thought of his own conduct in his last moments, himself a martyr; nor did *Cranmer* thrust his hand into the fire for a real crime, but for one which was venial through the frailty of human nature.

Below are the infernal items of the disbursements for the burning of *Ridley* and *Latimer*, from Fox and Stryppe.

	s. d.
For three loads of wood-fagots to burn <i>Ridley</i> and <i>Latimer</i>	12 0
Item, one load of fir-fagots	3 4
For the carriage of these four loads	2 0
Item, a post	1 4
Item, two chairs	3 4
Item, two staples	0 6
Item, four labourers	2 8

Then follow the charges for burning of *Bishop Cranmer*:

For an hundred of wood-fagots	6 0
For an hundred and a half of fir-fagots.....	3 4
For the carriage of them	0 8
To two labourers	1 4

Who can refrain from a shudder at this hellish record of expense?

ERRATA.—In a portion of our last number we had, in the date at the end, 1841 instead of 1842.

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Saturday, January 1, 1842.

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 7.]

EDITED BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

[PRICE 1d.]

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

To the SOCIALISTS of ENGLAND.

LETTER IV.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

FRIENDS,

I SHALL now proceed to call your attention to what I maintain *was*, and is not now, the principle taught by Robert Owen.

All associated bodies are expected to have some principle, by which I mean some philosophic conclusion, as to what is right, what is wrong; what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done. Some principles affect the members of societies in their aggregate or corporate capacity, and should be common to all the members; whilst others, which only relate to individual thought and action, are of comparatively trivial importance. No matter for what purpose men are banded together, some one common object they must have, and some one common conclusion or principle, else no bond of union can possibly subsist.

Principles are either good or bad, according to their application; which is here expressly stated, because I have met with some who have thought principle in *itself* good or bad, whereas all principles are abstractions—conclusions of the mind, to be tested by their application, and their value determined by the conduct they induce; in short, the *effects* of which they are the parents. We speak of true principles and of false principles; those which are beneficial, and those which are pernicious; by which are meant *conclusions* drawn from things, and the infinitude of human relations.

A party or associated body is said to be consistent with its principles when the conduct of its members; in their corporate capacity, is in harmony with their published conclusions; the idea of consistency not being necessarily identical with that of truthfulness or justness of action, as a party may be equally consistent in error as in truth—the consistent advocacy of a principle proving nothing for the principle itself. There is much more consistent action upon false, than upon true, principles; indeed, nothing is more rare than to see men act consistently upon the principles which they not only acknowledge to be true, but declare should be acted upon; yet such inconsistent people are

convulsed with rage if the plain, simple fact be pointed out to them. Oh, no! they would fain be thought men of principle, at the very moment they violate it; like greedy children, they would swallow, and yet desire to have, the lolly-pop. Such individuals are not rare-shows, but may be seen in every street and be picked up by the score in every party. Any one who should go a-fishing for such in the great sea of public life, must get strong nets, for without supernatural assistance I will promise them a "miraculous draught."

It is the principle of the honest Catholic, that the church of Rome is the true apostolic church, and only authority in matters of faith. He holds that the bible contains the word of his god, but not *all* the word, the rest being handed down in those traditions of which his church is the repository. It is with him a principle that the bible, as interpreted by his church, is true, but that much knowledge, merely traditional, and therefore not contained in the bible, is also to be received as true upon the same authority. The genuine Catholic also believes that Peter was the rock upon which Christ built his church, the holder of the keys of heaven and hell; and that the Popes, his legitimate successors, are *de facto* heirs to his authority, his god's vicegerents upon earth, the appointed and infallible agents of his will. Such are some of the leading principles of Catholicism; they are clear, distinct, and well-defined; acknowledged by the great body of the faithful, and from which many honest Catholics would rather die than swerve.

These principles, if detestable are not deceitful; they have all the merit of clearness—a child may understand them, and children may act upon them. The Catholic and the *old* Social principle are the antipodes of each other—the opposites, if not antagonists—the north and south poles of the mental-world—and the glory of a Socialist would be the shame of a Catholic. The one proclaims the sufficiency of reason and the absurdities of faith, the other proclaims the sufficiency of faith and the deceitfulness of reason. The Social principle *was* PROGRESSIVE; and the cry of its advocates—FORWARD! Catholic principle is inimical to progression; it fears, it hates it; and all the Popes, from Peter downward, with the faithful at their heels, have stood upon the ancient ways, far better loving a backward than a forward motion. Socialism *was* based upon philosophy,

the noblest and fairest child of science; but Catholicism scouts philosophy, as impious, profane, and only fit for the Devil and his angels. In short, the principle of Socialism was the great principle of progression; its fundamental axiom, that truth alone can regenerate the world, and that full and free inquiry is the only means by which that truth is to be obtained. It was to be a free, not a mock, inquiry; not a partial, but entire pursuit, of truth; which when obtained was to be preached and taught by all its advocates, even with their lives in their hands—without a shadow of mystery, a single particle of error, or fear of mortal man. Catholics hope to keep the human mind pure by keeping knowledge out; Socialists hope to purify by pouring it in. The morality of the latter was intellectual, and the early advocates expected all that is really noble and grand in human action to flow from the spread of intelligence, and the general cultivation of our higher faculties, far more in harmony, than heretofore, with the analogies of things; while the triumph of the Catholic priest is to reign in the heart by the stultification of the head, and make man obedient by destroying the desire for freedom. No genuine priest ever dreamt of other means by which the human race could be kept in order, than by perpetuating brute ignorance. Reform with them always meant innovation. The Catholic priest saw, in contented ignorance, the triumph of his system. The Social teacher, and not priest, saw his triumph in the active intelligence of his hearers. There is just the difference of darkness and light, truth and falsehood—between what Socialism *was* and Catholicism ever must be.

Supernaturalism is the science of all the follies—anti-supernaturalism is its devil or accuser: the science of all the philosophies. These two principles never can amalgamate. They are not so much like oil and water, as fire and water; for, like these, when they kiss they mutually consume. The science of Socialism meant the knowledge and the right application of the powers of nature—*now*, it would puzzle a wizard to know what it means, or whether it mean anything. As a philosophic system, it never had, never could have, anything to do with supernaturalism. Things (if there be any) above nature, are of course above human capacity; but there is no science excepting that which can be grasped by the intellect of man. Socialism, when it meant philosophy, was clear of all religions, for all religions are based on faith, or they have no basis; but who does not know that where faith begins knowledge ends? Religion is a blight upon the fair harvest of reason—man's deadliest curse and, if anything can be, his disgrace.

The "German Jew" has said "that religion is religion because it is not science," in which sentiment I heartily concur, and time was when all Socialists knew this—it was stamped on every letter of their philosophic alphabet;

but of course that was before you were called *Rational* Religionists, or made to believe that there could be any rationality in that which must be either above, or in opposition to, all reason. There was not a single syllable about rational religions, when Socialists called themselves by the very long, but far more rational, name of "The Association of all classes of all nations." Then religion was scouted as insanity; and great pains were taken to turn men's thoughts from the wild fictions and senseless rants of religion, to the sober and delightful realities of cultivated reason. The Socialists were philosophers or nothing; and herein may be seen the great and striking difference between the principle of Catholicism and the then principle of Socialism; for Catholicism forms no alliance with philosophy, it has always contemned and abused it. Churchmen, whether Catholic or Protestant, all agree in this particular, that philosophy should be the handmaid, *i.e.*, servile-slave, of religion. Whereas you, or at all events the Socialists of former times, made the fiction wait upon the fact—calling philosophy the first and the last, the beginning, the middle, and the end—the all necessary for the happiness of man. In short they acknowledged no other guide than pure reason, which the Catholic consistently rejects with horror, as worse than vanity. Am I not right, then, in saying that the principle of Socialism, as I have stated it, and that received and acted upon by the Catholics, are wide as the poles asunder? Surely your parties should be equally wide in their practice!

Nor is this hatred of philosophy confined to Catholics; I mean, philosophy that will not stop when churchmen bid it. No, the priests of all religions are the same—essentially, radically the same; they seem instinctively to understand that they must put down philosophy, or philosophy will put them down. They are right, and I admire them; for they are much more knowing in this particular, at all events, than those who condemn it as a shallow opinion.

When the Rev. Francis Close addressed, a few weeks since, the Church of England Tradesmen and Working Men's Association of Cheltenham, he had the honesty to say, "That the more a man is advanced in human knowledge, the more is he opposed to religion, and the more deadly enemy he is to the truth of God." This I call an honest declaration; and, on my conscience, I believe every syllable of it—believe! nay, I know it to be true, and that's better than believing. It is certain that the more a man is advanced in human knowledge, the more is he opposed to religion; and it is equally certain that the truth of science is indeed a deadly enemy "to the truth (?) of God." The Rev. Francis Close deserves at least a statue of brass for so wise a saying. If he had said *fiction*, instead of "the *truth of God*," it would have been perfect.

Religion seems to me the madness of morals,

the very delirium of metaphysics; its teachers display every kind of mental phenomena, from that of the sharp March-hare to the respectably stupid owl. Mr. Close is evidently an honest man, and therefore I admire him, for I always admire honest men of any party, of any or of no religion. One of the March-hares of the church, he speaks out boldly what his more owlish or foxy clerical friends think it imprudent to make known. He is just such a sort of fiery zealot in the true Christian church, as I was in the false Social church. No wonder, therefore, that I sympathise with and admire him, though I much fear that he will not return the compliment—either sympathise with or admire me.

He declares that pure religion is that alone which gives moral health, and should be the be-all and end-all of popular education, and denounces philosophy as the curse of states; whereas I, like a true Socialist, as conscientiously declare that pure philosophy is the only balm, the only cure for all moral wounds; and I would, had I the power to work miracles, cast out all religions from human society, as worse than a legion of devils.

It is truly curious, and worth the pains, to note some further sayings of the same fiery gentleman, upon the occasion alluded to. "I know," said he, "I tread on tender ground; but I am sorry to see a sort of coquetting on the part of the church with human knowledge and philosophy. It is a leprosy infecting true religion, and pollutes the garb of the church;" which slap at the trimmers in the faith, thus amended, is just the sort of speech I have so often made: "I know I tread on tender ground, but I am sorry to see a sort of coquetting on the part of Socialists with human creeds, religions, and absurdities. It is a leprosy infecting true philosophy, and pollutes the garb of the Socialists." It is most likely that myself and the Rev. Francis Close will be set down as a precious pair of fanatics, the *Hotspurs* of our respective parties; he being a fanatic literally boiling over, who would

Pluck bright RELIGION from the pale-fac'd moon;
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
To pluck up down'd RELIGION by the locks,

And play other mad pranks for *his* doxy, that I would quite as willingly do for mine; the only difference being, that my fanaticism is philosophic, his religious.

I shall, in my next, back my opinion by authority, and show from the published writings and speeches of Mr. Owen that the principle of Socialism was what I have stated it to be. It will, if I mistake not, astonish many of your party when shall have been set before them the bold truths touching religion that were some years since publicly taught by Mr. Owen. It is my custom to show deference, but not obsequiousness, to authority; give to authority that which it is worth, and not one tittle more.

I should be ashamed to be presumptuous, but in all that relates to thought I *call no man master*, and should as little expect to see as to think by proxy. I would not willingly belong to an inquiring body of which there is one head which does the business of thinking for all the members. Intellect, unlike heat and light, loses in intensity by concentration, gaining in an equal ratio by diffusion. What Bacon said of money, applies with equal force to mind: "Like manure, to be fruitful it should be well spread." It is in the intellectual vitality of all, not the wisdom of any one, that parties and nations will find their surest pledge of safety. There are Socialists who, untaught by experience, would set up a mental despotism as a cure for moral evils; but there are blockheads in all parties, so of course you have them in yours. There are some such who take high rank among you; who *do what they are told*; are *practical*, but not *thinking*, men; who never venture an opinion without first inquiring "what does the master say."

Your well wisher,

CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

IS THERE A GOD?

VI.

"We are gravely and repeatedly told that there is no effect without a cause—that the world did not make itself. But the Universe is a cause; it is not an effect: no, I repeat it, the Universe is not an effect, but the cause of all effects. * * *

Return from your useless excursions, enter again into a real world, keep to second causes, and leave to divines their first cause, of which nature has no need to produce all the effects you observe in the world."—COMMON SENSE.

WELL-INTENTIONED ignorance will oft produce all the evils of the most malicious cunning; and the consequences of innocent errors are sometimes even more mischievous than those of the most guilty vices. It is the highest duty of those who watch over human opinions in the true spirit of philosophy, both to teach a warrantable and complete body of truth, as the best corrective of all human ills, and at the same time expose (if need be) the spurious teachings of others; who, whether from error or intention, corrupt and mislead the mind.

With these views, I considered it to be my duty in the last number of the *Oracle*, to publish in my own defence some severe but just strictures on the tone, swaggering conceit, and, more than all, the gratuitous, unblushing falsehood, displayed by the conductors of a paper, called the *Atheist and Republican*. And I shall now proceed, according to promise, not to murder but *dissect*, to *criticise* not *slander*, what I conceive to be certain spurious notions that they have published as the genuine philosophy of Atheism.

This will be called ingratitude by those who are not behind the curtain, seeing that since their first insidious onslaught, not yet a little month—when it was insinuated that I was

little better than a mere abuser, a boasting coward, who shrunk from actual conflict—I have grown in favour, and now it is openly said that I am quite the gentleman, never resort to abuse or play naughty tricks, “except in fair retaliation.” Now I rejoice in this change, but cannot love the changeling; am delighted with the gift, but cannot admire the giver. It is the spirit of persecution, not the spirit of friendship, that has thus exalted me. It is to the firm of Wood and Company I owe the plastering up of my bankrupt character. They persecuted me, and those who had abused were frightened into honesty. I repeat, the defence of myself and my cause, which appeared in the third number of the *Atheist and Republican* delighted me much, but did not deceive me; nevertheless, with honest Sancho, I say, “God bless the giver,” nor look the gift horse in the mouth. I should not have written six words upon the matter, but I might else have been classed among the ungratefals, the most hateful of all who wear the human form. I agree with the Stoics, that the benefit extorted, is not properly a benefit; at all events, we owe nothing to those from whom it is received. A friend stabs at, wounds, and plunders, me; but presently, with a view to his own safety, changes tactics, fights for, and shields, me from the assaults of a common enemy. What gratitude do I owe to such a friend? If he deserve anything, it would surely be a whip or the gallows. Besides, I cannot, consistently with my principles, permit private friendships to interfere with public duties. Any one who may read No. 2 of the *Oracle*, will find, under the head of “Free Inquiry,” the following:—“A free searcher after truth should be clear of partisanship, nay, even the delights that spring from love and friendship should be, if necessary, sacrificed upon the altar of principle and consistency.” It is not my practice to act the political weather-cock, allow my conduct to rise and fall with every wave of public opinion; or, like the floating straw, only be useful as showing in which way the wind blows. I say it is not my practice to shuffle off principle and consistency, wearing, or deserting it like an old garment, whatever may be the practices of others. Upon public grounds, therefore, and not to gratify personal spleen or private malice, I shall proceed to show the philosophical, or rather unphilosophical blunders contained in the paper alluded to, thereby protect the cause of genuine philosophy; and teach a severe but useful lesson to the *thirty-and-one* great unknowns; who, if they have anything in them, it will be an excellent thing to bring it out; for really, judging from their first moral demonstration, it seems probable that, instead of the “*society of all the talents*,” they will form a *nucleus of all the absurdities*.

That Atheism is growing in public favour is abundantly evident; that it will be in time the fashionable philosophy, I have not a shadow

of doubt. Men will bye and bye be quite as anxious to be known as members of the great Atheistical party, as the millions are now to be thought Christians. Materialism is the philosophy; and Atheism, or the denial of a god, its first grand fruit. I have, as I stated in my last, the good fortune, the *luck*, to be one; for what can be more lucky than to cast off the old clothes of superstition and take on the new suit; what Mr. Owen calls, the wedding garment of genuine philosophy. I will not give currency to the false notion, that a large portion, *if not the majority*, of this and many other countries, are Atheists, for I know well they are no such thing. If we say so, to borrow parsonic phrase, “we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.” It is not by deception, or any kind of crooked practices, that men are to be made morally grand, and that the great truth of the Atheist can ever be demonstrated.

Setting out with such wild assertions is the trick of shallow teachers; who, like certain animals, the fox for example, sometimes seem most cunning, when, in reality, they are the most short-sighted.

The plain truth is—a truth which should be known—there are very few Atheists, though many would fain be thought so. Pure Atheism is, I repeat, the child or first-fruit of Materialism; a philosophy which rejects the chimeras of scholastics and metaphysicians about creation, causation, reproduction, or annihilation.

It destroys at once both “*Universal cause-mongering and Universal chance-mongering*.”

That there are so few *real* Atheists is a fact to be lamented, but a *fact*, nevertheless, a knowledge of which should not daunt, but incite us to energetic action. In the rich field of human society, there is indeed much to do; a glorious harvest to be reaped: but let us not mar it, either by putting in the sickle ere 'tis ripe, or by using any other than the sharp scythe of unalloyed truth. The people have not yet learned their philosophical alphabet; the sublime truths of Materialism have not yet been taught to them. How then should “a large portion, *if not the majority*,” be of opinion that “Atheism is the only system founded upon truth; and, therefore, the only one calculated to make men wise and happy.” It has been too much the practice of public men to aim at making the people believe that they understand what they do not understand, which has produced incalculable mischief. The bubble must burst sometime or other, and the day of reckoning is not to be avoided. Frogs should not be taught to play the ox, lest they swell to bursting. It is high time for men of sense to set to work, and tell a few homely truths; not to flatter, but enlighten, the people; not to perpetuate, but destroy deception. A dozen such men would go far to destroy all old delusions, and establish human liberty upon an unshakable basis. Such men, however, must be workers, not mere talkers; prepared to pursue the course

they recommend to others, however dangerous the act, or remote the reward; and remember what Plutarch said of those who were victors in the Olympic games, "they were not crowned when they entered the lists—but after they had run the course."

When the principles of Atheism shall be more popular than they now are, they will not want advocates; and even now many are sitting up as teachers of its principles whose ideas upon the subject are crude and ill digested. It will, therefore, I repeat, be the highest duty of those who do not think or write at random, and whose highest pleasure it is to watch over the interests of truth, not merely to teach its lessons, but, if need be, lay bare the sophistries, and expose the blunders of such ignorant pretenders.

Jean Paul strongly recommends that men should never write upon a subject without having first read themselves full of it; nor read without first having an appetite for it. It is much to be desired that modern writers upon Atheism would adopt the first part of the recommendation, when its principles would not be placed in jeopardy, or at least *misrepresented*, as they now are. But, alas! many of these writers feed little upon the Atheistical dainties that are to be found in books; but set about teaching Atheism without *reading* themselves, still less *thinking* themselves, full of it.

We find, for example, in the first number of the *Atheist and Republican*, such teaching as the following: "These fellows (believers in god) know no more about the *great cause* which produced and maintains the universe than we do ourselves." Which sentence I shall presently show is neither Atheism, Deism, nor any thing else (to borrow a phrase from the writer) than *Universal chance-mongery*. I may here just observe, that the writer who found fault with my language and manner, as grossly abusive and vulgar, has coined some new words, and adopted a mode of expression peculiarly his own—such words as god-mongers, chance-mongers, and such sentences as, "they went up to heaven at least once a week, and sat *hob-nobbing* with god;" then we have, "fellows, imbeciles, meagrim (certainly a coinage), impostors, milk and water cowards, drunkards, debauchees, and fools, with others fit to keep them company," are thickly strewn over its pages. Paley is called "the greatest drunkard and debauchee of his time;" Lord Bridgewater, "an old Deist and fool," and all those who have endeavoured to prove the existence of a god by arguments. *a posteriori*, are set down as "miserable poltroons," "an exhibition of whom will produce a universal burst of laughter, a shout of derisive scorn." The Arabs are spoken of as the greatest "thieves" in the world *except the Jews and Christians*, who will probably think such language rather abusive. Such are a few flowers culled from *but one patch of the new garden of rhetoric*:

yes, gentle reader, *all* these specimens are extracted from the first number of the *Atheist and Republican*, in which I was lectured for descending to *mere abuse*. What a pity the *thirty-and-one* did not remember, that when living in glass houses it is dangerous to throw stones. But to return. The philosophy of Materialism, upon which the denial of a god is based, proves that no "great cause," or big somebody, either produced, or now maintains, the universal fabric. The idea of *universal causation* has been, and is, the fundamental fallacy of all those who have written against Atheism. It is the fallacy of fallacies, which I shall have no difficulty in proving to the full satisfaction of all who are guided by pure reason.

In the fifth number of the *Oracle*, a heavy blow was dealt at this fallacy, the fundamental of Causationists, who never were, and never will be, pure or impure Atheists. Why, it is the fundamental principle of Atheism, *that all is of necessity UNPRODUCED*; I say of necessity uncreated or unproduced, or to those who like the term better, *uncaused*; and necessity, we know, is the strongest of all things. What can be more unphilosophical than to talk about the whole being *produced*, or the universe being *maintained*. when common sense teaches that a *producing power* must always be *distinct from the thing produced*; and that which *maintains*, an existence independent of the thing *maintained*? The very terms produced and maintains, always imply a producer and maintainer, as the word effect cannot be separated even in idea from cause—no man can understand the meaning of the word effect, and then suppose an effect without a cause; for to talk about effects without causes, if not a contradiction, is an absurdity in terms. Materialism teaches that the universe is not an effect, but an uncaused, and therefore eternal, existence. And if it be objected that the idea of the eternity of matter is not satisfactory, I have only to say, that it is not my fault nor the fault of philosophy; and just ask, at the same time, what is gained by flying to the notion of a god, existing somewhere, no one knows where; acting somehow, no one knows how—to explain the existence of matter, that, to our reason, exists everywhere, and every one knows *where*; and acts somehow, and *how* every one knows, more or less? The universe exists, that I know, if I know anything; but who will believe that the most divine of theologians knows as well that a god exists? Mine is absolute knowledge—the fact. His, at best, mere hypothesis. But, who would think of weighing knowledge against belief? Who, but mad people, would give up the great fact of materialism for the wild imagining of theologians? There is nothing in human knowledge *quite* satisfactory, and those who look about for *perfect* satisfaction, will look themselves blind—and then not find it. But because we cannot get all knowledge, are we to receive all absur-

dities? Because a self-existent universe may be difficult to conceive, are we to be living lies and say we believe in a god that never can be conceived? Some one has said, that to expose the absurdity of those who flatter themselves that they believe in a god, you have only to ask them what a god is? and this is true, for they cannot reply to it, either to their own or anybody else's satisfaction, and are driven for refuge to cant and hypocrisy. Ask proof that a god exists, and who will furnish it? None, I promise you, and the wisest in this world always play the fool when they attempt to preach gods. I know we have had the science of gods as well as other sciences; but it has been from Infidelity out-at-elbows, or philosophy maddened by disappointment. But, to my thinking, all that has ever been written about gods, if to be called science, is the science of humbug—the oldest, newest, and unquestionably the most profitable, of all the sciences. No! no! these men of science can give no proof, not even proof's shadow, that anything exists save matter; and to set about proving the existence of matter, is to throw labour and pains away; we require no proof that matter exists—it is its own proof. It is unphilosophical to say it exists *because* it exists—a phrase, seemingly profound, but really shallow; the universe actually existing, and there is an end—not however *because* of any thing. To ask why the universe exists, is to suppose a reason for its existence, and then a because, if there were any, would be reasonable enough; but to ask why that exists which necessarily exists, is the folly of metaphysicians, and has no place in the philosophy of materialism.

Here, then, I am at issue with those who write for the *Atheist*. I say that an Atheist admits not a producer, breeder, or maintainer of the universe; that an Atheist never admits, as an element of his philosophy, the existence of a great cause, which must be set down as blunder the first in the philosophy of these writers.

In a former number was quoted the opinion of Bacon, "That the world could not generate as a whole, but only by way of its parts." So I maintain, that the universe does not cause by way of a whole, but only by way of its parts; and further, that the words cause and effect cannot have any other than a relative meaning. The world cannot generate by way of a whole, having nothing external to itself wherewith to generate. It does not cause by way of a whole, for the sufficient reason that there is nothing but itself to cause, act upon, or modify. As Ocellus Lucanus says, "The universe has never had a beginning, and it is impossible that it should ever have an end; it can neither increase nor diminish, can neither grow nor decay, but must be ever the same, and like only to itself." Who can conceive the beginning of a universe, or imagine its annihilation? Who can suppose that all or the whole could either move, grow, or

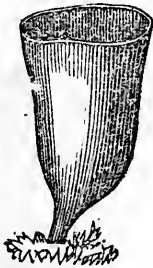
diminish! If the universe moved, it would move out of itself; now the whole moving out of the whole would be a comical kind of motion. It cannot grow or increase, because it is impossible that any thing should be added to everything; and as to its destruction, the notion can only find place amid the ruins of the human intellect. The universe is without change or "shadow of turning;" as it was, it is, and ever will be, world without beginning and without end. To this I take it no Atheist will hesitate to say amen; for the world, or universe, is a fixture—that is, motionless: a positive uncaused, unchanging, self-existent, only, and eternal thing.

To admit, therefore, either directly or indirectly, a great first cause, or a principle of universal causation, is a big blunder, which I have already called blunder the first; while to speak of a power that maintains the universe, as though a universe required propping up, keeping in order, and (like a big baby) some mother's milk, may be put down as blunder the second, by the "gentleman of distinguished talents," who has been engaged to Edit the *Atheist and Republican*, in conjunction with thirty other able writers no less distinguished than himself.

In the same article (What is Atheism?) I find the following: "We know that things do exist, and we know there is sufficient cause for their existence." Had the writer stopped with "We know that things do exist" he would have escaped the ditch of metaphysics, but he was not wise enough to know that there cannot be a cause, and therefore not a sufficient cause for the existence of things, unless we fall back upon Universal cause-mongery, by doing which we shall lay philosophy upon the flat of its back, opening its mouth, shutting its eyes, to see what *cause* will send it; but I must be careful and get off my hobby, lest I should be accused of "treating people with bombastic bravado, merely for the want of something better." Now, in sober seriousness, I deny that any man knows that there is a sufficient cause for the existence of things. We know that they exist, but we do not know that they were caused. To talk of a sufficient cause of things, is the madness of speech, for it includes the idea of a something distinct from things, or, as I said in the fifth *Oracle*, a shadow power that moves all substance weakness. This rash writer goes on to say that "there is no reason whatever for supposing that this cause is any thing extraneous to themselves." And here we have the genuine philosophy of Causationists, who tell us that the universal cause of things is not extraneous, that is, without, apart from, or beside of things; and though he says "that every thing with which we are acquainted must have a cause for its existence," gravely informs us that "there is no reason whatever for supposing that this cause is any thing extraneous to themselves." So here we have, for the first time in

the history of metaphysics, some account of a cause its own cause, a thing produced by itself, and as miraculously maintained at its own charge. Which third blunder makes a goodly trinity—the father, son, and ghost of the new-fangled philosophy.

As a finisher to this chaos of crudities, we are told what has before been noticed in this article, "that things exist because they exist," which, as it was put in italics, was, I presume, meant by the writer for what in slang phraseology is called a regular floorer, a sort of knock-down blow, for every class of objectors; whereas, I think it one of the most stupid sentences that ever was italicised. The word "because" always supposes, or pre-supposes, that there is a reason for; but philosophy would no more attempt to give a reason *for* the existence of things, than *against* such existence: it states the fact that things do exist, and rests there. After telling us that "things exist because," &c., the writer tell us, "that he knows nothing *further* about it," which is a small amount of knowledge indeed; but had he said he knew *nothing at all* about it, he would have been quite right. A few more words and I shall have done with this writer, for the present at all events, as, should I get into prison, it will be difficult to say how I shall be treated, and whether or not I shall be permitted to use my pen and write as freely within as without its walls. Should I be debarred that privilege, the defence of my character, principles, and writing, will rest with those friends who think with me, and are prepared to advocate these views, to wage war or promote peace, defend truth or attack falsehood, with courage, perseverance, and consistency.



(*Busaria, or purse.*)

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

VI.

"I regard it as certain, that the motion of fluids in the interior of animals—a motion which is progressively accelerated with the increased complexity of the organization, and that the influence of new circumstances, to the action of which animals are exposed when spreading themselves over the face of the habitable globe, were the two general causes which have brought the various animals to the state or condition in which we now behold them."

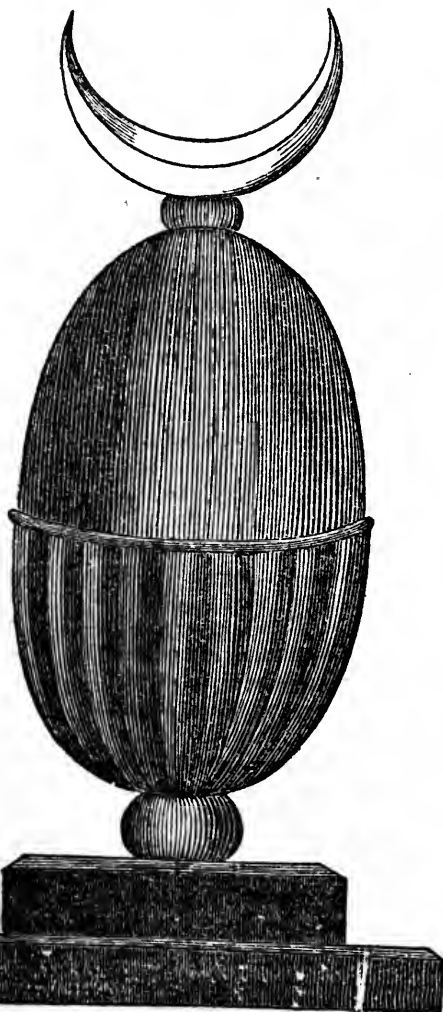
LAMARCK'S PHILOSOPHIE ZOOLOGIQUE.

THE creature called polypus has long been an object of curiosity among naturalists; it has been called the first of animals and last of

plants. Lamarck says, in his article "On the general distribution of animals," "That in the polypi the simplicity and perfection of the organization, though very great, are much less striking and, indeed, observable, than in the class infusoria; in the polypi," he observes, "the organization has evidently made some progress; for already nature in them seems to have obtained a constant and regular form, and to have furnished a special organ for digestion, and consequently a mouth, which is the entrance of their alimentary bag." He distributes the polypi into four orders of class 2 of the animal kingdom; according to which distribution, which I need hardly say is quite arbitrary, the polypi cannot be the first of animals and the last of plants. I have already warned those who wish to study nature with profit, that all distinctions between animals and vegetables, or rather the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, are only human inventions, useful when known as such, for then they aid and do not mislead the judgment.

In a former paper, it was given as the opinion of certain naturalists, that it is impossible to make of one body two living parts, life being one, or unity and indivisible. In the polypi, says Boitard, "It is quite the contrary, for in them life is multiplied, and each fraction of their body enjoys a particular animation, independent of the general animation, although it may in some sense be subordinate to it, inasmuch as that the being makes not more than one. Let us take from one of our ponds a polypus, the green hydra for example, and preserve it alive in a vase of water, if we then take a very sharp instrument and cut it into two parts, the effect will be that we double its being or life, for each part lives and performs perfectly all the functions of animality. Cut it into four, into ten, or even a hundred parts, and it will be precisely the same with each fragment, the only effect being that we shall have one hundred polypi instead of one. If we act otherwise: take two, three, or four polypi, and sew them together by means of boars' bristles, in a very short time what may be called the soldering of their bodies is perfectly effected, and we can no longer see more than one animal, living precisely in the same manner as the others, but having parts double, treble, or quadruple of the other. If you have two polypi, a small and large one, in the same vase, and throw them a little worm, immediately each of them will seize it by one of its extremities and proceed to eat it. When they have swallowed it, they will have drawn very close together, and very soon after they will be mouth against mouth, then, neither of them wishing to lose their hold, the big polypus will comfortably swallow the small one. But let not the reader suppose that he will be inconvenienced thereby, nor will the creature swallowed display any kind of uneasiness, but in the stomach of the other he will continue gaily

to devour his prey, digesting it in the most tranquil manner, beyond the reach of danger; then, when he is tired of his living prison, you will see him pierce the stomach of the big polypus, make his way out, and, as when going in, neither the one nor the other seem to suffer the slightest inconvenience. Life in these animals is everywhere, because there are not in them special organs for the performance of animal functions, therefore it is that a polypus may be turned outside in, and inside out, precisely in the same manner that you turn a pair of gloves, without at all deranging its economy or disturbing its nerves. That which is the stomach performs very well the office of the skin, and the skin returns the compliment by forming the partition-wall of a new stomach, which digests the food just as well as the first."



The Mundane Egg of Heliopolis, adorned with the Lunar Crescent.

SYMBOL WORSHIP.

VI.

The Deus lunus ovatus, Heliopolitanus, or the divine egg with the lunar crescent, adored at Heliopolis, in

Syria, is another relic of ancient superstition, too curious to be passed unnoticed."—MAURICE.

IN No. 5 of *Oracle* was given an engraving of the mundane egg, encompassed by the genial folds of the Agathodaimon, or good genius, a representation of which is suspended aloft in the Temple of Hercules, at Tyre, and is well known to the lovers of the antique. The Deus lunus ovatus Heliopolitanus has also long excited the curiosity of the learned among the moderns. In a passage from Philo-Biblius, quoted by Eusebius, it is said that the earliest and most venerated of Egyptian gods was a serpent, "having a hawk's head beautiful to look upon, who, if he opened his eyes, fills the universe with light in his first born region; if he wink, it is darkness." The history of hieroglyphics and symbols is the history of our race in the earlier stages of its progress. The use of hieroglyphics and symbols is as ancient, perhaps more ancient, than that of language itself. It can hardly be doubted that for many ages our race must have found it far more convenient to communicate their ideas by action, and the use of sensible signs, than by that of language, which either had no existence, or was necessarily imperfect; probably being in the "fossil, or undeveloped, man" very little better than the snorting of a horse, or the chattering of monkeys. All Oriental history shows that the egg has been from time immemorial a symbol of the world; which proves, or, at all events, gives good reason to believe, that the earliest sages of whom we have any knowledge did not, like more modern wise men, suppose our globe to be flat as a pancake, but *knew* it to be oval or egg-shaped. The symbolic-egg plays a conspicuous part in all the cosmogonies of the East, and, together with the serpent, is to be found in great variety, single or combined, in all the Oriental temples. These facts have been noticed by Maurice, who states that "the most remarkable of these symbolical devices is that erected, and at this day to be seen, in one of the temples of Japan." The temple itself, in which this fine monument of Eastern genius is elevated, is called Dia-Bod, and stands in Meaco, a great and flourishing city of Japan. The principal image in this design displays itself in the form of a vast bull, the emblem of prolific heat, and the generative energy by which creation was formed, butting with its horns against the egg, which floated on the waters of the abyss.

TRIAL OF MR. SOUTHWELL.

"An Inquirer" is informed that a correct report of the trial will be published as early as possible.

The writer of critique on "Introduction" has our best thanks.

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Saturday, January 8, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON:

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 8.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. J. HOLYOAKE.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE SECOND PRIEST OF THE ORACLE.

THE Great Lama never dies, so with the priest of the *Oracle*. Lama succeeds Lama, until the god seems immortal, and as such is worshipped. The priest of the *Oracle* cares little about being worshipped, but his immortality he is determined to establish—at least the perpetuity of his right to publish his *free* oracular thoughts. The phoenix is the true crest-bird of the martyr of truth; he dies firm, in the “sure and certain faith of a joyful resurrection” from the ashes of bigots’ fires. Making free with the words of Addison, it may be predicted—he will flourish in immortal youth, unhurt amid the war of error, the wreck of fanatics, and the crush of religions.

The analogy between the progress of physical and mental science is strangely striking. In the early days of physical warfare the battering ram was a favourite weapon in demolishing a firmly-built fortress. But it at length gave way before Friar Bacon’s discovery. Sudden shocks from the cannon’s balls were found much more effective agents of demolition than tardy thumping with wooden blocks. The mental warrior, unless his own head is made of the material of the old rams, may learn something from these facts. Modern science and discoveries are the gunpowder of mental strife, and a few well-aimed shots would infallibly do the business for corruption. Some persons seem so enamoured with folly, that they argue for its “gentle and gradual” removal. Whether they fear they must gaze on vacancy, when the superstructures of nonsense are levelled; can scarcely be determined, but their counsel is that of the man who should advise the modern soldier to persevere in the dull and stupid thumping of childish times, when better arms lie by him. Because the tortoise once beat the hare by its perseverance, laggards in reasoning have fallen in love with laziness; and with sagacity, in perfect keeping with the subject, can conceive of nothing so effective for the establishment of truth as sleepy error. The bounding fleetness of the hare was its virtue—its liability to relax its efforts its vice; but wiseacres have extolled and imitated its failing, and totally neglected its good quality. In attacking error, violence is virtue, it is the test of sincerity, the measure of

earnestness; it requires but good direction. In attacking error too much energy cannot be employed; too much force cannot be brought to bear upon it. Good generalship only is wanted, which, be it remembered, cannot be acquired but by *practice*. Error is ancient and full-grown; truth infantine, and, by over-careful nursing, a rather weakly child. Unloose its swaddling-clothes—give it exercise, and fear not but that its fair proportions will soon be developed—that it will soon grasp the club of Hercules and dash out the brains of ignorance. Prejudice, protected by religion, dull and thick-headed, can only be shaken by being shocked, and is as difficult to pierce as the hardened hide of the rhinoceros. Men of power seldom know pity. Selfishness absorbs human affection, as parched deserts do rains. Now ignorance, fanaticism, power, and selfishness ever stand in the way of truth, and truth-speaking. How are they to be removed? Will supplication move them?—their Gorgon visage transmutes hope into stone. Before gentleness they revel. They have grown insolent through forbearance. They are a rock of obstacles which can only be broken by being blasted. This shall be done, if that, which all admit is everlasting, fail not. The waters of truth shall be poured through the Augean stables of iniquity; at least some sluices in that direction shall be cut, with a view to its accomplishment. In the garden of the world the flowers of poverty and virtue have seldom bloomed, and the saplings of truth have been strangely checked in their growth; while the trees of error have reared their heads, with trunks sturdy and gnarled, and spread their upas branches, poisoning all life far and wide, and withering all green and lovely things. While the former will be tended, watered, pruned, the axe, the sharpest we can lay hands on, will be right busily laid about the roots of the latter, and that without asking any man’s permission, nor caring *what kind* of rookeries may be disturbed.

Many perplex themselves in their desire to determine the proper *time* for attacking error. We may seem inhuman, but we freely confess to the having no sympathy with their sufferings. *Our* experience, say they, teaches gentleness in our dealings with the prejudices of our fellows—we never had, and hope we never may have, such experience. But if asked the question, when

[SECOND EDITION.]

shall honesty appear, and subterfuge be banished? without metaphor, simile, or trope, we answer in one word—NOW. Condescending to answer this is something like doubting axioms; for surely the *time* to attack error was coeval with error's dawn, and it would have been well for mankind had it then been thought so. All days are lawful to do good, *all time* proper to do right acts in. Shelley felt this when he said,

My father, Time, is weak and grey
With waiting for a better day.

Bentham wittily remarked, that if you ask the advocates of things as they are, when reforms are to commence? Their perpetual answer will be *never*. To-day is too soon, to-morrow too late. The proper time is the moment people can be found to commence them, which would have been long ago, had not wealth generated cowards and religion poltroons. On the charge, then, of being "premature," we are perfectly easy.

It is intended strictly to adhere to the principles on which this paper was started. To simply pursue the same course, with singleness of heart, earnestness, and oneness of object. Such a course will perhaps be censured—and perhaps not, when people become used to it; but, if still deemed objectionable, it is remarkably free from perplexity, which will more than compensate for all the rest. The object is not to provoke authority, but to speak the truth. Mr. Southwell has been removed—what then? The plan he sketched, or course he marked out, is as useful and desirable now as it was before, and much more so. He *began* a work intending it to be finished. We simply beg leave to go on with it. Let men learn the quality which the hare wanted—namely, that of persistency, and in the race for mental freedom they will soon leave the tortoises behind. If reminded that danger waylays our course—one of the usual common places—we have only to observe, that every course is beset with dangers, and that the only danger really worth fearing is that of becoming a hypocrite. In daring to be just, people never calculate consequences—it is useless. Satan never argued better, or more properly, Milton never reasoned better for him, than when he said—farewell hope, and, with hope, farewell fear. There is no *hope* for honesty, and they who are fanatical enough to fall in love with it know what they have to expect—and *all fear is folly*. Indeed, it may be questioned, whether any punishment knaves or bigots can impose, is equal in severity to that which is self-inflicted, when the honest mind descends to disingenuousness. Ambition we have long discarded, and we do not expect or aim at uniting all the virtues of prudence, to the simple ones of honesty and justice. We are content with plain things, and leave *respec-*

table and complex virtues to people of higher pretensions. Bigots may rage as the holy spirit directs, and have recourse to their iron or legal evidences—the only proofs of the existence of a god—anything may be resorted to that in their wisdom and mercy (religion is full of this) they may think fit. They may *diversify*, they cannot *increase*, any calamity we fear. That which seems *sure to come* without them is, by far more, fearful than anything **THEY** can bring. With this long-felt and freely given assurance we proceed to other considerations.

Should the utility of the course, matter, style, or manner of these papers be disputed, we may refer to the events of the last few weeks for illustrations of the correctness of every step; of which abundant proof shall be adduced whenever it may be required. The agitation for the defence of Mr. Southwell has raised up armies ready to be marshalled beneath the banners of truth; men who do not merely *wish* success to the great principles of civil and religious liberty, but have bared the arm to defend them: not a few of them veterans, having seen hard service, and now, tired of inactivity, are filled with martial ardour for the onslaught. They want but opportunity and encouragement, and the prayer of Abou Ben Adhem, "that their tribe may increase," will be abundantly answered.

It is not difficult to conceive that the support of the great, and invaluable principle which the *Oracle* is intended to maintain, namely, the right of every person to express, in his *own manner*, his own thoughts, without interference or dictation, might at this juncture have fallen into hands more able, though not more willing. But between the want of inclination and the want of power, this right has been suspended, like the coffin of Mohamet, and the moral regeneration of the world has been delayed. Hence modesty must be set aside, and necessity, like charity, must cover a multitude of sins.

G. J. H.

GENERAL VIEWS AND POLICY OF THE "ORACLE."

The *Oracle* shall speak, shake orthodoxy's rotten bones, and make priests tremble.

AYE, and speak no less firmly, no less unflinchingly to thousands than it originally did to hundreds. From the first time, bold and ardent, it will preserve its spirit and maintain its unimpeachable integrity. And now, trumpet-tongued, it will send forth salutary and sublime truths, that must abolish all god-worship, man-worship, and mammon-worship.

Priests shall tremble, not for their cloth merely, not for the mere transfer of ecclesiastical power from the bloated orthodox to

the lean and hungry dissenter; not for a change of stall patronage only, but for the very existence of their creeds; for the foundation, not for the mere excrescences of their many-hued religions.

The *Oracle* will not be cajoled into suffering its pages to become a vehicle for amusing the gaping, and stolid, and priest-ridden multitude with controversial disputations. Those who are blinded by the dust kicked up by rival mountebanks and jugglers, may occupy themselves with the settlement of such matters as church-rate questions, head of the church questions, the voluntary question—and a thousand others, raised to deafen, stultify, and distract from really *dangerous* investigations. Our province is not to play fantastic tricks, and dip our hands into your pockets; not to kick up a row, and divide the spoil; not to get up an exhibition, and make you pay for it; not to excite a crusade, and persuade you to plunge into the conflict—in a word, **WE WAR NOT WITH THE CHURCH, BUT THE ALTAR; NOT WITH FORMS OF WORSHIP, BUT WORSHIP ITSELF; NOT WITH THE ATTRIBUTES, BUT THE EXISTENCE, OF DEITY.** Neither will the priest, as much as priestism, be the subject of our animadversions; the church, so much as the doctrine. And this, be it borne in mind, is not selected as being the *safest*, but the *most effectual*, course. There never was a greater mistake than the supposition of the danger of exposing the *priests*, for where this not winked at, there would be no vent, as it were, for popular indignation. It is not seen that the priesthood may be too powerful to care about exposure of priests, but not powerful enough to withstand the exposure of doctrines; crafty governments will suffer you to abuse their public men and public doings, but not expose the frauds of the system. March right onward to the foundation of the *pretences* of *all* religions, and they are on you tooth and claw, like ravening wolves; the miserable, mind-enslaved dupes being made the instruments of sacerdotal enormities. Else would not Southwell have been handed over, through the instrumentality of the priesthood, the magistracy, the judge's bench, and the jury box to a punishment shameful and ignominious to them, honourable and triumphant to him.

Nor shall we expend much ink in authenticating or rejecting the half-acknowledged, half-rejected religions, or branches of religions—such as the Jewish and many others, ready to be given up at any time (Jonas like) to save the rest. Sectarian follies and inconsistencies will not so much occupy our pages, as an inquiry into revelation itself; false interpretations, questions of authenticity, of christian historical evidences, will,

for the most part, give place to the exposure of all revealed, inspired, miraculous, and divine pretences.

When the *Oracle* shall have spoken out a little longer, then will be a miracle for the religious quidnuncs to babble about, one that will, like Aaron's rod, swallow up all competing miracles; they may turn it also into a prophecy, if they list. This grand miracle will be the prodigiously surprising union of the various religion-mongers; priests, congregations, and all. The miraculous draught of fishes will be beaten hollow. "Church in danger," will be obsolete; "no popery," a bygone war-hoop;—"the bible in danger," "altar in danger," "*god* in danger," will be the alarm cry, and the robber leaders and the robber bands will stagger forth with some of the old spirit, but with less of the old intrepidity, to dance the dance of death over the bodies of infidel victims. The christian congregations will suspend hostilities, they will stay their interbickerings and strife, their jealousies and recriminations, their mutual curses, and persecutions, and excommunications; their threatenings of damnation—mundane, purgatorial, and eternal—will all be silenced; forward they will rush—the *gospel*-book in one hand, the *law*-book in the other—yelled on in the brutal intoxication of bigot fury to defend their moloch god, by the fine, the gag, and the dungeon.

But after this last encounter, their impotent malice exhausting itself in sound and fury, will the unclean harpies—waddling and plethoric, with great gorging and spoliation—flap their impotent wings, distend their glassy eyes, contract their flesh-polluted claws with convulsive, but ineffectual, efforts; the carrion rooks, the purblind bats, the night-loving owls, and all noisome, disgusting, birds of prey will now, for the first time caw, screech, and hoot in concert, but, dazzled by the unaccustomed effulgency, will be consumed in the bright torch of truth. Like the priests in Volney's conference, about to be smitten by an infuriated people, they will attempt, terror-stricken, to stammer out a palliation; then will arrive the interposition of the enlightened, who, taught mercy by their philosophy—*not religion*—will exclaim, "It is yourselves that cause the evils of which you complain; it is you that encourage tyrants by a base flattery of their power, by an absurd admiration of their pretended beneficence, by converting obedience into servility, and liberty into licentiousness, and receiving every imposition with credulity. Can you think of punishing upon them the errors of your own ignorance and selfishness?"

And the people, smitten with confusion, will remain in a melancholy silence.

Controversial theology is permitted, said

Southwell's sapient judge—no better *prima facie* reason could be advanced, your worship, for our discountenancing it. Is any sort or any manner of exposure prohibited by the law of the land, either parliament-made or judge-made law; is any manner of speaking and writing on laws, politics, or religion denounced by religion as by law established, or by the law of which "christianity is part and parcel," or by the precedent-guided numsculls who sell it out for so much per annum; is any sort of publication solemnly interdicted—we may as surely conclude that the sort and manner are beneficial to the interests of humanity, as that kings, nobles, priests, lawyers, soldiers, moneylords, mill-lords, and landlords are but the tolerated nuisances of a semi-civilised, ignorant, and disunited people.

The pseudo-liberal cant about "good manners," "deference to society," "regard to prejudices," &c., will pass for what it is worth. A little help would be worth a load of advice gratis, and very ill-digested instead of well-considered advice too. We impugn not the motives of these suggestions, but the counsel of your good sort of well-meaning men, by inducing an evasive, expedient-loving, and truckling policy, is oftentimes the most dangerous to observe; leading into all sorts of scrapes, and carrying out less effectually the grand objects we all profess to have in view.

We are all curious to know why the circle of affections and loving-kindness, which is supposed to animate the breasts of the *soi-disant* philanthropists, extends not to the persecuted with the same sympathising condolence as to the persecutors—why do they shut their hearts against the victims, and not against the victimisers—why do they not counsel the legal and ecclesiastical plunderers and hypocrites, and the foul-mouthed scribes in their pay, to "mend their manners," to "pay deference to society," and "regard the prejudices" of those whom they traduce? Were the meed of justice fairly dealt out, we should have no more mock sentimental and mawkish comparisons between the offence of assaulting the prejudices and assaulting the person; and no such sneaking and dastardly commentaries as, "there are faults on both sides," would disgrace the pages of the organ of one of the most advanced societies in existence.

It may suffice to say, we have traced out a course for ourselves; we have decided deliberately, and will act inflexibly, through good report and evil report, "Mid the open and concealed attack of bigot foes and insidious friends," marching straight onward, neither retrograding, swerving, nor halting on the way.

Without the abuse, calumny, scurrility, cruelty, and vindictiveness of the pattern-

reformer,* we will endeavour to explain our meaning as plainly, as forcibly, and as spiritedly. We will not mince our words to polish off our phraseology, obscure a narrative by softening our diction, nor weaken a truth to round a period. We will always call to mind too, that we speak for Charles Southwell. Let our words be heard as echoes from his prison walls; let his undaunted spirit inspire us to lay bare the hollow pretence, and expose the cruel mockeries of all sorts of canters—evangelical, ecclesiastical, and infidel. Through us shall he speak, though gagged by his jailors. He shall be read, though he wield not the pen. His thoughts, in short, shall be your thoughts. As he, regardless of stupid and selfish conventionalities, unmindful of personal sacrifice, of the hate of enemies, the scorn of the indifferent, or the coolness of friends, would lay the scourge on hypocrisy and superstition; as he would abolish mental slavery in its strong hold, so shall the plan of his tracing be followed out; so shall his objects be pursued till he shall again walk forth as free in body as he still remains in mind.

Forseeing all kinds and qualities of persecution, we have, in our turn, prepared for it, and now, the sword drawn and the scabbard cast aside, we await, nothing dismayed, the onslaught of the bigot troops—ye shall have it hip and thigh, whether halting, retreating, or advancing—no quarter! shall be the word, and damned be he who first cries "hold! enough!"

Read this, and mark it well, ye Woodwards, and Bromleys, and Woods, and Wetheralls, and, above all, ye, gentlemen of the jury, enlightened and tolerant batch of free and independent Englishmen, whose fathers were striped, pillored, and hung up like dogs, on the same pretence as that for which ye immured Charles Southwell.—
Look to it! M. Q. R.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

PERSECUTION, versus
PROSECUTION.

MR. EDITOR.—The celebrated Lawrence Sterne observes in one of his works, that "Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world, though the cant of hypocrisy may be the worst, the cant of criticism is the most tormenting." I have no doubt that there are many who know, by bitter experience, the truth of this curious and pungent remark; many who become the subjects of painful emotions, when they behold their productions, or their opinions, submitted to the lash of an enlightened and faithful critic. When an individual, whose opinions are to him as sacred as the emanations of a divinity, perceives the truth of

* See Luther, p. 27, *cum multis aliis*.

those opinions questioned, their merits canvassed, and their absurdity exposed, it is difficult for him to repress the workings of malignancy and revenge. In spite of all that prudence would dictate, in spite of all the monitions of philosophy, and in spite of all the fancied influence of what is called divine grace, the spirit of persecution bursts forth, and the rack, the gibbet, the fagot, and the dungeon, are resorted to by those who have no better argument to offer in support of their faith.

That persecution for opinion's sake is peculiarly christian, is a proposition which no student of ecclesiastical history can deny. If, as some semi-christians assert, it is not sanctioned by that most delicate and veracious of all books—the bible—it has most certainly been sanctioned by the practice of the church. The persecution of the Waldenses and Albigenses, the burning of Huss and Jerome of Prague, the iron rule of the monstrous Inquisition, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and our own Smithfield martyrs, form only a few of those instances wherein the spirit of religion has gone forth to deeds of slaughter and of blood. It is useless to say that these manifestations of a malignant spirit belong exclusively to the roman catholic church. We can adduce other instances wherein protesants have been guilty of as outrageous and palpable enormities as the roman catholics. The followers of the papacy were as bad as saints need be, and as saints generally are, but then they were consistent, while the protesants, who in all other respects are on a par with the catholics, want this virtue altogether. In ancient times, when the chair of St. Peter formed the world's pontificate, the right to free inquiry, and to the free expression of opinion, was neither acknowledged nor allowed. Whenever, therefore, an individual attempted to canvass the doctrines of the church, he might be certain beforehand of his fate. In the present day the right of private judgment is formally acknowledged by protestants, and, indeed, constitutes the fundamental principle of their system; yet, when an individual opposes their religion, and exercises the same right which they claim for themselves, they hurry him off with malignant impetuosity to a dungeon. The unjust incarceration of a Taylor and a Carlile, of a Hetherington and a Southwell, afford sufficient evidence of this fact.

In order to escape the odium which is necessarily attached to all persecution for opinion's sake, our would-be liberals endeavour to point out a difference between persecution and prosecution. I have heard a fanatic of the "first water," and one whose moral character is not of the best description, make use of some such language as the

following: "We prosecute an individual for publishing blasphemy, but we do not persecute him. Between prosecution and persecution there is a wide and essential difference. We tolerate all opinions as long as men confine them to their own bosoms, we permit every person to exercise his judgment upon all subjects, as long as he does not publish the results of his inquiries to the world. The fact, however, of a man entertaining infidel opinions is one thing, and the fact of a man publishing them is another. In the one case the individual is accountable to god only, in the other case he is accountable to the civil magistrate. No magistrate has a right to punish a man for his private opinions, every magistrate has a right to punish a man for publishing infidel opinions to the world." Such is the substance, if not the precise words, of the argument put forth by this religiously-orthodox and *exceedingly moral* gentleman, in support of prosecution for blasphemy.

In this argument the civil magistrate is supposed to be a proper judge of the truth or falsehood of speculative opinions. How stupidly absurd! Can it be supposed, that Old Mother Red Cap, of Bristol, is properly qualified to discriminate between truth and falsehood in philosophy? He must certainly apply himself more closely to the study of Watson's "Theological Institutes," to John Wesley's sermons, and all the other productions of god's *elite*, before he can be fitted for this task. If, however, he would attentively peruse those parts of Wesley's journals, where he describes the visitations of the devil, he would *probably* acquire much useful knowledge, and be better qualified to fulfil his duty than he is at present.

"But you have no right," say our christian fanatics, "to outrage the moral sense of the community. England is yet a christian country; and, thank god, there are laws for the suppression of blasphemy." Then we ask, had the christians any right to outrage the moral sense of the ancient pagans, by denouncing their gods and worshipping a crucified man? This moral sense of the community, however, is a queer thing. The christian would appear to resemble a robust man with a gouty toe. You may infringe on every part of his body but that. The instant, however, you touch his toe, an oh! and a groan, betokens the pain you inflict. So, in the land of bibles and prayer books, missionary, *alias* money-getting, and humbug societies, you may publish any scientific opinion; you may contradict any received truth in philosophy; but if ever you touch religion, the cry of blasphemy is instantly raised; and in order that your soul may be benefitted, the old lady of Bristol, or some other equally venerable personage, causes your body to be confined in a dungeon,

Why are the doughty champions of orthodoxy disposed to persecute? This question can be answered in only two ways: either they are afraid to meet the advocates of free inquiry in fair and open discussion, or they are desirous of gratifying their malignancy by seeing them punished.

There are some people, half infidel and half christians, who maintain that the bible no where sanctions persecution. Then why do not those individuals exert themselves for the purpose of procuring the repeal of those barbarian edicts, the laws against blasphemy? Many dissenting ministers declare that no man ought to be punished for the expression of his opinions, then why do not those ministers petition the legislature to abolish statutes which are, according to their own showing, both arbitrary and unjust? The fact is, they do not like the popular odium which is attached to such cases of prosecution; and, therefore, they occasionally assert that such prosecutions are unjust. But to take any steps towards effecting a repeal of the blasphemy laws, would be too much to expect from any one who is deeply tinctured with devotion. The infidel might rot in prison before any considerable body of christians would petition for his release.

In every book of evidences that the priests manufacture, the French revolution occupies a conspicuous place. The atrocities perpetrated by an infuriated mob are described in all their horror, and represented as the genuine offspring of infidelity. The evidence - manufacturers, however, seldom advert to the exploits of their own worthies, to the cruelties they have practised, or to the sins they have committed. Afraid, lest they should grow presumptuous and high-minded, by forgetting their transgressions, it is my intention to lay before them, in subsequent letters, an account of some of their deeds. This account may have very little effect upon them, for even iron cannot penetrate steel, but it may have its due effect upon the world.

ONE OF THE UNORTHODOX.

A VOICE FROM BRISTOL GAOL.

Bristol Gaol,
Wednesday, Jan. 19, 1842.

DEAR H.—Received the *Advertiser* with your letter, both gave me great pleasure, though the report is meagre; and as heaven helps those who help themselves, I recommend you, and through you, the committee, to publish a full report of the Trial immediately, with all extracts, quotations, authorities, &c. I should like Chilton to superintend the publication of it—he would find the books I used on

the Trial of great use to him, as the extracts are therein all marked. I should wish one to be forwarded to me as soon as printed, for I do not think that I shall be prevented from receiving either books or papers from you; but the authorities are, I have reason to believe, very anxious that I should not write for the *Oracle*. Sir C. Wetherall, as you are no doubt aware, ordered me first-class treatment; but of the precise nature of that treatment I am not yet informed. I shall know in a day or two; and will, if permitted, forward all information thereupon to you. I expect to be allowed my own bed, books, &c., and should very much like to see the *Dispatch* every week, with any other papers that may happen to contain matter of peculiar interest. Perhaps you will put matters in train so that I may be furnished with bed, &c., &c., should they be allowed me. I don't know whether any arrangement of that kind has been made with our friends in Bristol, if not, it may easily be made. The governor of this prison is exceedingly kind, and I feel assured that all he can, consistently with his duty, do for me he will. Tell all friends that I am in good health and spirits, that some kind angel or angels furnish me every morning with coffee and toast; after that, with mutton and other things; and to-day, in addition to all this, I have been sent a nice cup of tea, that is now by my side, and would be perfection itself, if it were but a little sweeter. My paper is all but exhausted, so I must content myself by adding that all things seem working together for good, and all being well that ends well, may you all end well, not forgetting the middle and the beginning.

Yours, in *statu-quo*,
C. SOUTHWELL.

P. S. I want a cargo of paper and pens, but perhaps I can get them of Bristol friends.

[A bed, bedding, &c., has been provided and sent to him. Arrangements were made the day after the trial, for Mr. Whiting, one of his bail, to furnish him with food; the expense to be defrayed by subscription.]

(SECOND LETTER.)

Bristol Gaol,
Friday evening, 29th Jan., 1842.

WAS delighted to receive your note; thought you had almost forgotten me. The papers gave me great pleasure: "Publicola" comes out bravely. I am just as happy here as a lover of liberty can be in a prison. The governor is essentially humane; all, we know, are not men bearing the human form. All that his duty will permit, he will, I am sure, do for me.

He informed me to-day that the rules by which he must be guided in his treatment of me, would be ready for my inspection to-morrow (Saturday). When I know the precise footing upon which all matters stand, you will be informed *toute suite*.

I have just received "Hume's History of England." Oh! how I did hug the delightful volumes. You know out-of-door reading and chattering relieves thought, but here until to-day there has been no sort of safety-valve.

I have no companions here, good, bad, or indifferent. The confinement is solitary; and, in truth, I prefer solitude to the company of the irreclaimably vicious and depraved.

Should like to hear from head quarters immediately, with account including the sayings, doings, and what not of G. J. Holyoake; for I much fear, now he is set a-float, wind, tide, and all the powers of darkness won't stop him. Tell him, if you please, that though I have been, as the Yankees say, cruelly fortunate in my mad pranks, that he must put a guard over his valour, for he has given hostages to fortune, whereas I had not.

I have already said, that I expect to learn to-morrow how much of liberty I am to enjoy; but though the authorities here may determine that I am not to write *ad libitum*, it may be that a first-class prisoner can demand such privilege. Look you to that, friend H., for you are the lawyer for all sorts of unbelievers, heretics, and scamps. With a noted saint, however, I say to you, let every thing be done decently and in order.

Lloyd Jones has been to see me, and spoke of furnishing me regularly with one of the daily papers. If I could have the *Times* or *Chronicle*, one day after publication, it would be capital. Although put up in a hole here, I want to know how the rest of the wide world wags.

In all matters act bravely and honestly. The ball is at your feet, it needs but kicking scientifically. Yours, truly,

C. SOUTHWELL.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF MR. SOUTHWELL.

THE central committee for the assistance and protection of Charles Southwell, prosecuted for blasphemy, present their first report to the public, and to those liberal friends who have so nobly assisted them, pecuniarily and otherwise, in their efforts.

The leading facts of the arrest of C. Southwell, his trial, defence, and imprisonment, are already before the public. The necessity of interfering between C. S. and a law, no matter whether parliament, or judge, made, which has been used as a handle for all sorts of tyrannies, enormities, and exactions,

strongly prompted a few friends of freedom of opinion to organise a plan of operation which would enable them to place the circumstances of his case before the public, whose aid and co-operation they solicited.

In London, and elsewhere, public meetings were held, and subscriptions were collected, which have been extensively reported in the daily and weekly press; and subscription books were issued for defraying the expenses.

The committee aware of the fears and prejudices of the press generally, and it being a special wish on their part to give the utmost publicity to the entire proceedings, engaged Mr. William Carpenter to give a full and faithful report of the trial, which they now have in course of publication. Mr. Hetherington's presence and valuable assistance was secured, and every step was taken under the advice of eminent legal counsel. These, and innumerable other offices, difficult, or almost impossible to specify, but absolutely essential for the efficient conduct of the business, were cheerfully, and, in many cases, gratuitously, performed.

It only remains for the advocates of mental freedom, of every denomination, to come forward according to their various abilities, either in purse, influence, or labour, to help on the work so nobly begun. Much has been done, and much has been subscribed—still, more is necessarily left undone from the great absorption of the pecuniary resources placed at the disposal of the committee.

It is necessary to be distinctly understood, that the committee consider themselves as neither identified with, nor opposed to, the opinions or policy of Mr. Southwell, but as instruments to carry out the views of the liberal and enlightened portion of the people on the subject of the universal right to the unrestrained publication of opinion, whether by speech or by the press.

They cannot but state what it becomes the most pleasing part of their duty to make known—the prompt, zealous, and energetic response of various valued friends in some of the chief towns in the kingdom, namely, Bristol, Birmingham, Sheffield (where G. J. Holyoake has exerted himself in a manner which calls for especial notice), Glasgow, Edinburgh, Maidstone, and other places.

The press cannot be passed over without gratefully acknowledging the kind and manly assistance of some of the enlightened journals, amongst which the *Dispatch*, through its valued correspondent, "Publicola," stands foremost.

The committee's most earnest wish is to obtain sufficient assistance to deliver Mr. Southwell in the shortest possible time from the clutches of an iniquitous law; and to stimulate all sympathising minds to form an extensive ANTI-PERSECUTION

UNION, whose great and glorious objects shall be to abolish all law or legal practice which shackles expression of opinion, and to protect and indemnify all, of whatever persuasion, whether Jew, Christian, Infidel, Atheist, or other denomination in danger of similar tyrannies.

All remittances or communications to be forwarded to "The Protection Committee of C. Southwell, Lambeth Coffee House, 3, North Place, Lambeth."

By order of the Committee,
M. RYALL, Sec.

Feb. 11, 1842.

N.B. All persons having SUBSCRIPTION Books in their possession, are requested to bring them into the Secretary, on Wednesday Evenings, from 7 till 9.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the London Anti-Persecution Union.

	£	s.	d.
London	30	11	9½
Sheffield	3	18	6
Edinburgh	2	0	0
Glasgow	2	0	0
Harlington	1	3	0
Maidstone	1	1	0

Sums received by G. J. Holyoake.

From the Friends of Mental Liberty in Dover, per Mr. George Bennett	1	2	0
From Friends at Padiham, per Mr. Thomas Hull	0	3	6
Four Friends in Dundee, per Mr. John Dewar	0	5	0
Friends of Free Inquiry in Stourbridge, per Mr. John Wilson	0	13	8
A few Friends of Mental Freedom, Trow- bridge, per Mr. William Rose	0	8	0
From Darlington, per Mr. William Rich- mond	0	5	6
Through Mr. Henry Hartzburgh Israelite, Secretary to the Tract Society for the Suppression of all Superstitions, 5s.; from the Socialists of Sunderland, per Mr. James Williams, 5s.	0	10	0

TO SUBSCRIBERS.

The undermentioned sum has likewise been received, and applied to purposes not coming within the scope of the committee's operations, but, at the same time, for the use of Mr. Southwell.

	£	s.	d.
Birmingham, per Mr. Hornblower	4	0	0

Future lists will appear, and any omissions or additions noticed.

CUSTOM may lead a man into many errors, but it justifies none.—*Fielding*.

PRINCIPLES.—The change we personally experience from time to time, we obstinately deny to our principles.—*Zimmerman*.

LAW AS IT IS.—Scarce any man has the means of knowing a twentieth part of the laws he is bound by. Both sorts of law are kept most happily and carefully from the knowledge of the people: statute law by its shape and bulk; common law by its very essence. It is the judges that make the common law—do you know how they make it? Just as a man makes laws for his dog. When your dog does anything you want to break him of, you wait till he does it, and then beat him for it. This is the way you make laws for your dog; and this is the way the judges make laws for you and me. They won't tell a man beforehand what it is he *should not do*, they won't so much as allow of his being told: they lie by till he has done something which they say he *should not have done*, and then they hang him for it. What way, then, has any man of coming at this dog-law? Only by watching their proceedings; by observing in what *cases* they have hanged a man, in what *cases* they have sent him to jail, in what *cases* they have seized his goods, and so forth. These proceedings they won't publish themselves; and if anybody else publishes them, it is what they call a contempt of court, and a man may be sent to jail for it.—*Jeremy Bentham*.

WHAT IS SPACE?—If space be god, then all bodies are situated in god, as in their proper places; then every single body exists in part of god, and occupies so much of the dimensions of the godhead as it fills of space.

If space were god, then god, though in the whole immeasurable, yet hath millions of parts, really distinct from each other, measurable by feet, inches, &c. even as the bodies contained therein; and, according to this notion, it may be most properly said, that one part of god is longer than another part of him, and that twenty-five inches of the divine nature, long, broad, and deep, will contain above two feet of solid body, &c.—*Essays by Isaac Watts, D.D.*

THE BELIEVERS.—I am not afraid of those tender and scrupulous consciences, who are over cautious of professing and believing too much: if they are sincerely in the wrong, I forgive their errors and respect their integrity. The men I am afraid of, are the men who believe everything, subscribe to everything, and vote for everything.—*Bishop Shipley*.

JUDGES.—What shentleman is that upon the pench in hur cown, and her pelt, and hur plack cap? Why marry (quoth Morgan) hur is an old woman that takes hur nap upon her cushion, and then hur tells the shewry her tream.—*A Learned Dissertation on Old Women*.

Published by H. HETHERINGTON, Wine-Office Court, Fleet Street; and sold by all Liberal Booksellers. Printed for G. J. Holyoake, 179, Broomhall Street, Sheffield.—Saturday, February 12, 1842.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 9.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER V.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

FRIENDS,

IN my last I drew your attention to the principle of philosophy, and contrasted it with the principle of faith. The former I contended was the principle of Socialism, whereas the latter is now, and has been through all time, the principle of religion. By principle of Socialism, let it be clearly understood that I mean the principle taught by Robert Owen, and the principle received by all real Socialists before a "*Rational Religionist*" was dreamt of. The point of the wedge is inserted, and I will now, in my sledge-hammer fashion, endeavour to drive it to the head.

You will remember that the Rev. Francis Close was taken as a perfect illustration of the school of faith; of those men who say that religion, and religion only, is the balm for every wound; the cure for all kinds of moral disease, political and social evil. Like that renowned and immortal quack, Dr. Sangrado, they have one perscription, which does equally well for any and every disease of the body politic; Dr. Sangrado, in all cases, recommended copious bleeding and lots of cold water. Dr. Close recommends that his patients should be copiously fanaticised and swallow large draughts of hot religion. When Dr. Sangrado's patients died under his treatment, and sextons were glorifying themselves that so many graves should be opened, the doctor insisted that it was the patients own fault, and that they only died because they did not bleed enough, and did not have enough cold water. So with the quackish Dr. Close, who sees perfectly well that thousands suffer moral death under his treatment, but he contends it is not the fault of the physic, it is not because the people swallow systems of religion, gulp down every kind of fanaticism, or are bled till they are bloodless by their spiritual physicians—Oh no! the plain truth is, exclaim the worthies, the people have not enough of religion, they are too full of blood, and we want far more zeal in the cause of God

Now, when Mr. Berkeley, member for Bristol, spoke at a public dinner of the Anchor Society, he quoted, with many a bitter sneer, the above-mentioned saying of the Rev. Mr. Close. He (Mr. Berkeley) is, as all politicians know, a Liberal Whig. Now the Whigs are very liberal upon occasions, and when out of office, it is not uncommon to find them take rank among the Infidels, and use that kind of language towards the church and its supporters, which if said by any one else when they were in office, would be answered by the Attorney-General, and has made some of their best friends regret that they should ever be at the helm of affairs, making so fine an opposition and so contemptible a ministry.

Mr. Berkeley is, as before said, a Liberal Whig, and when not hampered by his party in office, can speak out famously against the cant of the high-church parsons; and most famously did he lash their sacred hides upon the occasion referred to. Upon that of the honest Mr. Close he had no mercy, and endeavoured to show true religion would be strengthened, not weakened, by the advancement of knowledge, and a general diffusion of education; with many other things equally popular and equally untrue. He was of course vociferously cheered; but at public meetings every one knows that falsehood is far oftener, and more loudly, cheered than truth. Mr. Berkeley displayed abundance of tact and talent; launched his sarcasms with terrible severity; but did not dislodge Mr. Close from his position, did not advance a single argument in refutation of the assertion, that "the more a man is advanced in human knowledge the more is he opposed to religion, and the more deadly enemy is he to the truth of God."

My praises of this speech may appear extravagant, but really I cannot help thinking it one of the most praiseworthy that ever fell from the lips of a churchman; having the rare, the very rare, merit of being honest and true; I say further, that it is a truth which should sink deep into your minds, and arouse you to a new and energetic course of action, if you would be known as a reforming, rather than an obstructing, party; if you would that society should progress instead of retrograde, and that the liberties of our race should be based upon the rock of truth, and not on the

shifting sands of priestly fictions. What, I would ask, is the legitimate, the only sound conclusion deducible from these facts, if not this? that the spread of knowledge will infallibly destroy all religions; which, as they spring from, so they are perpetuated by, human folly. As to *true religion*, or *rational religion*, it means anything or nothing. There are as many *true religions* as conventicles: there is the Catholic *true religion*, the Protestant *true religion*, the Socialist *true religion*, and no one knows how many more *true religions*. There is but one science, one truth in philosophy; but there are more truths in religion than days in the year or saints in the calendar. Churches are divided into high and low; so here we have had a high-church truth and a low-church truth. In philosophy we have a standard by which all opinions are measured; and all men of science joyfully submit their opinions, their discoveries, to the test of experience; but there is no standard in religion; every crack-brained numskull sets up his own, is his own measurer, or is measured by some cunning rogue, who knows how to cut his own and other religious coats according to the cloth.

Without the belief in a god, or superior powers, all religions would be destroyed; it is because men have a dread of, or hope for, something beyond the grave that they set up religionizing. Vulgar selfishness is the

Divinity that stirs within them,

And the religious animal in the direct ratio of his religiousness, is ignorantly selfish, generally cruel, and always cowardly. If you would have men essentially, radically vicious, strengthen the religious feeling, and multiply mad faiths; stud the country with churches, chapels, and monasteries; open gospel-shops in every street, and make gospel grindery the most lucrative of all professions.

Wherever *God* erects a house of prayer,
The *devil* is sure to build a chapel there.

I am not alone in my detestation of the religious principle; the accumulated horrors it has produced no tongue can speak no pen describe; no kind of teaching shows all the mischief of priestcraft. If I write boldly, others have shown the way, and the most popular writers of the newspaper press are, I am happy to say, arrayed in deadly opposition to every kind and form of religion. It is really quite refreshing to read such passages as the following from the *Weekly Dispatch* of Sunday, December 26th, 1841:—"We have hearts as bold and spirits as determined as the French, and minds equally enlightened and elevated; but our people are clergy-drugged, they are stupified with the poison of fanaticism, and this tinges and pollutes their minds on all subjects connected with political institutions and social liberty, civil or religious.

Our people, of all things, dread religious freedom, and they grasp with bloodhound teeth every opportunity to sacrifice any individual who has exercised it with a manly independence. The aristocracy foster this blind tyranny and ignorance, being well aware that religious freedom being established, the perfection of political and civil liberty ensues. The upper classes laugh in their sleeves at the idea of men being such fools as to condemn each other for religious libels or blasphemy, but they cunningly reflect, that if that absurdity is dispelled, political libels will follow, and delusion vanish after delusion, until not an abuse or imposition in the state will be any longer held sacred." Now I am sure that nothing I have written, or ever expect to write, can go beyond this in condemnation of religious teaching, or a clergy-drugged people. The fooleries of religion are, indeed, the delusion of delusions; and with it will vanish all others, when, as the writer justly says, not an abuse or imposition in the state will any longer be held sacred.

All religion, says a modern anonymous writer, is an edifice in the air; *theology being nothing more than human ignorance of natural causes reduced to system*. To learn the true principles of morality, men have no need of theology, of revelation, or gods; they have need only of reason; they have only to enter into themselves, to reflect upon their own nature, consult their sensible interests, consider the object of society, and of the individuals who compose it, and they will easily perceive that virtue is the interest, and vice the unhappiness of beings of their kind. Such is the teaching of sound philosophy, and all experience. We have need only of reason to make men just and moral; and need not religion, with its chimeras, absurdities, and phantasmagoria. This is the principle of philosophers: it was the principle of Socialists.

If such be the true state of the question, if religion be this curse, it follows that the most effectual measures should be taken to destroy it; and that until it is destroyed, the human race cannot be virtuous, free, and happy. This, I will presently show, was Mr. Owen's opinion, whatever it may be now; I will show from his published speeches and writings, that his opinion distinctly was, that without the utter destruction of every kind and form of religion, nothing like a rational system of society could possibly exist. I have given you church authority for church principles, and I will now give Social authority for Social principle. "There are," says Montesquieu, "means to prevent crimes, there are pains and penalties; there are those to reform manners, these are good examples:" and this has been the opinion of the wisest in all nations in all times. That such are the opinions held by Mr. Owen, is known to all who

know anything about his views and objects ; but in consequence of the trimming, time-serving policy that he has pursued of late, and the evidently careful manner in which he has, more especially during the last year or two, attempted to soften his expressions, and make them dove-tail in with religious prejudices, may have left many of the "young disciples of the system" in doubt as to what Mr. Owen's opinions upon these matters really are, if, indeed, it has not entirely misled them.

My language is in general tolerably strong, especially when treating on the mummeries and mischiefs of religion ; but when Mr. Owen was in his prime, he would beat me all the world to nothing in this particular. Let us take, as a specimen, the following from an address delivered by Mr. Owen at the adjourned meeting at "the City of London Tavern," August 21, 1817. "It may now be asked—If the new arrangements proposed really possess all the advantages that have been stated, why have they not been adopted in universal practice, during all the ages which have passed ? Why should so many countless millions of our fellow-creatures, through each successive generation, have been the victims of ignorance, of superstition, of mental degradation, and of wretchedness ? My friends, a more important question has never yet been put to the sons of men. Who can answer it ? who dare answer it, but with his life in his hand ; a ready and willing victim to truth and to the emancipation of the world from its long bondage of disunion, error, crime, and misery ? Behold that victim ! on this day—in this hour—even now—shall those bonds be burst asunder, never more to re-unite while the world shall last. What the consequences of this daring deed shall be to myself, I am as indifferent about as whether it shall rain or be fair to-morrow. Whatever may be the consequence, I will now perform my duty to you, and to the world ; and should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and know that I have lived for an important purpose. Then, my friends, I tell you, that hitherto you have been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, SOLELY in consequence of the errors—gross errors—that have been combined with the fundamental notions of EVERY religion that has hitherto been taught to men. And, in consequence, they have made man the most inconsistent, and the most miserable being in existence. By the errors of these systems, he has been made a weak, imbecile animal ; a furious bigot and fanatic ; or a miserable hypocrite ; and should these qualities be carried, not only into the projected villages, but into Paradise itself, a Paradise would be no longer found." Again, "Ignorance, bigotry, and superstition may again, as they have so often done before,

attempt to force belief against conviction—and thus carry the correct-minded, conscientious victim to the stake ; or *make a human being wretchedly happy !* Therefore, unless the world is now prepared to dismiss all its erroneous religious notions, and to feel the justice and necessity of publicly acknowledging the most unlimited religious freedom, it will be futile to erect villages of union and mutual co-operation ; for it will be vain to look on this earth for inhabitants to occupy them, who can understand how to live in the bond of peace and unity ; or who can love their neighbour as themselves ; whether he be Jew or Gentile, Mohamedan or Pagan, Infidel or Christian ; any religion that creates one particle of feeling short of this, is false, and must prove a curse to the whole human race !" You will, I think, agree that few things in the way of invective can go beyond this, it is dignified, forcible, and terribly severe. Its character may be summed up in the word—masterly. Now, I ask, and should like an honest reply to the question, whether times are greatly changed, bigotry less rampant, or religion less mischievous than in 1817 ? Is there less poverty, vice, and human degradation ? Are the poor better fed, better educated, in a word, more happy, than at that period ? To me it appears that religions are just as mischievous, systems of theology quite as absurd, and priests every bit as furious, as upon that very day. Now as then a rational system of society is an impracticable chimera, an air-built castle, "solely in consequence of the errors—gross errors—that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to man."

If then such were the opinions of Mr. Owen, why are they not so now ? and if they are, why does he not express them with equal candour and boldness ? *Thereby hangs a tale*—too long now to tell—which, if well told, will throw great light upon the past proceedings, present position, and future prospects of your party—a party which shall not, if I can help it, dwindle into a sect, nor block up, instead of opening the way which leads to reform. It shall not, if I can help it, be a party of canting hypocritical time-servers, but bold, honest, and energetic men ; it shall not, finally, be a religious party, except in spite of me and reason ; for all religious parties are mere parties for the perpetuation of humbug. They begin, proceed, and finish in deception ; and I tell you in the very words of your Founder, that should deception, or the qualities which it infallibly generates, "be carried not only into the projected villages, but into Paradise itself, a Paradise would no longer be found."

Your well wisher,
CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

IS THERE A GOD ?

“Ye too, believers of incredible creeds,
Whose faith enshrines the monsters which it breeds,
Who, bolder even than Nimrod, think to rise
By nonsense heaped on nonsense to the skies.”
Lalla Rookh.

PEOPLE often imagine such droll things that they cannot tell how they came by their thoughts. The task would be difficult but by no means impossible, to trace these wild conceptions to the early associations of infancy, when, as Meslier has well remarked, their nurses were their theologians. The poet in the above lines would carry us among the orientals as though such vagaries would be frozen to death in our nothern climes—he places us among Mocanna’s fierce followers, or the frenzied fire worshippers, where our wonder is more likely to evaporate seeing that the air is more rarefied than here. A sly fellow is Tom Moore to carry us abroad to contemplate that we leave at home. For when we arrive there, like poor Selkirk,

—Alas, recollection at hand
Soon hurries us back.

We leave our country when we need not leave our streets in order to see religious Nimrods gone mad.

Setting aside all argument upon the existence of a god, some persons with, an almost enviable assurance, claim evidence for the dogma upon the ground that a supposed alliance with eternal powers is flattering to human vanity. “The ideal or fancied connection of man with the powers of the universe is always an exalting reflection” said the author of Mammon, one day in our hearing. This is proceeding upon the plan of the seducer who flatters in order to ruin. This species of complimentary speciousness is continually used to supply the place of reason, and he who would destroy or, more properly, impeach the justness of such a course is industriously cried down as one who degrades his kind. We will see; first however premising, by way of exordium, that the promise of protection and favour from the gods to the obedient and devout has been in all ages the chief sugar-plum given by priests to stop the voice of the children of reason.

If the deity be, as the author of the *Essay towards a Science of Consciousness* contends—a “spiritous old man in the clouds,” the dignity of our alliance with him is somewhat questionable. Allowing however with Young that he is a “great godhead”—the cost of supporting his retinue among us is more than ten millions of pounds, which at the rate “poor devils” in Leeds have to live and labour would save all the destitute in the empire from death. Such an alliance as this, it must be conceded, is more expensive than flattering, and leaves us wiseacres in the condition of those who beggar themselves for the sake of respectable

company. Again, there can be no safe and honourable alliance except between equals. When a superior and inferior unite hectoring and haughtiness, sycophancy and submission are the consequences on one side and the penalties on the other. Has it not always been so with man’s fancied connection with the gods. King and slave, prostration and damnation are the well known items in the bills of alliance. Further; dependence on any one whoever he may be, and whoever may inculcate it, means non-dependence on yourselves, which is fatal to all independence, all dignity, all virtue. It will be asked, does not the father demand the submission of the child? No wise or generous father does, for both are unmeasurable losers thereby. Hence some good philosophers in modern days have sought to remedy the liability of such mutual dependence at the earliest age possible. Mankind would long ago have given up the position we have been analysing, had they not been to omuch like

Your preaching zealots, too inspired to seek
One grain of meaning, for the things they teach.

To suppose the reality, for a moment only, of any relationship with deities of the kind mentioned is to foster power in the hands of those who have abused it in every age of the world; and besides it extends the odious favouritism and partial partizanship of kings and courts among all social relationships—destroys the equality of men, the first principle of all true liberty, and fosters fanaticism and that most odious spiritual pride which has ever spread like a pestilence, cursing and cursed.

There is one view, among many others, too important to be overlooked with regard to this question. When men boast relationships it is natural to inquire into the kind of beings or persons with whom it is claimed. Some associations are detestable and degrading. What is this? If not positively questionable it is more than suspicious. “The dispensations of Providence,” says observing Arthur Young, in his *Travels in France*, “seem to have permitted the human race to exist only as the prey of tyrants, or as it has made pigeons for hawks;” which goes very far, if human judgment is worth anything, to impugn the benevolence of a creator. And, while every cruelty and injustice—the late Bristol conviction to wit—is sanctioned by his name, while honesty is a reproach, uprightness regarded as the want of “experience,” integrity proclaimed as “rashness,” and duplicity, hypocrisy, and villainy, the certain and only passports to public respect and regard—the inference is logically certain, whatever it may be religiously, that god either connives at deception, or sleeps like a dormouse in the burrow of Astræ. Should common sense walk up and

down the world, looking on fat and gorgeous piety rolling in splendour, or lolling on down; and humble industry, merit, and worth, pining in poverty, clothed in rags, oppressed, disregarded, and dying in despair? Humanity and theologians are doomed to differ about his attributes of goodness and mercy; either he is to be pitied for want of power, or benevolence revolts at his want of kindness. His character, then, so unsettled as far as consistency is concerned, must be seen by worldly wisdom through divine spectacles, before anything worth boasting of in the way of the assumed relationship can be discovered. Granting he is the contrary, who are his allies? men whose moral grandeur exalts and ennobles all human thoughts—atlases of intellect making the relationship plausible? No; but creatures who lose by comparison with beasts, whose religion is vagary cowed, or folly systematised. Such claimants of familiarity and relationship with the gods, reminds us of the sorry scamps whom the philosopher Bius found supplicating for deliverance in a storm; "be silent, you scoundrels," exclaimed he, "for if the gods find you here we are gone instantly." For these, and such like reasons, do we demur to those self gratulatory souls who bias mankind by vanity in favour of the supernatural, where logic fails to establish any grounds on which it can rest. We shall be told, no doubt, that,

Our jobbernols can never climb
To comprehend the true sublime.

Until some new version, different from any extant, be imported, with all due humility we confess it. Thus, when mankind look no longer through priestly glasses, "darkly," they will see clearly that conceit, imagination, pride, and prejudice, answer like echoes only to the question we ask—"Is there a God?" It would not have been left to the nineteenth century thus to argue, were it not that unthinking credulity has left people so impenetrable to conviction, that the very pickaxes of thought make little impression on their skulls.

G. J. H.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

NO. VII.

"There is, I repeat, no absolute line of demarcation between one organism and another; they seem all to be formed upon the same general principles, and almost throughout of the same identical materials. Indeed, it has been maintained that man is composed of divers inferior organisms, or at least, that he passes through them *in utero*; but this is not strictly true."—Lecture on the "Study of Anatomy," by THOMAS KING, M.D.

IN attempting the continuation of the above article, the present writer is fully aware of the difficulties attending the task he has undertaken; both as relates to the subject itself, and to the circumstance of his following one so

vastly superior as a writer to anything his ambition would lead him to hope for. And the only reasons which induce him to be thus venturous are, that for several years he has entertained the opinions treated of in this essay, and was led to believe, during his acquaintance with the late editor, that a striking similarity of ideas existed in the minds of each in reference to it; which circumstances, in connection with the interest it has excited, more especially with the female portion of our readers, renders its continuation advisable. Still, lest the public may be led to expect too much, the writer would beg leave to say, that, until the present exigency, he has not attempted to systematise his ideas, and arrange the facts which he has met with; and whilst he hopes for their indulgence in the event of trifling errors, he shall be happy to receive strict and candid criticism from any parties who may be searching after truth.

THE theory of a regular gradation, or the change of one mode of natural phenomenon to another, without supernatural interference, is in direct opposition to the almost universally received opinions of all countries and all ages; but more especially to the various cosmogonies, or world-formation theories, which, as a first principle, contend for the comparatively sudden and perfect formation of the earth, and of all modes of matter possessing the property of increasing from within outwardly, with organs for that purpose, and called organic, or organised bodies; differing very materially, in this particular, from stones, crystals, &c., which are simply an aggregation of atoms, forming layers or plates *externally*, and not considered to *grow*, in the general acceptance of the term (excepting by a few persons), but rather to *increase*.

The, to our minds, narrow views of the religious world in relation to the important principles involved in this question, would appear to be the inevitable consequence of man's long infancy, both zoologically and socially considered; and which, even in the present advanced age, prevents the acquirement and general application by society—as a result of its calm and unprejudiced consideration—of the facts which form the sciences, *every one* of which tends to the conclusion, that the inherent properties of "dull matter," as some *bright* portions of it have designated it, are good and sufficient to produce all the varied, complicated, and beautiful phenomena of the universe—however numerous the differences in other spheres may be in addition to those of our own (which expression of opinion, according to Mr. Grace Smith, prosecuting counsel against CHARLES SOUTHWELL, is, we presume, *blasphemy**). For believing matter to be infinitely extended, to be infinitely

* See Trial, pp. 18.

divisible, and capable of infinite combination or arrangement of the particles—we see no reason in flying to supernaturalism for an explanation of the ultimate causes which produce the results we witness, such an appeal inevitably increasing, and not lessening, our difficulties, making

Us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.

A very common objection to this theory is, that, "Granting, for the sake of argument, the probability of a gradual *change* from simple to complex in the organised world, up to the present period, how is it, seeing that the same properties are still possessed by matter, and are eternal, unchanging, that we do not see instances of *spontaneous* formations of men and animals now, which it is asserted took place at one time long antecedent?"

This, as it is supposed, insuperable objection, we will reply to before proceeding further. In the first place, then, we do not contend, in order to support our theory, for a spontaneous, unforced action (to use Walker's definition) by a portion of matter at any period; but, on the contrary, are of opinion that those particles of matter which formed the first organic body, at the remotest epoch in the world's existence (supposing it not to be eternal), were *compelled*, by the then condition of other portions, to take that form whatever it might be; which form continued without change, so long as the circumstances favourable for its development in the first instance remained the same, or were not changed sufficiently to materially interfere with its existence; that it adapted itself to alterations in the surrounding circumstances which were continually taking place; and, in process of time, resulted in a form so distinct from the first, as, without the intermediate modifications, to warrant the supposition that it never could have been produced from, or had any connexion with, it. These opinions it will, from time to time, be the object of the writer to show, are based upon generally admitted and indisputable facts.

Secondly, that it would be equally reasonable to inquire, why ignorant, savage man does not make use of the appliances of civilized life to increase his comforts, and secure himself from the vicissitudes of his nomadic life, without his first going through the various changes incidental to his progress to the condition occupied by his more advanced brother, as to expect matter to change from molecular to the most complicated organic form, without first taking the numberless conditions we know to be intermediate between those antipodes. For, as in the inorganic world we have gases, fluids, solids; so in the organic—very simple, less simple—complex, more complex, &c., which gradation is continued, to our social condition:

for we have our birth, infancy, semi-maturity, our maturity; and with states as with all else. There is a universal principle in existence of gradual, never-ceasing change; and the vulgar notion that man forms the last link in a chain which will never be continued beyond him is the consequence of interested teachings, which have kept men listening to opinions, instead of examining facts and drawing deductions. For the reason which obviously presents itself why man has not undergone any extensive organic alteration since his residence here is, that no change of sufficient importance to endanger his existence as a species has taken place in the condition of the elements by which he has been surrounded during that period, and which alone could produce such a result; but that he has at different times and in different ways been modified by circumstances will be shown in future numbers.

Thirdly, that supposing matter to have been in a condition at some period to produce perfect man, independently of any other organization (which, as we have explained before, we do not imagine or contend for), it does not follow that it should be in the same condition now, because its innate properties are the same; else, by a parity of reasoning it may be urged, that inasmuch as the ichthyosaurus, plesiosaurus, pterodactylus, and other antediluvian animals, once lived upon this globe, which was then eminently fitted for such existences—one of the strong arguments for our theory made manifest by geology—that it must necessarily be in a condition to support them now, although it is well known such is not the case. Again, would it not be as reasonable to demand, why it does not produce granite, mica-schist, chalk, &c., now, as well as at a previous period? The result of experience and experiment satisfactorily shows that the earth has had its changes and progressions; and what is true of the whole must be true of the parts, and *vice versa*.

Another *strong* objection still remains; viz., the supposed possession of an *immaterial* principle by man; which, if true, cannot be the result of *material* influences, and entirely overthrows our position;—of this we will speak next week.

W. C.

A VOICE FROM BRISTOL GAOL.

Thursday Morning, Feb. 3, 1842.

DEAR _____,

* * * I am allowed, by the rules for First-Class Prisoners, to see friends in my own cell three times each week. The hours for visitors are from 10 or $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10 till 12, or thereabouts. The days, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. All here has been very unsettled, in consequence of mine being a peculiar case, and the first of the sort known in this prison. I

can't move an inch out of my cell without gaolers at my heels. I see no objection to my writing to you for your own or any one else's edification you please. The governor may, if he pleases, read all I write; but the magistrate, Mr. Herepath, informed me that it is not his wish, nor that of his brother magistrates, to draw the rein too tightly, or unnecessarily fetter my mind. He added, that anything written against the Christian religion, &c., would be stopped; but this, of course, will not hinder me from writing anything truly respectable; so that the Socialists may still hear from me now and then. Should like Lyall's or Buckland's writings on geology, if comeatable.*

Tuesday Afternoon, Feb. 8, 1842.

DEAR CRONY,

Just received yours, and couldn't drink my soup or eat my bit of pancake for joy. It took away my appetite; but don't be alarmed, that will come again, I promise ye. Will do all that you advise. Petition *immediately*. Should like to hear some account of ball [at John Street]. Another public meeting, that's right, keep the game alive, but be careful to come off winners. Long to see how you proceed, but fail you can't. Tell the noble army of martyrs that their kind sympathy makes light the burthen of imprisonment. Let me see, on Saturday, I shall have been four weeks here; four deducted from fifty-two, leaves forty-eight. Come, we are going on bravely.

Affectionately yours,
C. SOUTHWELL.

THEOLOGY.—When we coolly examine the opinions of men, we are surprised to find, that in those, which they regard as the most essential, nothing is more uncommon than the use of common sense; or, in other words, a degree of judgment sufficient to discover the most simple truths, to reject the most striking absurdities, and to be shocked with palpable contradictions. We have an example of it in theology, a science revered in all times and countries, by the greatest number of men; an object they regard as the most important, the most useful, and the most indispensable to the happiness of societies. Indeed, with little examination of the principles, upon which this pretended science is founded, we are forced to acknowledge, that these principles, judged incontestable, are only hazardous suppositions, imagined by ignorance, propa-

gated by enthusiasm or knavery, adopted by timid credulity, preserved by custom, which never reasons, and revered solely because not understood. "Some," says Montagne, "make the world think that they believe what they do not; others, in greater number, make themselves think that they believe what they do not, not knowing what belief is."

In a word, whoever will deign to consult common sense upon religious opinions, and bestow in this inquiry the attention that is commonly given to objects, we presume interesting, will easily perceive, that these opinions, have no foundation; that all religion is an edifice in the air. That it represents, in every country, to the different nations of the earth, only romances void of probability, the hero of which is himself composed of qualities impossible to combine; that his name, exciting in all hearts respect and fear, is only a vague word, which men have continually in their mouths, without being able to affix to it ideas or qualities, which are not contradicted by facts, or evidently inconsistent with one another. The idea of this being, of whom we have no idea, or rather, the word by which he is designated, would be an indifferent thing, did it not cause innumerable ravages in the world. Prepossessed with the opinion, that this phantom is an interesting reality, men, instead of concluding wisely from its incomprehensibility, that they are not bound to regard it; on the contrary infer, that they cannot sufficiently meditate upon it, that they must contemplate it without ceasing, reason upon it without end, and never lose sight of it. Their invincible ignorance, in this respect, far from discouraging them, irritates their curiosity; instead of putting them upon guard against their imagination, this ignorance renders them decisive, dogmatical, imperious, and even exasperates them against all, who oppose doubts to the reveries which their brains have begotten. What perplexity arises, when it is required to solve an insolvable problem! Restless meditations upon an object, impossible to understand, in which, however, he thinks himself much concerned, cannot but put man in a very ill humour, and produce in his head dangerous transports. Let interest, vanity, and ambition, co-operate ever so little with these dispositions, and society must necessarily be disturbed. This is the reason that so many nations have often been the theatres of the extravagances of senseless dreamers, who believing, or publishing their empty speculations as eternal truths, have kindled the enthusiasm of princes and people, and armed them for opinions, which they represented as essential to the glory of the deity, and the happiness of empires. In all parts of our globe, intoxicated fanatics have been cutting each other's throats, lighting funeral piles, committing, without scruple

* Any persons having the above, and willing to lend them, would greatly oblige C. S.'s friends, by leaving them at Mr. Hetherington's, Wine Office Court, Fleet Street; or a note stating the circumstance would be equally acceptable, and meet with immediate attention.

and even as a duty, the greatest crimes, and shedding torrents of blood. For what? To strengthen, support, or propagate the impertinent conjectures of some enthusiasts, or to give validity to the cheats of some impostors, in the name and behalf of a being, who exists only in their imagination, and who has made himself known only by the ravages, disputes, and follies he has caused upon the earth. Fierce and uncultivated nations, perpetually at war, have in their origin, under divers names, adored some God, conformable to their ideas; that is to say, cruel, carnivorous, selfish, blood-thirsty. We find, in all religions of the earth, a *god of armies*, a *jealous god*, an *avenging god*, a *destroying god*, a *god* who is pleased with carnage, and whom his worshippers, as a duty, serve to his taste. Lambs, bulls, children, men, heretics, infidels, kings, whole nations are sacrificed to him. Do not the zealous servants of this so barbarous god, even think it a duty to offer themselves as a sacrifice to him? We everywhere see madmen, who, after dismal meditations upon their terrible god, imagine, that to please him, they must do themselves all possible injury, and inflict on themselves, for his honour, invented torments. In short, the gloomy ideas of the divinity, far from consoling men under the evils of life, have everywhere disquieted and confused their minds, and produced follies destructive to their happiness. — *Preface to "Common Sense."*

A MINUTE'S ADVICE TO THE DIFFIDENT.—Many persons will express themselves freely in one assembly, who will say nothing in another; loud in the country, silent in the town; confused at home, unembarrassed away. Why is all this?—one would think that truth was the creature of custom and place. Persons subject to the variation of feeling always painful, to which we have made reference, should remember, that though water will boil at different temperatures at different elevations, conviction, like mathematical theorems, if true in one place, are true in another. All individualisms should fade before truth; we should forget ourselves in its contemplation, and, like Demosthenes, contrive that our hearers forget the speaker, and the reader the writer, under the influence of the subject. If satisfied of the truth of your opinions, do not vary with the locality you occupy, but freely let them be known. If you think your views are fully spread in your new sphere—a common apprehension—be careful you are not assuming too much; all men are essentially different, have of necessity received different impressions; and your ideas are likely, nay, certain, to vary from all other persons. All reflecting men repose on their own views—hold them independently. As action is the first element of oratory, so confidence in

one's self is the first element of a great and free mind. Men keep back their opinions—leave the field to a few, and then complain of the monotony they themselves make. Where the majority of men can be induced to enter the arena of mental conflict, it will not be to suffer from sameness, but to feel astonishment at the variety. Difference is the daughter of comparison; and legion the mother of every great truth, it being always inducted from many facts.

A FEW WORDS TO THE SILENT.—It is an important duty we owe to society to express, on all proper occasions, our thoughts. But it is often difficult to induce persons to do so, who, nevertheless, acknowledge the truth of the foregoing proposition. The case may be reasoned thus: If I believe my views to be superior to those entertained by any other person, I must feel ambitious to express them; but if I do not think so, still should I freely express them, that they may stand or fall, according to their worth or worthlessness. All opinions should be freely launched on the ocean of the world; the storm of its "dread laugh" will never wreck them, if truth be their cargo—if error only, the sooner they sink the better. He who fears to speak his thoughts, proclaims three things; either that he has no confidence in their correctness, or in his own ability to explain them, or that he has on hand a stock of vanity which he apprehends may be mortified. No person should hold opinions, of the justness of which he is not *perfectly assured*; and it is criminal to withhold from society that which would benefit it; and to feel mortification or annoyance when our errors are shown, is unworthy an inquiring mind. It is to suppose ourselves infallible, not to be prepared for the exposure of our mistakes; and to shrink from their exhibition, is to be secretly in love with error while we profess to be searching after truth.

G. J. H.

LEGAL RELIGION.—It is not necessary for a lawyer, who conducts a prosecution for blasphemy, to be religious himself, in order to be consistent, it is quite sufficient that he 'believes in the law and the profits.'

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The following is inserted at Mr. Southwell's request: "Give my best thanks to 'AN INVESTIGATOR' and say that his friendly strictures *shall appear*, with some remarks of my own, *if possible*, which they have called forth. Say, besides, that I shall be glad to receive *here* some more such criticisms, from time to time."

Criticisms or communications addressed to the Editor, care of Mr. Hetherington, Wine-Office Court, Fleet Street, will be attended to.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street, Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.

Saturday, February 19, 1842.

THE

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Undicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 10.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

TO WHAT DO THINGS SEEM TENDING ?

THE learned, enthusiastic, and laborious translator of the "Metaphysics of Aristotle," Thomas Taylor, somewhere remarks that the energy of men's minds, in modern days, is sadly weakened by the fashionable practice of writing books so simply and plainly, that schoolboy intellects grapple with nearly all subjects. It being better, he contends, that truth, like Fair Rosamond, should be concealed in a labyrinth, that ingenuity may be duly exercised by attempts at discovering it. Such reasoning may be very ingenious, but not to our liking, nevertheless. It seems analogous to that of those sage divines, who argue for the conservation of the causes of crime, because temptation exercises our Christian virtue. In the days of Aristotle, when men were so full of theory, that practice was of little repute, hidden meanings were useful, peradventure. To the schoolmen, who love jargon because it seems learned, and write unintelligibly of necessity, having no distinct and natural idea of things; to such worthies mystery is like darkness to lovers of evil deeds, a perpetual letter of recommendation. But no one can deny that the spirit of modern times is most anti-supernatural, as completely so as the very genius of practicability could desire. In this working world people do not stop at hidden meanings, they must read as they run, or they will not read at all. So matter-of-fact is mortality now, that spirit, like riches, has made itself wings and has fled away. Indeed, we are most devoutly persuaded, at least as devoutly as persons of our persuasion can be, that *both* fled away together. Poverty has been a great teacher. Want has made more converts than preaching, of late days. Gospel and good dinners did very well together, as fat old abbots, and rubicund-nosed parsons, can tell. Christ and a crust, *merely*, never in this world went down well, in spite of all that pious tracts say to the contrary. But Christ, *without* the crust, people soon die upon, as poor-law guardians and relieving officers can, and do abundantly testify. When the godly are drawn together, if the feast is purely spiritual, the company is proportionably small. Let the courses be changed and the dishes

varied, clerical cooks understand this—Hugh M'Neile, Hugh Stowell, M'Ghee, and O'Sullivan to wit; a good attendance is certain as rent day. When bad feeling is to be stirred up (always plenty in a chapel, because the people are originally depraved), the Catholics to be hated, execrated, exterminated, all is tangible. Catholics can be seen, felt, handled, &c., all which relate to matter rather than spirit, and this proves the unspiritual propensities of piety, when the opposite is supposed. In early ages mankind scraped, or thought they did, which is nearly the same thing, some acquaintance with the spiritual. Ignorance and mystery are ever twin sisters. Some few men saw clearly the reality of all things, the tangibility of matter, and the materiality of mind. The numbers have increased, but slowly, because knowledge, if not like Sisyphus, has often shared the fate of Prometheus, chained to the rocks of superstition, and plucked at by the vultures of theology. Knowledge, means familiarity with the knowable, the avenues of which are the senses, things only having the power to operate on the senses. With the progress of knowledge, spirit, and spiritual things, have evaporated like ether poured out in the sunbeams. *Sacred Socialism*, it is true, would contract an acquaintance with the spiritualising—the effervescence of philosophy—the smoke, not the fire, of common sense. It is the torquism of progression. Like the schoolboy on the frosty morning, its every step forward is two backwards. Its refinements require a new language. A wag once accounted for Irvingism thus :

Armstrong, the preaching Irishman,
Follows close in Edward Irving's van :
Irish and Scotch together strung,
Who wonders at unknown tongue.

So those who will take matter and spirit, and attempt to mix them into a system, make a very Irish and Scotch compound, which might more properly be called medleyism, than sacred Socialism, or anything else. Matter is mysterious enough without being enveloped in the fogs of spirituality. We want a clearer not a denser medium. No fear we shall go too rightly. The world feels this. The love of the tangible is the tendency of the times. Poets will regret this. But we

do not see why they should. They are the children of reality without knowing it. But poets "must stand down; their case will not come on to-day." We have to do with the men of the world who are not, nor ever will be, poetical. Let the pauper-wretch plead before the parson-magistrate for relief—his spiritualised affections, all so many tortures. The divinity may beam in his eyes; the mysterious sympathy between himself, his dying wife, and famishing miserable children (all boasted evidences of the supernatural and ever-loving spirit) are mocked at. His soul, all fire, rushes to his head; his brain burns in agony; his heart is an icicle, and he of the immortal soul is dragged to the gloomy mausoleum of poverty—the poor-house—where, instead of the

Lord looking down in his dreams,

Grim Death sits over his pallet of straw, and the angels who carry him to Abraham's bosom are they who drag his carcass to the dead-house. In the contemplation of such scenes, adoration is struck dumb. Religion dies a natural death, or "by the visitation of god," as the verdict would be, and Faith, like lead in the sea, sinks down into the deepest caverns of unbelief: the refuge, the welcome asylum of outraged humanity.

"Of thirteen children only one is left (said a poor old woman to Alderman Kelly, the other day in Guildhall), and she is transported; I have travelled here from Hunslet, to see her for the last time; see my nakedness and rags (stretching out her gaunt withered and bony arms before the court); father, mother, brother, sister, children, all gone; I have no friend left but god, and I begin to think he is rather hard upon me in my old age." Misery had done its work; groundless piety was expiring, where it evidently had been most tenaciously cherished. The Musliman is not more devout than the true Catholic; nor the boa constrictor more fatal in its crushings than is popery in its influence on the reasoning faculties, but suffering teaches lessons where reason could not impart truth. Hear the Rev. Mr. Hearne, a Catholic priest, "he stood by the bed sides of thousands of poor wretches, out of whose mouth neither he, his exhortations, prayers, cross, nor crucifix, could prevent the words of blasphemy from escaping." This should teach priests, that when they lay their paralysing hands on knowledge, they should banish misery, for both are mighty potent teachers of the vanity of faith. "Facts must be the progenitors of theory," cry modern moralists. Hence their production in support of ours. Others, numerous as

Leaves of the forest when summer is green,
are waiting to follow in the same train, all

proclaiming alike from the monition of sense, and the warnings of hopeless suffering, that credulity is in its right declination, and the philosophy of "things as they are," is approaching its culmination.

The just shall live by faith, said a saintly rhapsodist, but forgot to say *how*—a piece of information that would be most invaluable in these Cavanagh times. Not only can men not live by faith, but faith itself cannot "Faith," says Coleridge, "without principles (on which to ground it) is but a flattering phrase for wilful positiveness of fanatical bodily sensation." The demand upon the banks of theology for these "principles" has been so great of modern times, that few are able to meet them; and, unless some new *specie* is issued, are never likely. The spiritual, not in spite of fate, that being an impossibility, but in spite of fanaticism, is on the wane. Piety is now felt to be, what the sagacious few have ever seen it, the humiliation and degradation of the masses. It is mischievous, positively mischievous. To prove it to be useless, some may think going far enough—as prudent people, we should not like to be thought going too far, so we will be content with this. Who ever tried to extract hard coin in this cold world from the pocket of a brother in Christ, by the soft rhetoric of a heart-moving tale. You might as well expect to go to heaven in the chariot of Elijah, or twist a rope of sand. Go farther: our government is Christian—the laws are Christian (hence their merciful care of disbelievers)—what did the millions ever obtain by their piety from their rulers? They may supplicate to turn the hard and obdurate hearts of their political Pharaohs, "What matter," as the song says. Goals are built; the police force is strengthened; swords are sharpened—god's answer, these. For any other relief than new oppression or additional insult, you may as well bore for the centre of gravity with a gimblet. Well, what of all this? Why, that these are very matter-of-fact times, we think all things abundantly show. That innumerable causes are silently and surely weaning men from superstition; are showing how attachment to the *unknown* has mesmerised mankind; and that many beacons point to nature as the alpha and omega of human hopes. The Atheist has caught the spirit of the times, and is marching on in the front of the van, and men seem hastening to that bourn, whence no happy traveller returns to the regions of disquietude, suffering, faith, and folly. It is a mournful reflection that man's path to happiness should be so dismal. That the torpedo of superstition should so lay prostrate human reason, that ages of suffering should be required to stimulate its exercise. But let us hope that its gradual growth betokens a lengthened prime; that, like the universe, it

may prove self-existent, and its manhood eternal. That we are tending to those happier climes,

Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.

G. J. H.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

NO. VIII.

“The whole mass of *material* existence is to us *infinite*, or at least incomprehensible. To its extent in the regions of space no limits can be assigned; and to its duration, anterior or subsequent, we can fix no period.”—PRINCIPLES OF NATURE.

IN conformity with the pledge given in our last number, we shall proceed to consider another of the objections opposed to our theory of the all-sufficiency of *matter* to produce and sustain the various modes of existence, or what is generally called the natural phenomena, of the universe. This objection consists in the supposed possession by man (according to some), and of all forms of animated nature (according to others), of a spirit, a soul, the power of reasoning or abstraction—a something, and yet not a something, and *believed* in, because not understandable, which controls the material residence in which it is located, and determines its position and condition in relation to other objects and things. This, whatever it may be, is not material, we are told, but the opposite; matter is something, its opposite nothing—a word without a type; and this opposite of something is *said* to be superior to it and inseparable from it during life, though not partaking of its nature. All attempts to elucidate this *immaterial* problem involves a string of absurdities, the length of which is proportioned to the time wasted upon it, a dilemma the cleverest of its advocates have never escaped from. And, regardless of the charge of egotism, we will venture to say, that it is painful to a reflecting mind to think that it is necessary to offer objections to, and show the absurdity of, such notions, when it requires so small an amount of real knowledge to detect the glaring fallacy.

There are at least *three* great divisions of believers in this indefinability:

Those who confine its possession to man;

Those who confine it to animated existences alone;

Those who believe every particle of matter possessed of it.

We will begin with the first, as the most numerous, comprising the great bulk of the Christian world. “How, say some of them, can matter feel and think? *All* matter does not feel and think, therefore *no* matter can do so.” There is just as much reason in this argument as there would be in asserting, that because matter in certain conditions, as stones

and metals, is not capable of furnishing nourishment for plants and animals, no matter can be; and inasmuch as some conditions of matter are injurious to animal and vegetable life, all conditions must be. Oh, no, they will say, this is not fair argument, our experience teaches the contrary; if, then, they are willing to take experience as their guide in this particular, why not in all others; and where, we would ask, is the existence of an immaterial principle demonstrated, or where can they refer to similarly clear and conclusive reasons to those which are presented to us in the operation of matter upon matter for the sustenance of life? But, again, in contending for the exclusive possession by man of this immaterial, immortal principle, simply because he feels, thinks, and possesses the power of abstraction, these followers of blind guides overlook a *fact*, which like a wall of adamant, protects the philosopher from the fooleries of faiths. If the possession of sensation, reflection, and a power of subsequent action, or a will, be evidences of the presence of aught not matter, but above matter, not subject to matter’s modes of progress and decay, in connection with form; but moreover capable of existing when matter is no more—feeling, thinking, and acting eternally—then must *all* animals be possessed of this never dying, unchanging, eternal principle.

For, that the inferior animals (as they are called) have their perceptions, reflections, and determinations as well as man, the “paragon,” is easily proved; but the following extract from Hume will, for the present, suit our purpose: “It seems evident, that animals as well as men learn many things from experience, and infer that the same events will follow from the same causes. By this principle they become acquainted with the more obvious properties of external objects, and gradually, from their birth, treasure up a knowledge of the nature of fire, water, earth, stones, heights, depths, &c. and of the effects which result from their operation. The ignorance and inexperience of the young are here plainly distinguishable from the cunning and sagacity of the old, who have learned, by long observation, to avoid what hurts them, and to pursue what gives ease and pleasure. A horse accustomed to the field will not attempt what exceeds his force or ability. An old greyhound will trust the more fatiguing part of the chase to the younger, and will place himself so as to meet the hare in her doubles; this sagacity is founded on observation and experience. This is still more evident from the effects of discipline and education on animals; who, by the proper application of rewards and punishments, may be taught any course of action most contrary to their natural instincts and propensities. Is it not experience which renders a dog apprehensive of pain, when you

menace him, or lift up the whip to beat him? Is it not experience which makes him answer to his name? It is custom alone which engages animals, from every object that strikes their senses, to infer its usual attendant, and carries their imagination from the appearance of one to expect the other. But though animals learn much of their knowledge from observation, they derive also much from the original hand of nature; which greatly exceeds their share of capacity on ordinary occasions, and in which they improve little or nothing by the longest practice and experience. These we call *instincts*."

If then feeling, thinking, &c. be evidence of immateriality, and immateriality of immortality, the *souls* of animals will exist in a future state with the good Christians, uninterrupted by the wicked, who will then have ceased to trouble; for the "Jew Book," as our beloved friend CHARLES SOUTHWELL called the Christians' hobby, says "where much is given much will be required," evidently intending the converse to be supplied by the reader, which in our opinion is confirmation strong, that "brute beasts" will go to glory, and the "yahoos" only to the devil, notwithstanding a totally opposite conclusion in another part of the same veracious authority, that the brutes shall perish, but which it does not suit us to take into consideration. Again, if the thinking principle be an emanation from a god, pure and undefiled, which is asserted; how is it we have no evidence or experience of the fact, derived from our observation of the uniformity of conduct of the beings possessing it, and their agreement respecting the source from where they have derived it, its nature and properties? On the contrary, every one of the supposed possessors have different ideas respecting it, some believing it to be one thing and some another, some saying it resides in this place and some in that,* and some denying its existence altogether. If it be said that this may result from the differences in the medium through which it is made manifest; we answer, such a reason is not valid, seeing it is contended that the immaterial principle is *superior* to matter. That varieties in the organizations which it inhabits cannot affect it, must be clear, because it forms no part of them. But we cannot spare more time and space in exposing this folly, and must leave our readers to look elsewhere if we have not given them sufficient.

Next in order come the advocates for the immaterial principle in *all* animated organisms, who are for extending the benefits of hereafter to all fleshly houses without distinction. To this class, mostly Deists, belongs Sir W. Drummond, who says that god is a spirit or intelligence, which, however is not material,

being nothing so gross as body, but in some mysterious manner enters into all bodies, having no liking for dead ones. So that, according to these philosophers, god is *in* every living thing, he being the eternal and infinite *mind*, and of course out of every dead thing, intelligent matter only being the residence of deity. But as these reasoners admit that all matter is not living, per consequence some must be dead and without god; which may account for the singular inconsistencies of the parts of matter inhabited by this *intelligent* god. In one quarter of the globe we find men fighting for one notion of morality and in another for quite the contrary notion; there they are in arms for a president and here for a king, there for Mohamed and here for Christ; they meet, blow out each other's brains and cut each other's throat, allowing the little bits of god to escape by thousands, and to roam about, ready to pop in, at a moment's notice, to the quarters preparing for them in the organisms in embryo. And unless we suppose there are always plenty out of employment, we can readily account for what are called still-births, being caused by the emptiness of the immaterial market at the proper time; or perhaps by its coming too late, for dame nature never hurries nor waits, and a moment lost can never be recalled. This idea is equally absurd and devoid of proof as the first; and all that may be urged against it applies equally to the other. It is the result of an attempt, on the part of certain clever men, without subjecting themselves to the odium attaching to Atheism to escape from the imputation of stupidity or dishonesty in adopting Christianity.

The third and last opinion—that every particle of matter is possessed of the cogitating, immaterial principle is very similar to that of Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, who believed in one god, the soul of the universe, the matter of which was the body; and that the two united formed one perfect animal. Now to our minds this conclusion, granting the soul-and-body-principle to be correct, is perfectly rational and legitimate. For if the universe be composed of particles of matter each of which possesses properties or principles, an aggregation of which, under certain forms, we call animal life, intelligence, &c., then must the whole be one great intelligent animal; inasmuch as it is all life and all intelligence, combined with all body. With this view, we must consider man, and in fact all animals not parasitical, as vermin infesting the carcass of the great beast. But this notion will be repudiated by our modern hair-splitters, who, while they reject as ridiculous the divine-animal theory, and still contend for the principle laid down, have to explain apparent absurdities equally as great. For if every particle of matter be associated with, or possessed of, an

* See Oracle of Reason, No. 1.

intelligent principle, and yet the whole does not form one great body of intelligence, or animal, we should say, the larger the parts the greater the wisdom. In proportion then to the number of cubic inches in a tree, over and above those in a man, must be the intelligence of the former to the latter; and the one hundred and twenty gun ship, requiring some thousands of trees for its construction, must be superior in intelligence in the same ratio. This process carried on *ad infinitum*, would bring us to the "divine animal" as a certain conclusion; for if every particle be possessed of intelligence then must the whole be intelligent, and we know nothing of intelligence apart from animation. Now this doctrine, which distinctly involves the being of a god, that is a something superior to matter, is held by some parties calling themselves Atheists, who contend that Atheism does not necessarily depend upon materialism; and who, desiring to account for final causes, for what reason it is difficult to say, assert the universality of intelligence, and think, to build up a fabric of Atheism upon a foundation of godism. For a something superior to matter, call it by what name you may, includes most of the notions respecting a deity, or ruling providence, and is, in reality a god.

But, supposing this asserted principle to be so intimately connected with matter as not to admit of separate consideration, and only to depend upon favourable circumstances for its development; then is it not immaterial but material—being in fact, matter considered as a whole, and is the principle for which we are contending.

To those who may not see the immediate connexion between immateriality and regular gradation, we would briefly remark. Immateriality, or a principle of intelligence separate from matter involves a governing mind in the universe, from whose will all forms and conditions of matter are derived, and which are dependant upon the laws he is said to have impressed upon or assigned to matter at some period subsequent to his own existence. To this we oppose the theory of the eternity of matter, and its all-sufficiency to produce the results attributed to intelligence. The latter opinion rests upon facts, the former upon faith; it being a question, we maintain, of folly *versus* reason.

W. C.

A VOICE FROM BRISTOL GAOL.

Saturday afternoon, 13th February.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Governor of the prison has just informed me that he felt it a duty to seize certain papers sent with cake—the *Oracle of Reason*, and report of "Trial," I believe; they are not admissible at present. I shall write respecting

the matter to the magistrates. Should like to hear from you, and receive newspapers as often as convenient.

Yours, in haste,
C. SOUTHWELL.

Tuesday, February 15, 1842.

DEAR FRIENDS,

A little, or rather a big, month is passed—one of the "calendars" awarded by Sir C. Wetherall. I have just returned from chapel, where I heard a most respectable sermon, which reminded me of a certain village preacher, who having delivered one sermon three times over, a wag of his congregation got up, and said, "Rev. sir, the bill has been read a third time, and I move that it do now pass." Of course such waggery can only be indulged in under the voluntary system; birds in cages are just as little able to fly, as though their wings were clipped. In this dull place even sermons, the most stupid and poor, are a relief, no art being so difficult to a prisoner as that of killing time. How I envy the buxom wench who so bitterly complained that she never knew the comfort of a bed: "The moment I go to bed," said she, "I fall asleep; and the instant I awake, I am obliged to get up." Philosophers have written fine disquisitions upon time; some have said time is the most valuable of all things; others, more profound or captious, say time is nothing at all; some say time passes, others declare that it is we who pass; but whether it is time passes, or we who pass, I often wish that it were gone, or that those, who "help the Lord," would let me go. Had I faith, as a grain of mustard seed, in holy legends and ghostly tales, there would be many crumbs of comfort for me and all the *miserables*; for the *impoverished* in spirit are to inherit the kingdom of heaven, the mourners are to be comforted; besides, affliction is the badge or mark of divine grace, as it is said, whom god loveth he chasteneth, &c. I am also informed, by those who are in the secret, that it is a part of god's plan to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, which, it must be confessed, priests, who are servants of the most high, do all they can to carry out. To them it is given to know "the mysteries of heaven," and they teach, in the name of god, that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance;" to which is added, what is even more surprising, that "whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." All things are possible with god, but, *humanly* speaking, it is quite incredible, that something should be taken away from those poor devils who haven't anything. All this is solid comfort for poor *believers*, but for poor Atheists, it is lighter than vanity. Blessed people are those, who can be so occupied for the care of the soul, as

to be unaffected by what passes in the body.
Who, asks the poet,

Can hold a fire in his hand,
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus ;
Or wallow, naked, in December's snow,
By bare remembrance of the summer's heat ?

I answer, at once, that I can't. I have tried, several times, to fancy myself at liberty, and enjoying the society of my friends, but can't for the life of me ; the prison's gloom is not mistaken by me for the full blaze of sunshine, nor can I, by any effort of my imagination, fancy myself very comfortable while wallowing in misery. The romantic *Octavian*, in Colman's play of the "Mountaineers," when straining his mistress to his breast, exclaims, "Oh, plunge me deep in Etna's smoky gulph, and I could wallow calmly in her fires, like lazy shepherds basking in the sun, to hold thee thus at last." A great deal must be allowed for the enthusiasm of lovers, but if the majority of them were thrust into a cold gaol for a year or two, it would cool their courage. In Yorkshire, the unwashed have a saying, that though their masters may make them work, they can't make them like it ; and this kind of spirit, so antagonistic to the Christian, is strong in me ; for though the Bristol worthies have succeeded, to admiration, in punishing me, they can't make me like it. Nothing but working a miracle would enable them to do that ; and, as the days of miracle-working, like those of chivalry, are gone, why, there is no sort of likelihood that they will convince me, either that all is for the best, or even for my own good. When the apostles worked miracles, and showed so many signs and wonders to the Jews, who would not see them, "gold and silver they had none." But things have greatly altered since the times of Peter and his colleagues, for their successors have abundance of gold and silver, but can neither open the eyes of the blind, cure the sick, or cleanse, by heavenly magic, any kind of leprosy. My paper is exhausted with this infinite deal of nothing, so good-bye, but neglect not this advice, don't be quite so "rash as fire," and we shall meet again, some time, doubt not. May it be shortly, for "*mine eyes desire thee above all things.*"

C. SOUTHWELL.

FIRST EPISTLE

To the Second Priest of the "Oracle."

Edinburgh, 15th February, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR,

The *Oracle*, No. 8, is before me, and really it is a good pennyworth. Real information for the twelfth part of a shilling ; how unlike, in quality and charge, the utterances of the Oracles with which priests have had to do ! If this be a specimen of what the work will be under the new management, the persecutors

will find that they have taken nothing by their motion.

Nothing, in my opinion, is more calculated to put a stop to these prosecutions, which testify the malignant tendency of religion, even under its best forms, than to give the clergy and magistracy to understand that they can't kill us. Let us tell them, and show them, that we won't die ; or, rather, that if we cannot achieve immortality for ourselves, we will for our cause. If, when they chop off one head, a hundred appear in its place, they will soon find it a losing game. The more I think of the "*don't-hurt-their-feelings*" advice of some good sort of people, the *put-up-with-it, lie-down-and-die* policy of men who assume the name, without having the spirit, of reformers, the more convinced do I become of its inexpediency as well as dishonesty. We are certainly not to go to Rome to pull the pope's nose ; nor would it be justifiable for us to exhibit the ferocity of John Knox, who, with his followers, entered the sanctuaries of the Roman Catholics, by force tore down their altars, destroyed their magnificent edifices, and trampled on what they esteemed most sacred. But, if the pope of Rome strive to make me a slave to his spiritual despotism, it is my duty to resist, and that right vigorously ; if any religionist speak or write in favour of certain doctrines, it is my duty as a non-religionist to insist upon the right of speaking and writing in opposition. And whoever shrinks from this his duty, ought to go to heaven at once, because he is not good enough for this world, and because he falls short of the dignity of manhood. Latitude of language in general is, doubtless, convenient to shirkers, inasmuch as they would hide their cowardice by calling it prudence, and conceal their want of public spirit, by pretending to extraordinary charity. That course of conduct is the most charitable which will do most good.

* * * * *

Yours, sincerely,

THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY
DISPLAYED ;

OR THE PENALTY OF HONESTY IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY.

OFTEN has religion, with appalling grin, bestridden the murdered form of humanity, and too fondly has the hope been entertained that knowledge and civilisation had driven it to the regions of blackest night, its birthplace and most congenial home ; but it has again ventured forth, strangling truth with fierce hands, and, in the name of a god, chasing honesty from the world. Startled corruption has cried havoc, the Bonners of christianity have let

slip the dogs of war, and mental freedom again lies prostrate before the priests.

Through the medium of the public press our readers have been made familiar with the fate of the late editor of this paper. For the exercise of a common right, at least one common to the Christian portion of society, viz., that of publishing his opinions, he has been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and to be fined £100. The bible-believer professes to think for himself; every true Protestant claims the right of private judgment; both publish and speak their views, and *obtrude* their beliefs upon all men, whether willing or not willing to receive them. If any one should demur to them, his voice is stifled in the dungeon, and his scruples removed with the sword. CHARLES SOUTHWELL has views and opinions as honestly formed as their own, and as they are entertained without a premium, probably more so. Like them, he holds his notions to be of vital interest to mankind, and laudibly proceeds to impart them. He places his proofs, not above the skies but within the compass of human reason; invokes no power to spread them, and, relying on their intrinsic worth, lays them an offering at the feet of truth—to be owned or disowned as they may merit. How is he treated? let his sentence answer. Yet from that bible, for which his prosecutors profess all kinds of regard and fear, will they rake out, to serve a turn, such a text as, "Of one blood all men are made," a text reserved, like her majesty's toy-guards, for parade, not actual service, while every pulpit re-echoes with the priestly cant of "dearly beloved brethren." Truly the truth is coming home to us!

The trial took place in Bristol, before Sir C. Wetherall, who has been styled a "saturation of antiquated prejudices and sad eccentricities, and who has long demanded removal from the bench." The prosecuting counsel was a Mr. Smith, "an excessively weak and ignorant man," as *Publicola* truly remarked. When it is felt that into these hands the defence and protection of a god have fallen, if we are to judge of him as we do of men, by the company they keep, he has become, as the police would say, a very suspicious character.

We purpose drawing attention to the most extraordinary speech of the said Mr. Smith upon the occasion. A critic once said of the productions of a certain great man, that all the ordinary rules of characterisation were set at defiance by them. So of the learned counsel's defence of christianity; to describe it would be impossible—truth and falsehood, candour and cant never were before so strangely commingled. These traits are so conspicuous, that he who runs may read, as the "Jew Book" has it—and so, from the necessity of

the case, we must comment upon it. Analysis would murder it. Heterogeneity is its name. It is in keeping with nothing but its wretched and imbecile object.

He first informed the court that Mr. SOUTHWELL did not stand there to deny or palliate the libels he was charged with having published. This alone should have convinced the jury of the injustice of placing a man at the bar to answer to his fellow-men for his honest convictions. It was also a high eulogy on those principles, which could support a man to bravely defend the right in the teeth of injustice, power, and certain punishment for his honesty. On these occasions, men, with rare and honourable exceptions, sink into slaves and crouch for mercy; but unflinchingly to maintain, in danger, the opinions preached in security, was not more new to the law than refreshing to the world. It brings us back to the days when men dared to think and speak in the teeth of death. It was an assurance that all manliness was not swept from the earth. This opening remark (how the jury felt it, cannot be told, how they ought, may be) brought contempt on the whole proceeding, indignation on the heads of the prosecutors, and honor for their victim. After a tirade of misrepresentation of the prisoner's words and writings—peculiar to the counsel's cause, and so common on these occasions, he ventured the rash remark: "He (Southwell) asserts the right of all men to discuss and publish their opinions, upon all conceivable subjects, without restraint or responsibility. *But there is a great fallacy in the assumption of such a right;*"* verifying the remark of Cowper, that some men

Where others toil with philosophic force,
Their nimble nonsense takes a shorter course,
Flings at your head convictions in the lump,
And gain remote conclusions at a jump.

Oh! cried Mr. Smith, only grant this, and there is an end to all law, order, and happiness. Now, if he honestly meant anything, it was that there would be an end to all kinds of legal and religious iniquity. If the position taken by Mr. Smith, really needed a serious refutation, it would be found in the fact, that while men are denied this right, they must be hypocrites; and nothing more need be said of that "religion, law, order, and happiness," having no other foundation than duplicity, and whose corner-stone is hypocrisy.

Next was adduced the standing argument of the supporters of all abuses, namely "that mental liberty, absolute and perfect, would be licentiousness." No tyrant was ever asked for the smallest privilege who did not declare this his reason for non-compliance. In the republic of letters, should the world ever see

* See Trial, p. 10.

one, truth will be the first and perpetual president, and merit alone will be exalted and honoured. That persons who have so little of it as counsellor Smith, the judge, and serf-like jury will be treated as mental invalids there is no doubt; and that the iniquity which demands their profession would be removed they know. The name of a god, that pretext for all enormities, was, as usual, invoked to justify the prosecution. The jury were assumed stupid enough to swallow it, which, to their everlasting disgrace, they did, and a new infamy was thereby stamped upon christianity.

Then, Mr. Smith, kind, careful soul, would extend his fatherly protection to the press. The press, the light of the world, the "second ark" of mankind, of which Ebenezer Elliott has sung so gloriously, but for the restraints of the law would exceed all decorum and shock all Mr. Smith's proprieties! It is the boy wanting to lead his father. The law should be the child of the press, and will be yet. Is the imputation to be borne, that the giant pioneer of civilisation, the nurse mother of morality, is to be walked about with leading strings held by legal libellers? Are we to be told by bribed maligners, that it is the alcohol of immorality, making drunk all who drink at its fountain? No it has

Holy light within,
And every form of grief and sin,
Will see and feel its fire.

Mr. Smith seems the embodiment of original sin. The poet, Campbell, once humorously affirmed, that he had nothing original in him, but original sin. This might be believed of Mr. Smith, without his confession of it. He might be pointed to, as the incarnation of depravity of conception, who looks out upon the world as on a great gaol, where slaves crawl up and down, and adore their keeper through fear of the rack, and do homage to a tyranny before which they humble. Exalted conception of humanity! He sees no love leading to kindness, no nobleness inciting to justice, no honor, no morality, excepting that which is the forced offspring of base-born terror. Our servants, apprentices, &c., will do nothing for their superiors; and all mankind, like so many comets, will run wild through eccentric orbits, but for the restraints of religion. No other, and no more fitting use, can these gentlemen discover for religion, than that of keeping slaves submissive, and servants obedient and dutiful to their pastors and masters, and all set in authority over them. It is never expected to influence kings and bishops who, locust-like, feed on the green things of the earth. Nobody ever dreams that it is to guide the conscience of the lawyer, whose soul, like the merchant of Burke, lies in his money bag, and whose love of religion

and morality is always on the side of the better paid brief.

According to the argument, this judicious and all-essential restraint was founded on the fear of a god and a devil, which must therefore be protected from doubt by the jury and the gaol. Holiness, then, is founded on hobgoblins. Piety, not on love but fear. Here then is justification, new and ample, of the assertion that our sublime and sacred mysteries were concocted merely to terrify, and that preaching is a trade, encouraged only to frighten people, who ought to have been trained in morality and educated in virtue. G. J. H.

(To be Continued.)

ULITTARIANISM AND THE DELUGE.—A calculating friend, who seldom employs any other interpreter to the bible than the "Rule of Three," being asked his opinion of the deluge, replied in a manner worthy of Jeremy Bentham, "I think it a great waste of water, which might have been more profitably and humanely employed in quenching hell fire."

THE HUMANISING EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.—The Rev. W. Hoales, in his "Memoirs of Mr. Chubb; or a fuller and more faithful account of his Life, Writings, Character, and Death," published in 1747, after asserting, without the slightest evidence, that Chubb was addicted to the most abominable vices, declared that he would have his corpse, and that of every similar sceptic, instead of being decently buried, "Dragged by a halter round the neck to a gibbet, where the hangman, after having cut out the heart, plucked out the tongue by the roots, and chopped off the right hand, should burn the whole in a fire made with the works which he wrote; and his ashes being thrown into the air, with execration and contempt, would make all those who bow the knee at the name of Jesus, lift up their hands with joy and great gladness."

ERRATA.

In the List of Subscriptions in No. 8, instead of "Sheffield, £3 18s. 6d.," read £3 4s. 11d.

Omitted in previous List :

	£	s.	d.
Leicester	1	10	0
Bilston	1	1	8
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Preston	0	7	6

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THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 11.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER V.

“Honesty IS the best Policy.”

FRIENDS,

IN the *Times* of Monday, the 7th instant, there are some remarks worthy of attention; the writer, in alluding to a pamphlet lately printed at Paris, by General Cass, which treats of the question now pending between this country and America, respecting “the right of search,” observes, “Of course a political writer is quite at liberty, in plain but measured terms, to impute to his opponents such motives as he considers their actions clearly evidence. Whether he does so in a spirit of truth, it is for others to judge, not for him to proclaim; and they will not be prejudiced in his favour, by seeing that before, and whilst making his accusation, he does not manfully take up such *invidium* as attaches to his position, but tries to shelter himself by a disclaimer from the responsibility of a suggestion by which he yet plainly intends to preoccupy the mind of the reader.”

I was forcibly struck with the above spirited passage, which in my present somewhat delicate position came completely home to my feelings. Though I cannot allow myself to be called an “opponent” of your party, I know that in taking my present course it is scarce possible I should escape such a charge. But I am far less anxious to ward off such a charge than to do you justice. Either in attacking or defending parties it is difficult to keep strictly to the line of moderation. Could I convey to you all, and exactly what I think, I am persuaded that no sane man among you would take offence, but to conceive is one thing, to execute another.

Lacedemonian Chilo thus profest,
Nothing too much, a mean in all is best,

which was admirable advice of the Grecian sage, but advice few indeed know how to act upon. No one can deny that “the mean in all is best,” but who can safely determine what is the mean, the neither too much nor too little which should be said or done. For myself, whenever I attempt to put on paper

exactly what I feel and think with regard to your party—unlike Milton, of whom it was said, that such was the majesty of his genius, that the English language sunk under him. I invariably find that I sink under the language. In writing to you upon matter so calculated, however carefully dealt with, to perplex and irritate, my condition reminds me of a little Scotch friend of mine, secretary to a debating society, of which I was a member, who would sometimes attempt to make a speech, but after sundry miscarriages he at length candidly said, that getting up in the midst of so many friends literally frightened the ideas out of his head, but he added very naively, “could I only say what I think, when I am sometimes crossing the road, I could make a speech with the best of you.” The weakness which I do not feel when combatting the common enemy, I attribute to the excessive anxiety I feel not to be mistaken, but to convey to your minds the simple naked truth and no more; and I candidly confess, that could I entirely succeed in this particular, I should be careless about the good or bad opinions of any individuals or parties. No one can think more lightly or even contemptuously of vulgar applause, but few are more ambitious or would make larger sacrifices to obtain the approbation of wise men. I value fame as a means to an end, not to the end itself, knowing, to use the words of a modern writer, that “It is not so much action that stamps the character, as character that stamps the action.”

I am by no means desirous, while making “accusations” against the policy of your party, to shrink from the *invidium* which may attach to such conduct, at the same time it is but fair that I should provide against mistakes, and “speak by the card, lest equivocation should undo me.” I know the folly of attempting, or rather expecting, to please all men; those who are over solicitous to do so much, will probably succeed in doing very little, and like the poor old man with his ass, receive no other reward than scorn and derision. Having therefore determined to take the strictly honest course, I am prepared “manfully to take up such *invidium* as attaches to my position,” nor will I attempt to “shelter myself by any disclaimers from the responsibility of

any suggestion by which I plainly intend to preoccupy your minds." As all inuendos, parables, or dark sayings of any kind, savour of servitude, and would never be used by the really free, such modes of expression will here be avoided, so that no man shall have the power to say, I wished indirectly to convey that which I dared not openly proclaim. And here I may allude to a sentence in a former letter, with a view to guard against misapprehension. I there state, that in "all that relates to thought I call no man master;" but standing as it does, it is calculated to convey a false idea, an idea it was never intended to convey. It is true, that in all that relates to thought "I call no man master," but it should have been added, that I accept thousands as friends and instructors. I am opposed to mastership and discipleship, but no less opposed to arrogance and presumption.

I have long been an ardent admirer of Mr. Owen, and to the best of my ability have defended him from the coarse, assassin-like attacks of priests and their emissaries, but my admiration never degenerated into idolatry, and I hope that I shall never so far dishonor myself as to prostrate reason before any human idol. Not a few of your party are mere Owenites, who puff Mr. Owen up as an oracle of wisdom as well as of reason, and have instituted a species of man-worship. It has long been my opinion that the worship either of god's or men is a pollution of our humanity. Mr. Owen exercises great influence in your party; and as regards the attainment of certain inferior objects, perhaps a salutary one, but if you would march towards the largest measure of freedom, he is a stumbling block in your way. I do not hesitate to affirm that Mr. Owen's connexion with your party is fatal to its progress in just ideas and the noblest practices. It is usual to flatter Mr. Owen, but I have other objects than that of pleasing individuals. There are few men who can resist the poison of flattery, and Mr. Owen is certainly not of the number. Flattery almost always acts injuriously upon public men, but specially so upon such susceptible natures as Mr. Owen's, who, with rare benevolence and most astonishing perseverance in the cause of suffering man, is seemingly without his own knowledge, lustful of power, and strongly, I may add fatally, inclines

To give his little senate laws
And sit attentive to his own applause.

This opinion is not set forth in *spite*, but in *duty*; for, as regards Mr. Owen, personally, I have no quarrel. I think that no man of the present generation is at all comparable to him, in the essentials of a truly great and good man; but he is not infallible, nay, of late, he has manifested weakness, and displayed inconsistencies of a most glaring and

pernicious character: and I must insist, that Mr. Owen puts forth claims to being a "practical man," and the only rational one; which is neither warranted by his conduct or abilities. Mr. Owen has been called by enthusiastic admirers, "the greatest luminary that ever rose above the political horizon," which if we admit, I see no reason why men should fall down and worship him. But I do not admit anything of the kind, and am clearly of opinion that Mr. Owen, though well qualified to point the way to a new and superior state of society, has no notion how to build up a science of morals. He sees a few truths, and only a few, and mistaking them for all truth, he sets to work with a perseverance which does him honor. As a friend once said to me, "A duck's leg is not a duck; and he who would expect it to lay eggs would be disappointed;" just so with Mr. Owen, he has got a duck's leg which he mistakes for a duck, and is always on the look out for eggs. If Mr. Owen were content to moderate his pretensions, they would not be so often challenged; but the most friendly cannot stifle disgust at offensive displays of excessive egotism. Besides, as my object is to infuse fresh blood into your party, and make you acquainted with the true state of your affairs, it is essential that you should be undeceived with regard to Mr. Owen. I wish to show you that he is but a man like yourselves, and not a demigod, as some would seem to think him. Mr. Owen says that he is the only sane man in the country, all others are grossly irrational; now I only go one step further, and say that we are *all* mad together. We may safely lay it down as a rule without exception, that all are mad a *little*.

When at Congress, I was positively ashamed to hear some of the delegates pour forth their flattery. These big babies were everlastingly talking about "our dear father" doing this, and "our dear father" saying that; in fact, their conduct was preposterous, and better suited to the eunuchs of an eastern harem, than the members of a rational congress. I have heard of a monarch, who, being unfortunate enough to have a crooked neck, not a single courtier could be found with his neck straight. Another suddenly determined upon taking snuff, when all his courtiers at once became snuff-takers, and nothing was heard but sneezing about the palace; and I verily believe that Mr. Owen, had he put his neck awry, or begun to sneeze, would have found his courtiers at the Congress equally complaisant.

Mr. Owen was by no means averse to the "popish trick" of calling him *dear father*, but listened to that and the most fulsome adulations with great complacency and unmixed delight. His whole manner strongly reminded me of a certain French quack who

used to parade the streets of Paris, preceded by a little boy, with pills and other cures "for all diseases." The boy ran before his master, crying, "My master cures all diseases, and sometimes death itself, for the small charge of six sous;" the master contenting himself by every now and then pointing to the boy and saying with great gravity, "*The lad speaks true.*"

I confess that my admiration of Mr. Owen, which at one period was almost unbounded, has much cooled of late. Close contact with him has cured me of my enthusiasm, and given new value to the remark of Dr. Johnson, that men talk like angels and act like men. His conduct upon one particular subject has given me great offence: I allude to his attempt to teach his "disciples" what he is pleased to term a "Rational Religion."

I shall take the liberty to consider Mr. Owen's personal merits or demerits, in other papers, my object now being merely to *shake* your faith in Mr. Owen's infallibility, and to protest against the idea of Rational Religion, as most absurd in itself, and if not exposed will speedily prove most disastrous in its consequences. It matters little whether Mr. Owen's opinions and conduct, with regard to this, or indeed any other question, result from what is called policy or sheer ignorance; for whether error proceed from folly or left-handed wisdom, it is always destructive to the morals and happiness of society. The overthrow of superstition has been for ages the grand aim of wise men, and as to the cant, for it is nought else, about all religions being destroyed, except the true and rational one, it unfortunately happens for Rational Religionists that philosophers consider all religions equally rational. They deal with them most liberally, placing all exactly upon the same footing. As to what form it may assume, it may be truly said,

For forms of religion let fools contest,

there being a settled conviction in men of sense, that whether it assume the Presbyterian, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Pagan forms, or whatever may be its object, crescent or cross, one or a thousand gods, it is always a dead weight upon human intellect. Mr. Owen has lately discovered that religion is a most excellent thing, if it be of the right quality. He abhors superstition, but Rational Religion, the religion of charity, as he sometimes calls it, cannot be dispensed with. As the parsons say of prayer, it is as needful for the body as for the soul. Mr. Owen never seems to have thought deeply upon the subject, if we are permitted to judge of his latest writings. He talks about Rational Religion as though entirely ignorant that a religion, like a revelation, if proved by reason, would be destroyed by the proof. "To prove revelation by rea-

son," said Soame Jenyns, "is to destroy it;" undoubtedly, and it is not less certain that a religion proved to be true, would lose its religious character and take rank among the sciences. Belief is the essence of religion; knowledge is the essence of philosophy. Mr. Owen should have avoided the rock on which so many great reformers have split. He should not have made religion part and parcel of his system, but boldly drawing the line between conjecture and knowledge, said to the people, I will show you the way to peace, wealth, and happiness in this world; but as to the next, JE NE LE CONNAIS PAS, so I leave all to find *that* for themselves.

Your well wisher,
C. S.

A BROADSIDE FOR CANT AND QUACKERY;

WITH A FEW HINTS TO MEN OF PRINCIPLE.

MR. EDITOR—I've been to a hob-nob, a public hob-nob; you know what a hob-nob is, don't you? So many legs under a table, so many heads over a table, so many hands clenching so many glasses, so many tongues wagging in concert, so many voices a-shouting, and so many throttles a-gulping. I have but just left one of these hob-nobs, a very superior thing of its kind, I assure you. Everybody acknowledged the rights of everybody else, decried the "vile and selfish oligarchy;" the "upstart aristocracy;" the "landed monopolists;" the "dominant priesthood;" everybody said that everything that was said was the best thing of the kind that ever anybody did say; and everybody vociferated for freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press; liberty and equality for ever! hip, hip, hip; hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! Gorging and sympathising must go together; for how can we express a fine sentiment, except in a fine toast; or how could a shilling be coaxed out of our pocket, except through the medium of our stomach? A sixpenny subscription per quarter for active co-operation, is a mighty call on our resources; a couple of pounds per annum would be next to ruin; there are so many calls on our *benevolence*. But a feed, oh, that's quite another thing—any range, from a couple of shillings to a couple of guineas: "Oh yes, Sir; I'll take a ticket *for the sake of the cause!*"

Of a verity we are a dinner-loving people, and an after-dinner speech-making people, and we love to greet our favorite *talker* with vociferous shouts; it reflects credit, as it were, on our own taste and judgment; and besides, needing something or some one to idolise, whom better than a political pet? But then, the reckoning! Oh, never mind the reckoning till settling day. The nation didn't mind the war

till it had to pay the debt; and it never thinks it buys its whistle too dearly, till the bill comes in. Do we know why we are *allowed* to get up our hob-nobs? Because it gets rid of our sulks. The national safety-valve is turned, and the national steam is let off; the pressure is lowered. It is with public dinner meetings, and such like displays, as it is with the Protestant-asserted right of private judgment. Freeborn Englishmen shall talk as they like, as long as they like, and as loud as they like, provided their talking and their thinking result not in something "dangerous to the authorities," that is, *serviceable to the people*; or "hostile to the church," that is, *favorable to philosophy*; or "subversive of the interests of society," that is, *destructive of the slave bonds and class interests*. Talk plainly, searchingly, without circumlocution; expose any great political or religious cheat—no more hob-nobings, no more impunity. You are scowled down by the slaves, and put down by the law. You have done what is unfashionable, and unfashionable and illegal are convertible terms. There is fashion, not only in the cut of a gown, or the sit of a coat, but in the expression of an opinion. There is fashion in belief and unbelief; nothing so bad as unfashionable Infidelity; fidelity and Infidelity being determined by the knaves and simpletons; the former few making the latter many do their bidding in crushing all attempts at general enlightenment. "If I may give a short hint to an impartial writer," says De Foe, "it would be to tell him his fate. If he resolves to venture upon the dangerous precipice of telling unbiassed truths, let him proclaim war with mankind—*à la mode le pays de Pole*—neither to give nor to take quarter. If he tells the crimes of great men, they fall upon him with the iron hands of the law; if he tells their virtues, when they have any, then the mob attacks him with slander. But if he regards truth, let him expect martyrdom on both sides, and then he may go on fearless." Let this sink deeply into the minds of those who regard truth above all things, and who would proclaim it. The history of the lovers of truth, and of their species, is not read in the recital of the favor of the great, the support of a party, or the acclamations of the multitude. The fury of a mob, neglect of party, the loss of connection, rejection of friends, and disunion of family, with the fine, the gibbet, or the rack, have chronicled in misery and blood and anguish, the actions of the friends of man. And not till death has satiated the vengeance of their assailants, and their bones have mouldered in the grave, or the cross-road, have their merits been discovered, their virtues extolled, and their memories revered. Such was De Foe's experience. Such is the experience of all who mark out for themselves a similar

course, and unfalteringly pursue it. Let the foes of superstition never forget what they are here told, and they will either at once halt in their course, or proceed, strengthened by just, and not preposterous expectations. The opposition or secret machinations of the religious world are not all, we repeat, against which they must expect to contend. Not listlessness and apathy alone will be found on the part of the *quasi-infidels*. There will be shrugging of the shoulders and forebodings and foretellings, and exclamations of "injudicious," and "self-willed," and "headstrong," and "imprudent," and "indecorous," and "unsuitable," &c. For position's-sake, and caste's-sake, and connection's-sake, and the sake of anything and everything but truth; and because each free-Briton is afraid of every other free-Briton, the real friends of free inquiry must expect to hear open disavowals and denunciations. And to scrape still further favour with the orthodox and *respectable*, these worthies may occasionally be heard even exulting at the punishment of the blasphemer. An instance of disgusting sycophancy and time-serving apostacy was actually displayed by one of these gentry, a few brief days since. This admirer of Volney, and Paine, and Voltaire, and Spinosa, and everybody afar off in time or space, positively enunciated the truly *pious* wish, that the next that followed in SOUTHWELL's footsteps, may be doubly and trebly punished. Think of this my neophytes of the *Oracle*; think of this my priests in expectancy, and having once determined, after carefully weighing all contingencies, and having fully "envisaged" all the possible difficulties, you will be thoroughly prepared for the arduous struggle, in which you will have to bear the brunt of the battle. Having thus deliberately decided, you will act promptly, energetically, firmly, and undauntedly; and unlike Cæsar, who with the memorable exclamation, "*Et tu Brute*," fell vanquished, more by his own broken spirit than by the daggers of his assassins; you will, knowing the hollowness of the many, engendered by the rottenness of our social system, bear up undismayed through all indifference or through all attacks. "Silence will not retard your progress, and opposition will give increased celerity to your movements."

The writer, one of the pledged band, ready to take his stand at the post of danger the moment his turn comes, has had "extensive experience," as the venerable and respected founder of the "Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists," would say, in these matters. He is made, as friend SOUTHWELL has it, of tougher stuff than that of which *he* is composed, who would lie down and die on witnessing the treachery of so-called friends of the cause. He will receive no more of repulse or opposition than he ex-

pects, or than he is prepared to meet, to repel, or to overcome. A certain degree of sympathy has already been evinced in SOUTHWELL'S case, but a trifling demonstration when compared with what might be brought to bear by Infidel strength and resources if fairly put out. Much is due to partial effervescence, but it must not be calculated, from the past modicum of support, that the agitation will be followed up by proportionable future contributions in pence, labor, and energy. This is Balm of Gilead to the godists; there is gall and wormwood for them, nevertheless. They cannot have the sweet without the bitter, and deadly bitter will it be for them; a bitter, however, which will sweeten the labors of the toilers. The *sweet* is the beholding of the truth-martyrs, after a temporary ebullition, in the clutches of the law; vituperated, neglected, or unassisted by their own party. The *bitter* is the finding the vehicle of the objectionable and dangerous opinions still careering on; still continuing to furnish mental food to the thinking; still beating down old errors; still exposing all sorts of crafts, priestcraft, tradecraft, godcraft, and devilcraft, all which will, in their proper places, come in for consideration, as essential departments in the domain of REASON. The "bonds of society," our "noble institutions," our "admirable laws," our venerable church," our "holy religion;" all this stultification must be laid low. For the bonds of society we will read chains of society; for our noble institutions—crafty devices; for admirable laws—sanctioned trickeries; venerable church—antiquated pander; for holy religion—mystical humbug. "Truth without mystery, or fear of man" we will proclaim, and as little "mixture of error," as may be.

But to return to the hob-nobbers, and sham-infidels, there are among them, as among all other men and parties, those who give their unqualified sanction, their approval to all *past* efforts for reform; so much so as to leave no reserve for present toils, trials, and troubles in the same cause. They can admire the Socrates, and Wickliffes, and Huses, and Luthers, &c. &c., in the moral and religious reforms, and the Gracchi, and the Tells, and the Hampdens in political reforms. These can be admired at a distance, and distance, with this class of people, confers respectability and lends enchantment to the view. The day of these reformers is gone by, and they require but the passive, fruitless sympathy of actionless approval. The O'Briens, O'Connors, Frosts, Lovetts, Hetheringtons, the Carliles, Watsons, the Southwells, living men, their actions fresh in our recollection, and above all, it being so unfashionable to concede to such our sympathy, and so unprofitable to grant them support, must be repudiated, or cautiously screened, or fur-

tively tolerated, or apologised for with bated breath. To acknowledge an identity of opinion would be an effort quite beyond their courage. The people, with the little sympathies and narrow benevolences cannot afford it; "it is not the season," as the boys say with the peg-tops. Whence comes this? Is it from the antagonisms of their language? No, for hostility far more aggravated in the organs of despotism is viewed with dove-like tenderness. Is it from the fierceness of their attacks? No, for nothing can be more disgustingly unscrupulous than the onslaughts of the bigot press, which is passed over with scarcely a disapproval. What, then, are the obstacles? The opinions themselves! And why the opinions? Because *other* people are afraid of them. What would *Mrs. Grundy* say? what would become of us, if we lost *Mrs. Grundy* for a customer? How should we make both ends meet, my dear, if *Mrs. Grundy* were to leave us? Consider our wives and families. Consider my parliamentary duties, says an M.P. in sending a very polite refusal to attend at a Radical hob-nob. Why a wife and family are as good as a little annuity to one of your cautious tribe. A widow's cap can scarcely compete with a wife and family. And what an irresistible reason for sitting slippered in the arm-chair before the fire, reading with complacency or becoming indifference about other people's strugglings; and what an infallible excuse for buttoning up the breeches pocket. Besides, a wife and family begets sympathy; and sympathy begets custom, you know, and being a "nation of shopkeepers," we must look to the "main chance," and all that. Yes, the main chance, *et preterea nihil*, and nothing else. What do the poor do with their wives and families, who lose more by sacrificing their miserable pence, than these excusers do in deducting their pounds? The fact is, that three-fourths of the so-called Infidels are *worshippers*. They worship the till, the profits, and the percentages; they have, equally with the religious world, a god, as operative, as influential, as controlling in their every thought, word, and action. This god, and the godists' god is the god *mammon*. In him, as one of the noted "Jew Book" writers has it, "they live, and move, and have their being."

Vainly do the firm hearts that stand in the foreground, and strike the first blow against tyranny, vainly do they look for support; they who cast away the mental bandages, who think for themselves, who see for themselves, who use not the tongue nor pen of others, but boldly put forth their independent thoughts, are suffered to fall unaided, or faintly and ineffectively helped, the victims of force and fraud. "Man, man!" says the *New Ecce Homo*, "I begin to be ashamed of thy name! A brother comes to thee, and says, 'Farewell, brother, I go to prison!' and thou sleepest!

Another says, 'Farewell, brother, I go to the scaffold!' and thou sleepest! Another says, 'Farewell, brother, avenge my death!' and thou sleepest! Man! man! man! I will still exclaim until thou wakest."

The same ferocity, for it is still ferocity, whether gratified or not, whether barbarous or refined, is still displayed in the judicial sentence of the fine and imprisonment. And shall this most monstrous and unjust power be permitted to be exercised, shall its objects be gained by stopping the free current of thought? They shall not stifle the free voice, they shall not "coquet with the press or with human knowledge," they shall not upraise one portion of the press and trample on the other; either they must crush the press, as the priest truly said, or the press will crush them. Is the hunger and thirst after blasphemers' liberty and life to be allayed by a single sacrifice? No! he "still must have more blood!" His appetite is whetted by the taste. The human tiger prowls about from conventicle to conventicle, from "missionary" meeting to "bible" meeting, from "anti-popery" meeting to "church-extension" meeting, the most brutalising of the human passions being wrought upon and brought into full play by the doctrines and incendiary addresses of the M'Neiles, Stowells, M'Ghees, *et id genus homine*. The stream proceeding from a polluted and sanguinary source must necessarily partake of its foulness—blood! blood! is their theme. Blood for the old Jew-god! blood for the young Christ-god! blood at the Jew massacres! blood at the Christian massacres! blood at the Tonga Islands! and blood at Rathcormac! Finally, they would have blood at Bristol gaol, were their murderous intentions not frustrated by a more generally diffused opinion in favour of milder criminal laws; diffused, let it be borne in mind, not by religion, as Bentham could attest, but by Infidel philosophy.

Stay! before you return to the day-book or the ledger, view this portrait, it is drawn from the life, and by a faithful artist: "See, at yonder high-place, a figure moving towards you with a crucifix in his hand! See, he moves his lips? His lips are as black, and hang as frightfully over his chin, as the lips of the horror of the night. Words fall from his lips—his words—hark, hark! 'You are within, leaning on the creaking stools, you adored the god of the ocean-drop, you were heretics, you have been broken, you have been rent and cast away—hallelujah! You who stand outside the door, you were Jews, your hearts have been burned—hallelujah! And future heretics and Jews shall be broken, and rent, and cast away, and burned—hallelujah! hallelujah!'"

These remarks may be fitted by each shade or grade of believer or unbeliever to himself, according to the particular complexion or

modification of his belief or unbelief, and in accordance with its special applicability.

The Infidel from whim and the Infidel from disgust, and the Infidel from anger, and the sham-Infidel, and the semi-Infidel, or any but the Infidel from examination and conviction, may shake their crotchety heads "and look repudiative," or may even wax indignant, or contemptuous, or dignified, or in some shape or way cast off from themselves any identification with the real supporters of complete latitude in the expression of opinion. The honest Infidel, the honest man of all beliefs or no beliefs, will always uphold right and principle. The little phalanx linked together for the upholding of right, the assertion of principle, and the practical carrying out of its objects through the pages of the *Oracle*, are banded by ties not belonging to personal friendship alone, nor those of the till, or the counter. They hardly know each other but by reputation, or mutually seeing or interchanging thoughts on paper. *They are banded by principle*. Holding, with scarcely an exception, prominent and influential positions in that society, which is attracting a larger share of public attention to its operations, both from the cabinet and the people, than any other extant, and which is about to commence "practical measures," on the grandest scale of co-operative association; thus situated, as I said, in this society, the contributors to, and pledged supporters of, this periodical are determined to abolish, or set at defiance, all interference with mind, whether in high or low places.

SOUTHWELL'S bark shall never sail without an helmsman.

M. Q. R.

THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY DISPLAYED;

OR THE PENALTY OF HONESTY IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY.

(Concluded from page 88.)

WITH a simplicity only to be pardoned, as Mr. Owen would say, or the sense of "inexperience," we have felt it a kind of duty to believe that Christians were sincere in their professions of belief in their dogmas and creeds, and have ascribed the reality of their faith to stupidity rather than deception; deeming it more charitable to set them down for fools than to estimate them as knaves. But our conciliating logic is for ever knocked on the head by the imprudent disclosures of the learned gentleman who conducted the prosecution. Government, which now means little else than robbing and starving people in the name of her majesty, hinges on the terrors of religion, which is but a machine to support injustice, and frighten, by bugaboos, its victims into submission. And Christians themselves could not better defend

their craft than by making the confession. In doing so Mr. Smith must have been inspired by Mr. SOUTHWELL with some of his zeal in the cause of truth.

While I respect his honesty I am alarmed for his temerity, for was it not his interest to be religious on these occasions, strong glimpses of the truth like those to which he is evidently subjected, joined to his rashness, would soon remove him from the bench and place him in the bar. From being the opponent in truth he would become SOUTHWELL'S "companion in bonds," as St. Paul would say.

The Unitarian contends that god is love and goodness, and he discards the idea of hell as brutalising, revoltingly cruel, and degrading to the nature of a god; then the Unitarian robs the world of the supposed salutary fear of everlasting punishment, said to be the main stay of government. The Atheist does no more. If then the Atheist is to be strung to a gallows, the Unitarian should swing on a gibbet likewise. So much for Mr. Smith's defence of hell: the right arm and sceptre of superstition and prop of all iniquity, the perpetual pivot on which the defence of all injustice is made to turn.

Men are happy, says Rosseau, in proportion to their virtue, and next in proportion to their independence. With equal truth it may be affirmed, that men are just in proportion to their knowledge of their relationships to their fellow-creatures, and honest in proportion to their liberty of speaking the truth. Then in order to secure justice and virtue, it is only necessary that men have sound education, and freedom from pernicious restraints. He who is honest through *fear* will be *criminal* from the same cause.

Not another word need be employed in demonstrating the absurdity, folly, and wickedness of endeavouring to govern men by slavish terrors. It is slavery and disgusting sycophancy in those who bow to it, and despicable tyranny in him who attempts it, be he a god or a king, or an attorney-general.

The most striking and potent argument of the whole speech was the concluding one, an argument which is even the climax of all theological reasoning—we mean the call he made on the jury to put down Mr. Southwell's principles and teaching, by the strong arm of the law, plainly acknowledging that they were not otherwise answerable.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you will have to consider, simply, are these blasphemous libels, as they are described to be in the indictment, and were they published by the defendant? If so, there can be but one result; that is, a verdict of guilty; and whatever the defendant may now say, allow *mè* to say, that not only will such a verdict meet with the *full approbation* of every man competent to form an opinion upon such a subject, but that I think also, that

the time will come, when the defendant's own conscience will approve and confirm that verdict. Gentlemen, with the fullest confidence that there can be no other result than the verdict I have anticipated, I leave the question for your decision."*

When christianity came to the bar—whose lofty form we are all told has walked in triumph through the world for eighteen centuries; who in England has monopolised all office, all power, all respectability, all colleges and education; who, besides earthly appliances, has heavenly means to boot; a god's grace, holy spirits, ghosts, and prayers of the faithful by cargoes to aid it—poor Human Reason it might fairly be expected would be infallibly and for ever sent to that place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest," and that the full blaze of light would strike the disputer down, as pious Paul did Elymas. All she advanced, stripped of fallacy and assumption, appears very unlikely to rob any of her apologists of their customary characteristics, presenting, if any difference, fresh claims to the description of Gifford:

The abortive progeny of pride
And dulness, gentle pair, for aye allied;
Begotten without thought, born without pains,
The ropy drivel of rheumatic brains.

With an hypocrisy in perfect keeping with the "pleasant day, sir," of Jack Ketch, as he slipped the noose around the neck of his victim, Mr. Smith pretended to hope Mr. SOUTHWELL could be sent back to his comfortable home, though he had "the fullest confidence" in a verdict of *guilty*. But this, he subjoined, is impossible—and the publication of his opinions be prevented. Oh, yes, it might be done Mr. Smith well knew. The publication of *any* opinions can be prevented by their *refutation*; and it was a virtual admission that the sword of the law is the only *argument* of the priests.

To confess that SOUTHWELL cannot be answered, otherwise than by the jail, is more candid than consoling; excepting that it confirmed all it was intended to confute. It is to proclaim that our theologians are imbecile, who cannot defend their own dogmas; that religion is deception; and the bible a cheat. It places the government of the world in the hands of an official of state. All government as usually understood rests upon the belief in a god, and the evidence of his existence is in the hands of the attorney-general. It is, as a god-believer might say, tearing the almighty from his throne in the universe, and sticking a lawyer in his place. Verily Christians are indebted to Mr. Smith; their case in the hands of their opponents is hopeless enough, if it is thus treated by their friends.

A million of false oaths, says Dr. Price,

* See Trial, p. 19.

are taken every year, and they are all administered in courts of justice, every taker first kissing the blessed bible. "What becomes of the sanction under which law and justice are administered," quoth Mr. Smith, without "the solemn appeal to the omniscient and almighty being, through the medium of an oath, taken upon the sacred scriptures?" Aye, what indeed? What became of this same "sanction under which law and justice are administered" in the case of the quaker juryman to whom the pleader found himself obliged to allude? In the very same breath Mr. Consistency Smith observed on the quaker's non-taking of the oath, but that "was not because he disbelieved in the existence of a god; but because he has such a profound reverence for the holy scriptures." Thus, have but an extra profound reverence for the holy book; and the "sanction," the "solemn appeal," the "almighty being," and the "sacred scriptures" themselves, are all pitched overboard *sans ceremonie*. On the contrary, say you don't believe a word of it, that it is all knavery or twaddle—and it is forced down your throat. So much for the morality of christianity! But see it further exemplified, in the truly Christian advocate entreating the jury, who had been sworn to decide only according to *evidence*, to find Mr. Southwell guilty, although no particle of evidence could be adduced in proof of the crime with which he stood charged. The best reply to all advanced, during the whole speech, on the immorality of Atheism, was in Mr. Southwell's own person. He had sacrificed his fair prospects, risked his life, subjected himself to the coldness and loss of friends, to the sneers, scoffs, and cruelty of enemies, and then stood there to be convicted of an offence which no man did, nor ever can, commit—without hope of justice, without chance of mercy, and with the prospect of a long, cruel, and murderous imprisonment. It is due only to the accident of Mr. Southwell having friends to make his imprisonment tolerable, that his life may be saved to lay the lash again upon his bigot foes. And all rather than tell a lie, and with the hope of bettering the condition of his oppressed and priest-ridden fellow-men.

The moral sensibility of a lawyer is analogous to that of the butcher, him of the red coat as well as the blue apron, both alike having their sympathies blunted by their training. One might as consistently ask a soldier in the field of blood to sit on a coroner's inquest as one of the men of the law to decide on a question of morality. Yet these men of dungeons and death, whose footsteps are in the midst of misery, and who live on the agonies of the unfortunates of humanity, are the vicegerents of a god, his defenders, to whose

hands his evidences are consigned, who, as "Publicola" forcibly says, would have argued the other side with equal alacrity had the brief fallen into their hands. Surely theology is on its last legs, and its god in a despicable condition. Atheism comes like a balm, a sweet anodyne to the irritated spirit, after the contemplation of such a scene.

The utility of the course Mr. Southwell has pursued, this trial abundantly demonstrates, except perhaps to the hopelessly prejudiced. A thousand lectures and argumentations would fail to expose the pretension, hollowness, cruelty, and injustice of religion, so effectually as she has been driven to expose herself. The public opinion now awakening, the light now cast on her deformities, and the press, her giant enemy even in bonds, publishing her infamies, will soon transform her into a suicide. If any view taken here should be deemed over painted and unjust, the answer is, *the condemnation of Southwell is merciless cruelty, bigotry and oppression; RELIGION HAS BEEN THE PREPETRATOR; CHRISTIANITY HAS THE SHAME;* and whatever is cruel and unjust is execrable, called by whatever name it may be. Still the transaction is redolent with satisfaction, for considering the fatal and imprudent disclosures SOUTHWELL has drawn forth by his trial, one conclusion seems inevitable, that Christians have more to fear from the arguments of Infidels, than Infidels from the vengeful and cowardly punishments of Christians. A few more exposures like this Bristol conviction, will entomb them in contempt; a few more such victories will ruin them. SOUTHWELL has gained more to the territories of reason in two days, than they can regain to the domain of faith in two centuries. By his sufferings they are everlasting losers—a mental Sampson—in his fall he has broken the pillars of the temple, and brought the superstructure of Dagon over the heads of his enemies.

G. J. H.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. Z. No.

MOVING THE TRIAL. The Trial was not moved, because it could not have been brought within metropolitan jurisdiction; and it was not deemed advisable to change the *venue* to a neighbouring county. Every step was taken by the committee under the best legal advice.

A SECOND REPORT will shortly appear, with further SUBSCRIPTION LISTS.

Subscriptions received on behalf of Mr. Southwell.

	£	s.	d.
Ashton-under-Lyne	0	10	0
Per Mr. Clarke	0	2	6
W. J., per ditto	0	5	0
W. W. C.	1	0	0

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Saturday, March 5, 1842.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 12.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

**MR. OWEN’S THIRTEENTH AND
FIFTEENTH ADDRESSES**

TO HIS DISCIPLES.

“We shall be the last to limit inquiry in any direction which man may desire to explore; all we wish is, that all investigations in search of truths, known or hidden, should be commenced and continued in good faith and in good humour.”—ROBERT OWEN’S Thirteenth Address to the Disciples of the Rational System of Society.—*New Moral World*, January 15, 1842.

To the dictations of philanthropy and the teachings of age, more than ordinary deference is due; and when the well-earned reputation of Mr. Owen for sound philosophy is taken into consideration, to question the correctness of any of his conclusions will sound in many ears like unpardonable presumption. But if we see sufficient reason to do so, we trust any remarks made will be set down to the proper motive; not to vanity and conceit, but to anxiety to be right. Though not more prudent, we deem it more honourable, to walk in the paths of reason, than to blindly tread in the footsteps of authority. Truth owns no man’s name, but stands like a tower upon a hill, and the arrows of criticism fall harmlessly at her feet. Error, like Jonah, requires a gourd, flies to covers, deprecates searching, and fears attack because conscious of mortality. This observation, which is more trite than newly born, is not without its application. Men, even the most rational, are too apt to grow in love with their opinions, and tremble to see them questioned; which is in reality to raise a prejudice against them, and to treat them as errors while proclaiming them as truths. This may not be true of Mr. Owen, but probably somewhat correct of many of his friends.

On the day on which Mr. SOUTHWELL’S Trial terminated in Bristol, Mr. Owen’s Address, from which the quotation at the head of this article is taken, was published. It contains, if we understand it rightly, some very incorrect remarks on Mr. SOUTHWELL’S character and principles: and as he is prevented from defending himself, a few observations on his behalf are due to justice if not to generosity.

Mr. Owen lives in a world of his own. Images and visions of a bright future ever flit before his eyes. Abstracted from the stern

realities of life, he sometimes fails to judge as justly of other men, as perhaps consistently he ought, when their notions of right and wrong clash with his own. Probably their disagreement perturbs his contemplations, and induces a severity belonging rather to his years than to his nature, and foreign both to his philosophy and to his heart.

We do not speak to disparage but to defend. In Mr. Owen’s strictures on Mr. SOUTHWELL’S character we think he errs, and as he does not lay claim to infallibility, perhaps we shall be pardoned for saying so. By Mr. Owen we readily shall. Men whose claims to deference are beyond dispute seldom rigorously exact it; those only of questionable pretensions are uneasy under scrutiny. For the especial comfort of such, we beg to say all our remarks shall be made in “good faith,” and we trust that our “good humour” will never forsake us.

For the edification of those shrewd spirits who will conclude we are attacking windmills, we direct attention to a portion of that *New Moral World* to which we have alluded, wherein correspondents on Mr. SOUTHWELL’S case are referred to Mr. Owen’s Address, from which we shall now quote the following passage:—

“Many parties, young and inexperienced, or possessing by nature strong, and violent, and overbearing energy of wild and uncultivated power, greatly desire, before they have acquired any sound practical knowledge or experience, beyond a very narrow circle in society, to take a prominent lead in its management, while they imagine that the Rational System which they profess to adopt consists only of the most vulgar democracy, or stark staring violent Atheism, of neither of which do these parties appear to have any rational conception.”

“Youth and strength,” if brought forth as charges must be respectfully pleaded guilty to. They are *faults* of time, if faults at all, sins to be borne patiently and forgiven. It should not be forgotten that youth is often found to undertake those duties, necessary to be performed, from which maturity shrinks and age is shielded. Ancient Rome owed its arts of eloquence to the Roman youths. Ascetics, cynics, and churls in the senate, had banished all rhetoricians and philosophers. But Carneades, Crito-

lans, and Diogenes, when visiting Rome, as ambassadors from Athens, charmed the young men of the city by their philosophy and oratory, and through their ingenuous appreciation these elegant and useful arts were restored to Rome. In like manner, many a commonwealth has owed more to the warmth of youth than to the cold prudence of greybeards.

"Inexperience" is not so much the creature of age as of opportunities, and no one can correctly affirm, at random, whether they have been many or few. It is more a matter of opinion, than a certain fact, that Mr. SOUTHWELL's powers are either "wild or uncultivated." The earlier pages of this publication go far to induce a contrary belief. And, as the eulogy of an enemy has more weight than the conviction of a friend, Mr. Grace Smith may be cited as a confirmation that we are not wholly wrong in our views. "Violent and overbearing energy" is rather a desirable qualification, when employed in attacking error or defending truth. No evidence is or can be adduced that Mr. SOUTHWELL ever manifested impatience in any way. It is fashionable now to ask, not what ought to be said, but what can be AFFORDED to be said, and soldiers of truth "look as fair and smell as sweet as any waiting gentlewoman." Hence Mr. SOUTHWELL has been magnified into a *Hotspur*, when perhaps the inference can only be arrived at by comparison. Foreseeing, while he was a member of the social body, that his conduct would be ascribed to ambition, we took no little pains to ascertain if such was the case, and can unhesitatingly affirm that no man in the whole social body had ever a less desire, or greater disinclination to take the lead than CHARLES SOUTHWELL. His real thoughts upon this subject are honestly expressed in the following words from his first Letter to the "Socialists of England:" "Had principle not been violated; had the association been true to itself; had its talented leaders repudiated instead of imitated the vices of mere demagogues, I would have fought in the van, in the rear, or side by side, with them; aye, even to the last gasp; my notion of these things having ever been, that in the glorious warfare against error and tyranny, *to a mind not spotted by vanity*, it would be held far more honourable to be a corporal in a well-disciplined regiment, than a general among ragamuffins."

He did not see *only* "stark staring, violent Atheism" in Socialism, but he saw, what Mr. Owen declared in the City of London Tavern, in the speech quoted by Mr. SOUTHWELL in his "Fifth Letter to the Socialists," "that the errors of religion must not be there." And he has yet to learn, as indeed many others have, how the errors of religion can ever be annihilated except by the exposition of Atheism. Believ-

ing this, he began to teach it, and if it appears "stark and staring," probably it proceeds from the conviction that truth, like Socialism, or any other good thing, is most beautiful when naked. Its fair proportions are better seen, or its deformities more easily discovered. Atheism is not, it cannot be, "violent." It pertains to reason, not to feeling, and philanthropy every body knows is cool and quiet enough in our day.

Mr. Owen indulges in a little pleasantry, and calls the crusade in favour of Atheism, "Quixotic." The same thing was often told Mr. Owen in his young days with regard to Socialism. He did not believe it, and it is well for the world he did not. We do not believe it of Atheism. We have more confidence in truth and reason, and it may be well for humanity we have.

In another part of this address, Mr. Owen says, "There must be a power to perform that which occurs throughout the universe; but what that power is, man has not yet discovered. That power we call God; *and there the whole matter ends.*" But there the whole matter does not end, unless it be in a somewhat dogmatical manner. It may so end in Mr. Owen's mind, *but Mr. Owen is not the world*, and it is the world that is to be convinced. A Euclid might, in his day, have turned to his pupils of Alexandria and said, "The 18th proposition in the 12th Book of my Elements of Geometry, informs you, that 'Spheres have to one another the triplicate ratio of that which their diameters have,' and there the whole matter ends." "That may be very correct, but not quite so conclusive. Permit us to see your axioms, definitions, and postulates, and pass step by step through all *your* reasoning, and we may be of the same opinion," would have been their natural reply. So the world argues with regard to the being of a god. We perfectly agree with Mr. Owen, that nothing is known relative to the existence of a power governing the universe. Men should learn this fact, which would be the destruction of all religion. We wish only to add, that our "stark staring, violent Atheism" is nothing more than an attempt to explain as clearly as possible the truth of that proposition which Mr. Owen has himself enunciated. For to require assent before conviction, is by himself conceded as being an error. It was a "cute" saying of Aristotle, "that to be ignorant that you are ignorant is the disease of the multitude," which ignorance on the subject of religion, has continued their diseases to this day; not a mere intermittent fever, but an epidemic, which can only be cured by direct application, medicine prescribed for another disorder will fail.

It is a poor objection to affirm we shall "irritate," when we war with those who oppress. Samuel Bailey, the most powerful living writer on the formation of character, has

* See Trial, p. 16.

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

shrewdly remarked, that "The religious opinions of the majority of mankind are necessarily acquired by instillation: from the nature of the case they cannot be otherwise than derivative, and they are as firmly believed, without the least particle of evidence, as the theorems of Euclid by those who understand the demonstrations. Men do not suspect their religious creed to be false, because the grounds of its truth or its falsity lie altogether without the pale of their knowledge, and remote from the path of their experience."

Hence it appears that it is only by judicious and powerful attacks on popular beliefs and prepossessions that we can hope to turn men's attention in the way of reason and common sense. This too appeared to be felt by Mr. Owen, when he declared, that silence would not retard, and opposition would only accelerate the progress of social truth. For this reason it seems to us that good must result from such investigation as we institute, in more respects than one. Perhaps no subject of human inquiry is so well calculated to awaken attention and give a vigorous tone to the mind, as a discussion on the existence of a god, when the object is not to establish the correctness and incorrectness of received notions, but to arrive at truth. No branch of investigation can be more useful to young persons as a mental exercise. It draws attention to the primitive springs of all knowledge and to the first principles of correct reasoning; stimulates careful thought; exercises patience; checks presumption; requires impartiality, and encourages candour. The nature of the human mind and the constitution of things are unfolded, while the relationship of one to the other is exhibited in new and useful lights. If, like the children of the old man in the fable, one party should fail in discovering the expected treasure, a gratifying, unexpected, and more permanent advantage is gained. When the soil of reason has been diligently turned up, the expected legacy of *belief* is searched for in vain, a rich harvest of *truth* is the reward of our industry. We once heard it well remarked, that "Angelo's greatness lay in searching for untried existence," an observation very applicable to the subject of which we speak.

Mr. Owen, in his Fifteenth Address to his disciples, says he has never been so "petty" in his notions as to contend against *one* religion, but has opposed *all*, so much the better. Still we do not see the criminality of warring with only *one*, unless upon the well known principle, that

*One murder makes a villain,
MILLIONS a HERO.*

It is overlooked that the war to be effective must be with *one*. Dispute with whomsoever you may, *he* will attack all religions but his

own. Condemn Brahmins, Jews, and Thugs, and probably he will be the most opposed to them. The arguments must then be made to come home to him, which reduces the war to *one*.

These observations are not made on the supposition that Atheism is a *partial* attack on religions. We think it as comprehensive and complete an opposition as can be desired. Warring not against forms and ceremonies, not against "fundamental errors" merely, but against the *essence* of ALL religions—on the ground that they *displace morality*, and are consequently inimical to human happiness. We merely contend that, let the notion be as general as it may, the practice, to be useful, must be "petty," as it is styled. Turk and Pagan may be opposed till the grave of Moses is discovered, without a convert being made, where it is of the first importance they should be made—at home. Christians are not particularly quick in their apprehension of the weight of an argument, nor very anxious to own that one relates to *them*; and while objections to their system are exported to Constantinople or the Indies, they grow rampant at home, coerce the press, and strangle heretics with impunity, in the name of their lord and their god. Mr. Bailey, whom we quoted a moment ago, defines "Theology to be a comprehensive examination into the course of action and condition of mind, which will please the being who has the fate of mankind in his hands."

Now just prove, as you may do very easily, that there is no *reason* for believing there to be a "being" at all with "the fate of mankind in his hands"—and as Mrs. Leman Grimstone says, the whole buildings and cabinets of creeds are levelled at one fell swoop. It is a perfect gunpowder plot; the way of the Socialists, or any other reformer of abuses is clear before him. The elephant of the priesthood if fairly knocked from under the castle of oppression, and the incubus which for ages has sat upon the breast of mankind is driven to its den. As a species of wholesale work, nothing can be compared to Atheism. Superstitionists, under its visitation, are like the Assyrian hosts, when

The Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed on the face of the foe as he passed;
The eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
Their hearts but once heaved and for ever grew still.

Not dreaming that originality and vigour are qualities in our way; not even pretending to imitation of those who have excelled in their exercise, we pretend only to an admiration of others who have rejoiced in their possession; we are content to wander like comets, in devious and eccentric paths, if they but lead us in an age to the light of such suns. If, Uranus like, we should be consigned to a

distant orbit, we shall rejoice to revolve round the centre of truth, the smallest and palest of stars. If indeed we were nearer, the lead of our argument we confess would boil, as lead is said to do in Mercury. With these views we rejoice at the displays of warmth in the cause of right, and are glad when philosophy migrates from frigid to torrid zones. The pen of the great Paine was the warring of nature's elements in a world of corruption. If in his day the commotion of the waves purified the waters of iniquity, would not it do so now? Error lashed by him, felt very much as a man would in a thunder storm on a dark night—very uneasy under the falling torrents, and continually startled by the flashes of lightning which seem to dart at him. He may indeed escape with his life, but not without sundry misgivings that he has caught his death from the drenching he has received.

We would that the doers of evil were so castigated in our day.

We should have gladly passed by anything and everything coming from the individual to whose observations we have been replying, had not experience taught us, that whenever a great fish dives in any direction, rightly or wrongly, shoals of small fry are, from natural weakness and inability to take care of themselves, drawn along with him. And if otherwise, the articles we have alluded to, were calculated to foster and create prejudices neither creditable nor kind.

We flatly deny that Mr. SOUTHWELL has ever gone "*too far*" in his advocacy of truth, if measured by Mr. Owen's *pristine* standard, or perhaps by his present one. Take the following from his Eighteenth Address, issued last week.

"Hitherto you have been made abject slaves, both in mind and body, by the *priesthood of the world*, who to their own deep injury and your misery, have ever been made the *oppressive tyrants* of the human race."

After this, it would be difficult consistently to censure Mr. SOUTHWELL for any passage he has written upon the same subject, unless it is contended,

That in a captain is only a *choleric* word,
Which, in a corporal, is *rank blasphemy*.

The quotation at the head of this article contains the only permission we ask, that of making inquiry in any direction, without limit; and it lays down our two cardinal principles of action "*good faith*" and "*good humour*." With this remembrancer we take our leave to wait on the *Promethean*, and if the vultures do not tear out our insides, we will climb the rock to it in our next number.

G. J. H.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason
(MR. SOUTHWELL).

I INTEND to proceed from time to time with friendly criticisms.

Page 1, col. 2, No. 1, you say, "if men have not yet known, they should now be taught, that it is neither," &c., to "be an Atheist," &c. I have read this passage to, at the least, a dozen who have been talking about liberty and a free press, and Socialism, and Chartism, but in no one case have I found a full and free, and manly-spoken acknowledgment of the truth of your words. There was shyness or reluctance, a drawing back which shown, as is but too usual, a want of the habit of correct thinking; yet these were all men who put themselves forward to teach others; and so it must be until men's understandings shall be expanded.

Page 2, column 2, you say, "we see no solid REASON to believe—the *eternity* of anything but MATTER." I put it to you solely for consideration. Is it possible by REASON to know the *existence* of *matter*? To me it seems quite clear, that it is not, and never can be. Berkeley has shown the impossibility. If Berkeley's Essay were deprived of every word not "*significant*"—and of every word which is not pertinent to the existence or non-existence of matter, it would be reduced to about one third of its bulk and make a handbook of all but inestimable value. I hope to see this done presently, accompanied by a remark, that the abridgment has been made for the purpose of showing that the existence of matter cannot be proved by reason—and consequently not at all. This would humble many, and probably set some to reason more correctly than they have been accustomed to do, not only on this but on other subjects.

I "in my dark estate" am compelled to admit—or take for granted the existence of two things—1. matter; 2. self; because I can neither begin nor go on without them, though I know nothing positively about matter or even its existence, any more than I do of the self in which resides the power of comparing and deciding. This is not correct language, and yet I can do no better; we have not even the power of correctly stating this subject.

This is no "new view" of mine, but a very old one, and I believe a correct one.

Then, as to the word *eternity*. Give me leave to ask you to think again on this word. To ask yourself this question: Has it any real meaning; does it convey any clear idea? To me it seems to be used as an idle excuse, a shuffle to hide ignorance, better is the honest confession of ignorance than any attempt to hide it. Only see what a hodge-podge lexicographers and cyclopedists have made of it.

Page 3, column 2. You quote Dr. Samuel Clarke—"nothing is without a sufficient rea-

son," &c. "why it is." Dr. Clarke can hardly mean cause and effect, when as here he uses the word *reason*. If he does he puts his god out of existence. If he means the "*reason*" of god, he either talks nonsense or endeavours to put a trick upon his reader. Of *cause* and *effect* we know nothing certain, we cannot even form a conception of "necessary connection." All we can know is an inference from reasoning by analogy. What necessary connection is there between any wish to raise my arm and my raising it? How is motion connected with, what from want of a better mode of expressing myself, I call my *will*? Here is a familiar answer to all the whys and wherefores of our opponent, and of our own; all may be referred to this motion of the arm. Could we once clearly understand this, all other whys and wherefores might come to be understood; but being as we are, everything is a miracle. We do not know, and never shall know, the why of anything; we always come and always must come to a dead stop when we travel backwards in our inquiries, and never approach the end.

You will not, I hope, think these remarks superfluous, notwithstanding your own good reasoning on your quotation from Clarke.

Page 4, column 2. We come to Lord Shaftesbury, and *chance*. This word *chance* has been of more use to our priests than any other word in the way of controversy. *Chance* has been used as a sledge hammer, with which at one blow to knock down every opponent. This is another of the mischievous words which I discarded many years ago, together with hazard, accident, and all of the family. Horne Tooke, in his "Diversions of Purley," commenting upon the words—"it fell by chance," translates it into "*it fell by falling*." The word *chance* in relation to the matter in hand is altogether devoid of any rational meaning. Voltaire's definition of the word is a shuffle.

You say "not ourselves believing," &c., "from the *material* universe." Do you not here concede too much—more than you are warranted by any information you possess? I see no reason for the concession. I take the existence of the universe, or some portion of it, as an inference from the admission forced upon me—that matter exists; upon a close examination, I take the liberty to expect, that we shall agree in this particular.

But when you say, you "believe, that something must have been from all eternity, therefore uncaused," I am compelled to conclude that even you are a little superstitious. Only try, as I am sure you must. You must, because you cannot, even if you would, which you will not desire to do—avoid, thinking the matter over again, however you may decide. Ask yourself: what ideas have I when I use the words—"something *must*

have existed from *all* eternity, and therefore uncaused?"

I think you made a mistake when you said, "Spinoza established clearly that something exists;" he seems to me to have misled you as it is probable he misled himself. Spinoza could only *reason*, and it is utterly impossible for him or any one by *reasoning* to *prove* that anything exists. Spinoza assumed, like you and me, because he could not avoid it, that something existed, and thus he attempted, as many other men have, to prove his something by reasoning; when he had written all he has written he was precisely where he was before he had written a word, not at all nearer to a rational conclusion. Emanuel Kant took a shorter way. He said this kind of knowledge is prior to all reasoning—"it is *given*," and under this term he took whatever suited his purpose, to enable him to build up his system of complications, with which he crazed himself and three of my friends, all men of learning and science, one of whom died insane of Kant's philosophy.

You have adopted a theory which may, I fear, embarrass you, or even prevent your proceeding in right thinking, or may put a stop to any further thinking on the subject. You speak of the "inherent properties of matter;" this might be admitted were we upon a matter of science—but we are reasoning, par excellence, we are philosophising. May I say, as free from giving as I intend not to give offence, that you neither do nor ever can know anything about the inherent *properties* of *nature*, neither can you have any precise ideas of what you mean when you use the words. You are, evidently to me, not so old a dabbler as I am, or you would avoid all such phrases; they are worse than useless. Our rule should be never, when we can avoid it, and it can always be avoided when we reason carefully, to go beyond our knowledge; and if at any time we are pushed for answers to questions which we cannot answer, to say at once I do not know, I am ignorant on that point, or on that subject, and eager to be instructed by any one who has more knowledge than I have. Our progress in whatever can be known will be proportionate to our dismissions of absurdities and our accumulation of useful, i. e. real knowledge.

London.

AN INVESTIGATOR.

THE above strictures are worthy of attentive perusal; and the reader, unless a practised head, would do well to read them more than once. This is the more necessary, as I intend to offer some remarks upon them; in part by way of apology or reply for myself, in part by way of praise for him. These shall be brief, plain, and goodhumoured, which latter article I mention, because some of my correspondents have a notion that I am a man of fierce coun-

tenance, who treats those who differ with him in an off-hand and unwarrantable manner. Now this, I protest, is not my temper, and correspondents who may think fit to favor me with their hints, reflections, or even castigations, will be in no sort of danger. I will not undertake to answer all that correspondents may write, for as the philosophy of the *Oracle* is somewhat novel in this country, at least novel to the novices, and the *manner* novel as the matter, there will, doubtless, be a crowd of objections; so that I should find it difficult to answer them all if I had the *Times* broad-sheet at my command. I have determined in future to select the most solid and weighty objections of the whole mass, against either the theory of Atheism, or any other theories set forward in this paper. This is obviously the most useful, as it is the only practicable course. Every man has what Daniel O'Connell calls a little cockboat of his own, and there are very few indeed who do not carry too much sail or too little ballast. Besides, nothing can be more useful as well as enlivening to the general reader, than objections well put by correspondents, and well answered by editors, or if they cannot be well answered, well *acknowledged* as objections which cannot be met. It is in this spirit I shall proceed to notice the hints—criticisms is almost too harsh a name—of "An Investigator," whose style of taking objections is modest as his title; which, by the way, contrasts somewhat advantageously with the more lofty one of the *Oracle of Reason*; but let that pass as a non-essential.

He says, that he has read the passage in page one, column two, of the *Oracle*, "If men have not yet known, they should now be taught that it is neither creditable nor discreditable, to be an Atheist, a Christian, or Mussulman;" to at the least a dozen, who have been talking about liberty and a free press, and Socialism and Chartism, but in no case found a full and free, and manly spoken acknowledgment of the truth of those words;" and yet, he adds, "These are men who put themselves forward to teach others." I can readily believe this, but it is much to be regretted that those who set about "teaching others" should be ignorant of so highly-important a truth. As well might a man give credit to the rose for emitting a delightful odour, or praise the tulip for the beauty of its colors, as talk about the disgrace or the honor of holding certain opinions. To a necessitated being, there is nothing properly creditable nor discreditable; and man is as clearly the creature of necessity, as the bee or the butterfly. False opinions, as they give birth to vices, may be hateful, and those who hold them truly unfortunate; but to a philosopher, misfortune is not held a disgrace. Man is as much driven and forced to act, as the moon in its orbit, or the ball

from the cannon's mouth, even gods themselves, could we conceive of superior beings, must, like all things else, bend to necessity. The Greeks understood this very well, for even Jupiter was ruled by fate. For my own part, I know not how any man of sense can be ought but a fatalist. It is of little consequence whether we accept the *fatum* of the Turks, the *fatum* of the Stoics, or the *fatum* of the Christians, if we grant that all human actions, and of course all human opinions, are *necessitated*. To praise or blame is prime folly, for there can neither be merit nor demerit in opinions we are compelled to receive, or acts we are compelled to perform. There is really no essential difference between the Turk, who says that all is fated, whether cause or consequence; the Stoics, who taught that divine providence regulates and directs all things; and the Christian, who refers effects to god, working by second causes. But the subject is too complex to be reduced to simplicity by a few *dictums*, with which, however, I must content myself at present. When Napoleon, at Austerlitz, was exposed to the hottest fire of the enemy, his troops were alarmed for his safety. "Oh," said he, "fear nothing; the bullet that is to kill me is not yet cast;" which anecdote has been often related, as a proof that Napoleon was a fatalist; his fatalism, I suspect, amounted to this, that he was quite convinced, the thing to happen must happen. Fatalism is based on truisms, which all men acknowledge, and few men say they do. I agree with "An Investigator," that the philosophy of morals will not be understood, and men will go on stupidly as heretofore, glorifying themselves for being and thinking what they can in no wise avoid, "until men's understandings shall be expanded;" should that happen before the opening of the "seven seals," and Mr. Death pays the world a visit on his pale horse, men will see the gross absurdity of attaching credit or discredit to any kind of action or opinion. I agree with Luther, that "*free will is a lie*;" for how can human will be free, which, in the language of Byron, "depends as much upon a straw as on a storm?" and how can there be merit or demerit, where there is no freedom? This opinion has nothing in common with the predestination, absurdity and vulgar notions of fatalism.

With regard to "An Investigator's" Query, Is it possible by reason to know the *existence of matter*? In a strictly philosophical sense, I should say not; but nothing ever can be known in *that* sense. Our very existence is but a *probability*. Pyrrho doubted his own existence. When asked why he did not kill himself, he replied, that life and death being equal, he had not the power to choose. His friends found it necessary to furnish him with a guard of servants, lest he should, acting

upon the notion that all was imaginary, knock his head against brick walls. Upon one occasion, he was well nigh drowned, but true to his principle, he made no effort to save himself. Pyrrho was called a philosopher, else would one think him a madman. I have not the *Oracles* lying by me, but if I mistake not, in an early number, it is stated that the existence of matter is *taken for granted* as something, if not *indisputable*, practically certain; and without the admission of which all reasoning is at an end. In No. 7, there is something like the following: "The universe exists, that I know, if I know anything; but who will affirm that the most divine of theologians knows as well that an immaterial god exists. Mine is absolute knowledge, *the fact*; his at best mere hypothesis. The *if* shows that I did not assert the existence of an external world as CERTAIN. When Berkeley was carrying his famous book, in which he "has shown the impossibility of knowing by reason the existence of matter," he ran against a post, and terribly bruised his shins, but even that did not cure him of his theory; and it is certain, reason could not. I agree with "An Investigator," that an abridgment of his work would do much good, making all parties less positive, and, as a consequence, more modest in assertion, though it is a book calculated rather to strain than to expand the intellect. "An Investigator" will perceive that we are both in the "dark estate;" both "compelled to admit, or take for granted, the existence of two things: first, matter; second, self, &c.: yet is it true, that "I see no SOLID reason to believe in anything but MATTER."

As to the word eternity, in a number of the *Oracle*, it will be seen that I define what I mean by the term: TIME, *that has no conceivable limit; as infinity is EXTENT, that has no conceivable limit.* This definition is, in fact, a confession of ignorance, which I perfectly agree with "An Investigator," is "better than any attempt to hide it."

What Dr. Samuel Clarke may have meant by saying that "nothing is without a sufficient cause why it is," I will not pretend to say; indeed, my opinion is, that his so much cracked-up demonstrative reasonings on the existence of a god, are but learned sophistries. He is one of the best specimens of clever men, in whom the preacher stifled the philosopher. I agree, that "of cause and effect we can know nothing," if the condition of knowing be contingent upon the impossible conception of "necessary connection," for "all we can know is an inference from analogy." The rest of that paragraph precisely sets forth my views, therefore comment would be superfluous. I may simply remark, that everything is a miracle, which I have taken some pains to show in the *Oracle*; but then all things, causes as they are called, and effects as they are

called, are *equally miraculous*, no one kind of moral or physical phenomena being more or less astonishing than another; so that all is, with me, a miracle, or rather, *I admit no miracle at all.* If men were content with the dead stop, they would have attained the real end of philosophy; but

They are skilful to invent most serious names
To hide their ignorance.

I agree with "An Investigator," that the word *chance* has been of much use to the priests, but not of *more* use than any other in the language. The word *god* is unquestionably the *most* useful to them. The whole "family" of hazards, accidents, chances, &c. may, I think, be advantageously dispensed with in philosophising, so that myself and "An Investigator," agree in that particular; but "shuffle" is rather too harsh a word for Voltaire's definition; for unquestionably it has been usual to give the senseless name of chance to those effects, the causes of which (I speak now of antecedents merely) were not understood.

I have put the question to myself, as suggested by "An Investigator," "What ideas have I when I use the words—a something *must* have existed from *all* eternity?" And this was the reply of the little gentleman in my cranium—"Must" and "*all*," like *cause* and *effect*, are relative, not absolute terms. The admission is "forced upon me," that matter exists, and I have made free to call it *the fact*. Another admission is also forced upon me, and that is the indestructibility of matter; so that my argument, thrown into a syllogistic form, would stand thus: matter exists; matter cannot be destroyed; ergo, matter is eternal. It imports not whether I dogmatise, by saying the admission is forced upon me that matter cannot be destroyed, or that matter cannot be created. Like my friend, "An Investigator," I take the liberty to expect that we shall agree in this particular, and if so, we agree in all; for the *must* and the *all* have no *absolute* meaning. Nor do I see how it appears, from such reasoning, that I am "a little superstitious." Perhaps "An Investigator," in his next, will enlarge upon that point.

Spinoza *asserted*, would have been far better than "Spinoza clearly established that something exists," for, in truth, we can only assume that matter exists, it not being possible, as it appears to me, either to prove, by reasoning, our own existence, or the existence of any external world. This verbal viciousness should be avoided, if possible. As to the philosophy of Kant, I confess, with sorrow, that I could never understand it, and have been tempted to think that he hardly understood it himself. All this under correction, however; for I would fain avoid the vulgar injustice of depreciating what I do not, or cannot understand. Reasoning *à priori*, I should

say that the theory of Kant is eminently qualified to craze both master and disciples.

By "inherent properties," I understand properties inseparable from matter, as they appear to us, whether in the moonbeam, rose, insect, stone, or man. As to withins and withouts, they are not admitted by me, so that "inherent" merely signifies a force belonging to matter—matter being the subject, properties its accidents. With submission to "An Investigator," this is a precise idea; at all events, as precise as my idea at the present moment, that a pen is in my hand.

C. S.

A VOICE FROM BRISTOL GAOL.

Sunday night, Feb. 27, 1842.

DEAR CRONY,

This is my Patmos. You may look for the wonderful revelation of Saint Charles—a revelation novel in all respects, NOT needing another revelation to explain it. The revelation of an Atheist will be a curiosity, you may laugh, or cry oh, oh, as it please thee so to do, but it will. In sober seriousness; I dreamt a dream last night, of which, in imitation of Saint John, I would now bear record; but it is dangerous to be safe here, and anything but safe to record out-of-the-way things. One cannot speak truth or falsehood well with a gag in the mouth, or write in comfort with dark hole in perspective. So my awful revelation must be postponed *sine die*, but thus much I may say, we have reached *le commencement du fin*. The end, you know, must have a beginning, and the beginning must have an end. To leave dreams for realities, I have been honoured by a visit from Mr. James Wood, my own true knight. As much expected to see Mephistophiles at my elbow; but the ways of providence are partly straight and partly crooked, no man knowing what the morrow will bring forth. He was kind, affable, and all that, and highly complimented my intellect, though at the expense of my reason, but *that's* a trifle. Any compliment is better than none: wished uncommonly you had been a little way up the chimney, just to hear his astonishment that one who owed so much to god, should not even know that he was in debt, and even to deny the existence of his creditor. His opinion of me may be summed up in a sentence filched from Shaftesbury—"that god gave me my talents, and the devil the application of them." What a pity it is that "goramity no kill devil," as simple hearted Friday thought he should do, it would prevent much mischief. If the devil were killed, and god showed himself in his true colors, there would be an extinguisher put upon all sorts of mischief. I felt, as you may suppose, rather flattered by Mr. Wood's opin-

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ion, qualified though it was, and could I have got, within an hour of his visit, by the side of a clear stream, it is likely I should have suffered the fate of Narcissus. Must not omit to mention, that he flatly denied having issued, or caused to be issued, the second warrant; adding, that he was sorry his duty, as a Christian magistrate, compelled him to issue the first. I was incredulous, and if *incredulity* be, as Aristotle affirmed, the parent of wisdom, I shall soon be "as ladies wish to be who love their lords." I wished to say amen, but amen stuck in my throat. I verily believe that if one of the "twelve," instead of Thomas, called Didymus; I should have been every whit as incredulous; for unless I saw, in his (Jesus') hands, the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into his side, I should not have believed. So you won't wonder that Mr. Wood did not make me whole, or produce entire conviction. Some book or person told me, a short time since, that in the Bay of Biscay, when it blows tolerably hard, it takes two men to keep one man's hair on. Did not believe THAT neither. So, you see, I still remain yours, a shocking sceptic. C. S.

The most intelligent and philosophical among Christians, become Deists; and the most studious and talented among Deists, become Atheists.—*Anon.*

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LETTERS TO SOUTHWELL. In answer to various inquiries, we can say that Mr. Southwell has received all letters that have been addressed to him; and, we believe, without interference. Direct, "Mr. Southwell, Prisoner, Common Gaol, Bristol."

SUBSCRIPTIONS. It is desirable that the monies collected should be sent in as early as possible. Send, by Post Office order, to the Secretary, Mr. Ryall, 3, North Place, Lambeth, London; or, Mr. Hetherington, Wine-Office Court, Fleet Street, London.

ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION. A plan will shortly be presented for organizing a society for the purpose of protecting all victims in the struggle against mental oppression.

We would be happy to publish the numerous letters received by the Secretary of the Defence Committee, and the Editor, from various parts of the country, co-operating, sympathising, &c., but it is utterly impossible with our present limits; and even, in a supplementary number, the heads only could be given.

The *Trial*, in Twopenny Weekly Parts, may be obtained from booksellers or newsvenders in any town.

The *Oracle*, if there be not a liberal bookseller in the locality, can be usually obtained by order from a bookseller to whom the applicant is known; otherwise, stamps remitted to the publisher to the amount of the back postage, in addition to the price of the numbers required, will ensure a prompt supply.

No. 4, containing the "Jew Book," is now ready.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street, Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.

Saturday, March 12, 1842.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 13.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE "PROMETHEAN,"

NOT BY SHELLEY.

"For my part, I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to heaven with Paley and Malthus."—*Shelley's Preface to his Prometheus Unbound.*

"GENERAL appreciation in the pulpit," said a good clergyman, one day, "is condemnation." So it is of all writings and sayings against popular idols. The world is not yet sufficiently free from leading strings to dare to approve openly that which it sanctions inwardly. It is not prudent, politic, safe, respectable, or something: certain it is, it is not done; and those who expect it will be deceived. In all efforts at improvement, all exertions made under that delirium the Scotch philosopher styled "a passion for reforming the world," must proceed upon the calculation that the satisfaction of doing rightly will be *the sufficient* reward: and one that will repay the loss of friends, the vengeance of enemies, and sacrifice of life. Anything short of this will lead to certain misery, mortification, and disappointment. No man with his eyes open seeks these latter things. We trust Mr. SOUTHWELL has no weighed matters, and "rash" as he is held to be, we give him credit for being as cool-headed on these points as a stock-broker over a bargain.

We are fresh from the perusal of the second number of a monthly work, by name the *Promethean*, edited by Goodwyn Barmby. It contains, to our minds, some queer remarks on CHARLES SOUTHWELL, which must not be passed by unnoticed. Barmby is young, clever, and promising, but we think mistaken a little in the matter before us. A more careful study of his great prototype, Shelley, who seems to live in all his dreams, will do everything to correct that of which we complain.

Any hesitation observed in these comments, must not be judged too harshly of. It is gravely stated by the editor of the *Promethean* that his work is read only by the *elite* of the human race! Now, no man would willingly offend this assembly, if his organs of veneration or cautiousness are at all developed.

First, the *Promethean* says "of the *Oracle of Reason* we should not scruple to say, that it is the action of speaking from old memory, and

a worthless production, a lilliputian printed disgrace, a pigmean illiterate dishonour to the cause of dissent from christianity." This is excellent. Gulliver would say so too, it being formed on his *chaste* model. It is description refreshing itself. The "exoteric echoes of the esoteric," never surely produced anything better. Water and time are referable to known standards, by which their quantity and duration are measured. By what rule Mr. Barmby has estimated our "lilliputian" pigmy paper it would puzzle St. Simon to tell. The *Promethean* rejoices in a quarto sheet, luxuriates in sixpence cost, and is clothed in a yellow cover. A book in a similar case has been compared to a cinnamon tree, the bark being the more valuable part. Granting it rude to be without a cover, the *Oracle* should excite compassion not contempt. The *Promethean* should sing, as its motto, the lines of Watts adapted to its feelings:

How many pigmies in the street
Quite naked I behold,
While I am clothed from head to foot
And covered from the cold.

Then, we charge but one penny—shockingly "illiterate." The "*elite*" will never forgive us. Of the other five things said we must be silent, having no words at hand at all suited to convey our conceptions, and having no skill at coining new ones, a privation Mr. Barmby never felt. "When we say" (continues the *Promethean*) "the *Oracle* attacks christianity with the same bigotry and intolerance, and with the same Billingsgate abuse as that with which the Christian attacks the Infidel, we speak the truth, and say enough to dishonour it." We are not quite sure these remarks are not more redolent of dogmatism than truth. We have not the advantage of a sufficiently intimate acquaintance with "Billingsgate abuse" to be able to judge how correctly the comparison is made. But we have sufficient experience to know, that some are in the habit of calling everything "bigoted," which is bold; every argument or position "intolerant," which is well deported against popular prejudice; and every word "abuse," which is not of the coinage of their own idiosyncrasy. "We should resolve," said a famous love-spirit, of the school to which Mr. Barmby belongs, "to cease altogether

utter alone from new being." We suppose it is from this "being" Mr. B. has spoken.

Few things, to artificial minds, are more offensive than plain speaking, notwithstanding that Euripides has stated that truth loves it. Our stated propriety of speech has been styled a cheat upon the understanding. It deceives us with appearances, instead of things; and makes us think we see reason, whilst it is only tickling our sense.

We have never dwelt in the mystic regions of Fourierite sublimity, and so can tell little of the new religion of which Mr. B. is an apostle and teacher. Hitherto we have never known a good one. From its cheerless apathy displayed toward all noble affections and man-like struggles for freedom, it may set the head in a flame but leaves the heart an icicle. It falls like the moonbeams, not to warm but to freeze. Its rays are colder than the shade. We would escape from the world and wander on high, but the time is not yet come for it; we fear the rebuke of the Thracian maid, who watched Thales astronomizing till he fell into a well—"Give over searching into the heavens, till you are better acquainted with the earth."

The subtle refinements of proud and spiritual philosophy should never usurp the place of common sense. It was a wise saying of Socrates, that "what man is, and what a nature of this kind ought principally to do, or to suffer, should be the first object of his inquiry and earnest investigation." Which just consideration, as we take it, would lead to juster thoughts on the way Mr. SOUTHWELL has taken. Mr. Barmby would have never looked on human wrongs in the soft spirit of poesy. But those who are more familiar with the sad realities of every-day life, cannot guild with golden hues the pains and miseries they taste. Nor would it be just or useful to throw a mantle over iniquity. It must be eradicated, not concealed. The mirror must be held up to injustice, the horror of the sight is with its perpetrators and perpetuators. Nero fiddled while Rome was burning—we cannot. Nothing goads the indignant mind like the soft and honied words of apology for wrong, and sycophantish tenderness for oppressors.

The teachings of the world, the fashionable, safe, and respectable teachings—we mean not any particular party's, are of the character of those addressed to the Dumb Boy of Silvio Pelico, to whom a man and a poet sang—

There are men would teach thee if they could,
To shiver, shrink, recoil and creep;
Would turn to ill each drop of good,
And o'er thee *charitably* weep.

Time, chance, fate keep thee from their hold,
God keep thee from their charity,
Their warmth yields only blighting cold,
Their pity but enslaves the free.

We must not forget that Mr. Barmby con-

cedes Mr. SOUTHWELL's right to stand by his own opinions, but as they are not advocated to his mind he dealt a somewhat peevish blow, with the view of knocking him down. Good sense dictates the concession—the "new religion" the condemnation. He ends with a barren wish for that success he should endeavour to promote.

The extract placed at the head of this article contains a wish, or perhaps more correctly, a liking, we can most heartily reciprocate. Perdition, either on this earth or any other, with men who with Byron can say,

————— Though I stand alone,
I would not change my free thoughts for a throne,

is infinitely more welcome than palaces or paradise with men, who "with candied tongue lick absurd pomp, and crook the pregnant hinge of the knee that wealth may follow fawning." In every fresh view the world presents, instead of beholding the open plain where ingenuousness and truth may walk in peace, we see only labyrinths where nought but cunning can hope to escape, and simplicity is sure to be entangled in mazes. In society the tracks of respectability and selfishness are so well beaten that their dust prevents any other road from being seen. Should a fresh green one be discovered by some searching, restless spirit, the opposition of foes is trifling compared with the hindrances of friends. Yet a little month, as *Hamlet* would say, and Mr. SOUTHWELL moved with the busy stream, his talents admired, his friendship valued, his usefulness appreciated. Now the cold dungeon entombs him. Foes triumph over his sufferings; his friends have dwindled or have passed like the parabled Samaritan on the other side, and their cold regards wither more than his enemies' taunts.

He dared to throw off the yoke so many were proud to bear; and proud slaves of custom were mortified that their meanness should be censured by a bold and deviating spirit. The purity of his motives no man can impugn, the cause in which he laboured the noblest spirits of all ages have espoused. We remember once when W. J. Fox was reviewing the early productions of a young poet, he remarked, "that we observe many defects—but these time and care will correct. We have found a poet—a rare thing in these days and, moreover, a man: we cannot stay to dwell on failings." Would that a similar spirit were evinced towards the antagonist of superstition.

In conclusion, if we have fallen into unjustifiable acerbity we offer as an apology or prayer, that we may soon see the "last of priestcraft;" such a sight would be the gratification of millions of differences entertained by better men than ourselves. In SOUTHWELL's person we have seen the Prometheus of ment-

liberty again chained to the rocks of superstition and religion; or rather, we discover that he is not yet "unbound." Astræa we take as the presiding genius of the *Oracle*. No criticism however severe is deprecated—if just. And no quarter is asked from any one where fair ground of attack is supposed to be seen. Mr. SOUTHWELL will profit by, and be grateful for, advice and censure, where honestly intended. But we have ventured to think he has deserved less of blame than he has received, and that generous and noble spirits might find more to approve than has yet been pointed out.

G. J. H.

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER VII.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

"To speak my mind, and to act as my conscience directs, are two branches of liberty that I can never part with. Sincerity in speech, and integrity in action, are entertaining qualities; they will stick by a man when every thing else takes its leave; and I must not resign them upon any consideration."—Bishop GARDINER.

FRIENDS,
WHERE there is smoke, there is fire; where there is religion, there is mystery; where there is mystery, there is mischief; where there is mischief, there stands the priest. Your religion of peace, charity, and love, is a chimera, "the dream of honest citizens." Religion concerns the gods, all that concerns *only* men and social order, belongs to the science of morals. The North American Indians call their priests *mystery-men*, and a better name they could not have chosen. The mysterious and the miraculous are the never-failing stock-in-trade of religionists, who live by faith, and as surely die by reason. All genuine *mystery-men* despise while they cheat those who trust them.

They shall have mysteries, precious stuff,
For knaves to thrive by, mysteries enough;
They shall have miracles, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, every thing but true.

It may be, that in any state of society, some men will be religious, and desire to worship the gods. Let them, there is little harm in individual religions, but there is all the harm in the world in party or national religions. If some men dream, and think their dreaming pleasant, in the name of sense let them dream on; but in the name of reason don't reduce dreaming to a system. If those who dance pay the piper, it would be strangely illiberal to prohibit dancing; and if those who worship pay the priest, he must be a bigot who would prohibit worship. The cases are parallel,

though I take it public pipers would be far more acceptable to wise men than public priests. But, you say, that in a rational state of society there will be a *rational religion*, a religion without priests, without faith, without worship—a religion, I take it, that *genuine* religionists will call flat Atheism, and with reason, for there can be no religion without mystery. "And upon her forehead was a name written, mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth." Those who can so accurately distinguish between superstition and rational religion, have "theological eyes," eyes to see distinctions, where there are no differences, and tongues dexterous in the use of "vain words" that "fill men's bellies with the east wind." They labour well in their vocation, for having, from political motives, called themselves Rational Religionists, they strive admirably to prove religion rational. To borrow a riddle—Why is rational religion like a curtain? You won't give it up—because you know *it serves for a blind*.

If any truth may be called indisputable it is this, that those who pronounce the oracles of god, whether called parsons, priests, talapains, bonzes, brahmins, or mystery-men, have been in all ages the deceivers and betrayers of mankind. The character given by Volney of the primitive missionaries of christianity, applies just as well in the *gross* to Christian missionaries or priests in our own time. "These men," says he, "were robbers and hypocrites, preaching simplicity, to inveigle confidence; humility, the more easily to enslave; poverty, in order to appropriate all riches to themselves; another world, the better to invade this." It is usual to make apologies for religions, by saying that because bad men are found among their teachers and advocates, *that* is not to be admitted against the religions themselves. THEY may be pure, though all priests should be corrupt, but surely such general depravity in the teachers of godliness, should make men suspicious, and lead them to look narrowly into the principles of godliness.

A divine religion could never have inhuman priests, and yet the inhumanity of priests is proverbial; they burn, slay, and imprison with the most savage fury. Their frightful persecutions are matters of history, every page of which is stained by the recital of their bloody deeds; as though instinctively cruel, the work of infamy is done without pity or remorse; as if they relished such "labours of love," their enthusiasm for religion stifling their humanity. The sentence "every inch a priest," usually means every inch a cold-blooded, hypocritical tyrant. Surely the system which generates such depravity must be a bad system; surely those principles and practices cannot be divine which lead to such results. Any religion, says Mr. Owen, that

fails to produce peace, charity, and love, is false, and should be destroyed. If so, what religion shall escape "the damnation of hell," for where is there peace, charity, and love? Echo answers, where? Priests are the incarnated essence of religions, and they truly "seek the kingdom of god and his righteousness," that "all the rest may be added unto them." They tell us that "the sacrifices of god are a broken spirit," that "broken and contrite hearts he will not despise," and, to do them justice, they furnish their god with abundance of such "sacrifices." Even the most gentle and merciful of all priests, are anything but lambs. A writer in the *British Friend of India Magazine* says, that even now, "Brahmins and other high caste Hindoos, hold the inferior castes in such extreme contempt, that the brahminical code puts the laity to death for the most trivial and venial offences committed against their superiors. For instance, if a low caste person looks at a brahmin, he incurs mutilation. In the Hindoo Institutes of Menu," it is written, that "a twice-born man who barely assaults a brahmin with intent to hurt him, shall be whirled about for a century in hell. He who through ignorance of the laws sheds blood from the body of a brahmin, shall feel excessive pain in his future life; as many particles of dust as the blood shall roll up from the ground, for so many years shall the shedder of that blood be mangled by other animals at his next birth." Are not priests lucky men, and those called brahmins particularly so, for in addition to the above, and many other laws to vindicate their holiness, there is one exceedingly curious, which punishes severely all who are rash and foolish enough to overpower them in argument. I know your party errs in ignorance and not in cunning, at least I have so much of confidence in its integrity as to think so, but conscientious mistakes are just as fatal as those springing from the vilest motives; none do more mischief than weak people with good intentions, hence the saying that good intentions form hell's pavement. The great error of your party, the parent, has been the attempt to unite principles utterly incompatible, as faith with reason, religion with philosophy, honesty with dishonesty; which charge I protest is not made in heat, or for factious purposes, but from deliberate conviction that the time has now arrived for men to take sides, to choose between old and new ideas, the wild rants of ancient and most "cunningly-devised fables," and the glorious truths of science, to determine whether the next shall indeed be an "Age of Reason," or as all the past, an Age of Folly. Were I not convinced that yours is the most advanced, and as a consequence, the most liberal party in existence, I should not waste ink and paper in pointing out its inconsistencies and corruption; for as to any other party in

the state, we might as well preach to stone, as to reason them out of a partial pursuit of truth, or the partial practice of honesty. The nation is so thoroughly christianised, that I do not think of the swarms of Jumpers, Shakers, Ranters, and the "innumerable numbers" of maw-wormers, who have turned the houses of prayer into dens of thieves, that a dozen honest patriots are left. I look to your party with some hope that it will yet make a firm stand for freedom.

For freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won.

But freedom's battle has never been fought upon right principles, upon those principles which can alone ensure complete success. I have studied with attention the history of my own and other countries, but in none of its pages can I find the trace of a pure policy, a moral science, or the practice of justice. Go forth my sons, said the well-known Swedish minister, and see with how little wisdom the world is governed; but we lucky Englishmen, who are blessed with the perfection of government, need not travel to justify the Swedish statesman.

There is but one force that can destroy, or even modify this state of things, a state of things seemingly beneficial to the few, but really disastrous to all; that force is an enlightened public opinion, a public opinion that shall be untainted by superstition, and freed from the tyranny of priests; a public opinion that would promote the growth of virtue by rewarding it, abolish rascality by making it unprofitable, and cut short the life of tyranny by rendering it impossible that any could be tyrants. Opinion governs the world; aye, truly, but the query I want answered is, how can we purify and emancipate opinion? A free press, free speech, and a few grains of honesty in the leaders of such parties as yours might do the trick. But these desiderata belong at present to the good *impracticables*; for a free press we have not, free speech is merely spoken about, and politicians cannot afford so much as a grain of unadulterated stuff.

It is certain that society, especially in this country, has greatly changed, I will not say improved, during the last fifty years. The people have undoubtedly increased their stock of knowledge, though the quantum of wisdom may have received but few additions; the effect of this must be that the pen will, not merely rule, but supersede the sword. The wars to come will be but paper ones, at least I trust so, for as the Duke of Wellington objects to "little wars," the people, though not quite cured, have a horror of big ones. They begin to understand that war is a game,

That were the people wise
Kings could not play at.

It is evident that all practice is contingent upon opinion, whether that opinion be purely speculative or based upon realities, for it would be absurd to deny that opinions of any kind do not determine physical consequence. It has always been my opinion that raised and supported laws and systems for the sword, is useless without the opinion to direct and wield it. Hence the absurdity of any men, however "wise in their generation," attempting to make laws or build systems for *all* generations. They may discover and teach certain principles, which being true, are eternal as that nature from which they are derived; but not one jot more. Those who talk about the imperishability of this law and the imperishability of that practice, are truly perishable simpletons. In the whole economy of nature, there is nothing to warrant the idea of *stand-stillism*, for in the material world all is growth or decay, nothing remains, nor is anything twice alike, and just so in the world of politics, where *Young Rapid* fashions things, "*push on, keep moving*" in some directions; to stand still, as it has been paradoxically observed, being to retrograde.

Now I want your party to "*push on, keep moving*," which it can only hope to do by *leading*, instead of *following*, opinion. By a bold and noble course of action that will command the admiration and support of the wise and good, in short, by an honest practice in perfect consistency with honest principles, a practice that, like the "city upon a hill," will be the observed of all observers.

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise,
He who defers the work from day to day,
Doth on a river's bank expecting stay,
Till the stream that's passing shall be gone,
Which runs, and as it runs, for ever shall run on.

As you may be more affected by holy than profane language, I tell you "*now* is the appointed time, *now* is the day of salvation."

It has been observed, I think by Hume, that knowledge is sometimes injurious to individuals, but always good to nations; and perhaps the same remark applies to honesty as well as to knowledge. It *may* be that honesty is not always the best policy for individuals, but it unquestionably is for parties and nations. I am persuaded, in a commercial point of view, your party would gain immensely by holding fast to principle, and that reason "once" delivered to the saints. Hundreds of your members agree with me, but ninety-nine out of every hundred either think the party *too far* gone to be made *sweet*, or that "the crisis has not yet come." They say, "the affairs are young;" or, "by-and-by, we shall shine forth like the sun upon an astonished and benighted world." By-and-bye, all know, is easily said, and when I hear these things, they remind me of a scene in the Portrait of Cervantes, where a half-starved servant reproaches his don for

not paying him his wages. Why, you scoundrel, exclaims the don, what reason have you to complain, your wages are running on? Running on, quoth the knave, running on, yes, certainly, they *are* running on, but the devil on't is, they run so fast that I shall never overtake them. Query, will your party ever overtake its *honesty*? *nous verrous*.

Your well-wisher,
C. S.

IS THERE A GOD?

VIII.

"Eyes were no more designed to see than stones to break heads."—FRENCH ACADEMICIAN.

It is pretended by theologians, that even though it were granted to the Atheist that the existence of a god could not be otherwise proved, it is demonstrated by the clear evidences of design in the universe. The Reverend George Stanley Faber affirms in his book on "The Difficulties of Infidelity," that the existence of a god is decidedly proved by the very frame of the universe. "Evident design," says he, "must needs imply a designer. But evident design is conspicuous in every part of the universe, and the wider our physical researches are extended, the more conspicuously does this design appear." Therefore, just as we argue the existence of a watchmaker from the evident design which may be observed in a watch, so we argue the existence of a creator from the evident design which may be observed in the universe. Thus the Rev. Mr. Faber, whose notions upon the question are neither novel nor striking. This favourite illustration of the watch has been sadly back-nied. He drew it from Paley, Paley stole it from Condillac, and where *he* got it from, is not of much consequence. Lablé sarcastically observed, that had watches never been made, the existence of a god could never have been proved, which seems not improbable, seeing the unsparing use made of it by theologians.

The rev. gentleman deals cleverly, though somewhat roughly, with the Deists, denying that a Deist though he admit there is one god, the creator and moderator of all things, can be sure without the help of revelation, whether the designing power be *one* or *many* gods. He makes short work with the Deists; but deism, considered as a philosophic system, is utterly indefensible; nor does he forget to abuse the Atheists, but he attempts not to wrestle with *their* principles. The following passages are worthy of attention: "It is perfectly true, that evident design must needs imply a designer; and it is equally true, that evident design shines out in every part of the universe. But we reason exclusively, if with the Deist, we thence infer the existence of *one*, and *only one*, supreme designer. That a universe, upon which design is so evidently impressed, must

have been created, is indeed abundantly clear; nor will this point be ever controverted, save by the gross folly of Atheism." Perhaps so, Mr. Faber, but with submission, we have in former papers thrown such a peculiar kind of dust in the eyes of our readers, that we doubt very much whether the idea of a universe created from nothing will be "abundantly clear," the "must," notwithstanding; and the "gross folly of Atheism," we shall come to by-and-by. We agree with Mr. Faber, that the universe, if created as the Deist admits by *one* supreme god, it is not clear whether created by *one* or *many*. Deists are an easy prey to theologians who feel their advantage, and make the most of it. Atheists are made of different stuff, which they find it dangerous to grapple with. Atheists admit not the possibility of an absolute creation, and deny that there is "evident design impressed upon the universe." The "gross folly" of Atheism has never yet been shown, the gross folly of all theological systems has been a thousand times.

One advantage the theologian has in all discussions upon this vital question, and that solitary but great advantage is the rooted prejudice in favour of their side of the argument, which almost universally prevails. Theologians have so long been accustomed to find all at their own disposal upon so delicate, and to all who oppose them dangerous, a point, that they have seldom found it necessary, and therefore rarely attempted, to prove the existence of a god by pure reason. Rant and violence has passed for reason, and invective for solid argument. The bulk of mankind have hitherto been so blinded by passion as to be unable to perceive truths the most obvious and palpable. To question the existence of a god has always been accounted most frightful blasphemy, and as scepticism with regard to such an existence would have shaken to its base the power of the priests, it cannot be matter of surprise that they should make belief in a god the groundwork of popular education, and fix that notion in human organism, which, in the language of Fichte, is "*the fundamental principle of all false metaphysics.*"

Theologians insist, and rightly insist, that to disturb the belief in a god, is to undermine all religious systems, and to pave the way to the extremest latitudinarianism. This would undoubtedly be the consequence of Atheism, and that is the very best reason why all who think "the truth shall set men free" should strain every nerve for satisfaction in so important a particular. Well cultivated reason alone can decide whether the theologian who affirms, or the Atheist who denies the existence of an *intelligent first-cause*, is justified by human experience of the properties, analogies, and general nature of things. It will be shown in these papers that satisfaction may be by a right course

of reasoning be obtained, and that the choice of opinions does not lie as some have asserted between absurdity on the one hand, and incomprehensibility on the other. It is admitted by correct thinkers, that what reason cannot comprehend, reason should not affirm, nor admit as knowledge, ideas which have no prototype in nature. But when men will affirm what all admit none can know, it is the part of reason to assert itself, and by denying the wisdom of such a course, expose the emptiness of such assertions. It is in vain that theologians would make the existence or non-existence of a god an exceptional question, by declaring that reason is fallible and incompetent to deal with it, for if fallible in the Atheist it is surely no less so in the Christian. Christians appeal to reason, and all godly people must know that scripture itself declares, that those who appeal to reason, by reason must abide. Reason is most unquestionably a fallible, but it is nevertheless man's best guide, for faith, if it may be called a guide, is confessedly a blind one, and when the blind lead the blind—but the proverb is quite musty. It is besides utterly inconsistent in theologians to rant and rave against reason, for when reason answers their purpose, as just shown from Mr. Faber's book, they don't scruple to use it; and it is only when beaten from the field of argument that they fly for refuge to faith. Theologians say that Atheism is made up of opinions false, foolish, and monstrous, and affirm as something past contradiction, that "god made heaven and earth, and all things therein, visible and invisible." The sea, say they, is his, for he made it, and his hand formed the dry land. A creator, and therefore *designer* is admitted as before noted by Deists as well as Christians. Indeed, all sincere religionists *must* believe in a god by whom the world was first produced, and then formed or moulded into its present shape. Saint Paul was evidently a *designer*, as appears from Epistle to the Romans, where it is written that "the universal things of him (god) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made." He even goes so far as to say, that unbelievers are without excuse, or at all events that the Jews, who had "*clearly seen*" *invisible things*, were so. Some designers love to dwell upon the infinite wisdom and goodness of god, whose "mercy, they say, endureth for ever." They enlarge upon the order, harmony, and most admirable wisdom, displayed in the works of creation. The beauty of the lily, the delicious fragrance of the rose, the regular motions and brilliant appearance of the planets, with the universal and most admirable adaptation of means to ends, are most eloquently insisted upon, as innumerable proofs of god's benevolence and artistic skill. To such believers the only wonder is how any men can be found so blindly obstinate as not to see and appreciate

such wonderful "signs and wonders." That birds were made to fly, fishes to swim, and ducks to lay eggs, seems to them as certain as that a pistol is not a haystack. Some have not been content to say that eyes were made to see, tongues to talk, and hands to grasp; but thought, they discovered the surpassing wisdom of god, in providential cares less obvious, but no less real and useful. Never are *designers* more eloquent and *passionate* than when descending upon "the fitness of things in this best possible of worlds." The *very* enthusiastic have supposed that winds were *designed* to blow our ships into port, the sea *designed* to be salt to preserve it from corruption. Hurricanes, which spread desolation over vast continents, and have proved very useful in clearing the air of vermin, are therefore most obvious marks of god's wisdom. Earthquakes, which devour whole cities, and volcanic eruptions, which burn them and their wretched inhabitants, *designers* consider as seeming evils, and therefore seeming disparagements of god's wisdom; but seen from a right point of view, it appears necessary for the harmony of the *whole*, just as sores and ulcers upon the human body will often preserve it in healthfulness and vigour. That we cannot see without eyes, walk without legs, or think very well without brains, is indisputable; but that the eye was *made* to see, the legs *made* to walk, or the brain *made* to think, is, to the philosopher, just as absurd as to say stones were *made* to break heads, legs were *made* to wear stockings, or sheep *made* to have their throats cut. It is worthy of remark, that *designers*, while they say god is the author of all things, wish to exclude *sin* from the category, nor is it unusual to hear divines say, god is the maker of heaven and earth, and all that is therein contained, all things "visible and invisible," but not the creator of sin and evil. These arise from the corruptions of man's nature, and were *designed* by the devil. Which kind of doctrine leads to the inference, that there are *two* designers, all good being designed by god, all evil by the *adversary*.

A devil, indeed, seems as necessary to a perfect theological system, as a god or angels; and we hold it a principle, that the Deist who admits a god, creator, and moderator of all things, cannot reasonably refuse a belief in angels or devils. The existence of a god can as little be shown upon natural principles, as that of angels or devils, while there are many powerful reasons that may be urged why admitting the existence of an intelligent god, draws after it that of an intelligent devil. Man's inhumanity to man, has made countless millions mourn, the earth has been through all known time one vast scene of desolation. The savageness of men has exceeded that of the fiercest beasts; the empire of lust, cruelty, and fanaticism has stretched from pole to pole; re-

ligion has been "a rhapsody of words," virtue an empty name, and the whole power of society lodged in the hands of bad statesmen and worse priests has been turned against those it was intended to protect. The protection that has hitherto been given to the just and innocent, is that of the tiger to its prey, or that of wolves to lambs. Nor did Zophar, the Naamathite, answer Job truly, for the triumphing of the wicked is not short, nor is the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment! Nay, it is certain that no "tabernacles" prosper so well as those "of robbers," nor any into whose hands "god bringeth so abundantly" as the proud, the cruel, and unscrupulous. Cicero, when speaking of the extraordinary good fortune of a certain noted pirate, said, it bore testimony against the gods; and the Stoics were often disposed to murmur against providence, from seeing that it permitted vice to triumph over virtue, and tyrants to wade to thrones through seas of blood. But the Atheist sees in this injustice, as it is called, of god or providence, the triumph of his system. The existence of evil is a difficulty to the Deist, an insuperable one to all *designers* who admit the existence of a god, but deny that of the devil; for none of these that we have met with will agree to accept such a god as that of Plato, a god capable of *creating* matter, but not powerful enough to *control its malignancy*. To the Atheist, a moth in the candle's flame, or a poor fly in the fangs of a spider, is a *proof* that the world could not have been designed by one being, infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely powerful. Infinite goodness would not desire evil, infinite power would not have created it, nor could an artist infinitely wise fashion an imperfect universe. God, says Epicurus, could have prevented evil or would not, or would have prevented evil and could not, or both could and would have prevented it. If he could have prevented evil and would not, we establish his power at the price of his goodness, if he could have prevented evil and would not, we establish his goodness at the price of his omnipotency; if he both could and would have prevented the existence of evil, how came evil into the world? Such is substantially, for we quote from memory, the famous dilemma of Epicurus, which designers can neither escape from nor dare to seize by the horns, lest they should be gored. If Epicurus be not unanswerable, it is certain that he has never yet been answered. C. S.

ORIENTAL GREATNESS.—Saladin, conqueror of the East, who held Jerusalem at the time of the crusades, by his will left charities to be given to Jews, Christians (his enemies), Mohamedans, &c., &c., without distinction of class, sect, party, or country. We are as far behind the heathen in greatness and liberality, as we are remote from the reason, philosophy, and nobleness of the Greeks and Romans.

GOD-WORSHIPPING.—There is a vast empire, governed by a monarch, whose strange conduct is very proper to confound the minds of his subjects. He wishes to be known, loved, respected, obeyed; but never shows himself to his subjects, and everything conspires to render uncertain the ideas, formed of his character. The people, subjected to his power, have, of the character and laws of their invisible sovereign, such ideas only, as his ministers give them. They, however, confess that they have no idea of their master; that his ways are impenetrable; his views and nature totally incomprehensible. These ministers, likewise, disagree upon the commands which they pretend have been issued by the sovereign, whose instruments they call themselves. They announce them differently to each province of the empire. They defame one another, and mutually treat each other as impostors and false teachers. The decrees and ordinances, they take upon themselves to promulgate, are obscure: they are enigmas, little calculated to be understood, or even divined, by the subjects, for whose instruction they were intended. The laws of the concealed monarch require interpreters; but the interpreters are always disputing upon the true manner of understanding them. Besides, they are not consistent with themselves; all they relate of their concealed prince is only a thread of contradiction. They utter concerning him not a single word, that does not immediately confute itself. They call him supremely good; yet there is no one, who does not complain of his decrees. They suppose him infinitely wise; and under his administration, everything appears to contradict reason and good sense. They extol his justice; and the best of his subjects are generally the least favoured. They assert he sees everything; yet his presence avails nothing. He is, say they, the friend of order; yet throughout his dominions all is in confusion and disorder. He makes all for himself; and the events seldom answer his designs. He foresees everything; but cannot prevent any thing. He impatiently suffers offence, yet gives every one the power of offending him. Men admire the wisdom and perfection of his works; yet his works, full of imperfection, are of short duration. He is continually doing and undoing; repairing what he has made; but is never pleased with his work. In all his undertakings, he proposes his own glory; yet is never glorified. His only end is the happiness of his subjects; and his subjects, for the most part, want necessaries. Those whom he seems to favor are generally least satisfied with their fate; almost all appear in a perpetual revolt against a master, whose greatness they never cease to admire, whose wisdom to extol, whose goodness to adore, whose justice to fear, and whose laws to reverence, though never obeyed. This empire is the world; this monarch god;

his ministers are the priests; his subjects mankind.—*Good Sense*, published by Cousin.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BALL AND CONCERT FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR. SOUTHWELL, at the Social Institution, John Street, Tottenham Court Road.

We have received the Report of the Committee who express their highest satisfaction at the result. The attendance they state "was one of the most numerous and respectable that ever congregated within the walls of the Institution. Such a fact is the more to be prized, when we take into consideration that the price of admission was more than is generally charged on such occasions; but the committee thought Mr. SOUTHWELL's conduct just and honorable, and they were willing to try if he did not stand in the same estimation with every intelligent and *truly liberal* individual."

Mr. Lloyd Jones addressed the assembly in a very appropriate and effective address, exposed the absurdity as well as injustice of the proceedings against Mr. SOUTHWELL, and urged, with his usual force, on all present, not to slacken with their aid or influence, in supporting him in his struggle.

A Petition expressive of the Meeting's strong disapprobation of prosecutions for blasphemy, as being both unjust and impolitic, their high appreciation of the intelligence and morality of the individual in question, and praying for his immediate release was read aloud, and signed for presentation to both houses of parliament.

The committee strongly urge on all the other branches to take similar steps, Mr. SOUTHWELL's conscientious observance of truth "without mystery or fear of man," and his bold, uncompromising, honest conduct in the dissemination of what he thinks to be truth, entitle him to that support. But there is a higher duty the members of the social body owe, and that a prompt and efficient support of all *conscientious Dissenters* when interfered with by an iniquitous law. There were present nearly four hundred. The body of the Hall being filled with dancers, and the large Coffee Room being devoted to vocal entertainments, &c. The clear sum of £12 5s. 2d. was realised by the charge of 1s. 6d. for single, and 2s. for double tickets. An additional pound subscribed, made, in total received on behalf of Mr. SOUTHWELL, £13 5s. 2d.

A "TRUE ATHEIST" is as yet but on the threshold of *true atheism*. There is much to be learned before a recruit enters the field against old soldiers of the church militant. Though coarse, a very good and wholesome reflection is couched in the following words: "Man through ignorance falls an easy victim to a gang of bloodthirsty bigots who rob his family of the necessaries of life. And what does he get in return. He is *clothed* in a mantle of superstition and *fed* with the scanty sermons derived from the brutalizing book." Let the "True Atheist" discipline his mind by reflection and writing.

H. M.'s strange jumble of objections to atheism, and his "Great First Intelligent and Designing Cause" will be considered in the series of articles under the head "Is there a God?"

ERRATUM. The "Letter to the Socialists" in No. 11, should have been No. VI, *not* v.

A reprint of No. 4, containing the "Jew Book," is now ready.

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION FOR AN ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.—The Committee who are now engaged in preparing a plan will gladly receive suggestions.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street, Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.

Saturday, March 19, 1842.

THE

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 14.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE CANT OF PREJUDICE.

"Prejudice is the spider of the mind."—PAINE.

CHATEAUBRIAND has said, that England is famous for fops, fools, fogs, and genius. Had he included the prolific progeny of *cants*, his enumeration would have been most complete. Civilisation, instead of being a fertilising stream, freshening and invigorating the verdure of mind, lies like stagnant ponds on the face of society, causing sad malarial attacks to attack the advocates of freedom, and paralysing fevers to prostrate the apostles of free thought. When a cheering outbreak of enthusiasm in the cause of truth appears, raising once more the fond hopes of man's better destiny, which have been deferred till the heart is sick; proving (in Channing's words) that the human spirit is not wholly engulfed in matter and business, that it can lift up a little the mountains of worldliness and sense with which it is borne down; the excitement is attempted to be suppressed, or coldly checked by the cant cry, "You must not offend people's prejudices." The ardent spirit is blighted, the soul seared into confusion, that the hollow conventionalisms of the world may be conserved, and duplicity wear the mask of honesty. Respectability and mammon-worship are eulogised as "prudence;" truckling submission, as "a knowledge of the world;" and a time-serving expediency, as the very personification of "experience." Youth aggravates the crime of candour, and sincerity must creep under the huge legs of falsehood, and peep about to find itself a dishonourable grave.

We should define *cant*, to be a whining pretention to goodness, made with a sinister design. Be it what it may, this is the sense in which we use the term. And this is the nature of the outcry against any "violent" attack upon prejudices. All who deprecate this course are not; we are willing to believe, equally guilty. Dishonesty begat the cry, weakness and ignorance have nurtured and brought it up. Like the influenza or cholera morbus, its attacks are epidemical. Modern reformers are chiefly affected with it at this season. The disease is rather debilitating than dangerous, more effeminate than fatal; the symptoms may be known by the afflicted

shrugging their shoulders when they should raise their arms, and shaking their heads instead of expanding their hearts.

We shall descant upon "violence" when its standard is raised. For the present we will venture the assertion, that if the prejudices of mankind are not to be offended; reformers must shut their mouths or mount caps and bells. Truth must be silent, honesty be cashiered, improvements be carefully boxed up, and discoveries be concealed. Regeneration must be scouted, reform abandoned, progression become a delusion, and men, like the dial of Ahar, learn to go backwards. Suppose the rule had been always acted upon. Bacon, Copernicus, Locke, and Newton would have lived in vain, because their theories offended the prejudices of the advocates of the substantial forms and occult qualities of Aristotle, the solid spheres, eccentrics, and epicycles of Ptolemy, as J. Minter Morgan has well said. In our own day, railways should have been postponed till the millenium, because they outraged the prejudices of every coachman in the kingdom. They should have been gradually introduced, running only six or eight miles an hour "until the public mind was better prepared." Gall and Spurzheim ("inexperienced men") should have been silent on phrenology, inasmuch as the metaphysical prejudices of the Brownites, Reidists, and Stewartonians were most unmercifully shocked, to say nothing of believers in the immateriality of the soul. Gasometers should have been proscribed, as the lamplighters of London, according to Dickens, dropped from their ladders *fourteen times in one night!* Their feelings had been so "violently attacked" by the cruel introduction of gas!!

Passing to graver things. How should Robert Owen be reprobated for his new views? Political economists have run wild, immaculate bishops raved, and parsons have been convulsed at his communities and five facts. The prejudices of a world have been half blown up by the Guy Fawkes of Socialism. Surely Mr. Owen mistook the nineteenth for the *ninety-sixth* century. We are in the very furnace of suffering and hell of despair. Would it not have been better that machinery had been *gently* brought into use, that mankind might have been drawn through

the slow tortures of transition for six centuries instead of one? He who calmly weighs the question, will find that there is neither first principle nor final conclusion, hint nor doubt in relation to existing opinions and practices against which some tender soul will not exclaim. Neither is there any objection against "attacking that which is *false* which will not be raised against explaining that which is *true*." In this world nothing is so offensive as truth. Always a libel and perpetual disgrace. Besides, where is there a vacant spot on which to build in peace, which error and prejudice does not occupy? Who can build up without first destroying, and who can destroy without attacking? All life is battle: battle against antagonistic powers, battle against death. In youth against blighting blasts. In manhood against decay. In old age against the narrow bed. The infantile spirit of good is ever warring in the moral world against the full grown powers of evil. Prejudice is the barrier of error, which must be passed over before the latter can be driven from the field, and truth take its place. Why should it be conserved then? Do we not sweep without ceremony the cobwebs from our houses? Why so careful of the spiders of the mind? If weakness be admitted as the excuse, the confession constitutes a disgrace.

If those who have faith in building up are desirous of employment, we recommend the establishment of this proposition. *The thoughts, opinions, and beliefs of men are mutable, the creatures of time and circumstance, born by accident and to be relinquished without regret or hesitation at the demand of truth.* Let men but learn this important lesson and prejudices will fall dead. No just man is in love with his opinions. No philosophical mind cares who attacks his beliefs. No consistent person, who pretends to hold true conceptions of things, but will cry, let error have full swing, let its violence be unbridled—truth may grapple, but she is immortal. Shall we then continue to treat mankind as self-deceivers and inconsistent imbeciles, as all do who pretend to respect their prejudices? That man pays them the highest compliment who openly and fiercely attacks them.

"It is a fortunate thing," some one has observed, "to write with the prejudices of mankind in one's favour." How shall we fare who write against them, we know not. We have ever regarded prejudice as the hoodwinks of men's mental eyes, and cloak of the body of error, and would, without ceremony, pull the first away and tear the other off. We think they ought never to have been there, and to pretend to a very tender regard for them is preposterous. It approximates to the man's notion of *compensation*, who defined it to be "a reward for non-execution of certain

duties, always too well paid for, and better never performed." In these times, when humanity is mocked, the claims of poverty disregarded, and virtue trampled into the dust, are mortal prejudices to be held like women's gloves. The age wants not footmen for falsehood, but warriors for truth; champions for justice; soldiers for the battle of right against might. The Babel of oppression reaches the skies. Justice demands its destruction. We hate temporising forbearance in relieving misery. The voice of expediency may soothe the ear of troubled guilt, but it gathers ice round the heart of affliction. The music of flattery should never be heard where the knell of justice ought to be tolled. But we irritate, it is said, by plain speaking. Better to irritate opulent criminality than blast the hopes of virtue and stifle its voice. When prejudice, as in the case of religion, binds the world of mind in its fell chains, to state honestly-held opinions is right, and to fearlessly put forth what to us is vital truth we regard as a first duty. Nor will we permit thrusting forward our opinions to be considered as intolerance, as the *Odd Fellow* erroneously contended. Intolerance is pushing our opinions to the violent exclusion of all others. We do no such thing. Men may launch, as far as we are concerned, anything on the ocean of thought; we claim an equal right for ourselves; Ishmaelites of truth, with our hand against all error, and all error against us. If it be objected, that our principles are destructive, an unwitting compliment is paid them. For they can never be "too antagonistic" for our purpose. We make no vain attempts at washing blackamoors white, improving the unimprovable, or conserving the good in that which, so far as we have seen it displayed, is *all* together bad; believing, as we do, that the Ethiopian of superstition can never change its skin, nor the leopard of religion its spots.

In the days of old, when priestcraft bold

With tyranny held the sway,
Men crouched at their feet, on their bloodstained seat,
Like creatures of coarser clay.

And they do now, and talk of respecting those opinions they should hold in unqualified abhorrence. Should earnestness in the pursuit of truth be carried to excess, "It is more honorable" says Coleridge, "to the head as well as to the heart so to be misled, than to be safe from blundering by contempt of it." If it is inquired, what is the utility of decision and determination in exposing error without limit, it is best answered in the violent opposition men raise against the course. While you fawn, palliate, smooth, and flatter, no uneasiness is felt. Throw off the mask and be honest men, and the tocsin is soon, sounded in the camps of oppression, the tyrant marshals his force, and the priest repairs his

rack. This should be the age of mental chivalry, when men should go forth and attack the dragon of error in his den, not sit whining at home about their fears and prejudices. Why should error fare better than honesty in the world, which is knocked down by all it meets, and trampled under foot by every passer by. A mental Napoleon is wanted, who despising the old system of tactics, will carry on a bold and vigorous warfare of truth against the mercenary troops of error.

To return. If prejudices are not to be attacked, what is to be exempted? If one only, all must, or injustice will be done. If all are exempted, the sun of improvement will sink below the horizon, and leave the world to darkness, crime, and death. "Opinions govern the world." They cannot be regarded as private property for the reasons just advanced, because if every man is determined to keep his own we must stand still, for no man can look, murmur, or move without offending some one's prejudices. No one asks the *poor man's* leave to outrage his feelings, why should we ask the rich oppressor's consent to reason against his crimes? If we do, will he grant it? From the very nature of our relations in the world we must take these liberties. "Take care to give no unnecessary pain," is the advice many well-intentioned men offer. The advice is superfluous. The chances are, that unnecessary pain will be continued through mildness in protecting error when covered with ermine and wealth. We would strip error, and put a whip in the hands of every honest man, to lash the rascal naked round the world. Whom do we offend. No honest man would harbour him, and since he is so dangerous, no dishonest man should be permitted. "It gives him pain to part with him," we shall be told. To whom, permit us to inquire? Who is so selfish, who will not make a sacrifice for truth? Who so vile as to boast a love for falsehood? If any, speak! for his weakness is his disgrace, and his dastard soul places him out of the pale of human sympathy, and him only have we offended. "Treat men as knaves," says a judicious and sensible proverb, "and you make them so," for which reason we would treat opponents as honorable men. All such love open, better than concealed, attacks, men who boldly storm the breach better than they who undermine the citadel; therefore we deprecate disguise. We are severe, thinking there is utility in it. We do not believe that men hold opinions tenderly. For seeing them bartered for expediency without scruple, changed with every fashion, we look at them as things of convenience. If they do, our course is freer from objections than that which, pretending to see their hollowness, affects contempt at making the exposition, and with spiritual

pride despises that which they assume is too important and tender a matter to permit them to touch. Such conduct seems to us heartless, while laying claim to gentleness, wounding beyond measure the vanity, while pretending to respect the feelings. It inflicts pain wantonly, engendering hate without enlightening the mind. Believing a man to be in error, to our notions the highest compliment we can pay him is to expose it. He knows we cannot esteem him while in that state; by flattering him we become hypocrites, by reasoning with him we perform the part of a friend. The wariness of our feelings will be regarded by all rightly-constituted minds as not derogating from true kindness. For, with the author of Lacon, "Let us beware of that proud philosophy which affects to inculcate philanthropy while it denounces every home-born feeling by which it is produced and nurtured." In relation to this question we have said nothing of those who would prescribe the modes of thought and colors of argument, making the *manner* to conform to some standard of their own crotchety conception. Such intolerance is too offensive to be borne. Thoughts do not bubble up as custom would prescribe, it is arrogance to demand a fashionable utterance of them, and hypocrisy to comply. Pity men are so much bound and influenced by custom. Nothing contributes more to produce that "dead level" which is so monotonous. Let us see minds free as the winds and variegated as the rainbow. The physical world has not more beautiful variety than the moral.

Whenever we hear men checked in their ardent advocacy of truth by the absurd cry that prejudices are in danger, we always remember that when the church is said to be in danger, tithes, and bishoprics, and fat rectories, are the things meant; and, by analogy, the conclusion comes home to us, that prejudices in danger imply little else than that weakness or guilt are crying out, and that some religious Annanias and Sapphira are keeping back the money of truth. Such conduct defended by the pretext of philanthropy is lame in argument and false in philosophy—*Is it anything more?* Is it not cowardice concealed under the mask of charity, and shrinking from duty, sought to be covered by pseudo-benevolence.

We heartily bid farewell to the sapient advice, "Prejudices must be respected." "Avoid all attacks upon," or, "offences against, them." "Don't hurt people's feelings." Do the "gradual," the "gentle," the "grand," and all such like principles, or more properly, such "*Lie down and die*" policy. Using the invocation of Charles Reece Pemberton, in his sixpennyworth of truth, they may,

Curse, growl, rave, rend, rage, rail, scoff, spit, and swear,
Sigh, pray, lament, weep, groan, cajole, and coax.

If they will but permit us with our pens or tongues to defend ourselves in our own way, they will never "hurt our prejudices." Careless of a few scars, we agree with Richard Furness, the shrewd author of *Medicus Magus*, whose sentiments we have no difficulty in reciprocating, "That the game laws of modern criticism are as odious as my Lord's of Wharnccliffe, and he who would 'shoot folly as it flies,' must not fear a trespass: thank my stars! happy in the independence of poverty, who grants me a literary licence, I sport where I please; yet when I aim at honest worth, or angle with the bait of flattery for the approbation of oppressors, may the keepers of the sacred preserves of faith and justice, seize gun, net, and rod, and condemn me to the prison of oblivion." A quotation from the Rev. Sydney Smith's *Letter to Archdeacon Singleton*, on *Ecclesiastical Commissions*, will happily conclude this chapter. It is so admirable, so much to the point, and so perfectly illustrates our views, that we feel as if we had indited it in a trance. Sydney says, "We are told, if you agitate questions among yourselves, you will have the democratic Philistines come down upon you, and sweep you all away together. Be it so; I am quite ready to be swept off when the time comes. Everybody has his favourite death: some delight in apoplexy, and others prefer marasmus. I would infinitely rather be crushed by democrats, than, under the plea of the public good, be mildly and blandly absorbed by bishops."

So say we. Honesty may enter its protest and welcome, but we will not be "mildly and blandly absorbed" by cant, smoothfaced hypocrisy, nor truckling expediency. If we are overwhelmed it shall never be by "charitable regards" for us.

G. J. H.

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER IX.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

"'Tis a dangerous thing to use too much freedom in researches of this kind. If you cut the old canal the water is apt to run farther than you have a mind to."
—Bishop GARDINER.

It is related of Christina, Queen of Sweden, that when on a visit at Rome, she was much charmed with Bellini's famous statue of Truth, which being observed by a waggish cardinal in her train, he took occasion to express his satisfaction, that her majesty should be so enamoured of truth, an affection so unusual

among crowned heads; when Christina replied, "My lord cardinal, *all truths are not made of marble.*" This significant reply was not lost upon his cardinalship, nor will you, I fancy, be at a loss to understand the meaning thereof. You will not fail to perceive that, if truth were merely an abstraction, "barren as the east wind" of all great results, and as little dangerous to authority as finely carved stones, none would be found to object to it. Neither crowned heads, nor statesmen, nor priests object to words, it is action they fear, and it will be found, upon a close examination of human motives, that bigotry the most frantic, and hatred the most intense, of free speech, have their source in the fear of change, and not, as generally supposed, in the love of dogma, political or religious. The memorable saying of a certain monk, "We must destroy printing or printing will destroy us," gives the philosophy of all human opposition to the spread of truth. The stubbornness of facts is proverbial, and great truths are but many-headed facts. They neither bend nor bow to mortal man, and in their slow, but certain course, sweep away all crazy opinions, and the senseless systems built upon them, making the prime wisdom of one generation the foolishness of the next. It is part and parcel of human nature to hate that which really does, or seems to, injure it. The most corrupt bigots would willingly let truth alone, if truth would let them alone. The god Jehovah has many who affect to vindicate his honour and defend his cause, but it is the god Mammon who is really loved and defended. In heaven, hell, in purgatory, or this bedlam of the universe, human nature will always be human nature, and supposing a state of immortality, should those who are destined to enjoy it find honesty and interest incompatible, their house of prayer would infallibly become a "den of thieves."

Your party has now an admirable opportunity to distinguish itself as a party devoted to truth—as a party that is too proud to suffer its sense of local injury to weigh against general good—a party prepared to make sacrifices for truth's sake, sacrifices of vanity, wealth, and the shouts of the multitude. These letters will put you to the test, and for ever decide whether you are sham or real reformers, men and women of principle, or creatures made up of that light material which is blown about by every wind of selfish interest. I say these letters will put you to the test, for they are decidedly hostile to your immediate interests as a party, they are not seasoned by a single grain of flattery, and treat upon those questions which you will probably think had better be buried in silence, questions delicate in their nature and most difficult fairly to handle. No man can serve two masters, is an old saying, and it is certain that neither parties nor individuals can honestly serve two opposing prin-

ciples. Your missionaries will speedily have to decide whether they will hold their tongues and eat their pudding, or give up their pudding, and loose their tongues.

It has been the curse of all reforming parties that, having no fixed basis of principle, no definite course of practice, they have fluctuated, played a game of see-saw, between truth and falsehood, justice and expediency. A necessary consequence of this miserable species of moral swindling has been an utter confusion of ideas in the minds of men, all has been vague, contradictory, and dishonest; and, after our dearly bought experience, political science is that about which anybody can talk, but nobody can understand.

Your party is, of all others, the most worthy to be called a practical party, yet, compared with what it might have effected, and even may effect, its practice has been miserable in the extreme. You have in your ranks the very salt of the reformers, men of talent, integrity, and entire devotion to principle, but these are the few, not the many. The bulk of your members are vain, with no extra enthusiasm in the cause of principle. This is manifest in your organ, *The New Moral World*, which as little represents those I call the salt of your party as I do his majesty of Morocco. Instead of giving promise of becoming a great party, devoted to the cause of freedom, and earnest in the pursuit of it, you are fast dwindling into a community of pedlars, with souls so slavish as to think of nothing but driving a hard bargain in the national sale of human industry. The saying of a noble Roman, that it is far better for great souls to live in small houses, than mean and dastardly spirits to burrow in gilded habitations, is neither regarded nor understood. Your party is now held together rather by its interests than its principles. Interest alone is a good cement, but not the true cement. The lasting cement is interest, based on enlightened principles. As regards your public policy, I protest, that for my own part, I do not know what it is, and yet, perhaps, few have taken more pains to learn. Your private policy is for private advantage, and that is laudable and generally good; but as to public policy, the declaration and support of public principles, there has been no such thing.

I do not think any party will succeed in regenerating society, by a come-day, go-day sort of policy. I do not think it useful to attempt a compromise between truth and error. The war against error and corruption should be one of extermination. The whole policy of your party, if policy it may be called, is a compromise between truth and falsehood, honesty and dishonesty. It is a shallow attempt to please everybody, that must prove abortive, and will ultimately please nobody. It is the *juste milieu* of

morals, a sort of middle path, which, though lying in two countries, properly belongs to neither. Any one who can imagine a line drawn between philosophy and folly, would hit my idea of your general policy.

Mr. Owen often complains that men talk as though certain principles were strictly true, and act as though they were grossly false, which is indeed a kind of conduct but too common, nor can I see any remedy for this state of things, but by choosing your principles and consistently abiding by them. But Mr. Owen himself lies open to this very charge, for he asserts, as an incontrovertible principle, that nothing but truth will regenerate the world; and yet I have before shown that he violates that great principle in his practice, thereby speaking as though certain principles were strictly true, and acting as though they were grossly false. Mr. Owen has indeed been sadly inconsistent of late, if no harsher term is to be applied to his conduct at Bristol. I believe him to be a good man, one of the best this age has produced, but as much overrated by his friends as depreciated by his enemies. Benevolent as Howard, but with larger and nobler views, Mr. Owen must take rank among the greatest philanthropists of any age or nation. The good he has done is incalculable; but, if I may be allowed the paradox, the good he has done, is all the good he will do. The many have overtaken Mr. Owen, and the few have passed him. He has done much by way of opening the road which leads to truth, but he is now not the most competent to travel that way. His philosophy, I mean no disrespect, reminds me of what was said of the famous "covenant" by a member of the long parliament. It is like an old almanac, out of date. Mr. Owen is far better adapted to be the governor of a community than a teacher of philosophy, or a leader of free inquirers. And I do not hesitate to avow my conviction that your party has suffered much during the last few years by clinging so fast to his skirts, and suffering itself to be dragged through the mire of apostasy and absurdity. Mr. Owen does not appear to have been aware of the great truth which stands at the head of this letter, that "If you cut the old canal, the water is apt to run farther than you have a mind to." He has been one of the most active and efficient cutters of the old canal, and is half angry, for he is never quite so, that it don't stop at his bidding. He is one of the most perfect specimens of humanity spoiled by flattery and the rage for system. His bland and affable manners, unwearied benevolence, and dogged perseverance in the enunciation of certain common place, but highly useful truths, must command the admiration of all good men; on the other hand, his profound contempt for all opinions not hatched, to use the language of Professor Sedgwick,

within the narrow fences of his own conceits, his inveterate habit of proving himself a false prophet, and his late leaning towards a jesuitic kind of policy, leave us ample reason to regret, for the sake not merely of Mr. Owen's reputation, but for the sake of the interests of your party, together with those of the world at large, that he did not long since retire into private life. His own opinion is that your party can do nothing without him, my opinion is that it never will do anything with him. There is a kind of fatality about his projects, and his very name conjures up the idea—unpractical. As practical as Robert Owen, is now a praise accorded to all visionaries. I know he will smile when he reads or hears of this, but I had much rather he should smile at my blunt ignorance, than weep for my insincerity. Nothing can be more offensive than large pretensions and small performances, talking as though mountains were molehills, and acting as though molehills were mountains. All vain boasting smells of quackery, and certainly nothing can be more quackish than Mr. Owen's pompous manner of laying claim to the character of a practical man, aye, and the only practical man to be found in Europe. Psha, all men are more or less practical, and there is much less difference between the wisest and most simple than is generally imagined.

These are some of the truths nor made of marble, that few among you may be charmed with. I regret this, but cannot help it, there are prejudices to be shocked in your party as well as all others. My course is marked out, I know it to be an honest, though it may prove a mistaken one. I am paying freedom's price, and will not be easily deterred by fear or love of individuals from exercising those rights which can only be exercised by the free.

To be weak
Is to be miserable, doing or suffering ;

but I am happy to say, that with regard to the candid avowal of my opinions, I have neither scruples nor weaknesses. Mr. Owen is but a man with great talents and virtues, not without a tolerable share of human frailties. Infallibility, said the promising Charles Roper, is the prerogative of no man, and he who would proclaim himself infallible, is one of the most deceived of men, or the most daring of deceivers. The general of the Jesuits, by a fiction worthy of their order, was esteemed a *man without passions*, surely you will not propagate a like fiction with regard to the general of the Socialists. For my own part, I should be ashamed, nay, rather would I skulk into woods and wilds, making companionship with the half-brute half-man bush-rangers, than give up my rights to inquire freely, and as freely publish, without individual or party licence.

It is not fair for those who have the press at

command to crush others who are not so fortunate. It is a kind of murder to traduce, or even expose the defenceless, but to attack a party, such as yours, which is armed *cap-à-pied*, to the very teeth, if not in principle and honesty, at least in talent and resources ; and to do this openly is surely no mark of treachery or cowardice. As Pilate said to the Jews, I say to all Socialists : what I have written I have written, and will willingly defend. All this, however, is but the beginning of the end, and though such a beginning may be somewhat salt, there is no grain of bitterness in it, at least I FEEL none. Your well wisher,

C. S.

IS THERE A GOD ?

IX.

O YES! answer the Charons of orthodoxy, who live by ferrying unbelievers to hell. However we agree with the Scotchman, who dooted the *fact*. If all ever written on the affirmative side of this question could be collected together in one heap, we opine it might be poured into a perfect vacuum, without at all destroying the common notion of nonentity. Divines on this their favourite hobby are so many students under Moses, the Jewish juggler. Their forte lies in manufacturing a seeming something out of nothing.

"It has been truly said," remarked the author of *Ion*, in his defence of Mr. Moxon, for selling *Queen Mab*, "that an undevout astronomer is mad ; an atheist poet was a contradiction in terms." How truly an astronomer who doubts the existence of a first-cause can be stigmatised as a lunatic, perhaps the learned serjeant can determine. To us the insanity lies on the side of those who, finding the universe a mystery, take refuge in a greater, to account for it. Such procedures, if astronomical, are far from being reasonable. In the supposition that the truth of the existence of a god is involved in anything that poets sing or say is a great fallacy. A very common one and very influential. Much popular feeling has been enlisted in favour of belief in supernatural powers by poesy, without a particle of foundation. Persons who bring forth the muses, instead of argument, only expose their own weakness, as a little examination will show.

The bard who said, "let me make your ballads, and you may make the laws," knew the power of poetry in forming popular notions. Personification is the soul of poetry. It is the tendency of the poet to embody his conceptions. To admire his skill, and to feel the force and beauty added to verse is delicious ; to attach the importance of fact to his dreamings, deleterious. Homer, Virgil, Ossian, all ancient poets, who sang of gods, were all devout believers in divine existence. But

where are they? echoes only tell. Their gods no more suit modern imagination, than the gods of modern poets will posterity's. The bard feels more than he thinks. Leaving the majesty of the universe, he endeavours to embody, to personify the supposed power he fancies pervades it. His mind is constitutionally unfitted for close and strict reasoning. He laughs at it. Fancy and not logic, imagination not reason, creation not fact, is his forte. To all this we do not demur. On the contrary, delight in it. But for consistency's sake, let his reveries go forth as such. Let all poetical gods and goddesses stand upon their true ground—*mythology*. Our nurses, said the shrewd curé of Etrepigny, are our first theologians; to which may be added, that the poets are the theologians of our nurses. When we hear of poets rhyming about divinities, we fancy we see "their eyes in fine frenzy rolling," and their brains too, "giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." A celebrated living poet, commenting one day in our hearing on the renowned bombast of Pope, beginning—

All are but parts of one stupendous whole, &c., &c., said, it was a remarkable instance of how much, words skilfully arranged, could be made to seem and sound like sense, without possessing one grain of it. All attempts to embody in language the idea of a god, whether by poets or others, have been miserable failures; for the simple reason, that words, being as Dr. Johnson beautifully said, "The children of men;" the representatives of things; and god, according to divines, being no-thing, language is out of its elements. We might carry these remarks farther, and quote certain tart writers, who contend that anything can be expressed of which a clear conception is entertained, proving, in this case, that people and poets are without any notion of the thing they pretend to talk and sing about. But as this might be "going too far," "shock people's prejudices," &c., we refrain.

We have never heard a sensible hymn of Mrs. Barbauld's sung, without feeling how deep a satire is conveyed upon the folly of worship in its best form. Two lines run thus:

But oh! our highest notes the theme debase,
And SILENCE is our *least injurious* praise.

The sapient saints who were bawling forth their own condemnation, would not make the discovery in "Seven Ages." Another proof that upon the railway of religion folly always rides in the mail train.

The popular notions instilled into the national mind by poetry, in some cases, has been humanising; no doubt that the greatest of poets have aimed at this. Still much mischief has been done, and great advantages taken of the lucubrations of the sons of Parnassus. If poetry could prove anything upon

the subject on which we treat, a learned disquisition would reveal some curious facts of gods of all forms and colours.

One consideration of no little weight on this subject must not be forgotten. Poets, as a class, are venal and time-serving, will eulogise murders, praise tyrants, flatter power, fawn on rank and title just as patronage may be dispensed, or the laureatship bestowed. As far as divinity goes, they will sing of one god, or thousands, just as the court fashion may demand. Byron, Shelley, Burns, and a few others, are glorious exceptions; but very few are such instances, and very far between. It ought to be otherwise: the harp should ever be strung to truth and liberty, not prostituted to sycophancy. Where are the poets of the people, whose wild strains waken the dignity and spirit of independence? How few are they who are not chilled by conventionalisms, or pensioned into silence and hypocrisy. Divinity in their hands is not less an ephemera than liberty. When they sing of a god it is, in nine cases out of ten, because their patrons wish the multitude set gaping after nonentities above, that they may secure the things below.

Analyse the prevalent conceptions of god: contradiction, confusion, and blunder is the compound. Go a scale higher: the notions grow "beautifully less." In the highest scale it is notorious the notion is gone. The reason, through lack of education, is not generally understood. Men who contemplate the revelations of science, the mighty teachings of astronomy, and look through the glasses of Herschel at the far off universes, wending their glorious way in realms where thought has never been, and where imagination and fancy are lost, do they not feel the mighty self-sufficiency of the boundless whole? Men who mock the overwhelming majesty of nature by their puny ravings and idiot teachings, that there must be some prop to uphold that which of itself is appalling power, are to be regarded with supreme pity.

Sometimes theologians skilfully aver, that the most cogent argument of the Atheist is to them "a confirmation strong" of the very opposite truth. Let us exercise what every phrenologist will approve, namely, our organs of imitation. It is pretended that the magnitude of nature is a strengthening testimony of belief in a god. The same consideration to our minds is so conclusive of the sufficiency of its power, inherent properties, and creative essence, as to render the assumption of independent agencies, more than superfluous—actually ridiculous. While its extent defies the full conception of itself, and renders impossible the belief in anything else. Congenial with the feeling of the ancient sage, on his bed of death, are our views: "Mother of life, from thee I came, to thee I go."

We bid now farewell to all poets. They are not all unwise. Many mingle philosophy with their songs, and the deep teachings of the universe with their muse. Their productions, when taken as a standard of truth, must be analysed by thought; the chaff separated from the wheat; the bad from the good; the fancy from fact; the daguerotype images of truth from the paintings of fiction: then will men derive profit from their productions, and avoid superstition's thorny roads; the ways of science become ways of pleasantness, and the paths of truth be peace. Purified from all grovelling notions, the antidote will be found to be the bane of religion; and the truthful mind, in the words of Dr. Olinthius Gregory, to his mathematical pupils, "will gather to itself all that is good, subordinate to itself all that is good, and sit enthroned on the riches of the universe." G. J. H.

MORALITY OF CHRISTIANITY AND OF ENGLISH LAW, of which it is part and parcel.—*Prostitution in Leeds* :—

Number of houses	175
Average number of prostitutes, four in each house	700
Number of bullies	350
Ditto mistresses	175

Total living on prostitution. 1225

Number of men visiting daily each house, 80; equal for 175 houses. 14000

The girls, on an average, receive £1 10s. weekly	£1050
Spent on drink, 1s. 6d. each visitor .	1050
Robberies, 2s. 6d. each, low average	1750

Money received by girls and obtained by robberies is what the 1225 individuals have to live on (the last-named £1050 being consumed on (drink at the time).

Total for prostitution weekly. £3850

Yearly. £200,000

Leeds Mercury, Jan. 4, 1840.

If sound opinions may be called truth's shadow, just actions are properly truth's substance; opinions, like shadows, having in themselves nothing tangible, whereas a just act is the realisation of a good. Virtue is not an empty name, but the fulness of just conduct: action, action, action! being the essential of moral greatness.

THEOLOGICAL SYLLOGISM.—The bible declares the existence of a god; the bible is the declared revelation of a god; ergo, the bible proves god, and god proves the bible.

A HINT TO THE PIOUS.—Economy is the feature of the age—it might advantageously be applied to religion. If the men who offer up innumerable prayers for deliverance from sin would make a bold stroke (query *strike*), and pray that their god would call in the devil and stop his roaming about like a "roaring lion"—what an immense saving of Christian breath would be effected. If faith is good for anything, this could be accomplished. We recommend the trial.

It is always a bad sign, when people are more attentive to words than to the idea they convey. No words can be either vulgar or indecent if the ideas they convey are just and true. When public bodies, or society at large, are shocked at truth without a veil, it proves corruption is present with them. The man in full health don't mind rough handling, it is people full of disease, that cannot bear to be touched.

HATE.—Hate may be called the offspring of good, begotten by evil, when it means the laudable detestation felt by virtuous minds for the "frightful mien of vice." Taking a liberty poets take without asking, namely the permission to personify, light may be said to hate darkness; sincerity hypocrisy; and benevolence cruelty. Hence hate is natural to rightly constituted minds, and will ever live until hateful men cease to exist, and odious things are known no more. No man, let modern moralists say what they please to the contrary, can love the tyrant, the cruel, and the hypocritical, unless some "fellow-feeling make him wondrous kind." We can only love the lovely, and like that which is pleasing. Were it not so we should want the motive which induces us to strive to become pleasing to others, and impels us to render all around us lovely. It is a mighty agent in perfecting man's progression. Proper and vigilant exercise appertains to it. Care must be taken that we do not hate the good. Scrutiny should precede it. Attention should be fixed rather on the cause than the instrument of evil's manifestation. The moral, like the physical world is full of antagonisms. Let hate but steadily be directed against evil, and love will soon enjoy a wider domain than it now can boast. Hate like many other things requires sound and just direction. In itself it is a useful principle, or rather feeling of the mind.

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THE

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 15.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FORBEARANCE.

"Our daily intercourse is with fallible beings, most of whom are undisciplined in intellect, the slaves of prejudice, and unconscious of their own mental energies. The essential condition of intellectual progress in such a world, is the resistance of social influences, or of impressions from our fellow-beings."—CHANNING.

LET people say what they will, this is an antagonistic world, and is likely long to remain so. The spirit of resistance, not only to "influences and impressions," but also to attacks, is a prime element of existence, the right arm of life. With it virtue is supported, right established, and men walk through the world. Without it justice is silent, injustice rampant, and men, like friable stone, are trampled into fine dust, or lie down footstools under the feet of tyrants. How should resistance be conducted? What principles should regulate it? Some decry all resistance, but either they who do so are removed from oppression's sphere or do not practice their own precepts. Modern philosophy has done more to confound than clear up the subject. It may be affirmed of the doctrine of forbearance as the satirist wittily did of metaphysics:

In non-resistance's subtleties crossed,
The more we jog on the more we are lost;
Discussed eternally, it still appears
Like Paddy's ale, it thickens as it clears.

Suaviter in modo fortiter in re, said Lord Chesterfield to his son, and perhaps few maxims better express the right course to pursue. Philosophy teaches gentleness, self-preservation demands firmness. If we look at mankind through the lenses of necessity, and see men the creatures of circumstances, still we are obliged to resist them. Truth resists falsehood; right, might; honesty, hypocrisy, and so on through the category of all the virtues and their opposite vices. Passing from the moral to the physical sphere, resistance is there side by side with necessity. Animals are definitely constituted, are modified like men by situation and training, yet we tread upon the viper, shoot the tiger, and do many other things at times not very remarkable for mildness and forbearance. So of our treatment of each other; when we come in contacts fatal to peace and life, nature teaches

resistance, and no philosophy can alter the case; for true philosophy finds out what nature is and busies itself only to provide the proper conditions for her manifestation. A proper knowledge of human nature and how it is ever modified by influences, how it is always at birth a fountain of goodness, and subsequently changed independently of the individual, may prescribe the mode of treatment in antagonistic cases, but can never destroy the fact of resistance, nor its justness nor naturalness. To make the subject more clear, we will suppose a case, perhaps the utility will compensate for the formality. We shall probably stumble over some differences which must not be regarded disdainfully, seeing that they make up variety which nature is said to love.

In the first place the difference must be narrowly scanned. No man has made a contract to think as another may, nor to imitate the customs another may choose to follow. The primary duty is to feel certain we have our "quarrel just." If annoyed by rudeness or cruelty, we merely see the influence of bad training upon an individual, which is to be considered the *cause* of his bad behaviour, and our first feeling must be pity for his misfortune, not anger for his offence: but with anger nor without it, offences are not to be borne with impunity. No man could practice such a principle and live. What is to be done to obtain redress? The offender must be mildly remonstrated with, patience, forbearance, and kindness must be exercised. So far goes the advice of moralists for curing the dissensions of the old world, which is all very good in its way, and especially so when it answers the intended purpose; but when it fails, as it does every day even when applied to the advisers, what is to be then done our informant saith not. They who should boggle at every omission they find would not get through a case in one of Georgium Sidus's years, so we must proceed and supply the deficiency as correctly as our partial "experience" will permit. According to our notion, patience under insult has two limits. One natural enough—when we can bear it no longer; the other, when our forbearance increases that insolence it is meant to repress. With regard to the first, seeing how men are whirled about by the winds of

fate, and blown through society with their early associations, like finger-posts, ever pointing the way they are to walk, and tyrant-custom driving them into the path, we confess that patient endurance, like the summer's sun should be long in going down. But if the end proposed is not answered, it must go down, or the truth of the trite saying, "we may have too much of a good thing," will soon be evident. Forbearance, like eating, is capital in moderation, in excess it leads to disease. When he whose fault has been forgiven feels he has received a licence to repeat it, some measures must be taken to teach him better; the least possible pain should be inflicted, but a firm resistance must now be offered. To preach unlimited patient endurance under insult is to encourage tyranny and injustice on one part, shameful submission and cowardice on the other. Whoever gives such advice, do themselves little credit, and whoever takes it render themselves contemptible: the meek slave of every oppressor, and the helpless prey of every knave. The wise man will, perhaps, never feel anger at wrong done to him, will remonstrate, strive to reform, endure long, will never resent, never be driven to revenge; but when these fail he will take the most effectual and mild means in his power to restrain the aggressor, in self-protection. In any attack from others, endangering life or person, the same principle of self-protection should guide, and nothing which self-preservation does not demand should be done. It is wise to step aside from the falling tree, conduct the lightning's flash away, but it is also right to kill the snake when scotching will not be safe.

The stupid precept, "resist not evil," which none but tyrants preach and slaves practice, is only recommended because in accordance with the prejudices of authority and power. He who will turn one cheek to be smitten when the other has been struck, will soon have his face disfigured. To "rely on the power of love," as we are sometimes gravely told, is a very agreeable thing where love exists; but he who expects its embrace from the arms of hate, strangely mistakes the world and the nature of things therein. Nature teaches self-preservation. Philosophy dictates that it be effected, if possible, without the infliction of pain to others. Experience says, study the world, and do not look for it to exercise those virtues it does not possess.

What is true of individuals, applies to the masses; when oppression's iron paw is laid on them, it may be remembered that men of mistaken views are the oppressors, though in one sense they are more unfortunate than the oppressed. But iron rule is not, therefore, less grievous to be borne. What is to be done? Philosophy again assists us. Remonstrate, endure, if you can, and when advantage is

taken of your patience the oppressors should be removed like so many blocks of wood, with the least possible suffering to them, but their power of making misery should be effectually taken away. Some are of opinion that moral force in our age is sufficient to secure human rights. So be it. But if not, no nation or people should therefore give the pledge of submission. It is the nature of power to intoxicate, of oppression to grow rampant. Teach that human endurance has *no limits*, and you teach that wrong has *no day of redress*. Assure authority that no ungentle opposition shall ever disturb its repose or rectify its harsh extortions, and it will slumber for ages in the seats of injustice while the wronged and the slave would remain to die miserable students of Job. In society those who have rights to gain do well to remember that they who withhold them are the children of fate like themselves, and should proceed to obtain satisfaction with mildness, but nevertheless with firmness and resolution, and should early in the struggle nerve themselves for the worst. A different teaching we are aware is now fashionable, but tintured more with fear and expediency than with truth and liberty. If society has unfortunately made the tyrant, nature has luckily made the slave to resist. In the battle for freedom no man should rest with less than success, nor permit cajollery nor pusillanimity to prevent him employing the proper means of securing it.

These opinions may lie open to some objections, if not on the score of truth, on that of policy. It will be thought we should dwell with confidence on the sufficiency of moral forces for the work of regeneration. It is rather with the principle than the practice that we now have to do. The adoption of physical means will be a matter of careful debate among men of high toned courage, or perhaps from the constitution of England, despair, misery, and accident will more likely at last determine it. We are of opinion that moral force, if left free to act through the press, would do wonders. But as an element in the calculation of the wronged under oppression, we think if physical means were excluded, dignity would be taken from their sufferings, and their hopes lowered. Because of recent miscalculation and failure the whole thing has been condemned, which answers no better purpose than showing how many sickly fish survive on the waters of liberty. When men are reduced to the lowest stage of savage or animal wants, viz. *the battle against famine*, in which, said the *Quarterly Review* five years ago, nine-tenths of mankind are engaged, it is of little use to expatiate to such on the virtues of patience and intellectual redemption. Philosophers in such a state would laugh at it. It is hard to believe that the morality which let them sink will raise them again. Cases occur every day in which it is better to die than to live. When men are

reduced to animal suffering, all their ideas partake of the associations of their condition, and if they should be prompted to acts not congenial to drawing-room life, it should be regarded as a warning voice that humanity is outraged and justice disregarded. We agree with Thomas Carlyle, that "Social communities are things to be amended; and in all places short of the pit itself, there is some admixture of worth and good. Room for extenuation, for pity, for patience! And yet when the general result has come to the length of perennial starvation, arguments, extenuating logic, pity, and patience may be considered as drawing to a close." To meet these cases, and they have ever been and are still too common, personal bravery should be conserved, it perhaps was never more wanted than now. Besides, brave men will bear insult and seek redress without being stimulated to revenge. The coward never can. It is not physical bravery and courage the times require to be *cried down*, but wisdom, consistency, and resolution in directing it, when other means fail that should be *cried up*. The spirit of modern social reformers has been sublimed into pusillanimity, while governmental regenerators have dwindled from Hampdens, Buonarottis, Washingtons, and Paines into political Laodiceans whom liberty has spit out of her mouth.

The witty comment on pulpit popularity, namely, that "appreciation is condemnation," is redolent with meaning applied to moral and political teaching. The finger of conventional courtesy may point derisively to our doctrines, but even in high quarters they are not without their advocates. John Currie, whose genius and eloquence often charmed the cold ear of Unitarianism, one of the late poor-law commissioners for Warwickshire, stated in our hearing, that "after a close and calm philosophical review, modern civilization was the progenitor, not of Roman or Grecian greatness, but of dastardism. And so deeply had this truth been forced on the minds of Lord Brougham and other originators of the measure he officially defended, that the great object of the new poor-law was to drive men, in spite of themselves, back to the first elements of human dignity and independence—*unqualified resistance to oppression*." No argument ever advanced so reconciled us to that inhuman enactment as this philosophical intention, that redress should rise up from the ruin of society's wrongs.

We cannot stay to ornament our reasonings, to bedeck with jewels the person of thought, or to fortify our conclusions by further authorities. The views advanced, if correct, will stand alone, if erroneous it is fortunate they are not further supported. Error is always sufficiently dangerous by itself, and should never be encouraged to keep company with plausible pretences.

G. J. H.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

NO. IX.

"In the beginning god created the *heaven* and the *earth*. * * And on the seventh day god ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."
—JEW BOOK.

We stated, in No. 9, our conviction that matter was of itself "good and sufficient to produce all the varied, complicated, and beautiful phenomena of the universe," and the present article will embrace some of our reasons for such an opinion, drawn from facts made known by modern investigators, in reference to the origin of the earth and other bodies of our solar system. We mean the origin of their *form* only, for the matter of which they are composed we take to be eternal.

"In the beginning," then (of our investigation, *not* of the world), we run full butt against the "rock of christianity"—the widely diffused and notorious "Jew Book"—which, without preface or introduction, expressly declares that "god *created* the *heaven* and the *earth*." Many zealous believers assert that created means producing something out of nothing; but supposing it only to mean moulding or forming that which already existed, we are still at issue. The holy-ghost, "for 'tis his inditing," says, "the heaven and the earth" were made together: and the parsons tell us heaven is god's residence, and that he has existed ever, "before time was." From this it would appear that Christ's condition, when he travelled all the way from his celestial abode to benefit his ungrateful inheritance upon earth, was by no means a novel one, since the devil had *his* hole long before the creation of the world, but the "holy-ghost & co." "not where to lay their heads," until six thousand years ago.

The *time* stated to have been occupied by the spiritual firm, it is scarcely necessary to say we demur to, for so completely does geology refute the assertion, that we look upon this portion of the delusion to be the first to be relinquished by the Christian simpletons who have been so long deceived with it.

And, lest we should be thought selfish or ambitious of fame for taking so decided a stand, we feel pleasure in acknowledging a coincidence of opinion on the part of many philosophers, amongst whom we may name Herschel, De la Beche, Maculloch, and, we believe, Dr. Pye Smith.

It is our opinion, that if we can show good reason for believing that the matter of which the earth is composed was once in a gaseous state, from which condition it subsequently changed to the solid, we now perceive it, we shall possess an important principle (which if not established, at least not to be refuted) on which to base our future arguments.

We shall now proceed to give authorities for our opinion, In *Chambers's Information*,

under the head "Nebulæ," is the following; taken, we believe, from Sir J. Herschel's "Astronomy:"

"Within the bounds of what has been called the star-system, great numbers of bodies have been discovered, which, from their cloud-like appearance, are called *Nebula*. There is one of magnificent appearance in the girdle of the constellation Andromeda, and another still more splendid in the sword-hilt of Orion, both visible to the naked eye. Some of these objects are of most irregular form, stretching like a fragment of semi-pellucid membrane over the sky, with patches of brighter matter scattered irregularly throughout their extent. In others, the bright patches are of greater intensity, so as to have the decided appearance of *gatherings* of the matter towards a particular point. Others there are, in which these bright parts seem nearly disengaged from the surrounding thin matter, or only bedded on a slight background composed of it. In a fourth class, we see detached masses, approaching more or less to a spherical form, and with various measures of comparative brightness towards the centre, until they resemble a star with only a slight *bur* around it. *It is a new and startling surmise of astronomers, that these are examples of a series of states in which nebulous matter exists, during a process forming it into solar systems* MORE OR LESS ANALOGOUS TO OUR OWN—belated portions, so to speak, of the same soft and diffused material, which, *countless ages ago*, was condensed into the defined bodies forming the remainder of our star-system! *There is much, IT MUST BE OWNED, to support this hypothesis, startling as it is.* The physical laws known to operate in our own solar system are in perfect harmony with it. * * And not only are the formation and movements of suns to be thus accounted for; but it has been shown that the same laws will explain how a whole planetary system may have been made up. * * The two rings which surround Saturn appear an example of two exterior portions of that planet as yet not advanced from the intermediate state, but which may *in time* become additions to the number of his satellites. The zodiacal light may also be a residue, of extreme thinness, of the matter of which our system was formed. It might be supposed that this hypothesis, ingenious as it is, could scarcely be stretched to account for the formation of solar systems in which there are two suns revolving round each other. *But this difficulty is easily overcome.* It has been shown that the nebulous matter, in certain cases, may assume that arrangement. On the surface of a flowing stream, in which slight repulsions of water from the banks produce little eddies, how common is it to see two of those miniature whirlpools come within each other's influence, and then go on wheeling round each other: *precisely in that manner* do the two suns of a binary star carry on their

revolutions, and from circumstances of a similar nature, though upon so much greater a scale, may these revolutions have originated."

The argument of De la Beche is an appropriate companion to the above, and will carry more weight, most probably, than our own. He says, "There is so much grandeur and simplicity in the idea of the condensation of gaseous matter into those spheres or spheroids which exist, not only in our solar system, but also by myriads throughout the universe, that we are irresistibly led to adopt some views of this kind, MORE PARTICULARLY as it would accord with the unity of design, so EVIDENT throughout the universe. Encke's comet, that remarkable body of vapour, which revolves round the sun in about three and a half years, proves, by its existence, that gaseous matter, or vapour, of extraordinary tenuity, may float around our great luminary in given times, and in a given orbit, checked only by a resisting medium of still more extraordinary tenuity. There is, therefore, no argument, *à priori*, against the hypothesis that the matter composing our globe may once have existed in a gaseous state, and in that state have revolved round the sun." We might even go farther, and consider with La Place, that our whole system is but a condensation into parts, *doubtless from design*, of that matter which now constitutes the sun, the planets and their satellites—matter which rotated on an axis, and hence *the fact* that all the planets move in the same direction. In support of this view, let any one weigh the evidence recently adduced respecting nebulæ, more particularly by Sir John Herschel, and he will have some difficulty in resisting the impression that these bodies are enormous masses of matter in the act of condensation. If all the matter existing in the sun, planets, and satellites were expanded to, and even beyond the orbit of Uranus (1,800,000,000 of miles), the whole mass would still be but a speck in the universe. * * * So long as matter exists in the state of gas or vapour, there is reason to conclude that the different kinds would be permeable to each other; at least experiments on gases would lead to this inference. Hence, supposing, for the sake of argument, that the heat was sufficiently intense, the simple non-metallic substances, and the vapours of the various metals, would tend to mix with each other. This condition of things would not continue to the external part of the sphere or spheroid, the existence of which we now suppose; for the temperature would become less, from various obvious causes at the outer parts, and the vapours of a great proportion of the metals would cease from want of the necessary heat to exist. They would tend to condense and to separate from the mass of the non-metallic simple substances, neglecting for the moment any chemical affinity which may exist between

the metals and certain of those substances. A condensation of the particles of metallic vapours would cause them to lose their support among the particles of gaseous matter, and the action of gravity would tend to carry them towards the centre of the sphere; but as they could not pass beneath the point where the heat would again convert them into vapours, we should obtain an inner sphere on spheroid of metallic vapours, striving to condense, surmounted by a body of the non-metallic simple substances, which could readily exist, some even to the extreme superficies of the whole sphere or spheroid, at a greatly inferior temperature. We must not here neglect the action of gravity. It has been assumed, that the heat being sufficient to counteract this action to a certain amount, all terrestrial matter was gaseous. The struggle between these antagonist forces would be most powerful, for as the volume of gaseous fluids is inversely as the pressure to which they are exposed, the pressure upon the internal portions of the gaseous sphere or spheroid would be enormous, and therefore, when, from that radiation of heat which must take place into the cold planetary spaces, gravity came forcibly into action, liquids and solids would necessarily result from this cause alone, and particles of matter be squeezed together, even into liquids and solids, in the interior, which would retain a gaseous form on the surface at the same or higher temperatures."

The above quotations are sufficient for our purpose, but we may refer to that from the *British Queen and Statesman*, in No. 5, which tritely condenses the opinion sought to be illustrated. We shall reserve our remarks upon the above until our next. W. C.

SHALLOWNESS OF PERSECUTOR'S PLEADINGS.

To suppress by the law's strong arm publications which advocate the principles of scepticism, to silence by incarceration and fines those who oppose the prevalent faith, does so manifestly testify a sense of danger on the part of those who use such means to prevent free discussion, that persecutors feel the necessity of pretending a reason in justification of their proceedings. We live in an age, in which even tyrants are obliged to profess a love of liberty, and the intolerant to give something like an excuse for the arbitrary exercise of their power. There is by far too little activity in the public mind; yet there is enough to cause a demand for reasons why it should renounce reason. When the clergy attempt to deal a heavy blow to mental freedom, it is not enough that they should say, "We have the power and we will it;" but they and their civil allies must cover their base attack with

an appearance of right, though it be, with nothing better than a flimsy sophism.

In this the middle of the nineteenth century, in this *light-of-the-gospel* country, when societies are circulating bibles by hundreds of thousands, when tract-societies are distributing their pamphlets by millions, where opulence, splendour, and power are at the direction of the clergy, a penny periodical is a cause of alarm, and prisons are tenanted that churches may be kept full.

We ask, what need of this alarm? And we are told that there is none! Still, we repeat, there is every appearance of it, or why should those from whom no danger is to be apprehended be confined by locks and bolts and bars that would outmatch the strength of Hercules? But again we are assured that these measures are not resorted to in dread of the efficacy of Infidel arguments, nor from a sense of the insufficiency of orthodoxy to defend herself by her own strength. No! "The church is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The cavils of the sceptic and the sneers of the scoffer are unavailing against that which the almighty takes under his protection, and the shafts of infidelity must for ever recoil from christianity's impregnable citadel.

Let us try, then, say we; and that is a fair challenge. They will not accept it, but fly for protection behind the shield of the law; and to conceal the ignominy of their retreat, cry out, "who's afraid."

Until the fullest liberty of expression concerning the tenets of religion be allowed, we are entitled to declare that religion is unable to stand the test of discussion. With all the advantages possessed by the supporters of orthodoxy, let infidelity have but the opportunity of speaking orally and through the press, and not a day shall pass without witnessing a decline in the extent and resources of the empire of faith. This is our position; and we will now notice the attempt often made to dislodge us from it.

Persecutors, or, if they like the other name better, prosecutors, frequently endeavour to ward off the conclusion which we have stated above, by pleading somewhat after the following manner: "So long as you confine yourselves to grave argument, and serious research, we will not interfere with the expression of your thoughts; but when not content with this toleration, you have recourse to invective and ridicule, when you indulge in abuse and sarcasm of things esteemed most holy, outraged public feeling demands that you should be punished. Your reasonings are not feared; but your unrefined attacks upon our faith are apt to seduce the vulgar; and, therefore, for the sake of the morals of the community, your licentiousness must be checked."

This is wonderfully liberal! How over-

whelming is gospel love! Sceptics may be deluged with vituperative epithets, by the champions of "the truth as it is in Jesus," their characters may be assailed, they may be accused of the vilest motives, and the whole force of wit be expended to bring them and their most hallowed principles into contempt; and yet, if a sceptic let fall a strong expression, or with raillery, would shame men from the folly of their creeds, he is to be thrust into gaol. We have heard from the lips of persons, and read in works, purporting to be apologies for christianity, language as abusive as the English vocabulary will supply and sarcasm as withering as they could make it. *Our* feelings are not to be respected. It is not supposed that the sentiments we entertain and which we consider essential to the happiness of our fellow-creatures, principles for which we would make sacrifices of station and prosperity, are as dear to us as are the doctrines of a religionist to him. The opponents of sceptical philosophy may let fly the arrows of ridicule, but the same weapons we may not use in return. We are to be treated as though we had a hide like a hippopotamus, while they are to be handled as tenderly as lambs.

If to a dominant sect were conceded the right of punishing what they deemed coarse or sarcastic attacks upon their faith, in what Infidel production, however refined, would they not perceive the characteristics which, in their estimation, would entitle them to inflict their penalties. If argument were presented, they would not admit it. They would either shut their eyes or be blinded by prejudice, and because they would not or could not see grave ratiocination, would declare it was not there. Reasoning they would call vituperative declamation; statements of facts would appear nothing better than slanderous misrepresentations; and an exposure of folly they would denominate ridicule. They would only have to make a charge of blasphemy, say that it hurt their feelings, and then pounce upon the offender.

To give any set of men the privilege of deciding the manner in which their opinions shall be opposed, and at the same time to allow them to judge when the prescribed style is deviated from, is manifestly in itself unfair, because it bestows on one sect a favour which is denied to others. It is also absurd in the extreme. Of two contending persons, suppose one to say to the other, "I will engage in combat with you if you will fight as I tell you, and strike as I shall instruct you," just as reasonable are the terms offered by the valiant Christians. They are like the Irishman's reciprocity, all on one side. I know little of military tactics, yet I think I could win a battle if the hostile army would consent to put itself under my directions.

But suppose the opposition of serious argu-

ment to the fundamentals of religion were permitted; suppose orthodox tribunals, unoccupied by prejudice, were never to punish any but strong and sarcastic or vituperative expressions, we nevertheless contend that they would be violating the inalienable rights of man.

If, in the course of investigation, an individual comes to a conclusion that certain prevalent doctrines are absurd and pernicious; if he regards a book usually esteemed sacred, as so abounding with errors, and so replete with degrading and monstrous narrations, that its authorship might well be imputed to some such fabled being as the devil; inasmuch as these are his sincere convictions, he has the right to say so. If to his perceptions any tenets appear ridiculous, he ought to be permitted to place them in such a light as that their nonsense should become apparent to others. This would involve invective and ridicule. But both being essential to a development and declaration of individual impressions of truth, the use of both cannot be prevented by any rule of right.

Strong language and ridicule are on many occasions perfectly consistent with propriety; and in our warfare with vice and error, we should often fail in duty, if we neglected these efficient means of destroying error and folly. They are more especially legitimate when employed against religion, because with the majority of people, religion has no more hold upon their minds than the fastening made by the solemnity with which pious absurdity enshrouds itself. Nonsense allied with gravity is sooner exploded by a little well-directed raillery, than by a thousand volumes of laboured abstract refutations. With the greater number of persons, religious belief is nothing more than a sentiment of awe connected with certain forms, ceremonies, books, and names, which feeling might have been formed with reference to any nursery tale, if the same means had been adopted as have been used to produce veneration for a certain book of stories. Profound argument scarcely touches this feeling, which mostly prevents the proper exercise of judgment; and, therefore, to make individuals susceptible of rational conviction, they must be made to look with less reverence upon the mystic veil which hides the absurdities of the object of their worship, and shuts out the light of truth.

To say that the course we are now defending is uncharitable, is to give a very different interpretation to the word charity, than the signification of it which sound sense sanctions. That conduct is most charitable which does the greatest good. Because people hug their delusions, it forms no part of benevolence to refrain from exposing the deception; and philanthropy disowns that milk-and-water kindness which would not couch a blind man to avoid giving the pain of the operation.

The feelings of unreasoning believers may be hurt by controversy ; but, whether is the temporary uneasiness occasioned by the conflicts of opinions, or the stagnation which must inevitably ensue from a cessation of discussion, the greater evil ? There are some men, as Thomas Paine says, who may be reasoned out of error, and there are others who must be shocked into thought. I wish the number was not so large of those in whom there is no chance of exciting mental activity, and whom it is next to impossible to arouse from the slumber of blind faith, except by placing something before them which will startle. We must, however, deal with the public mind as we find it ; and we will, despite the persecution of power in this world, and the threats of priests with reference to the next, unflinchingly denounce sanctified imposture, and expose theological delusions. H. J.

[The following is inserted at the request of a correspondent, and is extracted from the *New Moral World*, vol. 1, no. 15, third enlarged series. The radical change which has taken place in the tactics of that paper since this article appeared in its columns will be sufficiently evident to its present readers, without any comment from us.]

“SPEAK OUT SIR.”—*Teacher in old Society.*

“S—— is a philosopher. He felt he could do more good by handling gently the prejudices of the people ; by supplying the public mind with food according to its capacity ; who, after reading his work, would take him to be the man which you and I take him to be ? Men are not yet prepared for the truth. Our great literary men give *as much* of the truth as *they* think the people can bear.”

THUS writes my friend ; and similar opinions are frequently expressed by many well-disposed, intelligent, but timid persons. To my mind there seems to be something implied in these expressions repugnant to the spirit of honesty. They require a sacrifice of that open-minded expression of what we are sincerely convinced is truth—a clog on that free expression of our sentiments and feelings, which characterises the truly honest man ; an embargo on our generous exertions to extend to our less-favoured neighbours the knowledge which was freely bestowed on us by our more talented predecessors and cotemporaries. Who are the great literary characters who dole out knowledge by the drachm, instead of giving it without measure ? Are they those book-makers who “rack their brains for lucre ; or who, by the aid of the publisher, aim to secure for themselves a niche in the Temple of Fame ? In either case the expression, without reserve, of unpopular truths would, generally, defeat the end proposed ; which, it will be seen, is not the benefit of the people, but of the scribe or the orator—the candidate for the people’s *cash*, their loud huzzas, or both. To secure this end, the line of conduct must be of the *creeping, crawling, cringing, succumbing, mystifying* rationality was not produced by the ad-

ing order ; and, by no means characterised by that dignity of demeanour and loftiness of sentiment which stamp the full value upon the acts and precepts of the free speaker. Yet this method of dark-enlightening—of *diluting a little bit of truth with a considerable quantity of the superstition of the day*, is the standard which is endeavoured to be set up as best calculated to clear away the mists of error, and of infusing truth into the public mind. Why do not these kind and considerate men attempt to fix up a screen to prevent the warm rays of the sun injuring the bodies of those who have passed the winter amidst the snows of polar regions ?

As it is pleasant and cheering to be warmed by the sudden appearance of the god of day from behind a dense cloud, which has made the blood to run through our veins with a chilly coldness ; so it is refreshing and delightful to have a stream of cloudless reason, flowing freely into the mind after passing from the withering influence of priestly superstitions. What is more calculated to chase away error than unalloyed truth ? What is more certain to clear the mental world of the owls of ignorance, and the bats and phantoms of superstition, than *unmixed material philosophy* and the true science of mind ?

Who, that is in possession of the truth on any given question, *is to decide which quantity of it the public mind is capable of bearing*, and in what way he shall mete out the small periodical modicum, so as not to create a *surfeit* ? The public mind is composed of individual minds as diversified as are the leaves of a forest : and is it because many stunted shrubs drag on a sickly existence, overshadowed by lofty trees, that the latter are to be deprived of more light and moisture than is sufficient for the debilitated constitutions of the former ? Surely not. *Then let all who have the power and will help to waft intelligence through the land, and “give it with all their might.”* “Let their light so shine before men,” &c., and we shall reap the good fruit in a rapid progress in the revolution of mind, which has taken such gigantic strides during the last few years.

It may be useful to inquire to what class of men we are indebted for this railroad speed in mental reformation : nearly the whole of the milk-and-water opponents of the political and theological superstitions of “our ancestors” have sunk into oblivion, and the traces of their career are scarcely to be discovered ; whilst the bold and fearless attacks of Paine, Palmer, Voltaire, Volney, Mirabeau, D’Holbach, Shelley, Owen, &c., still flourish in all their pristine vigour ; and are now by means of numerous cheap editions of their works, with the aid of the great political agitations of the last half century, exerting a very powerful influence in the enlightenment of the human mind. This great movement to-

vocates of a mixture of science and humbug, or by an intermediate superstition. It was effected by the calm and dignified proclamation of the deductions of science. The high-minded men of our own age having discovered the error of the trashy superstitions of the day; and being in possession of knowledge which they deemed to be of the highest value to mankind, resolved to publish it; and in a way too that was not to be misunderstood by a mind of ordinary capacity; but these were not timid men; they were not actuated by the result of the calculation "shall I gain or lose by 'speaking out' in favour of the new views;" no, they saw it was right, and resolved to do it; they were not to be deterred by the fiery threats of superstition, or by the more tangible punishments of the ruling political faction; nor to be allured from their proposed course by the attraction of wealth; and never were men, so influenced and determined, having truth for their polar star, numbered amongst the unsuccessful.

Still, it is pertinaciously urged, that "you cannot make men rational all at once." Well, we can't help that: the question then is, *can they be made rational quickest by a glimmering of mental light, or by the full blaze of the meridian sun of knowledge?*

The line of march from superstition to philosophy has been likened to a pass through a deep, muddy swamp to the green hills and rich plains beyond. Now, what should we think of a fortunate man, who had been conducted through the mire and safely landed by the directing hand of another, turning round, as soon as he had satisfied himself of his security and elevated position, and saying to those whom he had left behind over-head in superstitious mud, "My good friends, you have not sufficient strength of mind to carry you to this beautiful region; there is a nice place there mid-way between us, I advise you to get there as soon as you can, the swamp is only half the depth there, you will only be up to your waist in the mire; you can exist there comfortably, never mind the stench; pay a priest of moderate doctrines, and thank your stars matters are no worse." *I think we should hardly set down this person as acting on the Social principle*, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Then let us all, according to our abilities and opportunities, do the utmost in our power to make superstition fly the land, awed by the independence and boldness of our actions, and the gentleness and kindness of our manners.

How cheering it is to see a man walking erect in all the dignity of his nature, amid a population of bending and crouching slaves: his deportment and conduct command the respect and frequently the esteem of his opponents in spite of themselves, and shield him

from that system of petty persecution, which the cowardly-valiant never fail to inflict on the timid holder of unfashionable opinions. Let no man set himself up as the meter out of scanty supplies of knowledge, regulated by the cold scale of calculating interest or of palsied timidity; but reflect the light which illumines his own mind to cheer the dark soul of the unfortunate superstitious, and kindly take him by the hand, and direct his footsteps in the path of an enlightened philosophy of virtue and happiness. *In fine, speak and act the truth*, "without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man," and there can be no apprehension of the result. W. COOK.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A MEMBER OF CONGRESS.—The Communication cannot appear, unless with the writer's signature.

JAMES ALLEN, RADCLIFFE BRIDGE, is thanked for his exertions, and directed to use this notice as authority for the collection of subscriptions, which may be forwarded as usual.—M. RYALL, Secretary, 3, North Place, Lambeth.

A. E. N., BIRMINGHAM.—The communication would have been acceptable, had not the arguments previously appeared in C. SOUTHWELL'S *Letters to the Socialists*. The article appears in another column. We agree with him that when the *New Moral World* "First came out all parties were denounced, whether religious or political. The bible was looked upon and spoken of with the utmost contempt. The religious were called insane, and treated as lunatics. And the right of every man and woman to speak his or her thoughts was advocated. But now the tone is changed."

The letter of "A YOUNG SOCIALIST," shall receive our earliest attention.

J. C. J. writes us, "As you do not believe in the divinity of the Christian religion, I shall, for the benefit of your immortal soul lay some of its proofs before you, so that when the 'day of judgment' comes, you may not be able to say that no one would instruct you; and for doing this important service I expect your thanks and the thanks of almighty god;"—to be sure he does. This is the true proselitizing rule acted upon by our parsons and missionaries; did they not, in the majority of cases, obtain the golden thanks of this world or anticipate a chief seat in "kingdom-come," the heathen both of our own and other countries may be damned for them and welcome. The following is proof the first, and may serve as a specimen of the remainder, "How can you reject the divinity of our Saviour, when it is proved in the New Testament by the statement of Mary and the dream of Joseph, that he was miraculously born; and that even a star moved out of its place to throw a light upon the new-born omnipotence?"

Mr. W. COBHAM was the donor of the £1, which appeared in No. 11 to W. C.

In the Report of the Committee of the John Street Ball, in No. 13, we have stated that a pound was subscribed in the room, we beg leave to acknowledge it as a donation by Mr. Birch.

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION FOR AN ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.—The Committee who are now engaged in preparing a plan will gladly receive suggestions Address, H. HETHERINGTON, Wine Office Court Fleet Street.

Many persons having inquired for Mr. Holyoake's lecture in defence of Mr. SOUTHWELL, intitled "*The Spirit of Bonner in the Disciples of Jesus*," &c. are informed that the Second Edition can be had of Hetherington, and Watson, London; and from the usual booksellers.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.—Saturday, April 2, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON; Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 16.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

IS THERE A GOD?

x.

"Thou great first cause, least understood."—POPE.

"Now, when the multitude of animals is considered, the number of parts in each, their figure and fitness, the faculties depending upon them, the variety of species, the complexity of structure, the success in so many cases, and *felicity of the result*, we can never reflect, without the profoundest adoration, upon the character of that being from whom all these things have proceeded: we cannot help acknowledging, *what an exertion of benevolence* creation was."—PALEY.

POPE was one of those men whose mental eyes were occasionally opened, and who "saw men as trees walking." At least he had unquestionable glimpses of truth, perhaps without suspecting it. That the *theological* "first cause" is little understood, and little likely to be, is true, seeing that it ranks among the non-understandables, which no man can comprehend. The cook in *Lord Hoppergollop* shouted with amazing philosophy,

What is impossible can't be,
And never, never comes to pass,

except, perhaps, in the hands of divines. Religionists have borrowed the dictionary of Napoleon or Mirabeau, in which the word "impossible" is found not; meaning, in their case, that no absurdity is impossible with them; they gather nonsense under their wings as the hen gathereth her chickens, and they warm and nourish the brood of folly. In proving the existence of a god they leap difficulties like young hunters do five-barred gates. Beating the Birmingham magistrate, who visited a culprit with the "most severest" punishment, they bolster up their incomprehensible dogmas with the *most sublime* reasons. Their pits of the ridiculous, like those of Milton, in their "*lowest deep contain a lower deep still*." Religion has been not only the cholera of morality, producing its "awful cases" every day, and the toothache of humanity, generating excruciating tortures every hour; but is also the paralysis of reason, the charnel-house of common sense.

In the last chapter an attempt was made to resolve the fictions of poets into their pristine elements—fancies; and to refer them to their common ground—mythology. The personifications of poetry are truly delightful when

regarded *as such*. It is in this sense mythology continues so attractive. He had a pleasing conception of it who styled it, the "daughter of natural philosophy embellished by poetry." Modern religions have little that is elevating in their compositions. Compact systems of mind stultifications, machines of political oppression, pretext of extortions, perpetual sources of mysticisms, moroseness, cruelty, and gloom; they are the night-mares of humanity, and blast, like the sirocco, man's fairest hopes.

In strict sense, mythology to us is the history of worn-out religions and superannuated gods, which intelligence and science have discarded. A very little foresight is sufficient to satisfy us that all present religions and gods are the mythology of posterity, who will regard our frenzies and fooleries just as we regard the superstitious vagaries of our infatuated and priestridden forefathers.

The conceptions of the ancients on religion often far outstripped anything modern pietists can claim; their god Pan, the mighty emblem of all things existent, to whom Orpheus sang so sweetly, testifies an enlargement of mind that would be deemed Atheistical in our day. Nature gave birth to their god, with us it is the reverse, god creates our nature. The wisest among ancient worshippers used to adore "Nature as the *mother of the gods*." This fact demonstrates the keen perception formerly possessed by some minds, of the origin of the various beliefs which have plagued the world on religious matters.

The economy which has crept into modern devotion, that has led it to retain but one god in pay, is a circumstance which, compared with the religious prodigality of ancient nations in these particulars, might be considered sufficient to satisfy any moderate Atheist that religion is "going the way of all flesh;" or to use a commercial illustration more likely to be comprehended in these money-grubbing days—that the markets of imposition and nonsense are glutted, and consequently all demand will cease naturally. Against this conclusion, however, facts, history, and experience cry aloud. Credulity is still so rife, people to impose upon it so plentiful, and religion so convenient an instrument for the purpose, that unless something is done to "help the lord" away, ages

will elapse before religion will cast its last, "longing, lingering look" on the fair world it has so long marred, on the scene of its plunder and theatre of its oppression. Again, all changes to be permanently beneficial should be made advisedly, deliberately, and with the clearest perceptions of the reasons for them. In this case has it been done? When man reduced his gods from many to three, and again from three to one, he fancied he simplified his faith, which was true; and he also thought he reached the truth, which was a mistake: to reach that a still further reduction must take place. Arithmetically lessening the number of gods, and stopping short of the cipher, betrayed rather a laggardly laziness of adoration, than a perception of the truth. It was saving a great deal of trouble without assigning a logical reason for it. To accelerate the next reduction, and hasten the decline and fall of the empire of faith, which ought never to have been established, do we labour. For upon the same principle that Mirabeau contended, to Madam Jay, that if probity did not exist we ought to invent it; so with Atheism, if its truth was less clearly seen than it is, it would be policy to teach it to cure fanaticism, religious oppression, and cruelty.

Atheism is modest and unpretending, religion arrogant and presumptuous; the first is satisfied with realities, the other rejects them with scorn and contempt: professing humility it aspires to the skies, although its only pathway must be round the very babel of mental confusion. It is said that Atheism must make but little progress in the popular mind, because its abstractions are too refined and its metaphysics too subtle for common comprehension. This objection is not good on the other side the question, because the multitude have been taught to adore without disputing, and have been commended for their faith in the proportion that it was baseless and without foundation. But when men generally are set to examine the reasons of their belief, will not the same difficulties in the way of subtle abstractions weaken their preconceived notions? It should not be forgotten that Atheism rests on realities—the antipodes of metaphysical refinements, and airy nothingnesses, and is the science of *things as they are*. It has matter to rely upon which the mind can easily comprehend, a little careful thought will be sufficient to master its first principles, and a very modicum of industry will consistently apply these principles to the solution of every spiritual sophistry. We do not despair of making every part of the subject quite plain and clear to the popular mind. For this purpose the plainest language is studiously used. Knowledge of any kind will never work out its high destiny until in the heads of the mass. The few are too apt to conserve, or use it to puff conceit and swell importance, and they have never made an honest use of it. The

mass are free from conventional trammels in a degree that encourages the impartation of knowledge to them from the certainty of its being honestly applied.

There is an argument drawn from the presence of misery in the world, considered in relation to god's attributes of goodness and power peculiarly adopted for common apprehension, though not more conclusive than a host of others; its effects will stagger the strongest belief and shake the firmest faith. Origen Bachelor, a controversialist on the other side of the Atlantic, calls the consideration of it the *strongest reason for Atheism*. We have before incidentally alluded to it and now shall examine it, and the objections urged on the contrary more at large.

Theologians contend that god is a being of infinite goodness and power—and indeed if not supposed to be so, it would not be worth contending about. But who can see the misery and wickedness abroad in the earth, the oppression of poverty and the pride of wealth, how right ineffectually struggles against might, and outraged humanity cries for redress and no ear regards and no arm is stretched out to save, and not exclaim, where, where is eternal goodness, and show us infinite power? If with Boz we reflect on life's sad vicissitudes, how regularly things go on from day to day in the same unvarying round; how youth and beauty dies and uly griping age lives tottering on; how crafty avarice grows rich, and *manly honest hearts are poor and sad*; how few they are who tenant the stately houses, and how many those who lie in noisesome pens, or rise each day and lay them down at night, and live and die father and son, mother and child, race upon race, and generation upon generation, without a home to shelter them or the energies of one single man directed to their aid; how *ignorance is punished, and never taught*; how jail-doors gape and gallows' loom for thousands *urged towards them by circumstances* darkly curtaining their very cradle heads, but for which they might earn their honest bread and live in peace; how many die in soul and have no chance of life; how many who can scarcely go astray, be they vicious as they may, turn haughtily from the crushed and stricken wretch who can scarcely do otherwise; how much *injustice and misery* there is, and yet how the world rolls on from year to year alike careless and indifferent, no man seeking to remedy or redress. Sick at heart the mind turns from such contemplation. What a hollow mockery of human torture it is, to be told that a *god of boundless power and goodness reigns, who can and yet does not* remedy all this. All sober feeling is outraged, common sense is set at defiance, every thing revolts at the supposition and refuses to dwell upon so glaring an impossibility. To affirm that it *can* do it and does not is to pourtray a *monster, not a father*. To assume

the will to redress while the evil is left unre-
 moved, is to proclaim the *pitiable helplessness* of
 that which is styled omnipotent. To contend
 for the union of will and power *without limit*, in
 the face of the fact that they are unexercised, is
 the essence of effrontery, the climax of impos-
 sibility and absurdity. *The existence of misery*
and pain then is proof positive that there is no god.
 The poor man has only to look at his own fire-
 side, contemplate the misery of his domestic
 hearth, and without the refinement of learned
 thought or erudite research the important truth
 is plain.

G. J. H.

(To be Continued.)

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER IX.

“Honesty IS the best Policy.”

Amongst Mr. SOUTHWELL's papers, which came into
 our possession upon his incarceration, we found
 the following, addressed to the Editor of the *New*
Moral World; thinking it the best proof which
 could be offered of Mr. SOUTHWELL's consistency,
 we determined to publish it. Mr. Fleming's reasons
 for not inserting it are attached. W. C.

LICENSING A SOCIAL LECTURER.—Mr. Buchanan,
 the Socialist lecturer, appeared at the Borough
 Court on Tuesday, and said he applied under the
 52 Geo. III., c. 155, for a license to preach. He
 made the application, he said, with the view of put-
 ting a stop to the vexatious proceedings which had
 lately been taken against him and those holding
 similar opinions. Mr. Maude said all he could do
 would be to grant a certificate that the party had
 taken the oaths. Mr. Buchanan said he was aware
 of that, and that the oaths were those of allegiance
 and supremacy, which he was now quite willing to
 take. There was some misunderstanding on a
 former occasion; and on further consideration, he
 found that it was not necessary for him to enter
 into any explanation of the oaths. Mr. Maude
 said the reason he could not administer the oaths
 before, was the answer Mr. Buchanan gave to a
 particular question. He should repeat that ques-
 tion, which was whether he (Mr. Buchanan) con-
 sidered these oaths binding on his conscience, inas-
 much as he believed in a future state after death of
 rewards and punishments. Mr. Buchanan said he
 should answer that question in the affirmative. He
 then took the oaths, and made the declaration
 under 19 Geo. III., c. 44, and received his certificate
 of having done so.—*Sun*, Friday Evening, August
 14, 1840.

It was not without feelings of grief and a
 deep sense of humiliation, that the writer of
 this article transcribed the above paragraph.
 The effects of which upon the public mind he
 dare scarce trust himself to speak. Of Mr.
 Buchanan he knows nothing, except in con-
 nection with the Social principles, of which he
 is a distinguished advocate. The following
 remarks, therefore, will not refer to him in
 particular, but to all those who are prepared
 to adopt the same course of conduct—if his
 name is here used, it is because he is the prin-

cipal actor in the scene. In the above para-
 graph, Mr. Buchanan is made to say that the
 oath was simply one of form, relating to
 allegiance and supremacy; let us see how far
 this is borne out by facts. The following is a
 copy of the oath: “Every person dissenting
 from the church of England in holy orders,
 being a preacher or teacher of a congregation
 of dissenting Protestants, shall take the oaths
 and subscribe to the declaration against popery,
 required by the 1 Wm. & Mary.” And shall
 also make and subscribe to a declaration, in
 the words following: “I, R. B., do solemnly
 declare, in the presence of almighty god, that
 I am a Christian and a Protestant, and, as
 such, that I believe that the scriptures of the
 Old and New Testaments, as commonly re-
 ceived among Protestant churches, do contain
 the revealed will of God, and that I do receive
 the same as the rule of my doctrine and prac-
 tice.” This was pretty well, but not enough
 for Mr. Maude, who having caught his victim,
 tied him to a stake, where, “bear-like, he was
 obliged to fight the course.” He made our
 Social missionary, the propounder of truth,
 without *mystery, mixture of error, or fear of*
man, declare, in open day, and in the face of
 the world, that he believed in a future state of
 rewards and punishments. This new light,
 this novel, spiritual illumination of Mr. Bu-
 chanan, will certainly surprise plain, straight-
 forward men, who remember that no longer
 ago than July 26, 1840 (not yet a little month),
 a letter was addressed by that gentleman to
 the editor of the *New Moral World*, in which
 he said, “I am very much against the princi-
 ple of submitting to any tests or declarations,
 but if the opposite party are determined to
 make us do so, on their heads be the wrong, if
 any. We shall be clear, in public estimation,
 of any inconsistency and moral guilt.” Here
 it may be asked, how Mr. Buchanan can re-
 concile it to his duty to submit to any tests or
 declarations, if he reject them upon principle.
 This is the age of strange doctrines; among
 which, that here put forth with such coolness and
 plausibility, certainly claims the first rank.
 We are told, by an expounder of Socialism, that
 principle may be trifled with upon occasion,
 of which occasion of course we ourselves must be
 the judges; and after having violated truth and
 honesty, we are to turn round with the greatest
nonchalance and self-sufficiency, and say, “O!
 'tis not our faults; we would be honest, if
 Mr. Kidd did not play the scare-crow and
 frighten us from our propriety: on him then
 be the wrong, if any.” *If any*, says our friend,
 as though his own conduct left a shadow of a
 doubt of its existence. Such an expression
 from the mouth of a public teacher, especially
 a teacher of Socialism, is highly injudicious
 (to use no stronger term), especially at the
 present moment, when public virtue, and the
 progress of truth depends so much on indi-

vidual spirit. If we need further proof, that Mr. Buchanan was *forced* to take the oath, his own words would furnish it. "I make," he said, "the application with the view of putting a stop to the vexatious proceedings which have been lately taken against myself and those who hold opinions with me." Here, then, we have an explicit declaration, that the strait was abandoned for the crooked course, not on the ground of right, but expediency; had he resisted the law and refused upon principle a subscription to articles he did not believe, he might have been VEXED and INCONVENIENCED. Honesty is expensive, and Socialists can't afford luxuries; this was not the manner of a Hampden, a Russell, or a Sidney; nor did John Knox found his church by such puerile conduct, he fed not his babes with such milk-and-waterish diet. We know that the first impulses of all men, are towards truthfulness of speech, and that independence of mind which leads to great results. If they deal in falsehood, 'tis not for the love of it, but fear makes them hypocrites, and the distinguishing characteristic of a great mind, is fortitude, which enables its possessor to preserve his purity of soul, amid all temptations, to disdain ease and comfort when purchased at the expense of principle. If the Social leaders, to avoid vexations and inconveniences, are prepared to make a shuttlecock of truth, and be but falsehood's echo, let it be proclaimed from the house-tops, and blazoned on our banners; let those, who will, receive the mark of the beast, that when the time comes, the goats may be placed upon the left hand, and the sheep on the right. It is just possible that Mr. Buchanan is a sincere believer in the bible, as a book *par excellence* divine; it may be that he has a hell and a heaven of his own squaring sufficiently with orthodox notions; he may believe that when our bodies decompose and form part of the jaw-bone of an ass, stop beer barrels, or spring up as cabbages we shall still live, have sensations, feelings, passions, &c., with a full sense, at the same time, of our own identity; he may believe all this and much more, if so, we certainly prove him to be honest, while we adorn his brows with cap and bells, and cease to wonder that, like *Abraham Slender*, he should "sing small like a woman." It will be objected that the writer of this has taken a false view of the subject, if so, he will feel happy to be taught; but surely it will be conceded, that nothing can justify a Social lecturer evading or shrinking from the consequences of truth, while he pretends to teach it without mystery or fear. Let us see how far Mr. Buchanan is open to this charge. Paley, in his *Moral Philosophy*, under the head of "Lies," has the following sensible observation: "I have seldom known any men who deserted truth in trifles that could be hushed in matters of importance; and

as there may be falsehoods which are not lies, so there may be lies without literal or direct falsehood, an opening is always left for this species of prevarication. When the literal and grammatical signification of a sentence is different from the popular and customary meaning, it is the wilful deceit makes the lie, and we wilfully deceive, when our expressions are not true in the sense in which we believe the hearer apprehends them." This simple, yet cogent argument, demolishes the sophistries of those, who insist that they have a right to put their own interpretations upon an oath prescribed by *another*; true, they have a right to do so, just the same right as the weak and fearful ever have to conceal their real thoughts in the presence of the strong and courageous. The poor African is flogged into obedience by his brutal master, who cuts the living flesh from his back, and compels him to speak (no matter what his thoughts) according to his own arbitrary will; the poor negro finds it expedient to act with deception, for deceitfully he does act, the compulsion alters not the nature of the act, which is good or bad, no matter what the motive. The slave does not manifest his conscience because he dare not do so, he is not sufficiently strong. Mr. Buchanan, if a sincere Socialist did not manifest his conscience because he feared to do so, he had not sufficient moral strength, so far the cases are parallel, in both cases deception is practised; but in the former it is pitiable, in the latter flagrant and contemptible for this single reason, that the negro makes no promise of sincerity, he vapours not about liberty and truth, but when a man professes to teach truth without fear of man, he is expected to keep his word. Dwarfs, as dwarfs, may pass by unobserved; but if with daggers of lath they ape the doings of giants, they rouse the sense of the ludicrous, and produce a smile of contempt. Men should not deck themselves in the plume of the eagle, to play the part of the jackdaw. That falsehood does not consist in any particular form of words, but in intention, is evident. Let us suppose a traveller, stopped in his way by a torrent; being ignorant of the *route*, and not knowing how to proceed, should ask a man, on the opposite bank, to shew him a ford; suppose this man to be an interpreter of words after his own fashion, a facetious blade, desirous to show his dexterity in lying like truth, and suppose he immediately reply, that the ford was a mile to the right hand; and if a neighbour should reproach him and say, you have told a falsehood, and sent the traveller in a wrong direction, as the ford is to his left-hand. Ah! but the cunning rogue might reply, I meant my own right hand, not his; so that, though I deceived him and led him astray, I did not violate truth, but simply put my own interpretation upon what I said. Most people will think, in

spite of this ingenious apology, the knave ought to have been well flogged for his acuteness. Nay, we may, as Paley observes, tell lies without uttering a syllable. We read in the ancient mythology, that the place where the arrows of Hercules lay concealed, was known only to his friend and companion Philoctetes, who had sworn never to tell the secret: the gods had declared, that until the arrows of Hercules were brought before the walls of Troy, the Greeks could not be successful against that famous city. Ulysses, the wisest and most eloquent of the Greeks, was sent to obtain these wonderful arrows, he knew that Philoctetes was in possession of the secret, and used all his arts to induce him to betray it; at length his arguments prevailed; but Philoctetes, dreading to perjure himself by telling Ulysses were the arrows were, played the rogue, he would not tell forsooth, O! no, he had too great a regard for his oath to do that, but he stamped upon the spot where the arrows lay concealed, when Ulysses was not slow to take the hint and carry them away; but the gods were not to be overreached in this fashion, and Philoctetes was punished for his perjury.

The real question between those who take the oath, and those who will not, is simply this, are we justified in speaking falsely; when an inconvenience attaches to the promulgation of truth, can Socialists, on the ground of universal expediency, defend a course that is only to be commended because it is safe, and guarantees them for the *present*, at least, from the attacks of their enemies; I take the question on this broad ground, and distinctively say, no, they are not justified in the eye of reason, *unless they are content to occupy a lower position than heretofore*, as it is monstrous, and imbecility itself to prate about honesty and truth (and *nothing but truth*, mark), while we dabble in falsehood upon occasion. We read of Regulus, who voluntarily met a cruel death; with the strongest possible inducements to violate truth, he resisted those inducements, and crowned himself with immortal honour. Partial expediency would have led that great man to equivocate, but he disdained to do so, the moral chain that bound him to what he conceived to be right was strong as adamant, nor did he attempt to explain away nor interpret after his own manner, his pledge given to the Carthaginians. Can we hesitate in deciding, who are the most useful, and at the same time, who will be the most honoured by present and future generations, the Regulator or the Buchani.

With a few more words as to the question of right and expediency, we shall conclude this paper; but will return to the subject if a reply be offered to the arguments here advanced. It is expedient, we are told, to take this oath; but is not such expediency partial in its results, like an unskilful surgeon, who opens many

wounds in attempting to close one. Those Socialists, who cry aloud for any sacrifice of principle so that they may jog merrily on, may, in their hurry, overlook some important particular; in their haste to reap, they may forget to sow, or that the seed time precedes the harvest; but it should be borne in mind, that Socialism is valuable, not merely because it shows the road to wealth, and will enable men to produce and consume more than they have hitherto done; but it promises advantages more solid and lasting in connection with intellect alone. The highest reformers have been those, who have given to sense its proper sphere of operation; by whom immediate enjoyment was sacrificed for future good, and that good not of an individual but universal character. The most prevailing temptation, says a modern author, to depart from the right, in pursuit of the expedient, seems to be the craving after prompt success, not remembering that principle in its moral influence, and eventually in its other influences, loses much more by such partial success, than it possibly can by remaining for a while in its dominion over men's minds, until that dominion is extended enough to assert its power over their actions as a community. For all great triumphs of principle, the world can afford to wait, and it is better that the world should wait. Herein, then, seems to consist the difference between an enlarged and a partial expediency, when the moralist, whose coat of mail is utilitarianism, declares that the utility of an act constitutes its morality, abstract right having nothing to do with political conduct and human affairs, and insists that the life of a public man, to be useful, must be one of compromise, he may be told, *that all right is the expedient, but the expedient is not always right*; this latter expediency is what is here protested against, as leading to the practice of immorality, and striking at the very roots of Social reform. ARISTIDES.

MR. FLEMING'S REPLY.

Charles St., Birmingham,
Tuesday Evening.

MY DEAR SIR,—I intended to call upon you in passing through to Bristol, but find I shall not have time to do so.

The pressure of business prevented me from sending you your letter to Buchanan per Guest, as I intended, with a few observations thereon. I put it in my bag, hoping to have delivered it, and made these remarks in *propria persona*. I must, however, take another opportunity of remitting both; and, meantime, take the opportunity of saying, that it seems to me highly impolitic for one Social missionary to lecture another as to *meanings* of terms, and above all to teach him publicly through the medium of the papers. If thy brother offend thee, reprove him privately, and amend the error, not

show it up to the public to make them rejoice over its detection.

I must, however, write to you fully on the matter when I get to London, and, in the meantime, request you to accept this as a testimony of my esteem and friendship, and a proof that I have not forgotten you.

I am your's truly,

GEO. A. FLEMING.

The above is the only letter upon the subject we can find. Supposing Mr. F. to have kept his promise, it is more than probable his other letter merely contained a fuller explanation of his views upon the *policy* of Mr. S.'s conduct, and not any arguments against the principle involved, which alone could make it valuable.

W. C.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

NO. X.

"And god made two great lights. * * He made the stars also. * * And god created great whales, and every living creature that moveth. * * And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew."—JEW BOOK.

LAST week we gave some authorities in support of our views, promising to give a few remarks upon them in our next.

Before adverting to them, we would direct attention to the extracts given above, from the "Jew Book." The believers in that veracious authority are therein informed that their god made the sun and moon, and the stars also; that is to say, the universe, with the exception of our planet, which was the King David of the rest, we presume—one after his own heart—all in one day, the fourth. Are we not, then, deservedly proud of our pre-eminence, we, the glory of the universe, the gem in the triune diadem? Is it not more pleasant, as well as safe, to believe these things, so flattering to our vanity, than to foolishly bicker and dispute respecting them? Certainly! says the obstinate follower of faith in preference to reason. We leave our readers to answer for themselves.

But to our purpose: the idea of the formation of the world from a condensation of gases, though "new and startling" to the Messrs. Chambers, who show signs, nevertheless, of being "cute" men, is by no means so with us, for we have a vivid recollection of our speculating with an intimate friend upon the same subject, some six or seven years since, and of our imagining water to have been formed by the combustion of oxygen and hydrogen. "But," say these gentlemen (see article of last week), "there is much, it must be owned, to support this hypothesis, startling as it is." Indeed! They are compelled to own it, are they? The cerberus of society must however be approached with a whining tone and smirking face, and the sop of apparent reluctance be thrown to

it, for fear of the consequences. The facts which support Atheism must not yet be given to the world by respectable men, without, at least, some qualifying remarks and doubts, although they are well known to be facts. Sir W. Herschel may give scientific men the results of his investigations, leaving them to draw their own conclusions, but the "cannie" Scotch editors have to make a fortune by leading the untutored mind to the understanding of the abstractions of science, and it will not do for them to point to the evident deductions from certain facts, if those deductions would interfere with the selfish interests of more enlightened and powerful men. No, they cannot afford it! Do but mark, though, how lightly they trip over obstacles to their onward progress to the position occupied for years before, by the despised, insulted, and persecuted Infidel, the moment the way has been prepared and made smooth for them by the indomitable perseverance of this unpopular class, as well as by the progress of science. Once upon the sceptic's rail, and they risk an explosion in their endeavours to run down or overtake all a-head of them. The slight "difficulty" of the formation of two suns revolving round each other, "is easily overcome." To be sure it is! But a "difficulty" affecting orthodoxy, mooted by an Atheist, if as far inferior to this one as Ceres to the sun, would most probably have resulted in the overcoming of the *advancer*, and not of the question, if it was suspected of being a dangerous difficulty. Moreover, they imagine that what has been, for eighteen hundred years or more, parrotted forth as being in almost no time called into existence, perfect and unalterable, may yet be altered or perfected "in time" to come, as shown by their remarks upon the rings of Saturn.

We beg, also, to direct attention to two remarks in M. De la Beche's opinions, which we have printed in italics, wherein that gentleman's views, in relation to design are offensively intruded upon the reader twice in a few lines. In both cases the object sought to be obtained is defeated by the means used, so difficult is it for error to be consistent. He is endeavouring to establish an important philosophical hypothesis, and professes to be led to the adoption of it, "more particularly as it would accord with the unity of design so evident throughout the universe." Why, we would ask, should he, if he be an impartial expounder of the natural phenomena with which he is acquainted, adopt a certain theory, because it harmonises with one man's opinion, while it is opposed to that of another? The evidence of design in the universe is merely an opinion—it is not proved, although Mr. B. speaks of it as being "so evident." Again, if it be "so evident," why adopt an hypothesis, "more particularly as" it accords with it?

If design be "evident," it is *proved*, it is a fact, and all other facts must, per consequence, agree with it, and all hypothesis disagreeing must be as certainly false. Therefore, to say we adopt an hypothesis simply because "it would accord" with a known fact, is equal to saying we prefer building upon truth to falsehood, which is always presumed of every writer, and clearly unnecessary to be stated.

But the thin film with which our philosopher endeavours to hide his Atheism, is speedily broken through by his own awkward attempts at keeping up the delusion believed by so many to be true. For, after talking of the evidence of design being apparent in the *universe*, he refers to the opinion of La Place respecting "*our whole system*," as resulting, "*doubtless, from design.*" Doubtless! indeed! Why, a few lines before, we are told it is *evident* the *universe*—the *WHOLE*—is designed. We had always imagined that what was true of the whole, was true of the parts, and *vice versa*. But here we find an individual stating the *universe* to be evidently designed, but hesitating to speak with equal confidence of a *portion* of that universe, *although it is from that portion alone* that he has obtained the experience which would lead him to form an opinion of the whole!

Here, we think, we may be allowed a little digression, the better to enforce our views upon the matter. By the extracts given above, from the works of men holding high rank in the scientific world, it will be perceived, that not only is the Mosaic cosmogony and also every other that we know of, completely scattered to the winds, but our opinion respecting the originally gaseous state of the globe borne out. This is not sufficient for our purpose. Though we may have driven the nail home, we can yet perhaps clench it. Some few years since, before geology had assumed any thing like a definite shape, the "called of god" insisted upon the literal interpretation of the Mosaic account of the creation, and did not scruple to persecute men for expressing contrary opinions, or for even asserting the earth passed round the sun. Geology has given the death-blow to the system based upon the "Jew Book" fable. Astronomy has lent its aid towards building up a nobler and fairer pile, the foundation of which is the everlasting rock of truth. The Augean stable of religion, fouled and polluted by human blood and misery, will yet be swept with the flood of science.

When geology had *proved* the absurdity of the Mosaic account of the formation of the world in six days of twelve or twenty-four hours each, those interested in the continuance of man's brutality endeavoured to reconcile science with evident folly, by saying that the word which stood for *day* in the Hebrew, would equally mean a thousand, ten thousand, aye, or an *eternity* of years, and that it did not at all prove that Moses

knew nothing of what he was writing about, but that he *accommodated* himself to the capacities of his hearers!

Then again, the naming of the beasts by Adam, and the collecting them for the purpose of preservation by Noah, which has been shown by Dr. P. Smith to have been impracticable, naturally, were all clung to as long as possible, *because* it was *asserted* in the "Jew Book!" They have, in fact, desperately disputed every inch of ground, and now the undermining of their last strong hold *design*, has been completed by Herschel's discoveries. *This* is our opinion.

The same force, power, principle, or forces, powers, or principles, or whatever it may be which, under certain circumstances, would *produce worlds*, may reasonably be imagined to *people* them afterwards with what we call organic forms. Where then is the reason of allowing these men still to assume, that at any rate there is *evidence of design*? We have reason to believe that *matter* in a gaseous state would condense into worlds like our own because its properties would so tend. But the religious world will not so have it, they insist that *matter* is *inert*, and of course incapable of combinations, unless put in motion by the spirit of god, which if true involves them in a pretty dilemma, making their god the author of *all mischief*, and not of all good *alone*, as they passionately assert. To wit, there is more evil in the world than good; god is the cause of ALL conditions, both good and evil; *ergo* he is an evil or *demon-god*. This argument, moreover, is in harmony with the statement in the "Jew Book," which will be conclusive with all *true* believers in its inspiration and infallibility, for it is their expressly said that the Christians god planted in the garden of Eden, in addition to *every thing* "pleasant to the sight and good for food," "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Here then is *prima facie* evidence that evil existed *before* man, and the great "I AM," the author of ALL, *must* have been the author of evil.

W. C.

AUTHENTIC ANECDOTES,

Illustrative of the Wisdom of Christian Religionists.

1. INFIDEL. You tell me I shall go to hell for unbelief, pray sir, would you send me there for it?—Christian. No; I am not aware that I have ever done anything to you to justify your thinking that I would do so, if I had the power.—Infidel. Just so, but you say god will do it, and thus make him worse than yourself.—Christian. It is in the bible, and therefore I believe it.—Infidel. But I am not constituted so as to bear fire and brimstone for ever.—Christian. Yes, but god *will enable you* to bear it.—Infidel. Well that is certainly *very kind* of him, to punish me

in a way I could not bear, and then alter my nature so as to make me bear it.

2. Infidel. You have been talking to me about "divine grace," and the "holy spirit" being a remedy for human depravity, now I candidly confess I don't know what you mean by those words.—Methodist Preacher (with surprise). Indeed, do you really mean what you say.—Infidel. Indeed I do, what is divine grace?—Methodist Preacher. It is the influence of the "holy spirit" upon the heart.—Infidel. Still, I am as backward as ever, what is the holy spirit?—Methodist Preacher. It is "divine grace," as I have told you before.—Infidel. Pooh, pooh, nonsense, I see you have no idea attached to the words you use, the "holy spirit" is "divine grace," and "divine grace" is the "holy spirit," and that's all you know about it; truly you are a valuable instructor of your fellow-men.

3. Infidel. Well Mr. C., you have been to church this afternoon, as usual.—Mr. C. Yes, sir.—Well what was the text?—Mr. C. directed the inquirer to the chapter and verse.—Infidel. How did the minister treat the subject?—Mr. C. What do you say, sir?—Infidel. How did the minister treat the subject.—Mr. C. I dianna ken what you mean.—Infidel. What principles did he elucidate by his remarks upon the text? What inferences did he draw from it? How did he apply it to your case, or to the cases of others?—Mr. C. Deed sir, *I ken naething about it, ye ken I hae na muckle sense.*—Infidel. I see, you have gained something by going to the Scotch church for forty years.

4. A Collier. Sir, I see you are a d——n Infidel, you don't believe in the bible.—Infidel. Well, don't swear about it. What do you think of those passages where god is made to order the destruction of entire nations by the Israelites.—The Collier. Why, sir, I never could read a word in my life.—Infidel. What! and yet you have told me you believe it all.—The Collier. Well, so I do; and what do you make of that?—Infidel. I am, indeed, more surprised that you should say you believe it all, and yet have not read it.—Collier. Why, don't others believe it too?—Infidel. Oh, certainly; and, on the same grounds, though the preachers say that ignorance causes infidelity.

As the charge of ignorance is so frequently brought against the Infidel portion of the community, I trust you will insert the foregoing specimens of Christian intelligence, assuring you that they are literally correct, they are mere samples of a great number that might be brought forward to prove the truth of the orthodox Dr. Watts's statement, "that the greater part of the Christian world can hardly give any reason why they believe the bible to be the word of God, except that they always did believe it, and had been taught so from their infancy;" and yet these are the parties who would glory in burning you and I for being

able to give a reason why we differ from them in opinion. Yours, J. C. F.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

[The several parties who at present conduct this work, though agreeing upon all general principles, differ, as may be expected, upon matters of detail. To prevent misconception, all notes or comments upon disputed points, involved in any communications, will have the initials of the commenting party attached, who alone will be responsible for his views.]

G. A. asks, "Has the point been raised or the opinion of counsel been taken as to the legality of the recorder's interference, as in page 67 of the account of Trial? The defendant was fully at liberty to comment upon anything which had been said by the counsel for the prosecution, either as his own remarks or by way of quotation, and the recorder had no right to prevent defendant arguing upon any point whatever which the counsel had mooted. It was the recorder's duty to assist the accused (he being without counsel) instead of thwarting him on a most important point of his defence, and there seems to be strong ground for appealing to a superior tribunal or to the secretary of state."—No objection has been taken. But an application is intended to be made to Sir James Graham shortly, and any intimations from those who can assist the deputation would be gladly received. Address to the Editor.

"Another suggestion presents itself—Could not the simpleton who purchased the Oracle and made himself witness to that effect, be equally well indicted for having so published it himself? If this sort of retribution could be brought to bear there would soon be an end to all persecutions for blasphemy."—We should say not, and for this reason. During the progress of the quarter sessions at which Mr. Southwell was tried, some parties employed by the Defence Committee purchased copies of Mr. Brindley's *Gazette*, which contained portions of the libel, and applied to the grand jury for warrants against the sellers for publishing blasphemy. After considerable delay, frivolous questioning, and indirect attempts at intimidation, the question was asked of the pious and just judge, whether the publication of a blasphemous libel for the purposes of refutation, could be construed into a blasphemous libel which might be prosecuted? To this the second Daniel replied, certainly not, *when published for the purpose of refutation.* Upon this reply the grand jury refused the warrant, not however before the applicants had been defrauded of 10s. 6d. by the officer's of the court, and subjected to the loss of two day's work. But this is not all we would direct attention to. *The libels were not inserted for the purposes of refutation, but solely to prove that R. Owen was an Atheist, and why, because Mr. Southwell (a Socialist) was one.* Any one may satisfy themselves of the truth of our assertion by reference to the paper spoken of; the quotation is contained in a Letter to Sir Robert Peel, Jan. 1, 1842. There is no doubt upon our minds that the grand jury were convinced of the criminality of the publication equally with the *Oracle*, but the defendants were respectable orthodox booksellers, and, moreover, some of them having the "lamb's mark in their foreheads," or why such evident trepidation and alarm as was evinced, *and why the delay!* We could speculate upon the probabilities of foul play in higher quarters, but we have no notion of restricting our usefulness to gratify holy malice, unless we can cut our opponent's legs for the like treatment of our stocking. We have been informed, since writing the above, that there is an act exculpating witnesses from prosecution under such circumstances. W. C.

"The Principles of Socialism," &c. "by a Social Missionary," in our next.

The Trial complete, stitched in a wrapper, 1s. 2d.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.—Saturday, April 9, 1842.

THE

ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

" FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD ; ITS MONARCH, GOD ; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS ;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 17.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

UTILITY OF UNLIMITED INQUIRY.

THERE are few greater drawbacks to the progress of knowledge than the assumption continually made, that this or that particular subject is unfitted for investigation—it is too full of abstractions, refinements, and subtilties. By this means people are frightened from things of importance to them. *There is no subject that careful thought will not analyse.* Let it be viewed often in all lights by many minds; let the acuteness of free and unrestrained intellect exercise its powers upon it, and whatever it may be, the shells of ignorance and error will soon be broken off and the sound kernel of truth be presented to view. Every thing wildly expected may not be proved in relation to it, but every thing natural to it, and all that the mind can embrace and reason upon will be displayed. Though false assumption may be disappointed, the rational mind will be gratified. The only difference will be, that instead of the subject appearing as it was supposed to be, it will show itself as it really is. These remarks apply in a peculiar manner to metaphysics. People are besought continually to abandon such airy speculations. But such advice proceeds either from the ignorant or mentally lazy. Metaphysics has been defined "an inquiry into the nature of man, the extent of his faculties, his relations to the existences around him, and the bearing of all these on his condition." What science can be more comprehensive or important? Recall to the mind the crimes and oppressions speculative errors have occasioned. It probably is not exceeding likelihood to say that metaphysical errors have produced more suffering, done more to strengthen priestcraft and retard the progress of the human mind than all other mistakes put together. The supposed mysteries and subtilties belonging to the science, were magnified purposely to deter men from investigating in a direction where true knowledge would be so fatal to superstition and credulity. Within the last half-century what advances have been made. How many truths has socialism made plain to the popular mind which before were confined to closets and enshrouded in the mazes of doubt! The floods of free thought have never yet been poured

into the subject. Industry and moral courage in a few years would reveal to broad light the abstrusest branches, and reduce its most subtle truths to axioms. The reveries of the studio would breathe the air of nations, and the speculations of sages would become the guides of the millions.

It is wise to disregard the common sophistry, that the brightest minds of antiquity did this and did that; and if we attempt to finish what they left unaccomplished, like them our labour will be in vain. Speciousness and plausibility must never be permitted to stop the inquirer on his path. The same thing rung in Galileo's ears when he started his new theories of the universe. Columbus was dinned in like manner by the same remarks. Newton was charged with presumption for his investigations—wiseacres assured him how hopeless was his stolid study, were ancient and modern geniuses had sat down in despair. When men show WHY investigation into any branch of inquiry *cannot* proceed farther, from the nature of the subject, a certain good is done—a favor conferred, a labour saved. If it is proved something else would be more useful, under the circumstances, the course to be pursued is clear—but to any thing else, to sophistry, comparisons, doubts, prophecies, threats, listen not, certainly regard not.

With all due deference to Solomon, there are, and will be, many "new things under the sun." At least it is consoling to indulge in the hope, for many of the old ones are insufferably tedious. In the words of Lord Shaftesbury "let but the search go freely on and the right measure of every thing will soon be found."
G. J. H.

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALISM, AND THE POLICY OF THE SOCIALISTS.

BY A SOCIAL MISSIONARY.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

DEAR SIR,—I have been engaged in the public advocacy of socialism from 1837 to the present time, and have paid some attention to the matter. I trust you will be able to find room for a few remarks, on subjects so important to the interests of the human race.

In your pamphlet, entitled the "Spirit of Bonner in the Disciples of Jesus," you say, "when I first became a Socialist, I did not suppose that I was pillowing my head upon down, but that I was set apart to promote the best interests of society, though hell itself should gape." This, sir, was exactly my case, and I think so still, and should consider I failed in the performance of my duty, if I did not carry this conviction into practice. If I mistake not, every missionary of our society thought so *once*, that was, however, before an *unwise* change came over the advocacy of our cause. That it has been "unwise," no one acquainted with the events of the last two years can for a moment doubt. I lay it down as a general principle, admitted by the Socialists, that socialism is a cure for the evils of society. If this be the case, the question then arises, is supernaturalism an evil or not? If it is, let us endeavour to drive it from the world, by declaring unceasing warfare against it, in every shape and form; if it is not an evil, why, in the name of common sense then, let us engraft it upon our system. We cannot *advantageously* occupy a neutral position, and yet one of the principle arguments in favour of our present policy is, that we shall, by so doing, be enabled to draw over to our side the sectarians of the Christian world. This, however, is refuted by the fact, that we have more or less, held out the right hand of friendship to them, throughout our entire career; have offered them every *privilege* they could demand, save the privileges of infringing upon *our* *privileges*, and yet they have continued and are likely to continue the enemies of Social reform. They act perfectly consistent with their doctrines, and this, I am sorry to say, is more than can be said of many of our party. If the doctrines of human depravity and a probationary state of existence be true, why should the believers trouble themselves about reforming the world, seeing that the *earthly* nature and destiny of man renders it a hopeless task? I repeat it, they are perfectly consistent, supposing their doctrines true. If, on the other hand, they are false, as *all Socialists* must believe, why should we leave untouched doctrines which are alike destructive to the happiness of both Infidel and Christian, and if the arguments be sound in reference to the two doctrines I have mentioned, it is equally so with every other doctrine in the large catalogue of theological absurdities. Shall we convince the Christians by refusing to meet them on their own ground? Never; and if we do not convince them of the fallacy of their notions, how are we to enlist them in the cause of co-operative home-colonisation; how are we to withdraw them from the influence of the priest, if we do not make them dissatisfied with their creeds? The thing is im-

possible; and they must still remain as "drag chains" on the wheels of human improvement, destroying their own happiness and that of the unbelieving world also. I maintain then, that self-interest and benevolence, alike demand that we should make no compromise with one of the chief curses of the world, supernaturalism. I do not wish my brother Socialists to run headlong into the jaws of the theological dragon; there is no necessity for this, nor, will there be any fear of it, if the controversy be carried on in a proper spirit; and even though we had to beard the lion in his den, that is no reason why we should shun the contest, for *individual* loss in cases like these, is *general* gain. We may depend upon it, that "the don't hurt the feelings, and respect the prejudices" policy will not be set down to our charity, and our being full of the milk of "human kindness;" it will be set down, as it has been hitherto, as a mark of moral cowardice and want of moral principle. The charges too would be true, for the Socialists, as a body, neither believe in nor appreciate the orthodox creeds; why then should we be parties to keeping up delusions at the rate of £20,000,000 per annum; a sum, which if rationally applied, would, in a few years, banish poverty from the land?

Again, will our present policy cause the Christians to forget and bury in oblivion the contests of the past? No man who has reasoned on the matter, can expect this. Infidel we have been, and Infidel we shall remain in public opinion; and why should we be ashamed of the title, when we know that infidelity, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, has been the forerunner of human progression, in all ages of the world? Let us claim for it the same respect as Christians do for their side of the question, and then our struggle will not be in vain. In the language of the "old book," "we shall reap in due time, if we faint not; let us not be weary in well doing." Whilst socialism is in the least degree connected with the name of Owen, and while his works are considered as expositions of the system, it is idle to expect that we shall ever convince the Christian world that we are not the enemies of supernatural religion. (1) No, they will laugh at us and treat us with contempt for our pains. I would respectfully call the attention of Mr. Owen to this point. It may be said by some, that Mr. Owen does not object to theological discussion, but wishes to carry it on in the way *he* lays down *and no other*, and indeed this is the case to a very great extent. Mr. Owen's plan is this: "Teach truth, and error will fall by its own weight; there is no necessity for dealing with it in any other way whatever." (2) This argument is partly sound and partly fallacious. It is true of those few who are capable of making correct

comparisons, 'deep reflections, and sound deductions; but it is fallacious as applied to the majority of mankind, who have resigned their intellects into the hands of the priesthood, and who dare not reason for fear of going to hell. You must meet these parties on their own ground, or they will not meet you at all; they respond to the sentiment quoted in the report of progress from Cheltenham in last week's *New Moral World* (March 19th), from the Rev. C. Birch, M. A., "not till the verdict has been pronounced against christianity, can socialism, as a system, put forth its claims." I may add, if christianity be all sufficient for the removal of the evils of society, why do we attempt to put something in its place by a *side wind*? And if it is not all-sufficient, why should we not boldly proclaim its errors and imperfections to the world, even though the orthodox do consider that:

To mix faith and sense,
On any pretence,
Is heretic damnable error.

I do not see why we should stifle our convictions and thwart our objects to please their capricious whims, when the happiness of the human race, in *every sense* of the term, is involved in the contest. Depend upon it, that in a utilitarian point of view, it is *always* politic "to say what is true, and do what is right." By doing so we shall gain the respect of those who dissent from our conclusions, and ultimately bring them over to our side of the question. Make a man dissatisfied with his creed, and he forthwith drops the mantle of infallibility. He is only then in a proper state of mind to listen to "the still small voice of truth." The policy I wish the Socialists to adopt is beautifully described in one of the Social hymns:

Free to examine various creeds,
And follow were conviction leads,
Free to embrace within her arms,
The truth in all its native charms.

And not only free to "examine," "follow," and "embrace," but to boldly and unflinchingly advocate it upon the public platform and in the private circle, on all suitable occasions, when it does not interfere with the discharge of the other duties of life. Above all things, let Social Missionaries "teach the truth, the *whole* truth, and nothing but the truth." If they who have been set up as pioneers to a better state of things, if they are not to "speak out," who is to do so? Some parties must break the galling chains of mental and religious despotism, or the world will be for ever enslaved. My paper is full, and your space no doubt exhausted, I therefore, for the present, conclude. Trusting that success will attend your exertions, I remain, yours, in the cause of truth,

J. C. F.

(1). Is not *every religion* based upon supernaturalism? Does not reason end where religion begins?

(2). Mr. Owen has acted upon his plan in most of his *discussions* (?), seldom noticing his opponent's objections, but has unscrupulously rejected it in his writings. Mr. Owen is quite satisfied if he can obtain a large audience, who will listen to *him*, and he gives them unadulterated *Owenism* alone; indifferent to what may be urged against it. This may be very well for Mr. Owen, who has sublimed himself into a belief of the infallibility of his system and of himself as its propounder; but it is a very different matter for the missionaries of *socialism*, who are expected not only to set up their new system, but to knock down the old one, and this is only to be done by coming into collision with the supporters of the latter. The Bristol meeting was a fair sample of the effect of Mr. Owen's plan, where a low blackguard was permitted to grossly insult the members of the Social body (whom Mr. Owen was *assumed* to represent) without opposition or notice. The cause of Social progression in Bristol received more injury upon those three nights, than it will recover for many months. But if the mere exhibition or announcement of truth be sufficient to ensure its adoption, to the rejection of error, *what are we to think of Mr. Owen's own views*? Do all who hear believe—does one in a hundred? No! Are we to take it for granted, then, that they are necessarily *false*? To use a harsh but appropriate phrase, such teaching is a *humbug*, a *cheat*. Mr. Owen did *not* act upon this principle, we presume, when he so unqualifiedly denounced all the religions of the world, and on many other occasions, when it suited his purpose. But times are changed, he has now the purses of the Home Colonisation Company to assist him in his favorite scheme, and their "prejudices *must* be respected." Capitalists will not speculate in human happiness, whilst there is a *chance* of failure. The public must be treated like a sick child, and the medicine which will restore it to health must be secreted in its sweet prejudices and errors, lest it might cry, and kick, and scratch. Although possessed with a deadly hate of corporeal punishments, I have seen wonders worked upon children by a whipped breech, when every available phasis of the forbearance doctrine had hopelessly failed. Just so with the world, it is untoward and wilful, and a smart moral whipping occasionally accelerates the circulation of blood through its brains, which otherwise stagnate and congeal. The opposite of Mr. Owen's present *preaching* produced a powerful body of men, the practice of the precept is likely to destroy it.

W. C.

IS THERE A GOD?

XI.

"We cannot help acknowledging, *what an exertion of benevolence creation was.*"—PALEY.

(Concluded from page 131.)

It has hitherto been the *policy* of the cunning of all nations and times to assert the existence of a cause assumed to regulate the general economy of nature. Let men take a wider view, and say, does not the subjugation of Poland under the iron rod of the Russian tyrant, when the *prayers* of the good of the civilised world were offered up to avert the horrible calamity; when they reflect on the fate of the slave and the humbled Indian; or, nearer home, contemplate Ireland reduced thirty weeks in each year to subsist on food not fit for pigs; on the millions who wander through our own land broken in heart and blighted in hope—and say, could a demon look down from the fair skies with the power to remedy and redress and not stretch forth his arm to save? *Where is HE* who rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? Why is not iniquity washed away, and why do priests remain to oppress, to apologise for crime, and to bolster up corruption? What being is he who can wink at injustice, look without emotion on the affliction of merit, and regard not the agonizing cry of suffering virtue? The time is come when men dare think, when thought has burst priestly barriers, when reason looks out from its long confinement, when despair has at last awakened men from their lethargy and pushes conclusions to all legitimate lengths. Against the delusions of religion and the sophistries of faith nature cries aloud through all her works, and humanity at every bleeding pore: a tongue is put in every wound injustice inflicts, and every feeling of the heart rises up in mutiny. Honesty and poverty look out from the watch-tower of patient hope, deferred till the heart is sick, under a heaven dead as iron, and draws inferences and arrives at conclusions no cajolery can destroy, no ingenuity elude, no power annihilate, no sword kill, no dungeon smother. The considerations drawn from the cold premises of logic which can be urged on other branches of this subject, showing the inconsistencies into which the supporters of the belief in a god must fall, have their due weight in calmer moments, but so few of those are permitted to the mass, in their necessary struggles for existence, that reflections like those above, which can be made in the very hot-bed of strife and suffering, cannot, in our opinion, be too strongly or too frequently urged home upon the attention of men. They have often been advanced as potent speculations by clever thinkers, but have never yet been brought to bear upon the minds of the majority of men.

The objections that god cannot be omnipotent AND benevolent; and that omnipotence *could*, and *benevolence would*, have from all eternity prevented evil, is as old as the days of Epicurus, and it hath been shrewdly added, "and as knotty as it is old." Lord Shaftesbury in this country, in more modern times, powerfully reiterated the objection that the presence of ILL annihilated the attributes and existence of god; but such reflections have been confined to closets and learned disputations, and have never ranged where their influence would be most readily and usefully felt, and work out the mightiest results.

It is contended by some persons that objections not new have little weight, and that this might be passed by because urged before, but it is overlooked that it is new to the many; and if not, if unanswerable, it is free to be advanced for ever till it has performed its work of conversion. But granting it to be as old as argument itself, and as grey with years as priestcraft is black with infamy, what do the objectors gain, seeing that the same may be urged against their own positions, upon the authority of one of their most infallible scribes and debauchees, who has written, that "there is no *new* thing under the sun?" If novelty only is legitimate in argument, reason would often stand still, and if the wisdom of the present generation only is to be our guide, our forefathers have lived in vain and the experience of the past is good for nothing.

Returning to our positions—we have taken infinite goodness and unbounded power, and have demonstrated their non-existence in any being, god or demon, under the circumstances of misery prevalent and unredressed in the world, and consequently the non-existence of god is, as the Scotch say, "*proven.*" But it is not to be supposed that no other objection than the one referred to relative to the age of the argument has ever been advanced. Clerical ingenuity is not so quickly foiled. Theology, the *science*, pre-eminently, of reconciling contradictions, amalgamating absurdities, and smoothing the jagged and rough surface of religious inconsistencies, displays no lack of expertness here. As was hinted at the commencement, impossibilities are no hindrance where common sense is never in requisition. Clerical reasoners, like the antagonist of the angel Gabriel, if lopped through with the sword of argument, by some spiritual jugglery or divine legerdemain, are joined again before a second blow can be dealt at their remainders. The objection to our position is, "that goodness and power only are taken into the case, while infinite wisdom is left out." This wisdom it is said "may dictate and compel the non-exercise of the power to remove evil;" by infinite wisdom should be understood an infinite excuse, an eternal apology for evil, an everlasting cloak of de-

formity. No mortal can conceive any use of infinite wisdom except to direct the exercise of infinite power, under the guidance of infinite goodness, for the promotion of infinite happiness. To human apprehension the wisdom which frustrates the exercise of kindness and justice is a very dubious kind of wisdom indeed.

Suppose a father with the power and will to confer a boon on his children, which justice claimed and humanity demanded, pleading as an excuse, his *superior wisdom* for withholding it. Bedlam would suggest itself to every mind as the proper dwelling for the unfortunate lunatic. "But god's wisdom," we are reminded, "is above ours; it is infinite and consequently above our comprehension." But not more so, certainly, than his goodness and power, and if we are not to reason upon the one why upon the other? And if upon none, why are we called upon to shape our thoughts upon his existence at all? Upon this question it has been strangely argued by Origen Bachelier, that "we may conceive the father of a family with physical power sufficient to murder his family, but the perception of its wickedness would deter the exercise of his physical power." This is offered as an explanation of the difference we have pointed out. But how does it meet the case? It demonstrates only, that god has no power to do evil or to inflict misery, this we contend for. It never touches the case, as indeed reason cannot, in which it must be shown how infinite wisdom can dictate the creation and perpetuation of the crime, suffering, and oppression we see in the world. This does not end the contest, so pertinaciously will some persons, from habit, interest, or obtuseness, or all three together, cling, in the very noon-tide of truth, to absurdity and error. The everlasting apology for injustice—the pretext for every plunder, the mantle thrown over every sin, is raked up from the caverns of darkness, error, and death. We are told all is *intended* for our good, all distinctions between right and wrong are broken down, and the children of misfortune are informed that the grief which beclouds the world, the tyranny which grinds them to the dust, and the rapacity which swallows up their substance,

Are clouds big with mercy, and shall break
With blessings on their head.

On this point we transcribe the eloquent retort of R. Dale Owen. "Must I be told (says he) that we cannot know that evil *is* evil, or that vice and misery are not blessings in disguise? In the name of common sense, what *can* we know, then? Not know it! Not know when the limbs are stretched on the rack that torture is an evil? Not know when the infant is dashed on the stones, or when gentle woman is butchered in cold blood; that the butchery

is a crime? Not know whether malice or jealousy, whether the iron hand of despotism and the brutal passions of ignorance are blessings or curses? Do we not know that the sun-beam is warm and the snow-drift cold? Not more clearly, not more positively, than we see, than we feel, than we know, that vice is no blessing, and misery no good. Theology may say they are; nature speaks louder than theology. The sophists may tread down the distinctions between good and evil, and appeal even from the bar of human perception: our feelings will build up again the great wall of partition, and our hearts deny the right of appeal. Crime *is* evil; to be lamented, to be avoided, to be extirpated, if it can be. Misery *is* evil; to be slunned, to be shaken from us, to be warded off by every possible effort from all our fellow-creatures. But why reason the matter? Will the boldest enthusiast *act* upon his doubts? Will he attempt to spread abroad among his brethren these same disguised blessings? Or, if reason and liberty at last extend their peaceful dominion over the earth, will he indeed sit down in sorrow, and lament that the mysterious sources of good are fast disappearing from among mankind?"

There is one consolation accompanies these reflections, which will serve to soothe those whom the severity of our conclusions may offend. If they will aid the diffusion of knowledge, unshackle the press, practice justice and benevolence, give free scope to man's best energies, evil and pain might soon be banished the world. The arguments urged in this article, though relating to the *existence* of evil without regard to its *permanency*, would be reduced in some measure to a theory and would lose much of that force and solidity which they now contain, from the unfortunate facility of demonstration the state of society affords. When this is attempted in earnest, we shall be prompt to concede, unrequested, the position required, and abandon with alacrity the high and inaccessible ground we have taken.

The aspect under which theologians present the deity to man, as not only *willing* but *deliberately* willing the evil which exists, seems too revolting to be dwelt upon, and excites feelings too painful to be entertained. Such degrading theories we point to as warning beacons, not drag them forward from any pleasure they afford us.

G. J. H.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR,—It is with considerable reluctance that I appear as a writer, feeling convinced I cannot do justice to myself or to the individual in whose behalf I am now about to make a few

remarks. But I feel compelled to attempt the vindication of one whom every honest and intelligent person must admire, seeing that he is debarred the privilege of defending himself, being imprisoned for an asserted crime, which no man can understand or define. It is the duty of every lover of freedom and truth to endeavour, as far as he is able, to put things in right lights before the public. To this end I purpose making a few remarks upon a lecture of Mr. Lloyd Jones's delivered in John Street Institution, upon "What is, and what is not, socialism." In this lecture Mr. J. charged Mr. SOUTHWELL, though he did not mention his name, with making incorrect statements; and which Mr. J. attempted to prove were so, by reading some extracts from the laws of the Society of Rational Religionists. Mr. Jones, however, like every other individual who has to serve a party, read what he thought proper, and drew what inferences he pleased from what he read. I shall endeavour to prove from the same laws, and from the writings of the founder of the society, that the charge of Mr. SOUTHWELL—that the leading men of the society have deserted principle, and have not met, in an honest and courageous manner, the prejudices and opposition which every pioneer in the cause of human progression must expect to meet—is true; in other words, that they have not spoken the "truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man." In the third law of the society it states that the object of the society "is to well educate and advantageously employ all, so as to ensure their health, permanent prosperity, intelligence, and happiness." In the next section it states the means which are to be used to accomplish the object, viz., to create a new public "opinion," and "daily to teach truth unconnected with error." Before, then, the world can be prepared to carry out the objects of our society, we must necessarily raise all its prejudices against us, because we intend to make an entire change; and it is not to be expected that old society will allow us to make that change without great opposition. It is the duty, then, of the members of our society to make a determined stand for the principles they believe to be true, for they can only hope by so doing to overcome the immense power that is arrayed against them. For some time that was done, and proportionable progress made, by preaching sound doctrines, unalloyed with error, as far as possible; but for the last two years I am inclined to think it would be difficult to say which has been supplied most plentifully, truth or error. Have not our missionaries mixed up much error with their teachings, in talking about sacred socialism, practical christianity, and many other adulterations, which had about as much to do with the objects of our society as practical Mohamedanism? But

if there be an insufficiency of facts to carry conviction, from lectures, I would draw attention to that which ought to be the organ of the society, the *New Moral World*, during the editorship of Mr. Fleming. I believe I have read every line in that paper for the last two years, though not without much pain to myself, and I thought, long before Mr. SOUTHWELL spoke of the matter, that it was a disgrace to our society, its character being milk-and-watery, admirably suited to weak stomachs; whilst column after column was sacrificed to the greatest twaddle that ever appeared in print, not excepting the *Evangelical Magazine*, which any one may satisfy themselves of by referring to such articles as the "Exoteric Echoes of the Esoteric Speech;" "Letters to my Pupil Friend;" "Sacred Socialism;" and many others which it is unnecessary to mention. I was repeatedly asked at John Street, what I thought of the papers, did I understand them, and was such "truth without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man?" That these articles were incomprehensible to some of the most enlightened of the society is apparent from the fact of "D." of London, a professional man, requesting, more than once, that a *glossary* should be given. I ask how it was possible to carry out the objects of the society, which is stated to be "to well educate all," &c., "and to remove the causes which produce evil," and all mysteries are evil, when such incomprehensible, foolish writings are prominently put forward in the professed organ of our society?

Mr. Jones denied that the society had deserted its principles, and that the statements made were not correct. Now I think I have shown to every unprejudiced mind, from the laws of the society, that Mr. SOUTHWELL'S statement was correct. But should any one not be convinced, let them look to the principles of the society and attend to the "five fundamental facts"—facts upon which our society rests, and which places it in direct opposition to all the laws, institutions, beliefs, and prejudices of old society, and say, if they can, that Mr. SOUTHWELL is not correct. Our friend Mr. Jones also stated that they had never drawn back at any time, but that they had always met opposition in a courageous and manly manner, and added, that it was not their duty to go out of the way to attack the old prejudices of those who might differ from them. These were strange assertions, and I think Mr. Jones's memory must have failed him when he made them, and that he forgot the principles and objects laid down in the book he was then making quotations from. Surely the gentleman forgot the equivocation and shuffling (no doubt with the best intention) at the time the Bishop of Exeter made such a Quixotic attack upon our society, which, had it been met manfully, would have placed our

party in a far more advanced state, and would have been more consistent and honourable to those who pretend to preach "truth without mystery, mixture of error, or *fear of man*." As Mr. SOUTHWELL observed, "A bishop does not come out every day, and therefore, when they do, we ought to make the most of them." Mr. Jones stated that we were not to go out of our way to run a tilt at and attack the prejudices and errors of old society. If we sincerely believe that the principles of old society are based in error, and that they are productive of all the misery, vice, and crime which is now reigning triumphant in this great pandemonium, then I say, to be consistent, we ought to preach it upon every occasion which may offer, regardless of the opposition which prejudiced individuals would raise, in order to do away with, as rapidly as possible, that which we consider to be the curse of mankind. But it may be said by some, for the want of a better excuse, that if they had not acted in this manner, they should have been, like poor, foolish SOUTHWELL, in prison; such actions may be very well in a lot of mercenary cut-throats, but for men who set themselves up for reformers of the world they are contemptible; and the individual who does not value *principle* and *honour* more than *imprisonment* or *life*, is not fit for a pioneer in the cause of human progression. Suppose all reformers had acted upon this cowardly expediency, where should we have been, think you, at the present time? Not in the position we now hold, and enjoying all the benefits and comforts we now have. And should we be content to do less for our children, and our children's children, than has been done for us? If we should, I blush for my species, and deplore the degeneracy of my race. I have before me Mr. Owen's "Lectures on Marriage," and I shall give an extract, to show what he, at that time, thought of expediency. In page 13, after speaking of all the evils of the old immoral system of the world as at present constituted, he observes, "And that the new moral system is the reverse of it in all these particulars, and so opposite in principle and practice, that it will be for ever utterly impossible to bend or blend the one to conform to the other. The world must have the whole of one or the other. * * In 1818, I proclaimed that ignorance and error, crime and folly, had their source in the different religions of the world. * * I well knew I was opposing all the stronger prejudices of the world, and that when I stated what I did on the subject of religion, I was casting away from me all the popularity which I then possessed, but which I considered then, and I consider it now, not worth one straw, except when expressed in favour of truth. I was then preparing the public mind for the principles I advocated, and it has taken me ever since, a

period of seventeen years, to prepare it sufficiently for the introduction of the subject of the present evening's lecture. We are now fully and fairly before the public, and we must keep our position. I now denounce the priestly marriages of the old world, as I then denounced religions. Do not mistake me, my friends. *Were you to attempt to unite any parts of the two systems, you would be sure to fail.*" How do these sentiments affect the late proceedings of our society. Compare, and answer for yourselves. Again, at page 5, I find the following remarks, which are worthy of his noble mind, and which must always command the respect of all courageous and good men. He says, "Surely none of you can imagine, that I decided upon relinquishing a situation, which was perhaps the most enviable that man could hold under the existing vicious system of the world, bringing me in at the same time many thousands a year, merely that I might instruct my suffering fellow-men in a few theoretical truths, which of themselves could never be applied to useful practice, much less to emancipate the human race from ignorance, sin, and misery? Or that I gave up a situation in which I could effect much practical good, to teach some truths, and refrain from teaching others; to flatter the prejudices of any man, woman, or child, when the latter truths were essential to effect the great good intended, and which could never be attained until all ancient prejudices were removed. Or do any of you imagine that I meet you here to pander to your prejudices upon important subjects in which your permanent happiness is involved? No, my friends. I have made the sacrifice of extensive wealth, of an extraordinary personal consideration among the great and good ones of the earth, as they are now called, that being freed from all such shackles, I might attain the highest elevation, and the most enviable condition to which a human being can aspire; that is, to be at full liberty to speak to the world a new language of truth, unmixed with error, upon subjects of the most vital interest to all human kind, and to send forth these truths, without fear of man, to the great ones of the earth. * * Think you I am to be withheld from this course because a few or many of my readers or hearers are alarmed at new, and to them, astounding truths? * * I tell you now, I am not teaching in the midst of the metropolis of the British empire to please my hearers, flatter their prejudices, and live upon their ignorance. I am purposely come among you to oppose all your oldest, strongest, and most inveterate prejudices; to stir them up from the lowest foundations, and to withdraw them, root and branch, out of your constitutions, or to sacrifice all that man holds dear in the attempt." That is what I call nobleness of character, and so says CHARLES SOUTHWELL. There is much more of the same sort

to be found in the early writings of Mr. Owen, which are very different to what he now writes. But why this dread of a prison? Why this lack of moral courage? There is nothing dishonorable in being put into prison in such a cause, but quite the contrary; the dishonor is with those who put you there, and with those who will allow a talented individual to remain there without making an effort, and that a very great one, to release him. There is no doubt but that it is not a very enviable situation to be in, especially to those who love liberty above all things; but there are many things in this world which are not at all agreeable, but which, in order that a great good may be accomplished, we submit to. And is not philosophy worth a greater struggle than our forefathers made for superstition and error? Shall we be renegades in the noble cause of human improvement? I have not one particle of ill feeling towards any individual living; but I should rejoice much to know that Messrs. Lloyd Jones, G. A. Fleming, and any dozen more of our society, were now keeping company with CHARLES SOUTHWELL; because I feel assured that we would then break the neck of this cursed persecuting tyranny. Nor do I wish any one in a situation that I would not gladly occupy myself, provided I could be of service to the cause of liberty by so doing. A small band of determined resolute men, who possess commanding talents, might soon drive tyranny from the land, and thought and speech would be as free as the air we breathe. This would "shake orthodoxy's rotten bones, and make priests tremble," and until you do away with that hydra-headed monster, that destroyer of the very vitals of freedom, you will never dwell in peace and happiness. We may build communities, but our communities will fail to produce that happiness we anticipate, unless the people are properly educated, and that they can never be while superstition exists in the world; or while belief of any kind exists which is not founded on facts. I shall but touch upon one more topic connected with the laws of our society, the principle of which I think we have deserted, I allude to the 5th section of our laws, which we call "Rational Religion," and you might just as well call it *rational nonsense*, and better, for nonsense is generally of a less dangerous nature than religion. But that which we call religion is no religion at all, but a code of morals; and it is well known that there is as much difference between morality and religion, as there is between light and darkness, or between truth and falsehood, and that where one flourishes most the other is sure to decay, no matter in what country or in what climate. Mr. Owen has justly remarked, in regard to old and new systems of society, "any attempt to amalgamate the two together will prove an entire failure," so it is with morality and religion, they are as

wide apart as the north is from the south. But in law 18 it says, that, "A knowledge of these unerring and unchanging laws of nature, derived from accurate and extended observation of the works of the great creating power of the universe, and the practice of charity for the feelings, convictions, and conduct of all men, consequent upon such knowledge, constitutes the rational religion." Now, I contend that we have deserted principle in not attending to this and the following law; inasmuch as when a member of our society, and that a very valuable one, endeavours to "investigate the laws of nature by accurate and extended observation," and "expresses his opinion of what is generally considered the supreme power of the universe" in a somewhat different way to some of us, we instantly cry out, that he is going *too far*, and that he does not understand the principles of socialism; when we, at the same time, say that one of the principles of socialism is *to teach truth unconnected with error wherever it may be found, and to speak that which appears to the individual to be truth upon all occasions.* A great deal more might be said, but I trust the above is sufficient to prove the truth of Mr. SOUTHWELL'S assertion, and to show that he was acting in perfect harmony with the laws of our society. Yours, in the cause of truth,

R. R.

All children are Atheists; they have no idea of god. Are they then criminal on account of their ignorance?—*Good Sense.*

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT.

W. E., NORTHAMPTON, is informed that it is the anxious desire of the conductors of the *Oracle* to preserve its distinctive character, but the disarrangement consequent upon Mr. SOUTHWELL'S prosecution has prevented its accomplishment. Our correspondent is mistaken if he imagines the *Oracle* was to be a reconciler, a healer of breaches; on the contrary, its nature is antagonistic, and it can only be the *Oracle* of "Jew-Book" notoriety while it remains so; still, mere "party strife" is far wide of its object. Many circumstances in connexion with Mr. S.'s prosecution required notice. Where so properly as in the paper which originated the remarks and conduct? *And where else could it be done?* There were but two alternatives: to take no notice, or to notice it in the *Oracle*. Conscious of the objectionable nature of the latter course, we yet hoped our readers would see the dilemma and share with us the disagreeable. Two of the three articles (Is there a god? and Regular Gradation) have been continued with some few interruptions. "Symbol Worship" will be resumed. We could not *this week* escape the dilemma of offending our correspondent, or of losing the support of numerous body in another quarter.

W. C.

ERRATUM.—On page 123, for "communities" read *anomalies*.

Inquirers are informed that Mr. SOUTHWELL'S *Tris* is now completed, and may be had, stitched in wrapper, for 1s. 2d.

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ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 18.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

STRAY THOUGHTS.

GARLANDED remnants of mysticism, like dull murky clouds, long hover in the horizon of philosophy. The fresh burst of astonishment at the sight of the simple contrivance by which, in mechanism, wonderful operations are performed; the blaze of light the first principles of a science throw upon the mind; the bewilderment, the multitude of men and things, the arts and sciences multiplying and magnifying every day impress the mind with, all teach not only the value and beauty of simplicity but the absolute necessity for it. We feel that not only the Iliad of Homer, but the ponderous tomes of the ancient sages the voluminous wisdom of our forefathers must lie in nutshells in our day. Amplification is an unpardonable crime, while condensation and brevity rank with the cardinal virtues. Formerly, if a father bound his son to a cordwainer or a bricklayer, stipulations were drawn up that the lad should be taught the whole "craft and mystery" of the trade. Now, the very name "craft and mystery" is regarded with suspicion in philosophy, and the great master-craft of religion is, happily, rapidly falling into disrepute.

Though mystery on a larger scale may be loudly denounced, mystery on a small one, a kind of "little go" in the trade of confusion and deception seems to be practised under fashionable auspices. One curious instance of this is found in the dashing use of the editorial "*we*." Editors are a sad body of formidables and he must look to his wits who has the misfortune to bring their ire upon his head. A few words may be ventured upon this subject, and perhaps the temerity will be pardoned.

Who are *we*? Chartists, Socialists, and all abused parties have often asked when false and erroneous statements have been made in the public papers; the maligner has been securely sheltered from the just execration under the gourd of this editorial "*we*." Besides being sometimes a cloak for delinquency, it is a continual and needless source of ambiguity and obscurity.

A person speaking of the acknowledged sentiments of his party may with propriety say, *we* believe this and *we* hold that. Referring to the common faculties of human beings,

a person may say *we* have ears to hear and *we* have eyes wherewith to see, &c. But when an opinion is given forth or a statement made, the *we* should not be used, unless the public are aware who are the parties, and that there are more than one agreeing upon the subject. Every day numerous affirmations are indulged in by each editor, who glibly says, *we* are of this, and that opinion, who does not know certainly, that any other man partakes of his views, and perhaps has never consulted another human being upon the question. To call this by its right name, would be a direct breach of all respectable propriety. A newspaper witticism, at this time current, asks, "who ever saw an editor—nobody—he is impalpable, immaterial—he is not an *i* but a *we*." Thus proving him like some of the theological hobbies, to be without body or parts—the assertion might go farther, and declare an editor to be without a conscience, when he can daily proclaim himself to be *many* while really only *one*. There is a mystery in the use of *we* delightful to little minds; simplicity would dictate the use of *I* when *one* person only is concerned. Editors should not violate that grammatical propriety it is so often their duty to encourage others to practice. According to Moses, god at the creation first fell into the mistake in saying, "let *us* make man," &c. So probably this error, like many others much more mischievous, is after all, of divine origin. A king will talk of *our* majesty, which is neither strange or very harmful unless subjects ape such absurdities. To some minds there is carried a weight and importance in numbers, "*we* are of opinion" sounds like a host on the winds. A few well-timed *we's* have done more, on some occasions, than argument. It may be objected, that if weight is sometimes given to error in this manner, it is sometimes in the same way given to truth. Forgetting that error ought to have nothing additional, and that truth stands best on its own foundation. Men and society are both wrong who do evil that good may come, and think that an indulgence in the most trifling error can subserve the cause of truth. Grammatical propriety, accuracy, simplicity, and truth, are in favour of a more careful use of editorial pronouns than is now fashionable.

This will be called not *multum in parvo*, but

the contrary, saying little in many words, custom will be pleaded as it always is in favour of the practice sought here to be brought into disrepute. Custom has too long sanctioned errors of every kind. A few modern grammarians, Hill of the *Northern Star* to wit, in his truly admirable lessons on the analogy and syntax of the English language, have, among others, pointed out the absurdity of this practice, but few if any have abandoned it. An editor who should use *I* would, perhaps, be called egotistical, but some penalty the world always inflicts on those who will do rightly, or only attempt it. Some will regard it of little consequence what is followed in this particular, and that to be fastidiously right is folly where so many are profitably wrong. That it is not of great apparent consequence is true, but sound philosophy will never regard being right, of little consequence even in the minutest thing. "The child is the father of the man," say the proverb, infantile errors are the parents of mature and grave faults. If we cannot be right in everything it is worth while to be right in all we can, since all human happiness depends on rectitude. "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves;" is it not true of veracity, and might it not be so rendered? Take care of little lies, and it will be easier to avoid great ones. Passing from the moral to the utilitarian side of the subject, Blair has said, he who endeavours to speak (and of course to write) with accuracy, learns at the same time to think with accuracy. The desirability of doing this will not be called in question.

Reader, the *Oracle*, from time to time will enunciate many curious truths, and advocate some very unfashionable and queer opinions, and perhaps, as infallibility is no man's property, some erroneous views; but this guarantee is given, that these will be mistakes of the judgment, not done knowingly, not for the sake of convenience, respectability, popularity, or pence. If original intentions are as successfully carried out as they are earnestly endeavoured to be, the *Oracle* will be less the organ of persons or parties than principles. It will not flatter the few because they are wealthy, no, nor scorn the many because they are poor. When the first volume of these papers is bound up, it ought to have the quaint preface of C. R. Pemberton's "Sixpenny worth of Truth:" "This small book will give great offence to knaves and to their friends, the fools and hypocrites." Little is said from the desire of fame or notoriety. Perhaps no man has so fully analysed all his motives as to declare positively his perfect freedom from these fond and delusive passions, but many efforts are made to remember the injunction of Pen: "Avoid popularity, it has many snares and no real benefits." No pretence is set up of insensibility to the healthful pleasure of

appreciation, but reason is the sole star followed as a guide, and the sole reward *calculated* upon is that arising from conscious integrity, other rewards may result, but they will only be valued in the ratio that they accompany this course. Professing extreme notions upon many subjects, "legion" will be the name of the objections to them. In this self-seeking, gold-worshipping, man-despising world, where only intrigue triumphs, and pliability of conscience succeeds, it looks like arrant presumption and great ignorance of human nature to talk of principle and sincerity; the words sound like libels, or some fresh attempt at deception, or are regarded as the outpourings of inexperience and misguided youth. It may be true that all men cannot be great, but every man can do that without which no eminence was ever attained—he can attempt it. No man ever became virtuous who never tried to be so; and it has been only by repetition of this simple process that any ever succeeded. It may be true, that perfect honesty, perfect adherence to principle, is a chimera, but attempting it is no chimera, but the first and chief element in noble action. Running with the stream is not the way to stop it; so pandering to the vices of society is not the way to cure them. When it was objected to Wesley, that Law, in his "Serious Call," had eulogised absolute perfection, an impossibility, he wisely replied, "he has done well, men cannot aim at too high a mark." Failings should always lean to virtue's side, and as judges are commended for inclining to mercy, so should men err, if they must err, on the side of right. He who looks down from the watch-tower of cold calculation on the few sprinklings of truth in the selfish world below, and sees failure in prospective, will best prove his philanthropy and philosophy by regarding it as a matter of mournful reflection, not food for malicious joy. Ill success in these attempts are sad comments on the virtue of the world and melancholy omens of the progression of humanity. To shake off the myriad cares of life—to examine the foundations of politic philosophy—to evolve expedient rules of action suitable to the iron-hearted customs and cold formalities of the world, and to walk all the days of one's life in the narrow paths of approved prudence, is neither compatible with my means, nor in accordance with my taste. Without anxiety or confusion, a simpler and nobler, if not a safer path may be chosen. That of sincerity and benevolence—taking care that the full measure of justice be filled before the latter virtue is claimed. Credited with truth and kindness, it would scarcely be worth while to ask for more, nor hardly possible to aim at anything higher.

The sense most valued in the *Oracle*, agreeably with the just notion of Swift, will partake less of *fine* and *exalted* sense, than of common

sense, and this must be understood as defined in the portico of the Greek sage, to mean the *common interest*, the wise following of which system Bulwer well styles the most beautiful part of morality. It has long been the office of manliness to discard the fear of men and devils, in all matters of action. It will be one office of the *Oracle* to enable virtue to reject godism in all affairs of just thinking.

It is perhaps necessary to remark, that whatever may appear in these papers, relating to socialism or Socialists will be dictated, as all former articles have been, by the desire to perfect not to asperse; the object ever being to aid in the just development of the noble principles known under that name. If any thing advanced should be ascribed to previous motives, attention is directed to the shrewd aphorism of Hazlitt. "They who wish well to their fellow-creatures are angry at their vices and sore at their mishaps; he who flatters their errors and smiles at their ruin is their worst enemy. But men like the sycophant better than the plain-dealer, because they prefer their passions to their reason, and even to their interest."

G. J. H.

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER X.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

FRIENDS,

WE are told in the "Book of the New Moral World," that "all the mythology of the ancients, and all the religions of the moderns are mere fanciful notions of men." At the Bristol discussion between Robert Owen and John Brindley, held on the 5th, 6th, and 7th of January, 1841, Mr. Owen declared that "the religion of the new moral world is entirely in accordance with the doctrine of the old and new testament."

To those who admit in logic a principle of contradiction, as that a thing can be, and cannot be, or true and false at the same time, the above will appear "hard sayings" of Mr. Owen, which may be easily understood, but I don't know how reconciled. As the lads say in Yorkshire, "one of them I may take in, but both together caps me." Christianity is unquestionably "a religion of the moderns," and as such must be included in the category of "mere fanciful notions of men." But now comes the puzzler, what is to be said or thought about the rational religion of the new moral world which Mr. Owen distinctly stated on the Bristol platform "is entirely in accordance with the doctrine of the old and new testament." By this curious ipse dixit,

it would seem that the "mere fanciful notions of men" will harmonise very well with the new moral world religion. It is a favorite dogma of Mr. Owen, that "one truth will always be found in perfect accordance with every other truth;" a dogma, to make free with Paul, "worthy of all acceptance;" but it may be worth while to inquire how "the mere fanciful notions of Christian or Mosaic doctrines can "accord" with the rational doctrine of the new moral world religion.

I know that some of Mr. Owen's disciples have paralleled the characters of Moses, Jesus, and Owen; but never till the Bristol discussion had I the most distant notion that the doctrines of these worthies were so "entirely in accordance." I protest the singular discovery has almost made me think Pyrrho a sage, and not merely that I know only that I know nothing, but that I don't even know that I know that I know nothing. That the law came by Moses, grace and faith by Jesus, love, charity, and solid pudding by Owen, is a common opinion, or to borrow again from Paul, that Moses planted, Jesus watered, and Owen gave the increase, is an opinion that no Socialist will consider novel, but these opinions are evidently erroneous, quite a mistake, the plain fact being that the doctrine taught by Mr. Owen, the *new* religion of the moral world is at best but the newest dispensation of the *old* Jewish religion, an antique play—not farce—newly revised.

If this be so, we cannot better employ a little space than in the consideration of what the doctrine of the old and new testament really is. You are, no doubt, sensible that doctrinaires are not moralists, I mean not necessarily so—it being one thing to dogmatise about doctrine, and another to teach precept. When Jesus or Matthew said, "Thou shalt do no murder," he gave a preceptive command; when he declared that those who believed not his word should inherit the damnation of hell, he spouted dogmatic doctrine. It is quite proper to speak of the doctrine of god, the doctrine of the devil, the doctrine of heaven's delight, and the doctrine of hell's blazes to keep it company; but no one would think of talking about the doctrine of morals, the doctrine of mathematics, the doctrine of chemistry, or, indeed, the doctrine of anything—things, science, or opinion—that is *knowable*. All men can understand moral precepts, but the gods only make sense of religious doctrine. All doctrine is *mere* dogma; as for example, the doctrine that "all men are to be salted with fire, and no sacrifice to be salted without salt" is purely dogmatic, just as much so as "god made heaven and earth," "those who believe shall be saved, and those who disbelieve shall be damned." These fire and fury doctrinal denunciations of the meek and lowly Jesus strangely contrasts with the

equally sensible moral precept, "that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn unto him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

I shall confine myself at present to the doctrine of the new testament, and see if we can find in it a doctrine *fit* to be in accordance with the "religion of the new moral world." The new testament doctrine was taught by Jesus, surnamed Christ, Paul the "chief of sinners," and twelve inspired catchers of fish. The authority of the "twelve" is just as divine as that of Jesus or Paul. This all must admit who have read "the Acts of the Apostles," where "it is written," that on the day of Pentecost the twelve were *very* inspired, and no wonder, after "a mighty rushing wind from heaven filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." With the holy ghost in them, and the cloven tongue of fire upon them, it cannot be surprising that they should have spoken in every tongue known under heaven, so as to be understood by "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus, Asia," &c. &c. &c. If the apostles of socialism could talk thus, we should soon stud the country, nay the world, with rational communities; but, alas, your best leaders are nothing to the twelve, having neither the gift of tongues, the holy ghost, nor the power to work one solitary miracle. No, no, had you that power Mr. Owen's last prophecy would be fulfilled, and *this winter* the great change would be accomplished. Though it is not unlikely that if your most able missionaries had superadded to their natural abilities the unnatural powers of the *flat catchers*, they would, with the unbelieving, share the fate of the apostles, who, after speaking in so marvellous a manner, had the mortification of being thought tipsy, for some of the standers by "said mocking, *These men are full of new wine,*" which broad insinuation much irritated Peter, who manfully declared that his friends were not drunken as *they* supposed, seeing it was but the third hour of the day; meaning, that it was quite out of all character to suppose they would get muggy so early. I have been thus precise in giving an account of the only authorities upon which we can rely for Christian doctrine, in order that your party in particular, and readers in general, may understand, or at all events catch a glimpse of the age which gave birth to doctrine "entirely in accordance with the new religion in the new world." I have a notion, which, set forth in anything but genteel language, is simply this, that Mr. Owen and his disciples will find this new

move no-go, that sense and nonsense will not make a good compound, that neither a partial pursuit of truth, nor a partial preaching of political honesty will enable him, with a million at his back, radically to reform society; that any attempt by you as a party to conciliate the not to be conciliated; to ward off, by truckling and cowardly evasions, the danger you ought to be prepared to meet, grapple with, and overthrow, is the most contemptible and miserable of all expediences; and finally, that this is not the proper season to attempt a palming off of "mere fanciful notions of men," as the doctrine to teach children or men of the new moral world. Perish *such* a new moral world, and let the old immoral world remain or chaos come again, rather than suffer that most odious of all cajoleries, a rational system of society with folly as its corner stone. Mr. Owen may treat these my honest convictions in his usual off-hand and bombastic strain, but I tell you, the heavens and the earth must pass away, ere these truths shall pass away. Remember the words of Lord Bacon, a wiser man I fancy than any this age can boast, "a unity pieced up by direct admission of contrarities in the fundamental points of it, is like the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image, which were made of iron and clay, they may cleave together, but would never incorporate."

I do not see, for my own part, what Socialists have to do with doctrine. There are no doctrines in philosophy. It would be absurd to talk about the doctrine of politics, just as absurd as to prate about the doctrine of morals. There is no doctrine in science of any kind, and all that has ever yet been taught is "mind's figment," intellectual dross, a mere filthy excrescence hanging about the body of truth. 'The lord help us from deliramenta doctrinæ, cry the priests; the lord help us from all kinds of doctrine, say I, for all doctrines when taught as truths are delusions, and those who teach them have heads too light to be wise or too heavy and thick to be honest. Jesus objected to the Pharisees, that they taught for doctrines of god the commandments of men, and Jesus doubtless was quite right. He seemed to know tolerably well what sort of men Jew priests were, and we know very well the genius of Christian priests, who are not a whit behind the Pharisees in teaching for doctrines of god the commandments of men. But what, I ask again, have Socialists to do with doctrines or doctrine expounders, with religion or with priests? Nothing. As men of expediency, they may have, but not as men of principle. Archbishop Laud hoped to live to see the day when no Jack gentleman in England would dare to stand uncovered in the presence of a parish priest. The worthy archbishop made a slight miscalculation, but who knows what

glorious days *doctrinaries* may yet see, who knows what a rational religion may bring forth, especially if you should be lucky enough to get a Praise-god-barebones for "Social Father" by virtue of your newly adopted Jesuit government. The general of the Jesuits was supposed to be a man without passions; but a social father without passions would hardly do. Indeed, with or without passions, a social father will be found a social nuisance. Faugh, the nonsense stinks of popery; but doctrine begets nonsense, and nonsense begets doctrine, they beget each other as surely as the sun breeds magots in a dead dog, being, as Hamlet says, a *god kissing carrion*.

The French have a saying—

On commence par être coquin,
On fini par être fou.

Literally—

Men commence by being rogues,
They end by being fools.

Now I do not say that Mr. Owen, or those who have urged him on to stultify men's intellects by a "modern antique" religion, "in accordance with the doctrine of the old and new testaments," commenced with downright roguery, but this I do say, that if they continue their doctrinaire tricks, they will end with downright folly. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean—not one.

Your well wisher, C. S.

IS THERE A GOD?

XII.

"The worshippers of a god find, above all, in the order of the universe, an invincible proof of the existence of an intelligent and wise being, who governs it. But this order is nothing but a series of movements necessarily produced by causes or circumstances, which are sometimes favourable, and sometimes hurtful to us; we approve of some, and complain of others."—*Good Sense*.

In a former paper we quoted from "*The Difficulties of Infidelity*," a book written by the Rev. Mr. Faber, with the laudable intention of proving that those usually denominated INFIDELS, are the most credulous of men. Firm believers in incredibilities that shock the rationalities of Christians; their faithfulness to folly is to him matter of surprise and wonder, that in short, "infidelity is encumbered by more and greater difficulties than christianity; to adopt the Infidel system evinces more credulity than to adopt the Christian system."

This reverend gentleman has pleased me much, by the performance of at least three indisputably good acts. Destroying deism, abusing atheism, and the last good act, is not the least, furnishing some very good, if not the very best, arguments in its support. The Deist he lashes most unmercifully. As a lion dandleth a kid, so he mauleth Deists. He does not call Atheists brutes, but he denounces atheism as BRUTISH, which is within an ace of the same thing. "Infidelity (says he) when

not degraded into absolute brutish atheism, specially claims to itself the appellation of deism," so that all Infidels, according to the reverend gentleman, not brutes are Deists, the Atheists being the brutes of the Infidel party—This is rather uncourteous if not un-Christian, but Atheists are outlaws, and have need to act upon the principle of the comfortable man, who when he lost his tooth, blessed his stars it was not an eye, having an arm shot away, thanked god it was not his head. Comfortable Atheists will be well pleased with only being called brutes, seeing that the reverend gent., might have used a fouler term. Besides this reverend abuser, in running a tilt at deism, has given such a shock to the belief in a god that no sensible man can be out of temper with him. I cannot accuse him of any intention of doing the "brutes" service, but this very intense hatred of atheism, which he has taken so much pains to display, gives great force to the reasonings by which he has unwittingly supported it. I shall now proceed to quote this batch of Infidel difficulties, and turn those weapons against this ingenious reverend, that he so dexterously wielded in opposition to the Deists. In page 24, he says, "The argument, from the evident design impressed upon the universe, proves indeed, that the universe must have been first designed and then created; but it is incapable of proving, that the universe had no more than a single designer. Whether we suppose one designer or many designers, and thence one creator or many creators, the phenomenon of evident design in the creation will be equally accounted for, and beyond this, the argument in question, as managed upon deistical principles, neither does nor can reach. The Deist, I allow, can prove very satisfactorily, and without the aid of revelation, that the universe, marked as it is in all its parts by evident design, must have been itself designed, and, therefore, created; but he never did, and he never can prove, without the aid of revelation, that the universe was designed by a SINGLE designer. He rejects, however, the aid of revelation; therefore, on his own principles, he cannot prove so much as the very dogma from which he borrows his name." Here then we have a plain simple refutation of deism, but the reverend gent., has proved too much, at least more I imagine than he intended to do. I agree that if it could be shown, which it cannot, that the universe was created, and that there is evident design impressed upon it, it is impossible to prove that the universe had no more than a single designer, that is without the aid of revelation. It will appear then from this reverend gent.'s admission, that to prove design is not sufficient, for as he very well argues, a man may see, or think he sees, evident design impressed upon the universe, without knowing whether it was designed by one or many, a

single god or a plurality of gods. To get satisfaction upon that point, he must go to revelation, for without a revelation to teach him better, without *that* as a guide, he has no more reason to believe in one god than a thousand.

This view of the subject is highly important, and I *do* feel deeply grateful to the reverend Mr. Faber, for calling attention to it, in so full and forcible a manner. I am not yet rendered so *brutish* by atheism as to be insensible of the great good he has done the cause, by the bold avowal of important truths, but especially the atheistical truth, that no man, be he Deist or Christian, can without the aid of revelation, prove the existence of a SINGLE god. What then the Atheist has to do is, first, to disturb the foundations upon which the idea of a revelation is built, and having overturned *that*, to show in the second place, that there is NOT *evident design impressed upon the universe*, that it carries upon it, no evidence, no marks, no signs save those of immutability and eternity.

Here it will be necessary to say something more about the *a priori* argument, as it is technically called, which was but lightly touched upon in a former paper. The *a priori* argument is the argument drawn from revelation, from the will of god said to have been revealed to man. The *a priori* reasoners point to what they call the revealed will of a god to prove a god's existence, which manner of treating the question is quite convincing to those who never had doubts, but useless to any body else. It is plain that such a mode of conducting the argument though it may be fashionable, is *very* foolish, for it assumes every thing, and proves nothing.

The revelation must be proved a revelation by reason, or all that has been, or may be written, in favour of a god, by those who *beg the question* of revelation, is only so much wasted ink and paper. But here the believer will be startled by a new difficulty—a difficulty that the stoutest theologians will find it hard to break through, and that difficulty is *their own admission*: that reason is not competent to judge of revelation; nay, that to prove revelation by reason, supposing it possible, would be to destroy it. The Christian writer, Soame Jenyns, dwells with much emphasis upon this point, insisting that reason cannot be a judge of what is or is not revelation, but that, if it could, the revelation would cease to be a revelation.

This posture of the question is truly alarming; enough to shake believers out of their shoes, or turn them inside out. What they can say either for themselves or revelation I am at a loss to know. They are fruitful in expedients, but this formidable position of their own fortifying seems beyond the reach of shot, even from the greatest guns in theology. I

was once accused of saying, that for "twenty thousand pounds, I would tell twenty thousand lies," a pound a lie; but were I offered twenty millions for the job, I do not think I *could* tell lies enough to refute this truth, that to prove revelation by reason is to destroy it. So that the argument thrown into syllogistic form stands thus: revelation proves the existence of a god, but reason has nothing whatever to do with revelation; *ergo*, the existence of a god is proved by revelation, and *not by reason*. Or, reason cannot judge of or determine the existence of a god, but the existence of a god is shown by revelation; *ergo*, the existence of a god is demonstrated by revelation, *not by reason*.

Some writers talk about all science and truth being in harmony with a *right interpretation of revelation*. Archbishop Whately, Coombe, and others, have hazarded the assertion, but the world never yet saw a philosophic archbishop, and as to Coombe and writers of his school, they are useful in unsettling old notions, but they give no new ones of any value. Coombes' "Constitution of Man" abounds in glaring errors. It is in that work he quotes and supports Whately's opinion, that all science must be in harmony with a right interpretation of revelation. But this is an error, for a *revelation* admits not a right or wrong *interpretation*; it is its own interpreter. To talk about revealing the revealed is nonsense, just as nonsensical as to tell a man almost blinded by the strong rays of a noonday sun, that you would reveal to him that luminary. To interpret a revelation is neither more nor less than to explain what is already known, for it is certain that cannot be a revelation, which is not seen. The theologian indignantly demands of the Atheist how he dare dispute the revealed will of god; in his passion, quite overlooking the fact, that what he calls the revealed will of a god, is not seen by the Atheist. *Show* the will to the most stubborn Atheist and he *must* believe, for the will of a god includes the idea of a god. But theologians are strange fish, with a way of reasoning peculiarly their own. They know that a god exists, because revelation says so; and know there is a revelation, because god says so. Arguing in a circle they arrive, by this round-about style of reasoning, at the very point from whence they started. In the same *convincing* manner they prove that the world was created. They ask who created the world, without first showing that the world had been created. That troublesome *fact* must of course be received upon their ipse dixit. Once admit a revelation, and all other proofs of a god's existence are superfluous. In such a case all discussions about design or no design would be idle and useless, not worth a good pinch of snuff. On the other hand, if we put revelation out of the question, and can by

sound reasoning show that there are clear evidences of design in the universe, still we must agree with the Rev. Mr. Faber, "that a universe thus characterized, was created by one supreme god, is not at all clear upon the principles of deistical infidelity." It is only "the gross folly of atheism" that will dare to maintain there is not *one* or more gods, that there is not a moderator or moderators of all things, and that there is no sort of reason to believe that the universe was originally *brought into being*, or now *subsists* through any *extrinsic instrumentality*.

The Rev. Mr. Faber, like the rest of his cloth, contents himself with *asserting* that there are evident marks of design impressed upon the universe, but he offers no shadow of proof. He contents himself with *asserting* that the Bible is a revelation from god, but takes no pains to demonstrate it. No, he asserts against the *Deists*, that granting as they do evident marks of design in the universe, yet *that* affects not the question, whether the universe was designed by *one* or *more* gods, a *single* deity, or *plurality* of deities. It appears then, according to the admission of the orthodox themselves, that the existence of one god alone, can only be placed beyond doubt by revelation. Design in the universe rendering it probable, merely, that a *single* designer exists, but the "gross folly of atheism" upsets both "*evident design*," and the equally *evident revelation*. The Atheist denies that the universe was designed, he denies that any gods have revealed their will to men, he denies not only the unity of the godhead on the one hand, or a plurality of godheads on the other, but the very existence of any such being or beings; he denies in short all that has been affirmed by the theologians, as a gross imposition upon the credulity of mankind—the idle rant of disordered intellects.

C. S.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XI.

"Had the exsiccation been progressive, such as we may suppose to have been produced by evaporating heat, how came it to stop at the point at which we see it? *Why did it not stop sooner! Why at all!* The mandate of the deity will account for this: nothing else will."—PALEY, *N. T.*

HEIGHO! what wretched stuff we are expected to wade through, because it is a legacy of the wisdom of our ancestors. A man who denies the evidence of design in the universe, and yet admits that he has not read Paley, will, doubtless, for some time yet, be considered an ignorant fellow, to be pitied or despised. Pitied, if not able to defend his position; and despised, if the contrary. Still, however, this is my condition. Some time since I began to read it, but the first few lines were sufficient to show me the absurdity of expecting convic-

tion from a work founded upon such premises. While bringing home "Natural Theology," a few days ago, I amused myself with reading the arguments under the head "Astronomy," and am induced, in consequence of my recent articles in support of the "Theory of R. G." being illustrated by facts from the same science, to give a few moments' attention to the celebrated archdeacon. It will be remembered, that in addition to strengthening my hypothesis by the quotations given, I contended against allowing the designers to talk of evidences of design in the universe with such facts in existence, and here we find the behemoth of the party hamstrung by the same weapon. We refer the admirers of the clever archdeacon to Herschel and De la Beche for a solution of the query, "Why it did not stop sooner? why at all?" I fancy that something else besides "the *mandate* of the deity will account for this." The following is a specimen of the manner in which these gentlemen dispose of questions of this sort, taken from the same work, "First then, attraction, *for anything we know about it*, was originally indifferent to all laws of variation depending upon change of distance, *i. e.*, just as susceptible of one law as of another. It *might* have been the same at all distances. It *might* have increased as the distance increased. Or, it *might* have diminished with the increase of the distance, yet in ten thousand different proportions from the present. It *might* have followed no stated law at all." I wonder this reverend supporter of folly did not go a little further, and finish what he had begun, and have added, "Or, it *might* not have existed at all." This would have made it complete, and should be added in future editions; I hope, however, to the *Oracle* will be given the credit of the suggestion. Again; we are told that "The planetary system required that the law of attraction should be a law which gave an orbit returning into itself. Now, out of an infinite number of laws, admissible and inadmissible, out of a vast variety even of admissible laws, *there are few*, except the actual law, which could do this. *Here, then, is choice.*" How conclusive! What, if one of the "few" rejected ones had been chosen, would the archdeacon have been equally able to determine *that* to have been the result of "choice" too? Could not the great designer have made a special "law" for the purpose, which would have been stronger evidence than any we now have of his power? Or was he *compelled* to operate in a certain manner, from a lack of ability to do otherwise? If so, would not the result to us have been the same whether he interfered or not? It would so seem, "it must be owned," as the Messrs. Chambers would say. "Liars should have good memories," says the proverb, and so should the supporters of lies. A few pages in advance of the above quotation, in which it

is admitted that there are "laws" in existence to which the planetary motions are referable, we are told, "Bodies starting from the same place, with whatever difference of direction or velocity they set off, could not have been found at these different distances from the centre, still retaining their nearly circular orbits. *They must have been CARRIED to their proper distances, before they were projected.*" The following authority is also quoted by Paley in support of the position: "If we suppose the matter of the system to be accumulated in the centre by its gravity, *no mechanical principles, with the assistance of this power of gravity, could separate the vast mass into such parts as the sun and planets; and, after carrying them to their different distances, project them in their several directions, preserving still the equality of action and reaction, or the state of the centre of gravity of the system.* Such an exquisite structure of things could only arise from the contrivance and powerful influences of an intelligent, free, and most potent agent. The same powers, therefore, which at present govern the material universe, and conduct its various motions, are *very different* from those which were necessary to have produced it from nothing, or to have disposed it in the admirable form in which it now proceeds."—*Maclaurin's Account of Newton's Phil.* Paley asserts, "that they must have been carried to their proper distances before they were projected," thereby admitting that, when at "their proper distances," they might have been sent spinning round the sun, as we find them; whilst Maclaurin denies that it could have been done even then. He also says, that the powers or laws, "which at present govern the universe," "are *very different* from those which were necessary to have produced it from *nothing*," although Paley tells us god made a "choice," accepting one and rejecting the rest. There are some other passages in the same portion of the work to which we may refer at a future period.

W. C.

PRAYING.—An old lady once prayed to the lord thus, "Oh lord, thou knowest what it is I want, I want *four hundred a year, paid quarterly in advance.*" If such prayers were answered favourably we should probably commence praying *ourselves*, and advise others to do the same.*—At a methodist meeting in Northamptonshire a new convert was called upon to pray, which he did to the following effect, "Oh lord, do thou have mercy on my sister *Sal, who sits three seats from the bottom of the chapel, with a pink ribbon in her bonnet.*" He, no doubt, thought that the lord would have so many to attend to, that it was necessary to

* We should like to get paid in *advance* lest the bank should break.

point out Sal's "pink ribbon," to prevent her being overlooked.

THE TWO CIRCLES.—The round of nations, says Gibbon, is barbarism, valour, greatness, discord, decline. The round of religion may be taken thus: ignorance, credulity, fanaticism, cruelty, demonism.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT.

A YOUNG SOCIALIST, ARMLEY, complains that Mr. SOUTHWELL indulges in personalities, and charges him with inconsistency upon the following grounds:—1st. In attacking Mr. Owen and Mr. Fleming. 2nd. For the same conduct in reference to the disciples of Mr. Owen. 3rd. For objecting to the principles of the society (as well as I can gather it) without bringing forward something better. Now there is clearly no "inconsistency" in one man's attacking another. A charge of this kind must depend upon something independent of the mere attack. The illustrations are equally false with the assertions, to wit, that Mr. SOUTHWELL's only charge against Mr. Fleming, was his (Mr. F.'s) not inserting the report of Mr. S.'s farewell lecture at Lambeth. If Mr. S. has not given any other reasons in the *Oracle*, it is not because he has none. There are very few of the Social missionaries, I believe, from my own experience, who have not grounds; and just ones too, of complaint, and of whose feelings and principles the *New Moral World* was anything but the representative. That paper *never* was the open honest advocate of truth; but has always pandered more or less to party and policy. The charge of "trimming and time-serving" upon Mr. Owen by Mr. SOUTHWELL, does not convey my opinion upon the matter, which could only be represented by somewhat harsher terms. Mr. Owen's late writings are no index of his former principles; and, in fact, many who have the greatest confidence in his ability to carry out his scheme, loudly complain of the *New Moral World* since his editorship. If Mr. O. declares all the religions of the world to be based in error, and that their utter destruction only can make the world happy, how could he *lend* himself to attack Mr. S. and his atheistical views—and be consistent? What a farce it is for Owenites to deny the worship of Mr. Owen, by a large majority of the body. Why, some have even said, that if they were convinced of the truth of a proposition, and Mr. Owen denied it, they would immediately relinquish it. It is not meant that they kneel to him, and pray to him as they would to "goramity." Mr. SOUTHWELL may not be capable of building up a science of morals (which I neither deny nor admit), and yet be competent to discover Mr. Owen's inability. A man may be convinced of the bad fitting of a shoe or coat, and yet be unable to alter either. "A Young Socialist" is greatly mistaken to suppose that every professed Atheist, acting like Mr. S., would soon destroy atheism; reason and history are opposed to such an opinion; the contrary would inevitably be the result. Mr. SOUTHWELL never has opposed *socialism*, but only the cheat recently introduced by Mr. Owen, with that title. I am myself happy at all times to defend what I conceive to be the principles, though I have great contempt for the present policy. I am sorry to feel the necessity for adding, that the foregoing remarks are not made with ill-feeling—in sorrow, not in anger. I would advise our young friend to read much, think much, and write much, if he wish to qualify himself for a disputant upon, or defender of, socialism. His own remarks were totally inadmissible.

W. C.

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POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER XI.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

[Through an error in the numbering of the MSS the letter of last week was inserted out of its place, it should have succeeded this one.]

FRIENDS,

"STRIKE, but hear," said Themistocles to the enraged Eurybiades. Abuse, but read, I say to "An admirer, *not* disciple of Mr. Owen's," my rather irritated correspondent. Upon reading his wordy ill-tempered "remonstrance" I involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh gentle son, upon the heat and flame of thy distemper sprinkle cool patience."

This testy specimen of rational admiration is "indignant" that I should "fight shy of the true question," and "sheltering myself behind the rampart of vague generalities valorously say a great deal and prove very little."

Now, by all the honour in my keeping, I don't know what this admiring non-disciple would have. He lectures me for dealing in generalities, but he has not condescended to set a better example, by applying himself to particulars. He talks about my "shirking the true question," which puzzles me exceedingly, for there are a legion of true questions which concern the politics of your party. If my angry friend can lump such matters, and strangle a multitude of errors at one grasp, he is lucky, luckier than what I am. One question at the time suits me. One down and the other come on, as the school-boys say.

It is amazing what numberless inducements there are for *any considerate* man to hold his tongue, and check his pen. If he use the latter and write truly, his ignominy will live in black and white. An honest tongue is inevitably a stirrer up of strife. A dozen plain sensible truths will conjure up as many enemies. It matters not whether the truths concern public or private interests; affairs civil, religious, political, or military, the truth-teller is the scapegoat. "Were any one to propose," says the author of *Welt und Zeit*, "that the sword-knots of the militia should be

changed from gold to silver, knaves and fools would raise the cry of treason, and declare the state to be in danger."

Therefore it is that the tempest of indignation, which seems ready to burst over my head, does neither surprise nor alarm me. Let it come when it will come, for though it may drench it will hardly drown. It would be cowardly in those who sow the storm to dread reaping the whirlwind, and friends or foes may rest assured that the virulent abuse of such writers as "An admirer, not disciple," will not divert or turn me from the course of honor and duty.

My answer to the petulant complaints of this admiring non-disciple, is, that I write what occurs to me as necessary to be written, without regard to individual or party pride and intolerance. My courage is not cooled by the wet blanket of profitable prudence. This may be a private misfortune, but it is hoped a public good. Reformers of the careful school are renowned for nothing except tact in "hitting popular prejudice between wind and water." They will speak truth and do much good, if it be but a safe spec. That it is more prudent to trust one's self to a wild horse, *sans* bit or bridle, than to an unchecked tongue, is an adage, old as the Hartz mountains. Belonging myself to the new school of imprudent politicians, the wise adage is cast away upon me. "It is dangerous," says *Hotspur*, "to take a cold, to sleep, to drink, but I tell you, my lord fool, that *out of the nettle danger, we pluck the flower safety.*"

Doctrine or no doctrine is now the question, to which I will stick much closer than Mr. Owen's admirer may perhaps think useful. Have you, as a party, doctrine of an ykind? Is the social system a doctrinal or philosophic system? Has it any one principle in common with the religions of old society? These are subordinate queries involving the grand question: *the point*. Are you a party of religionists or a party of moralists; professors of faith and numberless creeds, or lovers of philosophy? I have supposed ye men and women of sense, and should heartily grieve to find you Christians, I should most heartily grieve to see your society degenerate into a mere filthy nest for the unclean birds of supernaturalism; who,

With lusty knocks,
Would fight their way to the money box.

I should feel indignation as well as sorrow to see so noble a party dwindle into a mere sect, and take rank among the shaking, ranting, cursing, praying lunatics, who infest the nation and disgrace human nature.

Mr. Owen affirms that your religion is a religion of charity. I respectfully deny that—I deny that charity has anything to do with religion. Mr. Owen affirms that the religion of the new moral world is precisely the same as the religion taught by Christ. I deny that also. I deny that in a new moral world any religion that has been, or is now, taught would be received. I go further, and declare my solemn conviction, that in a really moral world no kind or form of religion would find entrance. In short, I deny all Mr. Owen's novel affirmations upon this subject—as shallow as they are mischievous. Lest an "Admirer not disciple" should again complain that I "shelter myself in generalities," pains must be taken to get at *particulars*.

You will please to bear in mind Mr. Owen's Bristol declaration, to which allusion was made in my last letter, that the Christian doctrine was entirely in accordance with the doctrines of the new rational religion. If your party forget it the world will not, and for my part I cannot. As he protested, not five minutes after making a declaration so notable, that he "would never utter a falsehood in that or any other assembly," I am bound to believe that he really meant what he said. At least I am bound to *try*, for more I cannot pledge myself to do. I will try and believe that he literally and honestly meant, without a "mental reservation," or Jesuitry of any kind, that, "the religion of the new moral world, is entirely in accordance with the old and new testament."

To remove even the suspicion of garbling or mis-quoting, I beg to say, that all the extracts will be *verbatim* from those works, and those works only, which have been printed by Mr. Owen's friends. I should scorn to take advantage either of unguarded expressions made in the heat of debate, or reports wilfully mangled by opponents. In these matters we should, if possible, be like Cæsar's wife, not only pure, but above suspicion.

The report of the public discussion in Bristol, from which the above extracts are taken, was published by the Home Colonisation Society, and may be received as rather more favorable than otherwise to Mr. Owen. At all events it may be taken for granted, that no material inaccuracies escaped their vigilance.

A copy of that "report" reached me when in Birmingham, and so staggered was I at its contents, that had it proceeded from the Brindley party, I should at once have thrown it aside as a gross imposition; a religious lie to

turn an honest penny. But, published by the Home Colonisation Society, stared me full in the face, and the "damning fact" could no longer be doubted. The fact, that during that fatal debate Mr. Owen had periled his cause and his honour, to the great grief of friends, and triumph most signal of his enemies. He periled his cause not merely by the admission of what is not true, but by a gratuitous statement of what is absolutely false. This is said with regret, but advisedly. The terms may appear harsh, but they only convey the truth, and that but faintly. What could be more explicitly and absolutely false than the following: "I have never in my life written or spoken anything against the Christian religion or against the bible." He continued, "I state this to you distinctly, as a fact." But how does that agree with the assertion made during the American debate with the Rev. Mr. Campbell? That, "the mythologies of the Pagans, the mysteries of the Jews, Christians, and Mohamendans, and all the sacred and theological writings of Pagans, Hindoos, Christians, and Jews, were of no value, nay instead of real value, they were the greatest evils existing among men, for they deranged or destroyed all the superior faculties and feelings of the human race, and made man as he is at this day, more irrational than any animal of the brute creation." What think ye, ladies and gent.'s, of these hots and colds from the same mouth? For myself, not being skilled in dovetailing contradictions, I shall not attempt the hopeless task of recognizing principle and integrity with both speeches. Perhaps the "genuine disciples of the system," will come to the rescue of Mr. Owen's reputation, and show how he could, as an honest and sensible man, say, at the London Tavern, in 1817, that "all the religions of the world are founded upon falsehood;" in America, that "all the sacred and theological writings of Pagans, Hindoos, Christians, and Jews, were of no value," that, "they have deranged or destroyed all the superior faculties and feelings of the human race, and made man as he is at this day, more irrational than any animal of the brute creation;" and in Bristol, say, that he had never in his life "written or spoken anything against the Christian religion or against the bible." How most passionate admirers or disciples can show that any man could make such extraordinary speeches, without changing or abandoning his principles, is to me a secret, a great mystery. Like the wisdom of god, it passeth my understanding. Such mutually devouring declarations may be compared with the renowned Kilkenny cats, that swallowed each other, without leaving so much as an inch of tail. Admirable without measure, they are for politicians who "turn go on, go on, and turn again." Excellent good for a new order of Jesuits, genuine disciples of a social Loyola. If thus the best champion of human

rights, plays fast and loose with truth, why virtue is indeed "an empty name." The noise about charity, love, peace, and earthly millenniums high sounding babble; for none of these can originate in chicanery and artifice. I know that Mr. Owen was most shamefully treated at the Bristol discussion. I know he was surrounded by a most hellish crew, who would willingly have butchered him upon the spot, sacrificed him to their immoral gods. But he had no business there, without first preparing for the worst. Besides, it is certain that the violence and confusion arose, *in great part*, from his own deficiency of moral strength. It was the lame attempts at evasion; the shifting and dodging from pillar to post, that drew on him such a storm of ridicule, contempt, and indignation. Had anything so radically and essential false, been extorted from his fears, let slip, or drawn from him by his artful opponent, in the hurry of speech, he has had abundant opportunity to vindicate himself. But no such vindication has appeared, no attempt has been made to reconcile such flagrant contradictions, or excuse what I make free to call so gross a departure from principle. If such conduct in public men is winked at, and suffered to pass without expression of honest indignation, I can only declare my conviction that Sisyphean will be your work of reform; endless as useless all attempts to regenerate the world.

All this is lamentable, but of course proves nothing for or against the extrinsic or intrinsic value of Christian doctrine, which is in fact the point now to be settled. Mr. Owen has thought proper to pledge your party to the profession of Christian doctrine. He has rashly, and I think falsely, declared that the doctrine of the "new moral world," is in perfect harmony with the doctrine of the old and new testament. To prove that Christian doctrine is totally irreconcilable with just ideas of human nature, will go far to convince all sober minded people that it would find nothing "harmonious" in a "new moral world." I cannot conclude this letter without expressing a hope that my angry correspondent will see that my statements, however unpleasant to some parties are not mere "vague generalities," but *very particular*; and further, that as an admirer of Mr. Owen's, he will strive to imitate his temper and moderation. Displays of passion are displays of weakness, which men commonly indulge in, as Demosthenes teacheth, for the same reason that the lame get on horseback. Your well wisher,

C. S.

IS THERE A GOD?

XIII.

"DEFINE your terms," was the sage advice of Locke. Theologians have not been slow to take it. Their definition of god, devil,

heavenly host, and hellish rabble, are amusing as instructive. God they define as "a circle whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere." A definition, if not satisfactory, at least as good as any other; that is, of course, but one of the definitions, which are as plentiful as patches in my grandmother's quilt. A satisfactory definition of the devil I have not met with. In general terms he is said to be the opposite of god in everything, serpentine in form and nature. Theologians say that "god is a great god, and a great king, above all gods," which, it must be confessed, savours of polytheism: but they ought to know, it is their trade. So I suppose we may safely conclude that the devil is a great devil, and a great king, above all devils. Jehovah being the king of heaven, and satan the king of hell. No man has seen this god at any time, only a piece of him, at any rate; but many descriptions have been given of the devil by persons who seem, according to their own account, intimately acquainted with him; and, if report says true, are in all respects fit to keep him company. The whole affair has been burlesqued by poets; but theologians are not to be burlesqued out of their gods, devils, and livings: in such a cause they willingly suffer martyrdom. Angels have been defined as "divine forces, sublime emanations, the transient flashing brightness of the divinity;" but so refined and particular a definition of angelic natures is clearly superfluous. The "Jew Book" gives a full, and it would be dangerous to say untrue, account of ærial messengers, alias angels, from which we gather, that a handsome man, with a tolerably large pair of wings on, is not unlike the angels who, though "sons of god, went in unto the daughters of men," had their feet washed, and did eat and drink with more than the appetites of ploughmen. The creatures in common parlance called imps, seem to bear precisely the same relation to the devil, that the angels do to god. In a figurative sense, all mischievous people, as Atheists, for example, are called imps of the devil; while, in the same sense, all godly messengers partake of the angelic character, as the Bishop of Exeter, for instance.

These definitional reflections have been suggested by a letter from a correspondent, who, according to his own account, has discovered "the grand secret," finding no difficulty in conceiving that "all this mass of matter, of which all the suns, moons, stars, planets, &c., are composed, together with all the animated and intelligent forms that may exist upon these planets, or in space, *once were combined in one large body, or vast globe of matter, with the Great, First, Intelligent, and Designing Cause!*"

This quotation is *verbatim*, so the reader will please not to credit me with a single word; no, not even the italics; words, italics, capi-

tals, all the "alls" belong to —. What a capacious mind must that man have who could frame such a sentence, only to be exceeded in bigness by his who can understand it. Lest there might be a mistake, — winds up with "This is my notion of god," and certainly, lumping idea with expression, it is one of the funniest that even crazy supernaturalism has yet offered to the notice of a discerning public.

— Might have enjoyed the contemplation of so bulky and truly extraordinary a god for the full term of his natural life, without my notice; but as he declares he "should like" to see this answered in *The Oracle*, he may be gratified by the admission, that what he urges is unanswerable. At all events, I cannot undertake to answer such sublime conceptions, so far above the reach either of sense or reason.

At a public discussion of the question, "Ought there to be law against blasphemy," held some time, in the Social Institution, John Street, Dr. Sharman followed a speaker of the — school. "But," said the doctor, very sagely, "I shall not attempt to answer the previous speaker's arguments, for this plain reason, he had none." Nor can I attempt to find sense in —'s notions about masses of matter, "together with all the animated and intelligent forms, once combined in one large body or vast globe of matter, with the great," &c., &c., cause, for the plain reason that *there is none*. When — condescends, or has the ability to make himself intelligible, I will endeavour to give an intelligible answer. Trying one's skill by shooting at targets in the dark, would be rational sport, compared with searching for meaning in so singularly novel a conception.

Another conceit of —'s, almost as inexplicable as the foregoing is, however, more worthy of notice. After manfully asserting that "there can be as many just and true arguments adduced in support of the existence of a god, or a first, great, intelligent, and designing cause, as I can bring forward in favour of Atheism, he follows up the blow by noting, that "if we take the *appearance of design* into consideration, and the adaptation of means to ends, certainly there is a great deal to support the belief of a god, or a first, great, intelligent, and designing cause." Then, as a finisher, he remarks, that "if we refer to phrenology, how can be shown more apparent design than in the various organs of the human head, adapted as they appear to be to all the various circumstances of life. Does not the organ of amativeness appear to be given to man for sexual enjoyments and for perpetuating his species? Does not the organ of philoprogenitiveness appear to be given to man to cause him to love and look after his offspring," and so on to the end of the paragraph, which includes a decent

notice of all the prime bumps and lumps in the human cranium; — not seeming to have the most distant idea, that phrenology has no more to do with the question of *design*, than his *assertion* with the *proof* of a god. The science, or pretended science of phrenology, may be very useful; but it would be difficult to discover what it has to do with design. The brain, acting as a whole or in part, as one piece, thirty-six, or seventy-two pieces, has nothing whatever to do with the existence of a personal intelligence, who both *willed* that the brain should think, and so *made* or *constructed* it that it might think. It is proper to say, we cannot love, hate, or exhibit any species of mental faculty without brains; but it is ridiculous to assert that brains were *pre-ordained* or *designed* to exhibit such phenomena; men think through the instrumentality of brains, they walk through the instrumentality of legs, they see through the instrumentality of eyes. The eyes, legs, and brains are organs or instruments, which perform the several functions of thinking, walking, and seeing. Instead of saying that eyes are made to see, legs to walk, and brains to exhibit all the mental faculties, which is a mere begging of the whole question in dispute; we should say men see *because* they have eyes, they walk *because* they have legs, they think *because* they have brains. Grass grows, but can any one be so senseless as to affirm that *therefore* it was *designed* to grow; the beaver builds its house, but surely it is not thereby proved that beavers were *designed* to build houses. The action of the animal, insect, fish, or grass, is a necessary consequence of its individual and peculiar organism, its position and rank in the scale of being. The impudent absurdity of designers in assuming the very point in dispute, and their parading the assumption as proof, is certainly without parallel in the history of intellectual chicanery.

— An architect constructs a magnificent palace in harmony with the idea or type which previously, for want of better language, may be said to have existed in his own brain. Here there is clear evidence of design. The architect conceived and realised that conception, he said to himself it shall be so and so, and it was, but by what kind of analogy is the universe assimilated to a magnificent palace? By what intuitive or acquired reasonings do designers know that an intellectual being, before the existence of any thing, conceived and realised the conception of that everything called universe? Does the fact that men raise palaces out of *existing materials* in any wise prove that an inconceivable being absolutely created the world, "all things visible and invisible," from *nonentity*, making, as it has been facetiously observed, the world out of nothing, and men and women of the same material?

The idea is absurd. It is neither justified by the general analogies of things, the distinctive tendencies of human organism, nor the teachings of experience. We not wonder then that theologians should labour to bring mens' faith to books, for books only can clear up believers' difficulties. A revelation is necessary and indispensable to those who would believe firmly in *one* god, and few now are prepared to receive *more than one*. It has been properly said, that a Deist who professes to derive his belief in a god from the light of nature, should incline to the old doctrine of *two independent* principles, which bids fairest for the truth, inasmuch as it solves with the greatest show of plausibility that enigmatical contrariety which on every side presents itself.

It should not be forgotten that — objects to my dictum, that all those who grant the eternity of matter are necessarily Atheists. "Like yourself," he observes, "I believe in the eternity of matter, yet I can conceive a first, great, intelligent, designing cause, though matter be eternal." If he can, I can't. How there can be a first, &c., or god, when we allow not *any thing before matter*, it would beggar the liveliest *imagination* to conceive, saying nothing about *judgment*. If we admit a first, the eternal must be that first, for it would be but an abuse of speech to talk about eternity with something before it. The eternity of matter precludes the idea of the creation of matter, which is at least a tacit acknowledgment that matter is self-existent. Self-existent matter is the grand dogma of materialism, whence Atheism results as a matter of course.

— Says he understands by first cause, a cause prior to all the suns, moons, stars, planets, &c., that are in the universe; a cause prior to all the animals and intelligent forms that may exist upon those planets and in space. After reading this rhodomontade, it is probable the reader will know as little about the first cause or god of —, as he did before. Really this gentleman must be filled with the "love-spirit," or he could never have perpetrated such barbarous jargon. If he have friends, it is seriously hoped they will look to him, and get some experienced phrenologists to feel his cranium, with a view to judge of what is going on within. There are many phrenologists who have fallen in my way, that seemed to have so incessantly examined other men's heads, that they had seriously damaged their own; and judging from conceptions of deity, I am inclined to think that the organs are not healthy, active, and that the balance of power is anything but perfect. Such wild trash is unworthy of a serious refutation; for, in truth, it carries its own refutation along with it. Upon such nonsense argument is thrown away, as it invests with an appearance of importance that which, if allowed to tell its own strange,

eventful history, or its ridiculous features set in the broadest and clearest light—would be formidable only to the cause it is intended to advance.

Gibbon seems to have been of my opinion as to the mode of dealing with incompetent or unworthy adversaries, for in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," when treating of the "idle tales of the poets," and "incoherent traditions of antiquity" set forth by them as divine truths, he observes: "Against such unworthy adversaries, Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate, as well as more efficacious weapon." I put in no claim for a large share of either reason or eloquence, but were it without the compass of my ability, and I could command all the reason and eloquence of a Cicero, I would not employ them when the satire of a Lucian would be more adequate, as well as more efficacious. I am always delighted to receive advice, reproof, or even honest and enlightened correction, but really those who like to undertake to write upon these subjects should think first, and not expect to be understood by others, unless they first understand themselves.

C. S.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XII.

"That there is a power or energy *in nature*, by which new species are brought into being, appears clear, but the nature of that power is as yet unknown to man."—*Freethinkers' Information*.

A FEW weeks since I *created* the world, and having looked upon it, consider it good. Nevertheless, being so far at least a Socialist, I do not imagine myself deserving of praise; for the materials of which it is composed, were in existence before, "I AM," and, of course, before I was, and will remain after I shall be. I have here restricted the meaning of the word *created*, not using it as theologians do, to imply producing something out of nothing. Well then, having created the world, though in a somewhat longer period than is said to have been occupied by "the unknown god" of the "Jew Book," and having, as may be expected, rested more than once in my labour, I would bless it, but am doubtful if it would result in any good, so long as I pertinaciously retain my present opinions. Besides, it would be inconsistent in an Atheist, whilst he denied the existence of other gods, to deify himself, and would not fail to produce a chuckle from the orthodox knaves, for the fools would not see it. This will be called by believers, a truly Infidel way of treating a subject, viz: to call all who are opposed to me fools and knaves, without giving proof. They quite forget that there are

hundreds of thousands of works of all sorts, and facts out of number, in existence, incontrovertibly proving the truth of the assertion, and that it is as easy of demonstration as a problem in Euclid.

I shall leave my efforts to be judged of by their results, and apply myself to my next job—the furnishing the earth with animate and inanimate forms. The sea after its kind, the air after its kind, and the land after its kind—a pure labour of love.

I cannot proceed directly to the development of the subject, however, without first noticing some objections brought against it by Mr. Lyel, the geologist; this is the more necessary, from the circumstance of my speaking in my first article of the assistance I expected to derive from geology in support of the Theory. I am indebted to the *Freethinkers' Information* for the extracts, not being able to procure Lyel in time for this number. They say, "Mr. Lyel, in opposition to the older geologists, who teach the progressive development of life from simple types of organisation, co-existent with the older strata, to completer development at a later period of the newest formations—contends that the fossils of the oldest rocks present as complex and complete an organised structure as any of the latest period, and that therefore the doctrine of a gradual development of species, from the simple to the complex, must be false. He says (*Principles of Geology*, vol. 1)—'numerous scales of fish have been found by Dr. Fleming in quarries of the old red sandstone, at Clashbinnie, in Perthshire, where I have myself collected them; and I have two entire skeletons of fish from the same formation in Forfarshire.' These beds are decidedly older than the coal and mountain limestone of Fifeshire, which entirely destroys the theory of the precedence of the simplest forms of animals. Scales also of a tortoise, nearly allied to *trionyx*, occur abundantly in the bituminary schists of Caithness, and in the same formation in the Orkneys of Scotland. Professor Sedgwick and Mr. Murchison confidently pronounce these schists to be of the age of the old red sandstone, so that we have here an example of a fossil reptile in rocks referred to the oldest part of the carboniferous series. The only negative fact, therefore, remaining in support of the imperfect development of the higher order of animals in remote ages, is the absence of birds and mammalia. The former are generally wanting in deposits of all ages, even where the highest order of animals occur. Land mammifera could not, as was before suggested, be looked for in strata formed in an ocean interspersed with isles, such as we may suppose to have existed in the northern hemisphere, when the carboniferous rocks were formed. As all are agreed that the ancient strata in question were sub-aqueous,

and for the most part submarine, from what data, we may ask, do naturalists infer the non-existence, or even the rarity, of warm-blooded quadrupeds in the earlier ages? Have they dredged the bottom of the existing ocean throughout an area co-extensive with that occupied by the carboniferous rocks? * * * The casualties must be rare indeed whereby land quadrupeds are swept by rivers and torrents into the open sea; and still rarer the contingency of such a floating body not being devoured by sharks or other predacious fish, such as were those of which we find the teeth preserved in some of the carboniferous strata. But if the carcasses should escape, and should happen to sink where sediment was in the act of accumulating, and if the numerous causes of subsequent disintegration should not efface all traces of the body included for countless ages in solid rock, is it not contrary to all calculation of CHANCES that we should hit upon the exact spot—that mere point in the bed of an ancient ocean where the precious relic was entombed? Can we expect for a moment, when we have only succeeded, amid several thousand fragments of corals and shells, in finding a few bones of *aquatic* and *amphibious animals*, that we should meet with a single skeleton of an inhabitant of the land? * * * The organic contents of the secondary strata in general consists of coral and marine shells; of the latter the European strata (from the inferior oolite to the chalk inclusive) have yielded above one thousand species. Vertebrated animals are very abundant, but they are almost entirely confined to fish and reptiles. But some remains of cetacea have been met with in the oolite series of England; and it is well established that in the same series the bones of two species of warm-blooded quadrupeds of extinct genera, allied to the opossum, have been found. The occurrence of an individual of the higher classes of mammalia, whether marine or terrestrial, in those ancient strata, is as fatal to the theory of successive development as if several hundreds had been found.' He goes on to say, page 229, in speaking of the tertiary strata:—'When we examine the tertiary group, we find in the eocene, or older strata of that class, the remains of a great number of the highest or mammiferous class, all of extinct species, and in the miocene beds, or those of the newer tertiary epoch other forms, for the most part of lost species, and almost entirely distinct from the eocene tribes. Another change is again perceived when we investigate the fossils of later or pliocene periods. But in this succession we cannot detect any signs of a progressive development of organisation, or any indication that the eocene found was less perfect than the miocene, or this, than what will be designated in the fourth book the newer pliocene.' The latest discoveries of geology

bear out Mr. Lyel in his position, for evidence of organic life is manifest in the igneous rocks. Professor Ehrenberg, by means of the microscope, has detected the minute skeletons of animalculæ in the igneous rocks of which granite is the principal; and as these skeletons are of a siliceous material, and therefore capable of resisting the action of powerful heat, it is supposed (and with good reason, inasmuch as these rocks have every appearance of being sedimentary, or stratified rocks, altered to their present state by great internal heat) that the heat under which this change of structure took place might be sufficient to destroy all evidences of organic life, with the exception of these minute infusoria. This theory is supported by Lyel, Dr. Mantell, and the most eminent of our living geologists; hence granite and other unstratified rocks have been called metamorphic rocks, signifying changed by heat from a stratified to an unstratified structure. By this theory we carry back the existence of life before the formation of the granites, which were once thought the foundations of the world, an extent of time of which imagination can scarcely conceive the limits."

What does all this prove against the Theory of Regular Gradation? Nothing, absolutely nothing! It is just as probable now as it was before Mr. Lyel ventured to attack it. Mr. Lyel seems to think that it is necessary to show a continuous, *uninterrupted* chain of progression, from the lowest strata to the tertiary. And that the existence of equally complicated organisms, in two strata of different ages is sufficient to destroy the hypothesis of a regular gradation. This is an error, as far as it might be considered to militate against my views.

In No. 9, page 78, I endeavoured to give, though in a very condensed form, my opinion of the circumstances which produced, or from which resulted organic form in the first instance. From that number, if I succeeded in conveying my ideas, it will be seen that Mr. Lyel is far wide of the mark, and that it is for him to show that in no stratum, or even at the present day, can be traced a chain of organisation, beginning with apparently very simple and ending in complex. For it is this only which can entirely set the question at rest, and which I hope few of my readers are so ignorant as not to know is impossible, and not to be accomplished so long as the facts forming the science of comparative anatomy exist. I want no more than the connections between present actual existences to warrant the opinion I have ventured. What if geologists were to find animals more complicated than man in granite, would that necessarily prove that the animal so found did not form one link in a progressive chain? No! Unless it could be indisputably proved that there were no other forms of matter in connection

with it, bearing in the remotest degree any analogy to it. The contrary of this we well know to be the fact, as respects complex organisms in the strata hitherto explored, for there are always others of a more simple structure in the same stratum.

My opinion, shortly summed up, is, not that there should be a regular gradation from imperfect to perfect formation, from stratum to stratum, but that the gradation from imperfect to perfect might exist in *each* stratum, entirely independent of every other. In fact, that it does not require that this progress should have taken place in regular order through all the changes, or from change to change, from the very first to the present moment; but that it does require that a highly complex organisation should have been preceded by a simple or less complex organisation. It matters not whether such progress occurs in one change or in one hundred.

Professor Ehrenberg's discovery, though it might prove the existence of exceedingly minute, and, at the same time, highly organised forms in the unstratified rocks, does not prove the non-existence of less complex forms, which the microscope has not yet discovered, and perhaps never will.

Dr. Maculloch supposes the coal deposit to have been at least six hundred thousand years in formation, a hundred times longer than the "Jew Book" would lead its admirers to believe the world to have been in existence. "Millions of years (says the *Free-thinkers' Information*) are inadequate to grasp the series of formation, for when we take into consideration that the sea shoals but an inch in a century, we may form an idea of the immense time necessary to deposit the various strata." Again, "Millions upon millions of years does this glance of the subject plunge us back into bygone epochs, revealing in the starry heavens, as well as in the earth below, evidences of continuous change—of the birth and death of worlds, and systems of worlds, as well as of animal and vegetable life." If geology will support these hypotheses, I think there is little room for cavil at mine, on the ground of the *time* it would consume. Because for six thousand years no perceptible change has taken place in the organisations of the animals now upon the earth, it does not follow that in sixty thousand years or in six hundred thousand years no change will occur. But many and great changes have taken place under certain circumstances, and that is sufficient for my purpose; for the possibility of change once being admitted, who will presume to say where it *must* end, and point to its utmost limits? How very ingenious is the argument of the talented professor Lyel: "Is it not contrary (he says) to all calculation of chances, that we should hit upon the exact spot—that mere point in the bed of an ancient ocean where the

precious relic [a mammifer] was entombed?" Very so, I should say, especially if we take into consideration the smallness of the proportion of mammiferous animals to all others, as laid down by the same gentleman. For without denying the possibility of mammalia having existed contemporaneously with the older strata, which if proved, as I have before said, would not affect my position, I think Mr. L.'s own argument bears somewhat against it. He says, "Now, the mammalia, whether terrestrial or aquatic, bear so small a proportion to other classes of animals, forming less perhaps than one thousandth part of the whole, that if the longevity of species in the different orders were equal, a vast period must elapse before it would come to the turn of this conspicuous class to lose one of its number. If one species only of the whole animal kingdom died out in forty years, no more than one mammifer might disappear in forty thousand years in a region of the dimensions of Europe.—*Lyel's Principles of Geology*, vol. iii., 1840. The dodo is an instance of the extinction of species in the history of man." Perhaps Mr. Lyel, before he leaves the scene of his speculations, may be the happy discoverer, provided he "hit upon the exact spot," if not of a mare, at least of a *mare's nest!* W. C.

THE WATCH ARGUMENT.

A DESIGN PROVES a designer, a watch proves a watch-fashioner (not maker, for the various materials, until fashioned as a watch, bespeak not the purpose for which they were designed). The pre-existence of the material, without the design, is therefore equally good evidence that the watch-fashioner did *not* make the material. So of the universe: if this were framed out of material previously *undesigned*, it proves the pre-existence of the crude material, and consequent *non-existence*, up to that time, of any designer. There is no process of reasoning by which we can arrive at the *maker* of anything: the most that we can get at is a fashioner of that which was previously existing; and if we understood the fashioning of worlds as well as we do the fashioning of watches, we might then perhaps be justified in pretending to talk seriously about world-fashioners—not *makers*, be it again observed. But even then, unfortunately for theologian logic, by the time that we began to understand anything like so much about world-fashioning as we do about watch-fashioning, we should begin to know pretty nearly as much as their fancied world-maker *itself*, or, changing it into a *male personation*, we should only look upon him as, at best, no more than the great head of the worshipful company of world-fashioners! The theologian argument might serve to gratify the vanity of a Sam Slick; but it carries with it no very great compliment to the supposed deity. Worlds and world-makers become per-

fectly common-place at this rate. A dungeon proves a deity, forsooth; and so the deity-worshippers go about and cast into the dungeon those who, denying such a conclusion from such or the like premises, are in *true* Christian charity thus made to feel *in the body*, that evidence which their persecutors are unable to bring home to the *mind*. But christianity and persecution! what hear we? Choice *designs* these indeed to be found co-operating in right good-fellowship together! Will the expounders of deity and designs say that these twain sprung from one and the same designer? Or, admitting the designer of christianity to be a being incapable of designing persecution, will they take much honour to themselves in admitting that this latter design springs from *human* hearts whose blackness of malignity is only equalled by their hypocrisy and selfishness? Will they take upon themselves to assert or deny that it was part and parcel of the design of their great designer, that in the year 1842 one Charles Southwell should cause them to be exceedingly sore, by his writings touching a certain "Jew Book;" and that, setting over him a judge and a *Jewry*—whose minds never having compassed a hundredth part of the things *his* mind had compassed, were as little adapted to pronounce judgment upon the virtues or the vices of his philosophy as would the veriest chopstick be to fix the standard of architectural excellence for a palace—they procure him to be found guilty of that which belongs to the days and the *intellects* when witchcraft was an *understood* and punishable offence? And now that they have accomplished thus much, and have got their measure of punishment and mulcture of property awarded, and the beatific *design* so far carried out, are they quite, quite at ease? does the flattering unction sink deep within their Christian souls, that another part of the great *design* remains, not yet to be unfolded, and the judgment set aside, and the verdict declared void, and the captive set at large, and benevolence have accorded to her serene dominion that empire which dark bigotry now usurps? In short, are they quite assured that the judge (who *ought* to have been of counsel for the accused) was quite *infallible*? Again we say, *nous verrons*. G. A.

JOHN FIELD was indicted, April 18, for publishing an impious libel, but as no evidence was offered on behalf of the prosecution, he was acquitted. The libel was the same as that for which SOUTHWELL was prosecuted at the last sessions. Mr. Smith, who was for the defence, said it was right that it should be publicly understood that the prosecution was not proceeded with in consequence of the end having been obtained by the former proceeding, *the publication of the work having ceased*.—*Bristol Mercury*.

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THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 20.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

**PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALISM, AND
THE POLICY OF THE SOCIALISTS.**

By a Social Missionary.

NO. II.

DEAR SIR,—I will, with your permission, make a few additional remarks to those inserted in No. 17 of the *Oracle* on the above subjects. "Man's character is formed for him and not by him"—therefore, all the religions of the world are false, is the sum and substance of the moral philosophy of R. Owen. As far as religion is concerned, Mr. Owen thinks nothing more is necessary than making this statement, and yet he must know that a majority of the Christian world admit the fact, but utterly *deny* the conclusion. Calvinism, for instance, is based on the formation of character; the grand difference between Calvin and Owen is, that the former believes in *supernatural* causes; the latter only in *natural* and humanly created ones, and seeks to remove those resulting from man's ignorance for the purpose of establishing more rational ones in their place. Thus it will be seen that some other mode is necessary to convince Calvinists that their religion is false; indeed, in one way or other, *all* religions are formed on the doctrine of *necessity*. Original sin itself is necessity under another name. How then can the "five facts" refute all religions; how refute election or reprobation? Why, some will say, by showing that it is an unjust doctrine. But what care religionists for justice in this world or the next? If they cared anything about "justice," and knew what the word meant, they would have long ere this abandoned the doctrine of an eternal hell. Again, how can the "five facts" refute the trinitarian atonement, or prove that the bible is not true in its general statements and principles. Experience has proved, that to be successful, we must refute error and teach truth also, if we wish to succeed in emancipating the mind and delivering the world from the evils of superstition. Mental and moral improvement is necessary for the enjoyment of the community state of society, and a greater foe to improvement than superstition does not exist, therefore let it be opposed in every possible way. One of the principal arguments urged against theological

discussion is, that Infidels have not, generally speaking, supported the Socialists in their efforts to ameliorate the condition of man by co-operative home colonization; this I grant is in a great measure true; but general principles of action will not be abandoned by any rational mind because of individual failings. It should be borne in mind, that if Infidels have not fought with us, they at least have not fought against us, and that is more than can be said of superstitionists, who have done their utmost, both by law and gospel, to put us down. With them we have had furious opposition, but with the Infidel portion of society it is simply a want of confidence in our "practical measures," and this time will cure if "communities succeed," of which I have not the least doubt. Besides, the characters of Infidels have been formed on the old principle of pulling down; building up a new system formed no part of their projects. At one period in the history of our society, "practical measures" were almost lost sight of behind Infidel lectures, discussions, &c., &c. I disapproved of that as much as I do *now* of neglecting to oppose supernaturalism. If infidelity and socialism are not synonymous, let us teach both; if they are alike, and they are so in many respects, the honest course must be evident. Halls of science and Social institutions should be schools for the adult population; through them should be diffused every species of useful knowledge; every plan supported that had a tendency to do good, either in or out of community. In doing this we need not neglect our own plans, or abstain from showing their superiority. That the general prevalence of infidelity would be productive of good, even in competitive society no rationalist can doubt, when it is known that the reason why we have not a national system of education is because religionists have been quarrelling about the religion to be taught in the national schools, *if any*. Other parties amongst us say, "let theology alone, except when you are attacked on those grounds, then, and then only, enter upon it; let the war be purely defensive!" Now this would be all very well, if *we could choose when, where, and how* we should carry on the contest; as we cannot do these things, we should take advantage of

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

every favourable opportunity, both for attack or defence, whether provoked or unprovoked. To attack only when we are attacked savours of a revengful spirit, and, moreover, is to contend at a disadvantage. To those who say let theology entirely alone, I answer, we cannot, we have gone too far to recede; it is neither possible nor desirable; it is not possible, because of the past; it is not desirable, because great good may be effected for the future. That a rational state of society is utterly incompatible with superstition the founder of our system himself has declared. SOUTHWELL resigned his office of missionary because he could not speak out with the approbation of the social body; in this I think he was wrong, he should have trusted to time and argument to convince its members that his course was the best and likely to effect the greatest amount of good. Society is formed by mutual concessions, were it otherwise all united agitation would be at an end. I can most conscientiously retain my office on this principle. When I lecture on theology, I usually commence thus, "The opinions I shall give in this lecture are my own; no other party is responsible for them;" by this means I do not involve others in the controversy against their will; any other course, constituted as our society is, would be unjust; and while this liberty remains, on the score of principle we have but little to complain of, though on the score of policy a great deal. But does it follow, that because Mr. SOUTHWELL, or any one else, has thought proper to act differently to my views, or to use a style different to mine, that I am to consider him an enemy to our cause, and abandon him to the rage of the persecutor? Forbid it, reason! Forbid it, common sense! The following extract from a lecture I have lately delivered in two Social institutions will explain my views on this matter. "Last, but not least in the black catalogue of Protestant Christian crimes, is the prosecution and imprisonment of CHARLES SOUTHWELL, editor of the *Oracle of Reason*. John Brindley, the opponent of socialism, states in one of his papers, that every one must admire the 'deep Christian feeling,' of Sir Charles Wetherall, in passing sentence upon SOUTHWELL. I was always at a loss to know what was meant by 'deep Christian feeling,' I learn now that it means condemning a man to twelve months' imprisonment and a fine of £100, for writing thirteen lines and a half against the bible. I trust that when the term of his imprisonment expires that the Infidels and Socialists will exert themselves to pay the fine, which Christian avarice and Christian cruelty demands. That the 'fine' is intended to lengthen his imprisonment, no one can doubt, be it our duty to defeat this truly Christian intention; be it our pleasing duty to liberate him from his truly Christian bonds. Rest

assured he will not abuse our kindness, but find in it new motives to urge him on in his contest and our contest with superstition; until by the influence of free discussion it shall sink into

The vile dust from whence it sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

SOUTHWELL has fought our battles, now let us fight his; kindness for kindness should be the first principle of the Socialists' practice. If we neglect him at the present juncture we shall dishearten others equally ardent and equally sincere, and thus the day of complete liberty will be retarded in its arrival, and thus shall we allow the tyrannical bigot to glory in the triumph he has achieved over mental independence and the right of free discussion. Why is it that so many have retired from the contest with political and religious depotism? 'Tis because of the little support they received from those who agreed with them in sentiment. Let it not be said of us that we were willing to share the fruits of victory but not willing to fight the battle. If we are now found wanting, our lack of moral courage and moral principle will be our disgrace. From all I can learn of SOUTHWELL I am inclined to believe that a more faithful servant the Socialists never had. While he was connected with us he did his duty to our society, now let us do our duty by him; he is worthy of it, he possesses a mind far above the ordinary stamp, and has displayed a moral principle that has seldom been equalled never surpassed, and both have been directed towards alleviating the afflictions of humanity. If we do not rally round and support him in his day of tribulation we shall act a part unworthy of our cause, and prove that we have less gratitude and benevolence than his Christian foes; even they support the persecuted if they belong to their own party. In the person of SOUTHWELL is violated the right of free discussion; if we wish it for ourselves we must claim it for him, we have no interest apart from our race. I do not take upon myself to defend SOUTHWELL's opinions or his 'style' either, of which we have heard so many complaints; but I do maintain that SOUTHWELL had a right to use what 'style' he pleased. If men are to be judged by their style no one will pass uncondemned. I am heartily sick of that maukish morality which would refuse to support a man because his 'style' was objectionable; that style is the best that is likely to effect the greatest amount of good, and this must in all cases be left to individual judgment. All I inquire is this, Is it a just or an unjust prosecution? If the latter, I would oppose it, be it inflicted upon whom or by whom it might. If all those who hold Infidel opinions would avow them, and Infidel unions were formed all over the country, we should soon present such

a bold front as to 'defy both persecution and prosecution. The cause of infidelity is the cause of truth, and must prevail." This letter has extended to a greater length than I intended; allow me to remark in conclusion, that I think that opposing superstition was one of the objects of our society; the founder himself in by-gone times has set the example; even now occasionally he does so, though not strongly enough for many of his disciples. That the objects of the society included something more than this, I freely admit, but that this was considered a stepping-stone to that something more, all acquainted with the history of our society must be aware. I do not believe that theological discussion will prevent us from obtaining money to establish some colonies; capitalists would lend their money to the devil himself, if he could give them as good security and greater interest than they could obtain elsewhere. There is nothing to fear on that account, and as the "politics and religions" of the world are wrong let both be opposed in so far as they are in error, and then shall we go forth conquering and to conquer, and leave the world better than we found it. Trusting that you may live long to assist in the great work,

I remain, yours in the cause,
J. C. F.

IS THERE A GOD?

XIV.

"In whatever direction we pursue our researches, whether in space or time, we every where discover clear marks of creative intelligence."—LYEL.

HE that made the eye, shall he not see? He that made the ear, shall he not hear? It is demanded by Theists, with an air of triumph, as though Atheists contended that he who *made* the eye could *not* see, or he who *made* the ear could *not* hear. What they DO deny is, that sophists, however dexterous, can prove that anything has been absolutely made by a *he*, a *she*, or an *it*, in short, by an intelligent being, of the masculine, feminine, or neuter gender. To admit that the eye was *made* or *designed* to see, would be, in effect, to give up the whole question; a virtual abandonment of Atheism; for that which is *made*, must have had a *maker*, and clear marks of *creative intelligence* demonstrate independent intelligence capable of *creating*. All then theologians have to do is, simply to prove that human or inferior organisms, in short, *anything* from pebbles to planets, were *designed* or created. Let them leave railing, and honestly tell *how they know* the universe was made—*how they know* there is a first cause, itself uncaused—*how they know* that unassisted matter is incapable of producing those effects at which wondering folly marvels—*how they know* that matter by its na-

tive energy, capable of forming a chrysalis, is incapable of forming an eye, a brain, or a hand—*how*, finally, *they know* that lime or mud can produce a worm, a serpent, or a crocodile, and not produce a man. If they cannot "*how*" satisfactorily, in the name of modesty and truth let them say so, and no longer insolently palm upon the credulous their *pious inventions* as *undoubted facts*. "The heavens declare the glory of god, and the firmament showeth his handywork," saith the psalmist; but begging the psalmist's pardon, the heavens declare nothing but moons, suns, and starry hosts, while the "dark blue sky" shows neither more nor less than dark blue sky. How strange that men should still be so hoodwinked by priests as to accept ignorance of what is, as "confirmation strong" of what is not, and credulously receive as solvent of the universal difficulty one that is ten thousand times greater. It is a rule of sense as well as of logic, that of two difficulties it is wise to choose the least—but there is little wisdom in theology and those who teach its "solemn nonsense," when they strenuously assert there must have been, or rather must be an uncreated *god* who *designed* and *created* the universe, *because* the idea of an uncreated *universe* is inconceivable; so that according to such wiseacres, an uncreated *spirit* is conceivable enough, quite a trifle to believe in, but uncreated *matter* shocks the nerves of their faith. It is plain that the study of nature is insufficient for the discovery of a god, and all that has been written about the "clear evidences of design in the universe," is mere moonshine. Now upon that rock the Atheist takes his stand; for to *him* the visible or invisible relations of Christians with Christ are of no more consequence than the same relations of Mohammedans with Mohammed, or the Jews with Moses; to *him* all such imaginary relationships are the work of priests, who first obtained and still hold authority, by nicknaming "divine oracles," *human inventions*. Atheists *feel* what is so beautifully expressed by the poet Wordsworth—

The impulse from a vernal wood
Will teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all SUCH sages can.

But vernal woods teach not *final causes*, as they are termed, nor do the dark and pathless forests whisper god. Nothing but human imaginations, the dangerous offspring of ignorant hopes and fears, fortifies the belief or supposition that the material universe sprung out of some inconceivable, immaterial essence. Such monstrous fancies are not countenanced by the study of nature, which gives the lie to the arrogant assumptions of the theologians. It gives the lie to the *assumption*, that matter must have been created, and verifies the teachings of an Eastern sage, that "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that

which is done, it is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." It gives the lie to the *assumption*, that the reasoning faculty, or mental conditions, could not proceed from what they choose to call irrational atoms. It gives the loud lie to the most impudent of *assumptions*, that "all is for the best," in a world which savage beasts and yet more savage men have deluged with crime, blood, and misery. Let the *triumphs* of a Caesar, a Zingis, a Timour, an Alaric, an Attila, and a Napoleon, tell their bloody tale. Let the bones of the slaughtered for the glory of religion and the honour of god, attest that all is not for the best; but the great truth that all is of necessity in itself, neither for the best nor for the worst, but in relation to humanity, a compound of good and evil, folly and wisdom, justice and injustice, the proportions of which necessarily fluctuate with the fluctuations of civilization. It is probable there is less of actual evil suffered, and more of actual good enjoyed *now* than at a former period, for the simple reason, that opinion has to a *certain extent* been enlarged and purified by experience, but the nations are *not yet* prepared to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; *not yet* cured of superstition and the accursed spirit it engenders, a spirit that delights in persecution, war, and rapine—a spirit which, in its mildest form, is the deadliest enemy to freedom and virtue. Then how in the face of endless proofs, that the universe if designed could not have been designed wisely, can Theists maintain that they "every where discover the clear marks of creative intelligence?" In a former paper upon this subject, I have ventured to assert, that "to the Atheist a moth in the candle's flame, or a poor fly in the fangs of a spider, is a *proof* that the world could not have been created by a being infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely powerful;" an assertion which may at first seem hard, if not presumptuous, but if fairly examined, it will be found that the *denial* of it involves a *moral contradiction*. An infinitely wise and infinitely good god would *design* perfect *moral* as well as *physical* excellence, while infinite power could not fail in the execution; so that those who say that all was designed by god, and in the same breath acknowledge the existence of evil will, if reasonable people, be constrained to admit that he (god) cannot be infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely powerful. But here another difficulty presses and affrights the believer, which is, the danger of thinking disrespectfully of deity; for all believers in a god, at least all I have met with, agree with Plutarch and Lord Bacon, that it is better not to think of god at all than to think evil of him. Sound advice, but how to be followed by Atheists, it is impossible to understand. I am aware that the Butler school of

analogists have endeavoured to establish the "*fact*," that "all things are double one against another, and god hath made nothing imperfect," which *fact* will be best answered by *other facts* of a less suspicious character. King Edward the second was deposed by the intrigues of a wife and her paramour, thrust into the Tower, where some ruffians held the unfortunate monarch down on a bed, and thrusting a tube up his fundament, passed a red-hot iron into his bowels; none who heard could ever forget the aged king's shrieks of agony while his bowels were consuming. What will the gentlemen sophists of the Butler school, *double* against that act of horror, what in heaven or hell is the *good* that even a god could do to compensate such evil? Surely it was not, cannot now be, in the eye of reason, "all for the best," that an aged, inoffensive, and far from unamiable monarch, should have his bowels burnt to cinders by order of an adulterous wife and her cruel paramour. How is the existence of a good and almighty god to be reconciled with the permission of such horrible enormities? The nations would be edified if religious analogists would reconcile their *fact*, that god has made nothing imperfect, with their *preaching* about the imperfections of our mortal nature; their *FACT*, that all things double one against the other, with their *pathetic lamentations* about Christ crucified to ransom and redeem a ruined world; their *FACT*, that god is a god of inexorable justice, with their *pulpit harangues* about sin and injustice; and, finally, their *FACT*, that god's tender mercies are over all his works, with their *whining cant* about the miseries of human life. If there be a god, Peter rightly said, "verily, and of a truth, he is no respecter of persons." Thousands, nay, millions of unhappy beings have been torn asunder by wild horses, sown up in sacks and flung to wild beasts, sawn into slips, buried alive, flogged, flayed, and starved to death, so that the earth, manured by the blood and bones of its inhabitants, has displayed the appalling and sickening sight of one vast human shamble! True, oh, Peter, your god is no respecter of persons, mowing down, with ruthless justice, the noble with the mean, the wise with the foolish, the innocent tender babe with the guilty blood-stained tyrant. That royal tiger, Henry the eighth, died in his bed, with a strong, "hope of a joyful resurrection;" the gallant, the great, Henri Quatre, fell by the poinard of the extra-religious Ravailiac; Cæsar, it may be said, justly paid the penalty of his ambition; but what is to be "doubled" against the glorious suicide of Cato, or the cowardly assassination of immortal Cicero. Nor would it be one whit less edifying or useful, if analogists and "all for the best" men, would reconcile with god's *wisdom*, child-birth agonies, abortional *mistakes*, with the endless train of torturing diseases, "flesh

seems heir to." Hume has remarked, that a wise providence, by a wave higher or a wave lower, might, without any visible disturbance of natural operations, have buried Cæsar and his fortunes; nor can I conceive how the harmonies of nature would have been seriously disturbed, if a wise god or providence had thought proper to design less suffering and more enjoyment, less hypocrisy and more sincerity, fewer rapes, frauds, pious and impious butcheries; with far more peace and happiness. By burying Cæsar with his fortunes, the liberties of Rome and millions of lives might have been spared; an overruling providence could easily have done *that*. By a little less of the brute, and a little more of the rational, in human brains, the earth *might* have been a paradise; and so it would be easy to proceed, *ad infinitum*, with what *might have been*, and what *might be*, if a wise god or providence controlled the operations of nature. But I am of opinion, that all would be better employed in understanding what *is* than what *might have been*, or *might be*, if nature was not nature, reason not reason, and absurdity not absurdity. Gibbon, in his notice of Zoroaster,* observes, that "the great and fundamental article of the system, was the celebrated doctrine of the two principles, a bold and *injudicious* attempt of Eastern philosophy, to reconcile the existence of moral and physical evil with the attributes of a *beneficent creator and governor of the universe*." Now it is a lame attempt of the theologians to escape the *injudiciousness* of Zoroaster, which it is the secret of their exertions to subdue, for it is impossible to convince the reason of mankind that there is no such thing as physical or moral evil; THAT the world, whatever it may seem to the unilluminated, is absolutely perfect; and therefore, the belief in one god infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely powerful, is both reasonable and consistent, and that from the analogies of things in this world may be fairly deduced a state of immortal bliss in some other.

C. S.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XIII.

"Matter moves by its own energy, by a necessary consequence of its heterogeneity. The diversity of motion, constitutes alone the diversity of matter. We distinguish beings from one another, only by the different impressions or motions which they communicate to our organs."—GOOD SENSE.

THE above is from a work often quoted in the *Oracle* under the title of "Common Sense," but published by Cousins as "Good Sense," and is translated from the French; it is the best exposition of Atheism I have met with,

and I cordially recommend it to the attention of the readers of the *Oracle*.

Although agreeing with the idea of the writer of the above extract, I do not with the language he has used, when he says, "Matter moves by its own *energy*." When we speak of energy, we usually mean power or force directed for a specific purpose, to accomplish a desirable object, and of course is inseparably connected with mental phenomena. This, it is almost needless to say, is not the idea intended to be conveyed by the author, because he concludes the sentence by saying, that it moves "by necessary consequence of its heterogeneity," which I conceive to be nearer the truth. At present matter is divided into forty or fifty simple substances, out of which small number philosophers assert all the innumerable varieties of form, colour, quality, condition, &c., to be compounded. Here we may see what stupendous results may proceed from apparently trifling causes. We perceive changes so varied that any portion, however large, that the mind of man is capable of grasping, is so inconceivable small in comparison to the whole, as to afford no adequate notion of it—all of which is produced from a few units. If this be the fact, we may next inquire, how this is effected, or at any rate, how it would appear to be effected?

"Fifty-four elements are presented to us by nature; of these, only four are employed in the elaboration of all the wonderful creations of living matter. Flowers and perfumes, leaves and wood, food and poisons—flesh, bone, fat, hair, feathers—when the chemist comes to look at all these, he finds such wonderful diversity is the result, not of the employment of a multiplicity of elements, but of the combination of a very few, in varied *proportions*, and under the influence of *vital agency*; for, having resolved organic matter into its ultimate elements, we in vain endeavour so to recombine them as to form what we set out with. We can resolve wheat-flour, for instance, into carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen; but we in vain attempt to reproduce wheat-flour, or anything remotely approaching to it, by any possible artificial re-union of these four elements; and accordingly it has sometimes been supposed that some error must of necessity contaminate our reasoning upon these matters; but the truth is, that the cause of our failure apparently lies in our utter inability so to present these elements to each other as they doubtless are presented to each other in the organs and vessels of living beings. Although, therefore, we can prove by irrefragable evidence, that the elements of sugar are carbon and water, we certainly cannot re-make sugar by any purely artificial combination of those bodies; and this, in all probability, for no other reason than that we want the command of the circum-

* Page 54, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.
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stances under which the carbon and water, or, in other words, the carbon, the hydrogen, and the oxygen, are presented to each other in the miraculous organisation of the plant. Yet is nothing easier than to show that by feeding a plant with carbon, and with water, or its elements, these will so combine within its vessels, as actually to constitute sugar. In fact, it all amounts to this: that the same elements which in *organic* bodies are united in *ternary* and *quaternary* combinations (that is, three or four together), have in *inorganic* bodies, a singular tendency to combine in *binary* proportions (that is, two and two together). For instance, *carbonate of ammonia* is an artificial product, and *gelatin* is a natural or *organic* product; the *ultimate elements* are the same in both, namely, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen: in the artificial compound the carbon and oxygen are so united as to form *carbonic acid*, and the nitrogen, and hydrogen constitute *ammonia*; so that carbonic acid and ammonia are binary compounds, and they are the proximate components of *carbonate of ammonia*, which is also a binary compound. But in *gelatin* (or common glue), which is exclusively an *organic* product, the same ultimate elements are united in one quaternary whole; and if I decompose glue, I can resolve it into carbonate of ammonia: but I cannot therefore convert carbonate of ammonia into glue, because I cannot subject carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen (its ultimate elements) to each other's action, under circumstances which shall in any way correspond with those in which gelatin was formed."*

From this, then, it would appear that it is only our imperfect knowledge which prevents our producing *organic forms*, with all their vital energies, precisely as we find them in nature, and of course, if it be our ignorance only which presents a barrier to our forming wheat from the simple elements of which it is known to be composed, and not the want of *supernatural* power, it follows, that an incapacity to make man, also, must result from the same cause. So that here we have strong grounds to hope, that man may ultimately manufacture man from the "raw material," as the market may require, and thus prevent a redundancy of population, unless there should be a prohibitory duty, sufficient to crush his industry, established by the "collective wisdom." May not the rising generation see a monument erected in Westminster, or St. Paul's to the memory of Frankenstein?

I again quote from "Good Sense," and with pleasure acknowledge my obligations: "Should any deny that motion is essential and necessary to matter they cannot, at least, help acknowledging, that bodies, which seem dead

and inert, produce motion of themselves, when placed in a fit situation to act upon one another. For instance: phosphorus, when exposed to air, immediately takes fire. Meal and water, when mixed, ferment. Thus dead matter begets motion of itself. Matter has then the power of self-motion; and nature, to act, has no need of a mover, whose pretended essence would hinder him from acting. Whence comes man? What is his origin? Is he then the effect of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms? Did the first man spring, ready formed, from the dust of the earth? I know not. Man appears to me, like all other beings, a production of nature. I should be equally embarrassed to tell, whence came the first stones, the first trees, the first lions, the first elephants, the first ants, the first acorns, &c., as to explain the origin of man. We are incessantly told to acknowledge and revere the hand of a god, of an infinitely intelligent and powerful maker, in so wonderful a work as the human machine. I readily confess, that the human machine appears to me surprising. But as man exists in nature, I am not authorised to say, that his formation is above the power of nature. But I can much less conceive of this formation, when to explain it, I am told, that a pure spirit, who has neither eyes, feet, hands, head, lungs, mouth, nor breath, made man by taking a little clay, and breathing upon it.

* * * One atom of matter cannot meet another *by chance*; this meeting is the effect of permanent laws [modes], which cause every being necessarily to act as it does, and hinder it from acting otherwise, in given circumstances. To talk of the *fortuitous concurrence of atoms*, is to attribute some effects to chance; it is to say nothing, except that we are ignorant of the laws [modes], by which bodies act, meet, combine or separate."

Not only does certain elements when mixed or associated together exhibit the phenomena of motion as described in the quotation; but animal form and life would seem to result from the decomposition of animal and vegetable substances, which is nothing more than the various elements separating from each other and entering into new associations; which of course includes action or motion.

From the foregoing, I would infer that local motion (general motion there cannot be) is a result arising from the difference in form and size of the various molecules or atoms of matter, as well, perhaps, as from the influence of attraction; which necessarily produces a changing or shifting of position of those not in a state of rest, or comparative rest, from the aggregation of attraction, as we suppose stones and metals to be. But even these are continually feeling the effects arising from contact with the air, water, &c.; every particle of which is continually changing its position in relation to other particles, as may be seen by

* Magazine of Popular Science, vol. iii. p. 1.

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watching the dancing of the dust in a sunbeam, though there be no wind stirring that can be detected. Whatever, then, is in immediate connexion with matter in motion, however dense and hard the quiescent body be, it must eventually suffer from such contact, that is to say, be decomposed to a certain extent, resolved into a more simple form, again and again to be recombined and decomposed eternally.

Motion being an essential condition of matter, the argument urged by supernaturalists against materialism—that that which is in itself inert cannot produce motion—fails from its incorrectness. The extracts in No. 15, from *Chambers's Information*, in relation to the formation of worlds, must have led practised reasoners upon the subject of materialism to the conclusion, that if matter, from its own inherent properties, would assume the form of planets, comets, &c., having a regular and particular motion or revolution, there surely was nothing to prevent the same matter, under other circumstances, resulting in organic form, exhibiting vital phenomena. In the language of divinity, this fact is one of the corner-stones of the temple of Atheism.

Motion is not always a proof of life, but life is always inseparable from motion, and the terms are convertible in reference to the phenomena exhibited by organised bodies. In fact, the modes which produce motion, in their operation upon inorganic bodies, are the same which, acting upon organic forms, cause them to present certain appearances which we call life, being no other than a series of motions. "We cannot (says Dr. Carpenter) like the fabled Prometheus of old, breathe into the lifeless clay the animating fire; we cannot by a judicious and skilful arrangement of those elements, combine them into new and artificial forms so as to produce new and unexpected phenomena; and almost all our knowledge of the laws of life must therefore be derived from observation only. Experiment can conduct us very little further in this inquiry than the determination of the dependence of the functions upon one another, and upon the external agents, heat, light, &c., by the action of which upon the organism the phenomena of life are produced." I shall, for the present, conclude this subject.

W. C.

CHRISTIAN JUSTICE.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR,—Thinking that the following is within the scope of your labours, I have forwarded it for insertion in your paper. ANTI-THEIST.

ATHEISM.—At the Stirling Circuit Court of Justiciary last week, James Henry, carter,

Kinross, accused of an assault on James Smart, weaver, in Kinross, and on William Simpson, criminal officer, when in the discharge of his duty as an officer of the law, pleaded "Not guilty." The following rather remarkable occurrence took place connected with this trial:—On William Simpson (the criminal-officer) being called to give his evidence, Mr. Logan, the prisoner's counsel, objected to his being put on oath, on the ground that he professed atheism. This fact, he (Mr. Logan) was ready to prove by witnesses, and referred to Alison, vol. 2. p. 437, for the validity of the objection. Mr. Logan was then proceeding to argue this point, when the Lord Justice Clerk said it was quite unnecessary to refer to any authority in support of the validity of the objection. If Mr. Logan could make out the point of atheism, there could be no doubt that the witness's testimony could not be received. Four witnesses were then called by Mr. Logan, who proved that Simpson, in conversation with them, denied the existence of a divine being and a state of future rewards or punishments. The Lord Justice Clerk then stated, that from what had taken place, it would be impossible to receive Simpson's evidence; whereupon the advocate-depute for the crown passed from the charge of assault against the officer of justice (Simpson, the Atheist); and the prisoner having pleaded "Guilty" to the assault on Smart was sentenced to be imprisoned in the gaol of Kinross, for one calendar month.—*Times*, May 3, 1842.

REASONS AGAINST ATHEISM.—Some person forwards the five following items, and on their account sets down Atheism as being "unreasonable and imprudent."—1. Be cause it gives no tolerable account of the existence of the world.—2. Nor does it give any reasonable account of the universal consent of mankind in this apprehension, that there is a god.—3. It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of.—4. The Atheist pretends to know that which no man can know.—5. Atheism contradicts itself.

Answers.—1. Atheism refers the "existence of the world" to natural causes, goddism to *super-natural*. Which is the more "tolerable," that we can understand, or that we cannot?—2. O, yes, it does! It ascribes the "universal" (if it be universal) "consent of mankind in the apprehension, that there is a god," to UNIVERSAL IGNORANCE.—3. Very true, in the case in question. It requires some *reasonable evidence* for belief in a god, which is very properly admitted as being "more than the thing is capable of."—4. This is wrong, if god-knowledge is meant by the thing of *pretence*. The Atheist does not "pretend" to "know" god. His prstence and offence is of the con-

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trary kind. It is that he does *not* know him, and is somewhat sceptical whether other people do.—5. Query? G. J. H.

RIDDLES FOR THE RELIGIOUS.

If god there was, 'ere time there was, then tell me if you can,
How this same god could *be* a god, ere time to *be* began?

If time there was, 'ere god there was, then tell me if thou know'st,

How god then, coming *after* time, eternity can boast?

If god o'er time, or time o'er god, can date no prior birth,

Whereon do your beginnings rest, ye creed-struck lumps of earth? G. A.

UTILITY OF METAPHYSICAL STUDY.

It has been frequently objected to metaphysical speculations, that they subserve no useful purpose; and it must be allowed that there are many inquiries in this department of intellectual exertion, which lead, in appearance, and even in reality, to no practical result. This is, however, a defect inherent in every pursuit, and can be brought as no specific objection against the philosophy of mind. How many substances are analysed by the chemist, which can never be rendered useful; how many plants are minutely described by the naturalist which might have remained in obscurity without the least possible detriment to the world; how many events are narrated by the historian, from which no beneficial inference can be drawn! It seems to be a necessary condition of human science, that we should learn many useless things, in order to become acquainted with those which are of service, and as it is impossible, antecedently to experience, to know the value of our acquisitions, the only way in which mankind can secure all the advantages of knowledge, is to prosecute their inquiries in every possible direction. There can be no greater impediment to the progress of science than a perpetual and anxious reference at every step to *palpable* utility. Assured that the general result will be beneficial, it is not wise to be too solicitous as to the immediate value of every individual effort. Besides, there is a certain completeness to be attained in every science, for which we are obliged to acquire many particulars not otherwise of any worth. Nor is it to be forgotten, that trivial and apparently useless acquisitions, are often necessary preparatives to important discoveries. The labours of the antiquary, the verbal critic, the collator of mouldering manuscripts, the describer of microscopic objects (labours which may appear to many out of all proportion to the value of the result), may be preparing the way for the achievements of some splendid genius, who may combine their minute details into a magnificent system, or evolve from a multitude of particulars collected with painful

toil, some general principle, destined to illuminate the career of future ages. To no one, perhaps, are the labours of his predecessors, even when they are apparently trifling or unsuccessful, of more service than to the metaphysician; and he who is well acquainted with the sciences, can scarcely fail to perceive, that many of its *inquiries are gradually converging* to important results. Unallied as they may appear to present utility, it is not hazardous much to assert, that the world must hereafter be indebted to them for the extirpation of many mischievous errors, and the correction of a great part of those loose and illogical opinions by which society is now pervaded.—*Samuel Bailey.*

THE DEDICATION PREFIXED TO THE ENGLISH EDITION OF THE BIBLE.—What must have been the character of the men who could write to that miserably-minded wretch; that disgusting and soul-degraded mass of loathsomeness, King James? Why is that triple-piled ass, with tiger's ferocity, fangs and claws lauded as an angel of light in front of god's own book? King James the first was an atrocious monster, and the right reverend fathers in god who worshipped him in his day, knew him to be such.—*C. R. Pemberton.*

HOW TO CURE RELIGIOUS FOLLY.—When men will not be reasoned out of a vanity, they must be ridiculed out of it.—*Sir R. L' EStrange.*

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LEWIS, LIVERPOOL, wishes to know the localities of heaven and hell. Consult the geography of delusion; they are marked upon the maps. G. J. H.

T. P. suggests that a review of Mr. Mackintosh's new pamphlet on "god" should appear. One of some kind will, at the earliest convenience. The pamphlet is young at present, and it would be ungenerous to press on the tender years of infancy. The cauldron of religion seems boiling very prettily, and the spiritual witches cooking "hell broth" with materials as *congruous* as in the days of Macbeth. Mr. Mackintosh's *invention* of a "pure mind" god is an incarnation of the poverty of the times. It is so shorn of every godly attribute that it seems more like an unfortunate inhabitant of Queen's Bench, than a maker of the universe. Have the Christians accepted this poverty stricken, forlorn, and bankrupt deity? Some say, "As well be poor as *seem* so." If they can do *with* Mr. Mackintosh's god, they can do *without* one. G. J. H.

Just published, price 3d.—REPLY to a "Discourse on the subject of Deity; delivered in the church of Mount Brinksmay, near Stockport, by a Philosophical Inquirer," on Sunday, September 9, 1827. By CHARLES SOUTHWELL, late Editor of the *Oracle of Reason*; now in Bristol Gaol.—"Sceptics have yet to learn, that their shafts are aimed at the god of the universe as well as at the god of Israel, and that downright Atheists are the only consistent, thorough going Infidels among them all."—*Origen Bachelier.*—To be had of all liberal booksellers.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street, Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.—Saturday, May 7, 1842.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

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BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

ANOTHER NEW RELIGION.

“Shall the people of these islands, free, sagacious, and noble, be for ever drivellers in religion only.”—
Rev. J. N. Armstrong.

WHETHER a people bound mind and pocket in religious restraint and political servitude, can be *free*, is a matter of some legitimate doubt; whether wearing the chains of mental, and consequently every other kind of slavery, is an evidence of being *sagacious*; or, while under priestly and bible influence, they can merit the epithet of *noble*, may be soberly and seriously questioned. However, friend Armstrong is quite right in asking if we are to “be for ever drivellers in religion:” and without staying to inquire if he meant an answer to be given in the *Oracle*, will proceed, to examine the matter.

The last few weeks have seen a new religion set forth. Quite a pious curiosity. It is to be found in the second part of the “Book of the New Moral World,” chap. iv., by Robert Owen. That we want a new philosophy, or an extension of some of the old ones, can be believed; but whatever can the world want with a new religion? It is as easy to grant that we want a new cholera morbus. Who would thank the inventor of a new pestilence, or the discoverer of some fresh evil in Pandora’s box? Who would thank St. John to predict a new vial of wrath to be poured out, while we have more than we know what to do with already? Those who would feel grateful in these cases will feel indebted to the producer of a new religion; but no one else. I have often thought that the sentences passed on our “Jew Book” progenitors, and on Cain, were that they should be religious, and bequeath the misfortune to posterity—that Adam and Eve should be of some magistrate’s religion,* and Cain a methodist. This supposition may be a little wrong, but certainly the delinquents were cursedly bad enough, if right. It has been well said, that “where there is religion there is mystery.” Now what in the name of consistency can a plain, sober-headed, practical man, like Mr. Owen, have to do with mysteries, against which he has so loudly and justly declaimed? In the *First Part* of the “Book of the New Moral World,” chap. x.,

* See Trial, p. 21.

he has denounced ALL religions. If he was then preparing some fresh one to offer to the world, it seems very like the old world prank, of crying down other people’s wares the better to pass off his own. But stay! Let us see what this *new* religion is. We live in a changeable world, and the curse of eighteen centuries may after all become a blessing in the nineteenth.

Mr. Owen lays it down in small capitals that RELIGION IS TRUTH, AND TRUTH IS RELIGION. This is wrong. Truth has nothing to do with religion. Religion implies faith, truth implies faith’s antipodes—*facts*. Religion is supernaturalism—truth rejects it. Religion relates to a god. Truth knows nothing of one, because truth is plain and comprehensible; and God, according to Mr. Owen, and all theologians, is incomprehensible.* Religion, according to Walker, “is founded upon reverence of god, and expectation of future rewards and punishments; a system of divine faith and worship.” In this sense the world understand it. Mr. Owen has given to men a system of truth—Socialism: and as “truth is always,” Mr. O. says, “consistent with itself,” let us see if it is consistent with religion. Socialism, not only has nothing to do with rewards and punishments, but decidedly teaches that mankind also should have nothing to do with them. What agreement is there here with religion? Socialism prescribes duty to each other whom we do know, not worship of an incomprehensible whom we do not know, and (if half is true which divines say of him) we never can know. Where is truth’s characteristic of consistency in this case? Religion has been also defined by that acute, careful writer and competent authority, Samuel Bailey, as “a course of action and condition of mind which will please the being who has the fate of mankind in his hands.” Socialism founds its precepts and practices on man’s constitution, and its relation to the external, palpable, tangible world; the wishes and pleasure of an unknown has no part or lot in the matter. And setting aside Socialism’s teachings, how can men, it may be fairly asked, shape their actions and conduct to suit an *incomprehensible*, un-

* Clause 1, Rational Religion, Outline of Rational System.

seen, unintelligible standard? The whole supposition is absurd. Query—does absurdity belong to truth? Indeed a man might study, till, like the yankee, he is thin enough to thread a needle with, before he could perceive the connection between Mr. Owen's new religion and Mr. Owen's truth!

Now let us tread the slippery plane of mere policy, and the winding labyrinth of expediency, and see what is to be obtained by calling truth religion.

Will the world believe it? Who will allow that to be religion, which rejects the bible? It is agreed that truth derives its practices from "an accurate and extensive observation of nature's laws,"* not from prosy porings over mouldy, dull, contradictory, and whimsically stupid records of Jewish jargon. Christians will not allow this, and they are the men who rule the roost, get the luscious slices, and give to others the scrag ends. In Birmingham only one parson, and he the Rev. T. M. McDonnell, a catholic priest, would allow that Unitarians are religious; and they believe in god, the bible, sing psalms, and pray as solemnly as Methodist washerwomen. Why, if Mr. Owen had all the truth in the universe, as Atlas had the world,—on his back, and he had not heaven's trumpets and hell's fire with it, not a Christian would believe he was religious. There is nothing to be gained except derision so far.

Now let us look at expediency in another light. What is truth? The world's treasury of happiness and the good man's guide. What is religion? The most stupid and dangerous nonsense to be found in the world. Then if truth is religion it is an unfortunate thing; for after all our love and praise of it, it must go forth to the world with a hateful name, and of course a prejudice against it. Hitherto religion has done little else than give hardness to fools, power to knaves, and malignity to malice. A pretty associate this for truth! It is sending it out with a libel on its front, and, as "evil communications corrupt good manners"—placing it in personal danger. The "science of circumstances" should teach better things.

Nor is this all; call religion truth and you alarm the fears of all the religious who are sharp enough to see their foe in any dress: and what is worse, they cry out that your truth, which is boasted as needing no man's help, hypocritically puts on their name; and they sneer at it as a jackdaw strutting about with borrowed feathers in its tail. While those who know the tendency of religion shrink instinctively from truth thus infected and polluted. So expediency triumphs, by bringing that which all should heartily embrace, into contempt on the one hand, and distrust on the other.

* 18th Law of the Constitution of Socialism.

Because truth means one thing and religion another, something else attracts attention. When Mr. Owen declares that TRUTH IS RELIGION and *vice versa*, he might quite as correctly have said, truth is the holy ghost, and the holy ghost is truth; or better still—truth is a haystack, and a haystack truth, for there is much more beauty, utility and intelligibility in a haystack, than in religion, and the natural connection is therefore plainer between these two than between religion and truth.

To look at the case once more. This shall be the farewell aspect. See how truth as a standard is injured by its identification with religion. Ask the world what is truth, and you will have to pause longer than Brutus did in the Roman forum for a satisfactory reply. A thousand and one sects send up a thousand and one, or more likely two thousand and two replies. Then if truth is religion, how various, changeable, and indefinite is it! To offer it after this as the guide of men is like making the chameleon the standard of colour, or erecting an Eddystone Lighthouse on a beach of loose and crumbling sand. But if truth is not religion, is it anything we do know? Inquire what is morality—all agree in defining it as the sense and practice of such duties as best promote the common and universal good. That utility is the basis of morality is acknowledged, and that the essence of utility is *truth*, must be admitted. Then truth, if any second name is required for it, should be called the essence or grand element of morality, which has a venerable, healthy, and undying reputation; which is always and everywhere comprehensible, and kind, and worthy, above all things, of honour, regard, general acceptance, and love from the human race.

It will easily be seen that the above remarks have been written in the spirit of free inquiry. With a person professing to think for his self it can be no question as to *who* wrote the nonsense commented upon. The only question is, is it *error*? and if so, it and everything of the same kind, must be refuted, be the fathers who they may. No authority must make folly enduring. I would as soon criticise the mistakes of Mr. Owen as those of Jesus Christ.

G. J. H.

IS THERE A GOD?

xv.

"Chairs prove a chair-maker, but does the universe prove a universe-maker? We have seen chairs made, but who ever saw gods make universes."—R. D. OWEN.

THE argument from design, or, as it is technically termed, the argument a posteriori, rests upon one of three assumptions. The assumption that it is impossible matter can be self-

existent; that it is impossible matter could, by its own energy, produce the results we behold; that it is impossible the evident marks of wisdom and contrivance, impressed upon the universe, could be the work of aught but a divine artist. These three impossibles are assumptions; but either of the three, if admitted as valid, would draw after it, as a consequence, the existence of one, or more than one, designing power. It is clear, that if it be impossible that matter can be self-existent, matter must have been created. The idea of absolute creation, i. e., production of something from nothing, includes that of design; for it is hardly admissible to suppose the creation of matter, without design or intention in the creator. But if we deny the possibility of absolute creation, we, in effect, deny the existence of a creator. It being evidently foolish to talk about creators or designers, unless we admit that something has been created and designed. Nor does it need more than a mere statement of the fact, to convince anyone, that the evident marks of wisdom and contrivance, prove that wisdom and contrivance have been exerted; which, in point of fact, is but declaring what no one in his senses would think of denying: it amounting to this, that where we see the mark or sign of things or conduct, we conclude, at once, that such things are, or have been, that such conduct is, or has been displayed. The house proves a builder of more or less ingenuity and taste, because houses do not spring out of the ground, like oaks. We properly say of a house, it was designed to be of a certain height, form, and material. Without experience, we should no more know that houses were designed, than we do that grass was designed to grow, the wolf designed to tear the innocent lamb, or the sun designed to reflect light and heat. We have no experience that the universe was built as a house, then, by what strange perversity do men so arrogantly insist that there must be a builder? Prove the universe was framed, then a framer or designer cannot be denied—and a framer or designer, too, who existed before the world, for what is designed, must be younger than the designer in whose mind or conception existed the ideal, type, or model, of that produced. The active and daring genius of Aristotle, led him to the theory of an eternal universe. This theory is scouted as impious and absurd; but a rational reason against it has never yet fallen in my way. By eternal universe, I understand matter uncreated—all matter, “visible and invisible.” In favour of this theory is analogy. All known analogies, and all human conceptions, forbid the notion, that anything ever was, or ever can be either absolutely created, or absolutely annihilated. The words creation and destruction will not bear a rigid interpretation. Even the Hebrew word *bara*, which has been rendered *create*,

only signified a change in the form of matter. The author of Genesis could only mean a “beginning” of order, when “god created the heaven and the earth.” Beginning, like creation and annihilation, cannot be rigidly interpreted. The beginning of Genesis is the chaos of the Greeks; but of chaos order first arose, taught the master of Epicurus. And whence chaos? asked the inquisitive infant philosopher. But whether matter be orderly or chaotic, it is still matter, formed or unformed; it necessarily exists, and if it necessarily exists, how can we escape the conclusion that it is self-existent. If we cannot conceive the creation of matter, we cannot believe that it was created. It is easy to say we believe, when indeed we only wish and try to do so. The assumption, that it is impossible matter can be self-existent, and therefore there must be a god who created it, may do very well for weak-minded people, who are better satisfied with the unsupported assertion of theologians, than the plainest teachings of sense and experience. Nor can the notion of absolute creation be justified on the score of antiquity. The notion is novel, a new fanglement of philosophical theology. Neither the sages of India or Egypt, of Greece, or even of Rome, had any “such stuff” in their thoughts. Even the sect of Christians, called Gnostics, who were distinguished, says Gibbon, as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christians, “blended with the faith of Christ many sublime, but obscure tenets, which they derived from oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter.” So that the notion of an actual beginning, and its inseparable companion, an actual creation, is a modern absurdity—a notion discarded by ancient philosophers, or rather, one so preposterous, as never to have been entertained by them. But it is worthy of remark, that when Atheists insist, that we are not warranted, by any kind of experience, in supposing either limited matter, or matter creatable or destructible; and urge, moreover, that it is insuperable difficulty, in the way of belief in one, or many gods. It is worthy of remark, I say, how sceptical even Christians can become. They will even go so far as to sneer at Atheists, for being so excessively credulous. It is not long since a very intelligent and sincerely religious friend, remonstrating with the writer on the ground of his easy faith in the existence of matter, which he contended, and properly contended, can only be believed in, urged as a reason why I should acknowledge a god, the existence of matter not being, by any means, so clear to his mind, as the existence of an immaterial god. After declaring, that “it is guilt and fear which produces unbelief in his religious dogmas, he proceeded with—“and, after all, what is Atheism but a mode of be-

lief?" as though I had denied, that either my own, or any other real or supposed existence, was a matter of belief. But this I do deny, that any man seriously and honestly doubts either his own existence, or the reality of an external world; men may dispute about both, but their practice shows they rarely doubt them. My religious friend contends, not only that Atheism is a mode of belief, but "a mode of belief involving the highest degree of credulity, since it adopts, *without evidence*, what almost all mankind reject upon the various degrees of testimony which the case admits. I say," he continues, "*without evidence!* For how is it evidenced that matter eternally existed?" to which I offer one only, but sufficient reply, by all individual and all aggregate experience, which attests, as far as anything or any truth can be attested, that an absolute creation is an impossibility; nor would I credit any man, who asserted that he as fully and firmly believed in the existence of a personal god, as in the existence of matter. Religionists may labour to believe that they believe what they do not; but though they may partially deceive themselves, they will not catch many men of this world in such a net of delusion; and if I do not greatly mistake, all readers of the *Oracle* are pretty well convinced by this time, that so far from its being impossible that matter can exist, act, and exhibit the phenomena we behold, by its own energy, the impossibility lies on the other side, it being manifestly impossible that a grain of mustard seed could by any conceivable power be produced or destroyed. Absolute creation is a fiction: absolute annihilation is no less so. All we know, or all we can imagine, as regards matter, is mere modification. All is included in the word *change*. Then by what kind of sophistry can it be made appear that the Atheist is pitifully credulous, for believing that matter exists, and therefore eternally existed, and that the Christian is not at all credulous in believing that a god exists, of whom he has not a single idea, that he existed before the universe was created, that he called that universe into existence by his will; in short, that a spiritual being, of whom it is confessed none can have the slightest conception, by his almighty fiat, first created, and now maintains, the material world? Surely no credulity can be so extravagant or so blind as this, and yet we are to be twitted with the credulity forsooth of Atheists. That the "great first cause" is least understood, even Christians admit, and yet they deem it no stretch of faith, to firmly believe in what they least understand, at the same time taunting, with all the pertness and flippancy so peculiar to them, men who rely on the evidences of their own senses, than the fanciful and most mischievous day dreams of others. Nor is it merely that the evidence of our

senses is less likely to deceive than superstitious fancies; but the simplest principles of common sense, what may almost be called the instinctive knowledge of our race, gives the lie to all that has been written about a designer or a god, who has been sometimes foolishly, sometimes wickedly, represented as jealous, revengeful, and cruel. As a deceitful tyrant, purposely hardening and corrupting men's hearts, that he might lure them to destruction; in a word, with all the attributes fabled of fiends. Then, upon what moral principle—upon what principle of any kind—can it be admitted that the world was designed and is now controlled by such an imaginary monster? Upon what principle are we justified in coming to the conclusion, that a self-existent universe has, in the past, does now, and ever will act by its own energy, "is an impossibility?" Upon what principle can we refuse to accept the universe, that all can see, and blindly believe, in a power who designed the universe, that none has yet beheld? Upon what principle are we called upon to *believe* everything, because we cannot know anything and adopt without evidence the pretended solution of the universal enigma, invented by priests for their own selfish purposes? A monstrous medley-solution, strangely compounded of folly, fraud, and mysticism. Even if we accept *one* only and eternal god, upon the *ipse dixit* of priests, in harmony with what principle can we suppose, that he desires us to know him, and yet does not enable us to do so without mystery or doubt. Were the "eternal truth" written upon the moon's face, or the sun's broad disc, in Roman capitals, in *any intelligible characters*, the crime of doubting would cease. If cocks by instinct distinctly crowed, "*there is a god*," the thing would be strange and tolerably convincing, but no such thing, it is not written anywhere, but only in books, and crowed by the cocks of humanity, the teachers of unknown knowledge, who find it very convenient to make us familiar with their god, that our eyes may be blinded to their *duplicity*. Finally, upon what principle, I ask, are we justified in wasting our energies, and corrupting our intellects by the vain pursuit of a phantom, an *ignis fatuus*, an "unreal mockery" to the neglect of that accurate knowledge, of those virtuous delights, those unspeakable joys that lie within our reach. To search after god is the folly of the fanatic, who ran half round the globe to find his own soul. Simple and sincere lunatic! who understood not that he who sees the body sees the soul of man as clearly as souls ever will be seen, as he who sees matter sees god as clearly as it is possible to see him. Then answer, ye archbishops, bishops, deans, and subdeans; answer, ye Barkers, Brindleys, and Bromleys, upon what principle of *sense* or *utility* it is incumbent

upon us to believe in or fall down and worship the idol that mystery and fraud have set up? Answer, I say, not by the law, but the pen. Bring forth your "strong reasons," and show by argument that self-existent matter is an *impossibility*; that unassisted matter, eternally working and eternally changing, is an *impossibility*. Show, if ye can, that all is an impossibility, except an immaterial god, who though a nothing by his word, produced everything. First, *designed*, then created, and now regulates the universe. Show, gentlemen, if *possible*, that because the chair we know to have been made proves a chair-maker, that the universe no one could have seen made proves a universe-maker. What is the first requisite of an orator? Action. The second? Action. The third? Action. So replied Demosthenes to his inquisitive friend. What is the first requisite of these champions of a god? Impudence. The second? Impudence. The third? Impudence. I truly say to all inquisitive readers: What is their first argument? Ignorance. Their second? Ignorance. Their third? Ignorance.

Sing tantararara, rogues all, rogues all;
Sing tantararara, rogues all.

C. S.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XIV.

"And the lord god formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the *breath of life*: and man became a living soul."—JEW BOOK, chap. ii. v. 7.

SOME wit has said, "Life is nothing," to which I say amen; life not being a substance, an entity, but merely the modes or conditions of organised matter during a certain period of its existence.

To-day we expose some animal matter to the burning heat of the sun; to-morrow we may perceive evidences of life, and the mass will be in motion: a chilling frost or deluging rain succeeds, and the next day organic life, or the power of locomotion, has ceased, decomposition rapidly takes place, and shortly we have an inorganic lump, where but now was life and happiness. The evidences of life in plants are the shooting of leaves, the production of blossoms, flowers, and seeds; in animals, the power of locomotion, construction, speech, &c. All these are well known to depend upon light, air, food, and exercise, all of which are physical agents, and without which none of these phenomena could be exhibited. No one ever thinks of taking away life, separating it from the organism, and preserving it as a specimen, just as he would a branch, a flower, an arm, or a head. We do not see in our museums

the life of a plant or an animal preserved in spirits and enclosed in a glass bottle, separate and distinct from the form to which it was supposed to belong. Our chemists have analysed every known combination of matter, and decided the relative proportions of the various simple, or supposed simple, substances of which they are composed; accurately determining the conditions under which they unite. I have never heard of an examination of the component parts of the "breath of life," which the Jew Book says was "breathed into" the first man's nostrils. It is true that the atmospheric air is known to be composed of certain proportions of oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen, and that it is indispensably necessary for the preservation of existence, but this cannot be the substance mentioned in the Jew Book, for in another part we are told, that "the lord giveth [the breath] and the lord taketh away," which latter action we presume the writer was much enamoured of, for he adds, and "blessed be the name of the lord." I quote from the recollections of my childhood, and hope to be forgiven by my readers if I have committed an error. Now breathing is an action in the science of language, a verb; and the breath a substance, or a noun. The action may cease and be no more, *the substance* can never change. We inhale atmospheric air, and exhale carbonic acid gas. Supposing the tenure of life to be the mere caprice of a fickle but powerful being, and to depend upon the withdrawal of a something which he had given or lent for the period of his princely fancy, and that something to be pure atmospheric air, we should be puzzled to account for the numerous deaths which occur in healthy localities and climates. We find that men and other animals die in the country as well as in the towns, though not so frequently, from the difference in the number of the population and their avocations. But have we not a right to expect that animals, imbibing pure oxygen, should live for ever, seeing that they are continually surrounded by the element which will sustain life, if they will *only* breathe it? And that it is a libel upon the justice and kindness of that being, "whose *mercy* endureth for ever," for stupid jurymen to return such verdicts as "died by the visitation of god," when it is frequently clear that the deceased was such a character that no *respectable person* would be seen speaking to, much less visiting; and whose death, like many others, was the result of indiscretion, arising from ignorance, or from the natural derangement of some important portion of his organization, and not from the application of an air-pump by the "great unknown," who visits incognito, I presume?

I concluded somewhat abruptly last week, not having room to enter upon an investigation of the nature or conditions of life, which I consider essential to a proper understanding

of the question before us. The position I have taken is, that matter and its modes, or more properly *matter*, for we only know it by its characteristics, is *all* that is; and all that is seen and known, results alone from it, whether that be the falling of an apple, or the power of turning one's self upon one's self.

The following extract is an illustration of Dr. Carpenter's views of the influence of light upon vitality:—"Frogs in passing from the egg to maturity, go through an intermediate state in which they are called tadpoles. They then not only have no limbs and possess a tail, but, like fishes, live in water, and breathe by means of gills instead of lungs. Dr. Edwards took a considerable number of frogs in this state, and dividing them into two portions, placed them under water, in perfectly similar circumstances, except that the one portion was exposed to *light*, and the other was excluded from it. This difference had the very remarkable effect of retarding the transformation of the latter to the state of perfect frogs. Whilst the tadpoles in the light had undergone the change, several of those in the dark retained their original form, but had greatly increased in size. The effect of the absence of light appears likewise to be shown in the colour and structure of the proteus, and some other animals, which inhabit situations in which light never enters." Here we see, that though some animals may exist upon the light never shone, others there are, and those the vast majority, who *depend upon it* for their original existence. Again, "There is, perhaps, no spot on earth, however dreary, in which the germs of many plants, and the larvæ of shining and light-winged insects, are not hidden, *though for thousands of years undeveloped*, and still expecting the *warm breeze* that shall call them out into life and beauty." Heat is here represented as the motive power, which in some cases is identical with light.

My next illustration in support of the self-generation of organic forms and life by matter, includes the consideration of another, more generally diffused, and powerful agent, respecting the action and properties of which we are as yet in comparative ignorance, viz., electricity. The annexed has recently gone the round of the public papers. "At the recent meeting of the Entomological Society, the subject of Mr. Crosse's production of insects by the Voltaic battery which made some stir, from its introduction before the members of the British Association, at the meeting at Bristol, in 1836, was revived by Mr. Newport, who stated, that a friend of his at Sandwich had produced the acarus crossii from a mineral solution, by a current of voltaic electricity continued for eleven months. Mr. Gray, F.R.S., of the British Museum, who was present, doubted the possibility of their production, as similar experiments had been made by Mr.

Children, of the same establishment, but without any success.—THE ACARUS GALVANICUS. In the autumn of 1837, the scientific world were greatly excited by the announcement that Mr. Crosse, of Broomfield, had observed insects, of a previously unknown species, come into being among certain voltaic arrangements. Among the various objections urged against their connection with the electricity, was the possibility of ova being in the atmosphere. At the Electrical Society, on Tuesday, a paper was read from Mr. Weekes, of Sandwich, describing experiments wherein he had obtained the same species of insect in a *close* atmosphere over *mercury*. Every possible precaution was taken to exclude extraneous matter, into the detail of which we shall not enter. On the 3d of December, 1840, operations commenced; at the latter end of October, 1841, the *first* insect was seen; on the 25th of November five were detected. Since that period they have been frequently examined. The account contains several incidents interesting with respect to the habits of these strangely produced creatures. Simultaneously with the experiment just detailed, another apparatus was put in an atmosphere of *oxygen gas*; on the 26th of February, 1842, eight or ten full grown acari were observed in vigorous locomotion. The solution whence these insects appear to have emerged, was one of silicate of potass, made with materials that were transferred from a *furnace heat to boiling water*, and filtered under cover.

The discovery of the unostentatious philosopher was too novel as well as *dangerous* to be allowed to pass unattacked, or its author undenounced, and a venal press was soon engaged in the *holy* work of defamation and detraction. The gentleman, who had for years quietly pursued the even tenor of his way, was compelled, shortly after giving the result of his experiments to the world, to defend himself from the ungenerous and cowardly attacks of men of all parties, one of them, Dr. Ritchie, in high repute, is mentioned by Mr. Crosse, as one "who seems to have forgotten both science and temper on the present occasion." "The scorners," says the *Magazine of Popular Science*, "were not in the least disconcerted by this communication. 'Taunt on,' was their exulting cry, the laugh grew louder, the fun more furious." But subsequent experiments have gone far, we perceive, to prove the injustice of such conduct, unless we think Mr. Weekes a fool or a rogue. The following may be taken as a specimen of the arguments put forward in opposition to Mr. Crosse's statement:—

ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN MR. CROSSE'S EXPERIMENTS.—"Respecting galvanism, as far as chemical research has extended, we know the limits of its powers. It cannot change in any way the ultimate forms into which compounds may be resolved; therefore the animalcular

or insect ova must be altogether distinct from the inorganic matter in which they are imbibed. It decomposes inorganic matter into its elements, or remodels its structure, or recomposes the salt or other compounds, by associating its elements; but there is super-added to living organic forms a *vis vitæ*, or *punctum saliens*, the greater gift of creative intelligence—the inspiration of the Almighty. The same electric power which resolves the compound into its proximate parts, or finally reduces it into elemental constituents, may aid, like regulated temperature, in hatching the ova, and promoting the evolution and growth of insect life; since it is certain that electricity favours the growth of plants and powerfully promotes the germination of seeds, and ovulation of the larvæ from the ova of the silkworm and other insects. It is by no means inconceivable that animalcular or insect ova might by possibility be associated with silicic acid, as animalculæ are with acetic acid, *e. g.* the bifurcated eels in vinegar. This being their matrix and cerement the ova might continue dormant till liberated by the decomposition of the silicate or silica. It is monstrous to suppose that any physical power known to man, whether electricity or any other, could not only build up a curious and complicated structure, but infuse into its mechanism the *vis vite*." "The sum of the whole matter, as far as Mr. Crosse's experiments are concerned, is simply this—the ova of the *acarus* derived from some of the sources mentioned are hatched by the electricity of the galvanic battery." *It ought never to be forgotten*, in our estimate of these phenomena, *that similar organised beings invariably make their appearance under similar circumstances*—such as the eels in paste, and the fork-tailed eels in vinegar—infusions of pepper, hay, &c., 'each after its kind.' This is also shown in specimens of water obtained from various sources, and seen in the solar, or in the oxy-hydrogen microscope."—*Murray on the Vital Principle*.

With this I shall conclude, thinking I have said enough to enable the reader to come to a rational conclusion upon it; and sufficient to warrant the assertion, that life is simply a condition of matter, and nothing super-added to the organization.

W. C.

"To the Editor of the "Oracle of Reason."

SIR,—As your paper contains a weekly article on the subject of Socialism, I would just beg, through its columns, to notice what appears to me to be a very glaring departure, both from policy and principle, in some branches of the society, namely, the endeavouring to abolish the discussions on the Sunday evenings. I

might mention several places where it has been tried to be excluded. On Wednesday, the 27th of April, Mr. M'Intosh stated that "he had no objection himself to discussion on Sunday evening, but as that day was set apart for the worship of the deity, it was improper for any noisy demonstrations to be made on that night, because it annoyed the feelings of the Christian world, and could have no beneficial effect." Indeed! how considerate we have become all at once! it was not so a few years ago; no, we were not so respectable then, and consequently cared less about the useless customs of society; but now, having attained a shabby gentility, (in our own opinion at least) we have become apologists for the very customs and institutions which we pledged ourselves never to rest until we had uprooted. Read the organ of the society three years ago, and then compare and judge for yourselves:—

"Our friend supposes we mean to compromise with the old society, and asks, if we mean to keep holy the sabbath-day? Yes; just as we do now every Sunday in this institution—deliver lectures and discuss principles, in opposition to all the established institutions of the country.

"Is this compromising with the old world? If we can brave society while we are dependent upon it, what may we not do when independent of it? Besides, if it be necessary that we should have one day of rest in the week, why not retain that which is usually observed? I see no reason for going out of our way to disturb the prejudices of any party."—*New Moral World and Manual of Science*, September 1st, 1838.

Birmingham,

J. PATERSON.

A NEW RAILWAY!—From an anxiety that no important discovery should remain unknown, the following is presented. As neither the British Association nor the Geological Society, it is believed, has mentioned it, it may probably be acceptable to the public:—A short time since, the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway Company announced they would, on a certain Sunday, run trains for the accommodation of the public, charging the sum of 7s. 6d. for the trip. Mr. Burns, jun., the great revivalist preacher, being in Newcastle at the time, denounced the trip as being a trip to hell for 7s. 6d., by placarding the walls to that effect, and addressing the shareholders, informing them that they would have a *share* in Jehovah's wrath, whereupon the following counter-placard was issued, as a reply, by the Infidel party. "A reward for sabbath breaking. SAFE and SWIFT return from HELL, on lord's day last, August 29th, by the Carlisle Railway." The Rev. Mr. Burn is respectfully informed that

the sabbath party had a "safe and swift" pleasure trip to the *infernal regions*, and found the establishment so completely crammed with hypocritical priests, excepting a few reserved seats for the Tyne Bridge grocer, and other "Newcastle saints" that the *old boy Nicholas*, after kindly enquiring for his friend Mr. B—whom he had been expecting some time, positively refused to "*hook into hell*" any other person whatever. We were, therefore, allowed to "return alive" by the same 'safe and swift' conveyance to "canny Newcastle." A few spirited merchants among the passengers formed themselves into a company, and made a large purchase of BRIMSTONE, (the devil like the priests having no objection to "filthy lucre" on the lord's day,) which they have safely deposited in Carloli Street, where they intend opening a new patent LUCIFER MATCH MANUFACTORY under the superintendance of Mr. BURN!!!

The "brimstone" being newly imported from "HELL," The matches are warranted to "BURN" bright and well.

In the name of the devil, a lover of priests' souls,
 JOCELYN,
 Late bishop of Clogher, and chairman to the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

Query,—If it only costs 7s. 6d. to go to hell by way of Carlisle, why should the priests charge *ten times* the sum to go to heaven by way of chapel?

THE HARMONY OF PRAYER.—One asks an east, another wants a west wind. Turks are all bawling and screaming on Friday, the Jews groaning and grunting on Saturday, and the Christians snivelling and psalm-singing on Sunday; and in the intermediate days the Esquimaux, Catabaws, Winnebagoes, Otaheitans, Hottentots, &c. are all *hard at it*, bellowing out divine service in *their way*.—Yahoo, a satirical rhapsody.

CLASSICAL OUTPOURINGS AT THE THRONE OF GRACE.—Whitefield, in one of his ranting sermons at Glasgow, in the year 1742, thus expresses himself; "O Lord, *dung* us with Jesus Christ, that we may bring forth much fruit meet for thee."—See *Lewis's Memoirs*. And in writing to Lady Huntington, the same preacher of the blessed gospel says, "I have just now risen from the ground, after praying to the Lord of all lords to *water* your soul every moment, honoured madam."—*Southey's Wesley*. [Query—was it to be done with a watering can? Ed. O.] Tom Brown quotes the following prayer from one of the frothy spouters of his time. *Souse* us, O Lord, in the *powdering tub* of thy grace, that we may become *tripes* fit for thy heavenly table; sweeten us with the *sugar candy* of thy mercy, O Lord, that we may all be rendered *lollypops* and *bull's eyes* for the righteous in kingdom come.—Yahoo.

CREATION OF WOMAN.

ADAM, like Paddy at Ballin, crazy,
 Wished a wife to make him *unasy*;
 Jehovah, therefore, now proposed
 To make him one; so while he dozed,
 (Unless we are told confounded fibs,)
 He twitched off one of Adam's ribs
 Fit for the purpose, from his side,
 With which he made him a smart bride.
 For though with dust, which he had scratched up,
 He had a Yahoo neatly patch'd up,
 He didn't think such dirty stuff
 To make his wife of—good enough;
 Rubbish might do to form a lubber,
 Destined to be a garden grubber:
 But for Miss Eve he took more care,
 She wasn't to be *earthenware*.
 Had she been made as he was first,
 'Twould only have been *dust to dust*.

Paradise Lost, not by Milton.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B. HAGEN, DERBY.—I think friend Hagen indited his communication when, like Cassius, "blood ill-tempered vexed him." Were the persons who chiefly write in the *Oracle* always to subscribe their full names the repetition would soon be said to smell of egotism. The initials of a person are always understood as sufficient for his identification when that is required. They bespeak the willingness of the writer to satisfy any one upon the subject. But cannot Mr. Hagen see that the first and third articles in No. 17, have attached the initials of a name printed in full on the first page, and on the last? As a quaker, I suppose he would not swear, but would he make an *affirmation* that he does not *know* they are the editor's? Then there are few persons capable of giving an opinion upon the Socialists' proceedings for the "last two years," but can tell that "J. C. F." stand for *John Collier Farn*, a name, I know, quite at Mr. Hagen's or any one else's service. "R. R." is Richard Redburn, of Branch A 1.

I do not feel called upon to defend the sentiments of every person who speaks in the *Oracle*, and so shall leave these gentlemen, as they no doubt will prefer, to be left to answer for themselves, just begging them for *space's* sake to be brief as possible. With regard to the last general objection contained in Mr. H.'s epistle, I would just remark, that not only "so far as I am able to judge," but also as far as I *know* the writers in the *Oracle*, their object is simply to speak plain truth on questions they deem of great importance to Socialists in particular, and mankind in general; and they do this without asking whose prejudices shall they attack; whose follies they might with profit connive at, or whose vanities expediently flatter.

G. J. H.

A. E. N. is thanked for his communication, which may be used at a future period.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

J. W. suggests *Penny Subscriptions* for Southwell's case. Cards for that purpose will be issued by his committee at their next meeting.

M. RYALL, Secretary.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall Street, Sheffield; and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.—Saturday, May 12, 1842.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, *Philosophy Vindicated.*

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 22.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

**ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN
STYLE AND THOUGHT.**

PERHAPS a careful examination would show that every thing in a greater or less degree produces its kind. But, is any thing in the procreative way to be compared with the prolific properties of words? Words beget words, and then answers to them. This is little to be wondered at, for the proprieties of speech are as little understood as are the just proprieties of thought and action.

Style may be defined the picture of ideas which arise in the mind, and of the manner in which they do arise. This, it will be seen, relates to the natural, not the stiff, formal, conventional modes of writing and speaking. It relates to the manner in which people should communicate their thoughts.

Do critics always remember that all propriety in language is *relative*. Any word is improper which is not understood by the party to whom it is addressed. Hence an oath is justifiable when nothing else would be intelligible. But, to use a common phrase, is there not a fundamental error at the bottom of the condemnation so freely passed on "strong," "coarse," and "violent" language? When persons exclaim, "Oh, he might have expressed the same thing in a different and less objectionable way," do they always understand what they say? The meaning often is, he should have expressed himself in *my* way.

Really and plainly, does not their censure proceed on the assumption that any ideas may be expressed in a certain smooth, approved, and mean-anything manner. But is it so? Is not *style the child of thought*? Will any language express the *same* idea? Have not all words definite and distinct meanings, and when a person holds opinions accurately expressed by them, has he any choice but to use them without regard to their supposed "violence" "or coarseness?" Or, must he not dilute his true meaning, and become a hypocrite by using other and deceitful terms? What is the value of the boasted precision of correct language if this is not true? Or, with a keener eye to truth and utility, is just thought to conform to conventional phraseology, or is conventional lan-

guage to give way, as it ought, to justness of expression?

When a man *has fully and accurately conveyed his meaning*, can he or any one else convey the same precisely in any other words? No, decidedly *not!* Then this follows, that they who advise a man to use any set of namby-pamby phrases, in exchange for those of his own natural selection, act as they do, who, in order to change a man's convictions, address motives to the will, instead of arguments to the understanding. It is saying, "the language you use is irritative and startling, it will be safer and more respectable to employ milder;" instead of which, the true course to pursue in changing language is to change the thought which gave rise to its employment.

When a man sits down to freely inquire after truth, he can honestly make no stipulations with priests, pride, with his friends, nor with his own interests as to the conclusions at which he shall arrive. And having arrived at them, he can make no agreement as to the terms in which he will express them—for all depends upon the accidental contemporary existence of certain prudent, plausible, and approved stereotyped phrases, and the convictions which he is to hold. If these do not exist together, and he essays to express his new sentiments, he must run all risks, and jolt against fastidious cynics and ceremonious churls or keep back the kernels of his thoughts. For the world will tolerate only the shells of truth—the shadow, not the substance.

Hence, it will appear that objections to *manner* of expression merely are superficial. They arise from looking only *one* cause deep. The censure of style is idle and frivolous; unless it is sought to make men hypocrites. It is quarrelling with the effect only when the cause should be attended to. Men should take the advice of Bacon, and search two or three causes below the surface of things. These reflections are warmly commended to the reader's careful consideration, because by some it is made to appear that style is mere matter of choice—that the great struggle for full mental freedom is a mere puerile, childish objection to the use of words. And it is sought to be shown that men go to pri-

son, not for principles but for forms of speech. What is the use of thought if we are denied its expression? The right of expressing it how we like is as sacred as that of thinking what we please. We cannot be *free* without the one, nor *useful* without the other. It is in vain the mind is free, if the tongue is tied. As restraints on the one are broken off, the restrictions on the other must be cast away. Men can no more speak justly in the hampering phrases custom and expediency prescribe, than think freely with chains in prospective as the penalty. Perfect freedom of thought, and full freedom of speech are twin brothers, and should never be separated. Sincerity and delightful variety are the noble rewards of their union. And moreover, there is inculcated the invaluable practice of calling things by their right names, which is of more importance to society than all the hollow compliments in the vocabularies of politeness, or all the qualified phrases that ever danced on a simpering tongue.

G. J. H.

POLICY *versus* PRINCIPLE.

TO THE SOCIALISTS OF ENGLAND.

LETTER XII.

"Honesty IS the best Policy."

FRIENDS,

CONGRESS will meet in May, and much good is hoped from its deliberations; at the last, it was hinted that any future congress might be unnecessary; and even boldly prophesied that some time before that day twelve months the old immoral world would be entirely broken up—shivered to very splinters. But, alas! the hard-hearted inexorable fates, who "lead the willing and drag the unwilling," had otherwise decreed.

It is far easier to prophesy a good thing than to realise it, or we should have had a new moral world years ago. If the busy tongue of rumour may be credited, the new moral world, in consequence of some unforeseen accident, is postponed till further notice; so that, at least, one more congress will precede the final destruction of our present wretched, worn out state of society. Another rumour is, that the ensuing congress will be one of presidents or fathers. You all know that the members of former congresses were delegated by a majority of their respective branches; as might have been expected, such delegates will now cease, and the father of the branch will represent his children in congress. It is rather my hope than my expectation to find these social fathers aping the glorious conscripts, and your congress emulating the virtues of a Roman senate. If it be as rumour states, I shall be much gratified. It has long been my wish to see

the new paternal government, as it is called, fairly carried out, and the hollow scheme of centralization seen in all its force and all its weakness. The new form of government had from the first my hearty opposition, because I saw that it was a specious but futile attempt to cure the evils of division and folly, by the still greater evils of tame and spiritless submission on the one hand, and a very charitable despotism on the other. My *opinion* is, that a congress of social fathers will be more disastrous by its unity, than any prior one ever was by its division; but let us wish and pray that it may not be so; let us pray, if that be of any use, that the branches have not elected men of straw, but those who will have the courage to maintain the cause of principle in congress, and the very superior quality of common honesty. With a view to aid those who may be so disposed, I shall proceed to set down, briefly and succinctly, that which to *me* appears worthy of approval in the practice of the party, and that which should be severely reprobated. By doing this, whoever may be deputed to congress will see the sort of bird they have to pluck with me, and like prudent men, provide a bag for the feathers. My *pecadilloes* it is more than probable will be noticed in congress, and that, perhaps, in no friendly spirit. My object in this letter, then, is to give the pith of what I approve and what I object to in Social policy, so that no member who might choose to battle with shadows, or less than shadows, his own conceits, will be able to plead ignorance as an apology for injustice. Approving, which is by far the more pleasant part of the work, shall take the lead. I approve of the co-operative principle in the abstract; and as generally applied by the party in your halls of science, and at Tytherly. It seems to me morally certain, that where there is an opposition of interests, disunion and misery are inevitable. There is not a man of the party more firmly convinced than myself that all for each and each for all is the most enlightened principle of action, but never yet lent myself to the delusion that competition is always an evil, or that co-operation is *always* a good; or to the delusion still more gross and mischievous, that any nation is ripe for an entire change of political as well as commercial system, or fully prepared to act upon principles of perfect justice. Such well-meant delusions receive the same apology as the pious frauds of priests, but apologies avert not mischiefs. Falsehood is a weapon that generally recoils upon the hand that wields it. I approve of the five principles, called by your party fundamentals, though it is much to be wished that some competent person was employed to put them in decent, or rather, in philosophical

language; it would here be out of place, else it might easily be shown that though the principles may be defended, it is quite impossible to defend or even excuse the slovenly manner in which they are expressed. Indeed, the outline of the rational system, is, taken all in all, one of the most imperfect of Mr. Owen's productions, and by no means fitted to be the text-book of a philosophical party. It is not only wordy and ill-expressed, which are trifling defects, of little comparative moment, but exhibits tokens of a far more serious kind. Some enthusiastic advocates have, as it seems to me, rashly undertaken to defend every word Mr. Owen has written; which is more than I would undertake. Thus has been given in brief the extent of my approval; from a review of which, it will appear that I approve all that forms the basis and spring of your practical operations; all your endeavours to improve human character in harmony with the important principle that men are creatures of circumstances, in a sense admitting no limitation, have my heartiest wishes for their success; while the experiment at Tytherly is, to my thinking, one of the most important and useful that can be imagined. If conducted, as probably it will be, with spirit, skill, and integrity, incalculable will be the benefit derived by suffering humanity. But let me warn you neither to deceive yourselves nor the public, with regard to the universal application of co-operative principles; such deception can only bring down disgrace and ridicule upon a cause worthy of a Howard, a Hampden, or a Cato. It is worse than folly to amuse your enemies, and make your friends blush, by talking about milleniums, ages of gold, and what not, in the year eighteen hundred and forty two. The idea of a millenium is very pleasing, but human nature unfortunately is not yet quite prepared for it. A heaven below the clouds is just as far off for the present generation, as a heaven above the clouds for all generations. Enthusiasm is excellent, especially when united with a generous and noble faith in human nature; but without some wisdom, is little short of amiable madness. "How many *days* is it from Paris to the frontier?" sneeringly inquired Charles the fifth. "Perhaps twelve, but they will be days of battle;" replied his intrepid French prisoner. You may be only as many *days* from a millenium as Charles the fifth was from Paris; yet, like him, never get there. The twelve days of battle may, if not skilfully fought, last twelve centuries. My *objections* are, first to the name "Rational Religionists," That of "Universal Community Society" is, I conceive, quite long enough, and in all other respects, better without such a tail of expediency. As a party, you have not, or should not have anything to do with reli-

gions, good, bad, or indifferent. Some of your members have no more religion in them than my young lady's lap dog—who are far from being the less intelligent or valuable on that account. Nor is it merely because my religion happens to be of the dog kind, that objection is made to the name rational religionists, no, it is not *merely* the absurdity but the dishonesty of it. The name was adopted, and is still retained as an expedient. To escape the clutch and obtain the protection of law, was the cause of that singular christening. The motives of those who advised such truckling were, doubtless, good; but, as the blunt friend of the betrayed Stilicho said by the cowardly Honorius, "I know not what has been the motive or provocation to such conduct, I only know that you have used your left arm to cut off your right." The taking of oaths by some missionaries, always appeared to me highly objectionable. If they took the oath with a reservation, it was dishonest; if conscientiously, it was foolish: now, either folly or dishonesty is inconsistent with the just advocacy of enlightened principles. I object to the new form of government, not only for reasons given above, it being the ludicrous blunder of putting the cart before the horse, but as a move calculated to throw power into hands which have too much already. To me it appears a bad limitation of an execrable original. The Jesuits showed to perfection the advantage and disadvantage of a government of unity; but you shall have my conviction without fear or flattery, which is, that your party is no more in a condition to ape Jesuit *virtues*, than to practice Jesuit vices. Had proper care been taken with regard to the character and general acquirements of those claiming the privilege of membership, it would have been of little importance what form of government you had, the intellect would have been with you, and where that is, all other excellencies follow. I object to a marriage system, as, to say the least, premature—no more called for *now*, at all events, than a religious system; and heaven knows, or rather we all know that men are surfeited by religious systems. When any of us get into a first-rate community, it will be quite early enough to regulate sexual intercourse. My own opinion is, that tacking a marriage system to the philosophy of socialism, did more to bring the system and the philosophy into contempt than any other single cause. There is no perceptible difference between the absurdity of a marriage system of the new moral world, and the religious system of the new moral world. The regulation of religious opinions and sexual intercourse must ever be contingent upon the general circumstances of any given period or state of society. Let all questions

be freely discussed, whether marriage, religion, or any other; but it is absurd to arrange details for future ages, instead of making judicious use of materials for the present. There are many other objections, did space permit me to enumerate them, but I must content myself with one more, which is, perhaps, the most important. That objection is to the indirect, but, as to me it appears, insidious attempts made by your executive to check, if not stifle, free discussion. Every missionary must have felt this, though, perhaps, few dare, that is, can afford, to offend the executive. The late notice of the Central Board, expressing a desire that the lectures delivered in the Social Institution, on the Sunday evenings, should be confined to the explanation of the rational system, was, to my view of things, a stinging insult—one which, had it been offered to me by the board, would have been the *first* and *last*. My face flushed with shame, not unmixed with indignation at sight of that order, which was neither more nor less than a genteel notice to quit, to all restive missionaries, whose tongues are not of the orthodox length, and ready to wag when and how, and only when and how the board is “desirous.” The following week my friends of Lambeth, who never were remarkably docile to the voice of authority, or in the habit of inquiring who should lecture for them, or what should be lectured about, to their surprise, no doubt, were admonished, “that the lectures delivered at the Social Institutions should be confined,” &c. Mr. Wright, it appears, not having on the previous Sunday lectured on the “Rational System,” but on the subject of “Fruit Diet.” So you will perceive that the missionaries must resign office *or* independence. But the plain truth is, that the party has done its work, and there is no more employment in the free inquiry way. There is a glut of talkers in the market, and the board now want actors. Gibbon informs us that such was the strict subordination of the Catholic church, that the same concerted sounds might issue at once from a hundred pulpits of Italy or Egypt, if they were TUNED by the master hand of the Roman and Alexandrian primate. Whether such strict subordination will ever prevail in the Social pulpits it would be rash to affirm or deny; but it seems not improbable, that the voices of your missionaries will be so well tuned by the master hand, that the same concerted sounds will issue upon all proper occasions, from the various Social pulpits. The party is indeed rapidly tending towards a well tuned sing-song, unfortunately, at the cost of mental liberty.

Your well wisher,

C. S.

MR. MACKINTOSH'S NEW GOD.

“Say, first of god above and man below,
What can we reason, but from what we know?”

How the path of learning would have been smoothed, what heaps of metaphysical lumber unrequited, and what volumes of controversy saved, had men profited by the judicious hint of the poet, and confined their reasonings to that they *knew*, or to that they found to be based on rational evidence! Unless I mistake the matter, these remarks will not be without their application to the subject under consideration.

The distress of the times to one class, and the income tax to another, are calamities enough to be borne at one period, but to these is added a fresh misfortune—the importation of a new deity!

The gentleman to whom we are indebted for this *favor*, is a perfect genius in his way, who stops at nothing, from the construction of a world, or the improvement of a steam-engine, to the manufacture of a god!

In a more serious tone be it said, Mr. T. S. Mackintosh is the author of several works on science and morals, which do his head much more credit than the one now before me, entitled, “A Dissertation on the Being and Attributes of God.” Mr. M. on most questions is a shrewd, sensible man, and, as such, one of the worst possible persons for his present undertaking and object. He used to declare that “ignorance was the mother of devotion,” and god being the sole darling of devotion, ignorance and god must be mother and child. Now knowledge is beyond dispute the foe of ignorance, and by inference fatal to her offspring; then, in the proportion that Mr. M. is removed from stupidity is he unfit for his task. As a goddister, I should regard with considerable suspicion all attempts by men of science and reason to bolster up the reputed existence of my favourite in the world, for they ever do most to lay it low. My patronising hand should be laid on those who would believe things divine in the ratio of their mystery, and swallow them, as Tertullian did miracles, the more readily because of their *impossibility*.

The “Dissertation” occupies some fifty-six pages, much of which is little connected with the subject; the most useful part is that having no direct reference to the main question agitated, but is given for the benefit of the uninitiated reader. The whole affords another proof that religion tinctures with ferocity the best minds. The spirit pervading nearly every page is the uncandid and intolerant one, that all who differ from Mr. Mackintosh are either “stupid bigots,” or “stupid Atheists;” and it is not without expectation of being classed under one of these heads that I venture upon a review.

The reader is led into the middle of the

book on the negative excursion of learning what "god is *not*." It may be remarked, by the way, that this is the right scent, the one in which the difficulty is not great of stumbling over the conclusion that god is nothing determinable by sense or analogy.

The work of negation commences with denying the *personality* of god, and his *creatorial* competence, then his first-causeship, omnipotent power, infinite justice, infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, and all the other infinities, kingly office, crown, throne, sceptre, heaven, angels, "Jew Book," and the whole paraphernalia of religion, hell and the devil excepted, whom he does not even deign to mention; but all the others cited are thrust away with as much rudeness as Satan and his troops were, according to Milton, thrust out of god's garret window; Mr. M. stigmatising them as so many "vulgar ideas of deity." One of the prophets talks of the lord sweeping the earth with the besom of destruction, which besom would be worn out in a few moments in Mr. M.'s hands, so fiercely does he seem to remove the sacred rubbish. And it may be added, that the work of demolition is so effectually completed, that the reader acquires the fullest conviction that no rational ingenuity can ever repair the mischief. Nor do Mr. M.'s subsequent attempts to palm, as a substitute, a new modification upon the reader's credulity, at all alter his opinion. I guess that Mr. M.'s orthodox friends, the Bishop of Exeter included, in whose estimation Mr. M. essays to stand as a kind of "shabby-genteel" religionist, that is as devout a religionist as science and the times will allow—I guess that these gentlemen will prefer the attacks of their frank, if "vulgar," enemies the Atheists, to the strange and dubious overtures Mr. M. makes in their favour. With them his "Dissertation" will be regarded as a "*Mutilation of the Being and Attributes of God*," and their affection for the author will be somewhat analagous to that men entertain for Greenacre or Daniel Good. Mr. M.'s plan is merely the transference to theology of the child's card game, of "strip Jack naked;" and the *very ceremonious* manner in which he lops off from the trunk of deity the revered branches or attributes of Christian adoration, I take to be an improved mode of "respecting prejudices," set forth as an example to "vulgar Atheists" for their guidance to propriety and decorum.

In the reconstruction of deity, the burden of Mr. M.'s song, he proceeds thus, "Power," says he, is the "fundamental idea" or essence "of god." This is the point on which he says all Atheists are agreed, viz. that there is power, and from this point all Mr. M.'s reasoning proceeds (see par. 25). But before taking up this notable position, Mr. M. makes an awful stand at the "hopeless case of the Atheist who can be so absurd as to

suppose that matter and motion are enough, without power to sustain that motion." Just as if any mortal man ever meant anything else than power by the term motion—motion being nothing but the material manifestation of power. Should Mr. M. argue that motion is communicated, and ask for the communicator, he is referred to his own "Electrical Theory of the Universe," where he himself answers the question when put by the Newtonians, in support of what Mr. M. styles the "*primitive shove*."

But Mr. M. essays to overturn the "vulgar notions of Atheists," and to give them *sublime* notions of deity. But if *power be god*, verily, verily (as Christ used to say) he is brought home to us at last, with all his sublimities thick upon him. Gunpowder is latent power, and of course god; then a bandit may thrust him into his belt in a brace of pistols, or hang him in a flask over his mantlepice to dry; men may pick him up in the lever, or twist him in the screw, see him in the bursting of a boiler, or trace him in the carnage track of the cannon ball, hang him round a pulley in a mill, and sell him to children in a penny cracker to fire at the effigy of Guy Fawkes. Truly this does put the inelegant imagination of the Atheist to the blush. Dr. Watt's shuddered at space being styled god, "for if so," cried the doctor, in heavenly horror, "we may say one part of him is longer than another part of him, and that twenty-five inches of the divine nature broad, long, and deep, will contain two feet of solid matter." Why, even this is sublimity itself to Mr. M.'s power god, who in the shape of a water-drop may be poked with a stick into hot metal, and made to cut all sorts of capers; can be indexed on the steam-engine as so many pounds pressure of "pure" god, or estimated by the engineer as so many horse or donkey power of deity.

But Mr. M. is too shrewd not to be aware of the ridiculous consequences of this position, and like mercury sublimated into calomel, his power god he converts into mind, as quickly as possible. "Power," he says, "is an attribute of matter," and, *happily*, of mind too. Here it is to be observed, that Mr. M. derives his happiness, and that of his subject from a distinction without a difference. For that the "power of the mind" is only the manifestation of the power of matter in another form, Sir C. Bell and other eminent physiologists have abundantly proved, as, indeed, does every fact establishing the materiality of the mind.

In order to support the theory of a "pure mind god," which Mr. M. advances, he turns an analogical resurrectionist, and parades forth, with no little importance and solemnity, the mangled forms or tortured ghosts of the watch and chair arguments of

very *designed* celebrity. To say that he fails to prove, or adduce reasonable evidence of a god by analogy, is no more than may be said of all who ever did, and probably of all who may attempt the same chimerical thing.

That all importations, no matter how ingenious, from the uncertain, incomplete, and inconclusive regions of analogy, must be unsatisfactory, seems clear; because *all* things of which man can become cognizant are *finite, transient, and relative, or parts* merely of nature; and it appears obvious that no *part* of nature can ever reveal any conclusive evidence of the mechanism, constitution, and government of the whole, any more than our short period of time can enable us to fathom eternity, or the transient changes we witness can teach us to comprehend the everlasting duration of matter. He ought to know this, and had he fully felt it, he would never have wasted his time in evolving his specious and sophistical theory.

To use a plain illustration, after Mr. Mackintosh's own manner, the portion of the universe coming under man's observation can no more inform him of the government of the whole, than a small wheel or fine pivot can indicate the mechanism to which it may belong, whether a watch, perpetual motion, or a smoke jack.

To render this more intelligible or credible, let us see whether it is not, so far as he has gone. His grand position is, "there must be a mind in nature *because* there is a mind in man. If this reasoning be correct, he is right, if not, he is wrong. In the first place, it is to be premised that, in order to give feasibility to his position, Mr. M. is compelled to argue from those very exploded notions of mind against which, every week, he, as a Social missionary, warns the public.

Secondly, in section or paragraph 28, he tells us, "mind is necessary to direct the operations of the universe, and that it is denied by no one except "absolute" Atheists, although in sec. 15, he gives the assurance that there is no such thing as an absolute Atheist in existence.

In sec. 28, he contends that "as mind is necessary to direct the operations of the body, so it is to direct the operations of nature." But this mode of writing violates just ideas of the mind's true nature. It would appear from what he says that mind is something *distinct* from the body, a kind of separate director like a superintendent of police, or the chairman of a railway company: but instead of this being the case, mind is but a "*series of excitements*," and the "body is directed" mainly by the influence of external things on the physical organisation of the body, and before the analogy is worth anything, we must be

shown the *external* things which influence the organisation of the universe, and excite those directing manifestations, which, when observed in man, we call mind.

Mr. M. further confounds all correct properties of mind, as taught by the Social philosophy he professes. Take the following passage from sec. 38. He says there a "misconception appears to lie in the supposition that because all the operations of nature are carried on according to tried laws, that therefore there is no necessity for a controlling and directing mind. As well might it be affirmed that, because all the physical operations of the human body are under the control of fixed laws, there is no necessity for a human mind." By this Mr. M. leads the reader to conclude that the mind is some uncontrolled, free, and independent agent, shouting, "Come, come! Go, go!" like the centurion in the "Jew Book." But Mr. M.'s rostrum philosophy teaches that the *mind is regulated by "fixed laws,"* as well as the physical motions of the body. In fact, as Mr. M. has often to expound, the mind is the creature of circumstances. Now, if the analogy be correct, the mind of nature is also the creature of circumstances, and like the mind of man must act under "fixed laws." Being then, as is thus shown, one with matter, inseparable from it, as it is regulated by similar "fixed laws," where is its distinct directing properties? Mr. M.'s theory will be found to consist in giving new names to physical properties, and in drawing the veil of pseudo philosophic mystery over that which was before intelligible.

Subsequently the reader is treated to sundry sections on the intelligence, wisdom, the identity, and *distinct* existence! and goodness of the mind of nature, and such like delectable dreaming that would do honour to John Bunyan. To wade through all this would be idle until Mr. M. has supplied some important deficiencies, necessary to establish on any probable grounds his analogy between mind in man and in nature.

I have seen him ring a bell before an audience, and exclaim, "You hear the concussion between the clapper and bell, a sound is produced. Well, that sound, my friends, is no part of the clapper or the bell, but it is an *effect, produced by the excitement* of the two. Such is the mind of man. *External* circumstances operate on his nervous system, and thought is produced, which we call mind." Now, to support his conclusions with regard to the mind of nature, he may be fairly challenged to show us the bell of the universe and the clapper in nature, and the **EXTERNAL** *circumstances* which

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produce the concussion and evolve the mind of nature. If man's mind is the creature of circumstances, as before remarked, so is nature, then *where* are the circumstances of which it is the creature? If nature be the universe as Mr. M. admits, there is not room even for the *echo* to answer, *where*?

Again, the mechanism of a man's mind is made up of brain, nerves, and spinal marrow. Where are the brain, nerves, and spinal marrow of nature? Mind enlarges with education, and grows feeble in old age. Does the mind-god of nature go to school, and will the eternal grow feeble with age, like poor human mentality?

Moreover, the mind according to phrenology has thirty five bumps. Can Mr. M. lay his hand on, or point his finger to, the bumps of nature? If he can, we may be enlightened with a natural phrenology, as we have been with a natural religion. This scheme might be carried out, but when the ocean came to be classified, Mr. M.'s god would be suspected of *water* on the brain.

Mr. M. does not profess to give proof of his creations, but he must admit the propriety of affording such particulars as will enable "stupid" people to see the connection between the things he speaks so imperatively about. The question might be traced much further, but sufficient has been advanced to show that, as an argument of analogy, it is very incomplete, and consequently, all the inferences are inconclusive in the same degree. Apart from all such investigation; Mr. M.'s god, taken as he is given to us, and considered as a tolerably respectable invention, is not of the slightest use to anybody. It is not pretended by Mr. M. that he created the universe, the first job of all former deities—and, if the universe existed independently of him, and could of its own innate power, exist without a god, why not be able to conduct itself with propriety without one? And where came the distinct existence of the mind from? And how ingratiate itself into the good favour of the universe, so as to get the office of perpetual director? Surely the universe, like the Socialists, did not require a Social Father? These questions are put only to show that the new god clears away none of those difficulties by which the old ones have ever been surrounded, but leaves us in all the doubt, suspense, and mystery so peculiar to the whole tribe.

Mr. M. strangely misconceives or grossly mistakes the position and pretention of the Atheist, which are as far removed from dogmatism, as Mr. M.'s version of them is from truth. He also talks of "pure mind as being the only form in which we can

conceive of god." Just as if he, I, or any one else could conceive of that we never saw, nor any one else can describe to us. For a complete exposure of these common errors (it would swell this chapter to an unmerciful length to notice them here), the reader is referred to a "Reply," just published, price 3d., written by Mr. Southwell, in answer to a Discourse on Deity, by a philosophical inquirer, who falls, with Mr. M., like blind and lame into the same ditches.

In conclusion, I render to Mr. M. an analogy, which, as far as I shall carry, it will have more points of resemblance than his own. It is between Newton and himself. Newton was a theorizer on the universe, so is Mr. M. Both have obtained celebrity thereby. But Newton wrote like a driveller on religion. Mr. M. seems travelling the same inglorious road. This says little as a disparagement, but much as a caution, Men accustomed to science, live in the atmosphere of reason, when they descend to write for theology, they are out of their element; acquainted only with the region of fact, they are lost in that of conjecture, in this sense, there are no amphibious philosophers. A priest is more successful, his native element is nonsense, and it is his misfortune to be able to live in it. I cannot, otherwise, account for Mr. M.'s strange production.

Next week I hope to expose those "absurdities of vulgar superstition," against which he declaims so prettily on his title page, but falls into so nicely in his book.

G. J. H.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A FEW MORE WORDS IN EXPLANATION.

CHARLES DENT has written, urging the necessity of directing special attention to the relations of man with the physical world, in contradistinction to the doctrine of the heaven and soul-mongers. He says:—

Divines have ever said, and naturalists and others have ever supported them in saying, that man is superior to all animals, not only relatively or locally, which I admit, but in the abstract and absolutely. On this general belief rests their system of absurdities. Destroy this belief, which is comparatively easy, for the religious world, almost without exception, have already done 99 per cent. of the labour, by refusing to admit any of the so-called inferior animals into their heaven. Show that man is identically the same in nature as all other animals, that he is indeed wholly as they are, a natural production; that he is a creature of natural necessity, as well as of societarian necessity; that he, like all animals and plants, springs from the earth, being always essentially a part of the earth; that nature being eternal, knows no superiority nor inferiority, no good no bad, and that man's superiority over all other animals is an assumption of his own, and will go for what it is worth—nothing.

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By this one of two things would appear : either that the writer has not read, or having read has not perceived, the leading object and drift of the series of articles, "Theory of Regular Gradation."

If the writer has not seen or read these papers, it becomes matter of great gratulation that so admirable a train of reflection should have suggested itself apart from, and almost contemporaneously with, that part of the plan traced out for the conducting of the *Oracle*. If he has read these articles, it may be that they have not been expressed in a sufficiently plain and popular manner to be clear to every comprehension. It would thus devolve on the writers to review what had been done, in order to detect where they had failed in making themselves intelligible.

He also says, Infidels "generally content themselves with exposing the craft of the parsonry, instead of doing, as I think they might, *cut the ground from under them*." This vice has been already strongly insisted on in numbers 8 and 11, by the undersigned.

M. Q. R.

ON DESIGN.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR,—From reading the last number of the *Oracle of Reason*, I have been tempted to offer you a few remarks on that much vaunted analogical argument for universal design, based upon a watch. At one time this argument appeared to me insuperable, and I am not surprised that so prominent a station should be assigned to it by the advocates of a god. We are not, I now think, warranted by the strict rules of philosophy and reason in flying from a material to a supposed immaterial agent, to account for any hitherto unexplained phenomenon of nature, until science can truly assert that she is fully acquainted with all the various principles and properties of matter; that she has comprehended the whole compass of nature's powers, understanding its infinite operations, and that any given phenomena cannot be explained by the known properties belonging to matter—then we may reasonably believe in other agents than those of matter. To whatever height the mind of man may soar, man, with all his mental manifestations is, in my opinion, but matter; and no one portion of matter, however fine its texture or beautiful its organisation, is able to comprehend all the properties and powers of other material existences. Therefore man can have no concern with immaterial existences, until he be able to grasp the entire material world, and still find something unexplained.

I shall now proceed to an examination of the argument, that the construction of a watch proving a designer, by analogy as much may be asserted from it of the construction of

the universe and all organised beings. The greatest difficulty I feel, is to give my meaning in a few words, and at the same time to render my views clear and intelligible. I would first observe, that the number of our ideas comprise the amount of our knowledge; our knowledge is derived from a two-fold source, actual experience and tradition: the first, our only true knowledge, the second, either oral or written, being merely belief. Experience being the strongest, we appeal to it in preference to belief. To apply this principle to the argument in question: by our experience we never knew a watch to be formed or fashioned without a watch-maker, and consequently we dare assert, with all the confidence warranted by our experience, that no watch exists but through the designing mind and fashioning power of the watch-maker. Thus far are the designers right, but no farther, for when they attempt to draw a parallel between a watch and the universe the analogy fails them, and I shall endeavour to show in what manner, as the whole strength of the position hinges on this. In the first place, notwithstanding that our knowledge of the properties of matter is very limited, it extends so far as to assure us that it is not the property of the matter composing the watch to run into the order of cog-wheels, springs, &c., which would adapt themselves to each other, in order to answer a certain and definite end; and we, therefore, naturally infer a fashioner, a designer. But the question is, can as much be said of the matter composing the universe; or to descend to particulars, can it be said of the animated matter of the embryo, confined in the uterus of an animal during the period of gestation, which forms the nucleus of the future animal? Can we say that it is not the intrinsic, inherent property of this condition of matter to run into the order of an organised animal, but that it must have had an intelligent designer, who moulded it into the form it comes forth to the world? If so, I would ask, what becomes of this designing power in cases of malformation? We have just as much reason for asserting that the beautifully formed prism of salt required a designer, though we know that in virtue of certain immutable properties of matter any given acid combined chemically with a given alkali will invariably produce a certain shaped prism; as we have for asserting that any given animal uniting with another given animal will not produced an animal of a certain shape, in consequence of the modes or properties pertaining to the matter composing their organisms, without the interference of a designer.

R. J.

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Saturday, May 21, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 23.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

JUSTICE.

“The subject of duties is the most useful part of all philosophy.”—*Cicero*.

SOME persons have no other idea of justice than the fulfilment of the requirements of the law. In its true extent, it signifies that virtue which impels us to give to every person his due.

Hierocles, among the ancients, gives some most judicious directions for the formation of all moral ideas, in accordance with justice; indeed, the ancients may be said to have understood the science of justice much more accurately than we practice it, which is but saying very little indeed for them, if they did not.

No observations give so beautiful an idea of charity as those which teach us to resolve it into justice. All charity which, upon analysis, is found to partake of any other quality than this, is of an erroneous kind, and leads, when practised, to erroneous action, and when spoken of to erroneous ideas. When men are charitable, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, it really means nothing else than that they give that as a boon which is due as a right.

Supposing, for the sake of argument, as a disputant would, that there is a god. If worthy to be entertained, every attribute of such a being should be resolvable into justice. Without it benevolence is assumption, goodness a mockery; wisdom is essential to direct it, truth is its consequence, power its support. And, in the same manner, every quality is auxiliary to it.

The same is true of the moral qualities of men, and all those exalted sentiments which should belong to them. Sincerity, the first of virtues, is based upon a strong sense of justice. It is the soul of honesty, it dictates consistency, and careful thought will show it to be all men really mean by benevolence. Mercy is unheard of where full justice is practised. In short, justice is the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega of all virtue, for all the duties of life flow from it, and are ascertained by its standard.

To discover the just measure of things is the attribute of intelligent and generous natures only. To act consistently with and to

practice justice, is the quality only of heroic and noble souls. It is an unfortunate omen of modern times, that we have so few incarnations of the “just Aristides.” In rhetoric, arguments founded on justice have more weight with rational minds than all appeals to the feelings ingenuity can invent. Indeed, the sympathy of those is worth little who are insensible to the claims of justice.

The acknowledgment of its guidance has by some been held ennobling above all things. Hence Shakspeare, without any qualification, advises men “to be just and fear not.” And asks,

What stronger breast-plate than a heart untainted?
Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just;
And *naked* he, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

Justice was the great charm of Brutus, which gave the majesty to his character, it is the key-stone to all greatness. Much of the effeminacy of modern times would disappear, together with all our artificial morality, and sound healthy thought and action would pervade men’s minds, if the science of justice received the attention it deserves.

G. J. H.

MR. MACKINTOSH’S NEW GOD.

ARTICLE II.

“A profound ignorance, boundless credulity, weak intellect, and warm imagination, are the materials of which are made bigots, zealots, fanatics, and saints.”—*Cure of Etrepigny*.

WHETHER or not these qualifications are necessary for god-concoctors, they are the indispensables of god-adoptors. Mr. Mackintosh may not be desirous of nurturing such qualities of mind, but the popularity of his book depends upon his success in finding readers who possess them.

A more curious compound of inconsistency has seldom been handed over to the public for their enlightenment than Mr. M.’s production, if the reader takes into account what Mr. M. has, and what he might have produced, had it been *politic* for him to have taken philosophy and truth for his guides.

He labours (par. 12), no one knows why,

first to prove that, strictly, there can be no Atheists at the very moment he is writing a book to refute their arguments and check their growing power. It does not a little puzzle the reader to guess the definition of the parties with whom he professes to quarrel. To clear up the mystery thrown around the question, it is proper to premise that no man finds out sooner than the Atheist that there is nothing "absolute" in the universe, and, therefore, he pretends not to the character. As an Atheist, I understand Mr. M. to be a man who thinks there is sufficient reason to believe in, not to *know*, the existence of a god. On the contrary, I, as an Atheist, simply profess that I do not see sufficient reason to *believe* that there is a god. I do not pretend to *know* that there is no god. The whole question of god's existence, *belief* or *disbelief*, a question of probability or of improbability, not knowledge. In fine, the Theist *believes*, and the Atheist *disbelieves*, that there is a god. When a Theist, like locust-John in the wilderness, comes crying, "prepare the way for my lord," I beg leg leave to inquire *why* he believes his lord is on the road after him? And when an Atheist says, after the fashion of Elisha, god is gone a journey or is taking a nap, and neglects to make his appearance, he is as willing as St. Paul to give a reason for the hope (or more properly in this case), *disbelief*, that is in him.

Mr. M., as a Theist, or professed believer in god, was bound to display the ground of his belief. In that portion of his book reviewed in the last number of the *Oracle*, he has attempted this, but with what success the reader has seen. In his anxiety to disprove atheism he has mutilated, if not annihilated, theism; and destroyed his own friends while professing to compliment them by attacking their foes.

In order to make out a case on the outside, if not in the inside, of his book, Mr. M. constructs a sentence to adorn his title-page, in which he confounds "extreme," with mere negative opinions; and, makes the simple matter of dissent from the absurdities of theology, to appear as "vulgarity," and then asserts that the "Atheist helps the priest," by his "extreme opinions," in the very face of the fact, that the Atheist's opinions are but the negatives of the priest's, and that they cannot "help" him, unless a priest is "helped" by being proved in error and an ignorant or wilful deceiver. If Mr. M. affects to believe this an assistance, the priests, with all the "absurdities of vulgar superstition" upon their heads are acute enough to be of a different opinion.

The part of Mr. M.'s book which remains

to be particularly discussed in this paper, is that part where he rests the existence of god and its acknowledgment, on new and novel grounds—free from the annoyances of logic or the "vulgar" interruptions of reason.

The first introduction to this is contained in pars. 33-4, which are upon the "*goodness of god*," and evidently written rather to support a theory than to illustrate truth. To fully understand this, the reader is referred to par. 4, where Mr. M. says, "when the theologian talks of the goodness of god, the Atheist points to the disease and death, and suffering, of all kinds existing among sentient creatures; and asks, are these evidences of goodness on the part of the governing power? And *these objections have not been answered*." Reading this, I passed on with impatience to pars. 33 and 34, to see the answers to be given to these queries by Mr. M., and there I found, not the matter at last philosophically cleared up, but slightly passed over, as "special cases adduced by cavillers." To shield his concocted god from the reproach to which, with all others, this deficiency of defence leaves him open, he advances the questionable proposition that "*evil is necessary that good may exist*"; and argues that because "want must precede gratification, cold, warmth, hunger, eating, darkness, light, &c., therefore, evil is necessary." Such logic may do to defend deity but hardly anything else. "Want is no evil when the gratification can follow, but a pleasing precursor to it. No one regards cold or hunger as evils, when agreeable warmth can succeed the one, and a good meal the other. All know that the epicure looks upon appetite (but another name for "want") as the greatest earthly blessing, which M. sets down in his theological philosophy as an "evil." But when want gnaws his victim, and is never satisfied; when hunger exhibits his gaunt visage, and famine drags, as it daily does, thousands to the grave, will Mr. M., in the spirit of his cold-hearted and inhuman reasoning, bring godly consolation to these poor wretches, by telling them that this evil is necessary to their enjoyment of good—which good in such cases as these can never come? Excess is evil! And the examples I have just cited, are of this character, but Mr. M. passes such over, and makes the order of nature for the regulation of our enjoyment to appear as evil, and argues his case from these erroneous premises. Even death is no evil, but a blessing in old age, when nature has prepared for it; but, as Cotton says, "when youthful blood runs high" it is a very different thing, and then evil only leads to it. But apart from what is evil and what

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is not, can the proposition be defended, that evil is necessary to good? If so, Mr. M. should embrace it wherever he finds it, with open arms, it being indispensable to the good all men desire, and to stand hesitating in the matter would be to delay his happiness. Did any man ever voluntarily reduce such a precept to practice? To do so would be regarded as madness. When Mr. M. calls on public meetings to adopt the principles of Social philosophy to cure the evils of society, he is inconsistent, as, from his own assertion, he feels evil to be necessary to good. Why, if this be true, then have we the best possible reason to be glad of our condition, for the evil is abundant at present, and the good of course, also, evil being one of its conditions; and Mr. M. should rejoice at those evils of vulgar superstition and atheism which he affects to deplore, inasmuch as they are necessary to his enjoyment of consequent good. In morals, if this principle be true, distinctions between right and wrong may be dispensed with, for if evil increases our happiness on the whole, good can do no more, and either will do in the long run. This may do in theological morality, but hardly in that which is to elevate mankind.

I have slightly hinted at the miseries of poverty and famine, and might point to the black and bloody catalogue of crimes perpetrated by religion alone, to the condition of three fourths of all the people on the globe, which wretchedness Mr. M. would sneer over, as so many "special cases adduced by cavillers;" but leaving alone the untenableness of such a position, I may ask, how does it comport with Mr. M.'s chief reason for setting up a god among mankind. In his preface he says, "belief in god is beneficial to man as an *individual*, and a comfort, stay and support against despair and adversity." But how can I be supported as an individual, or rely on him in the hour of trial, when not only my "despair and adversity," but that also of half the world, or at least the millions of my own countrymen, would be sneered at as "special cases offered to his notice by cavillers." And now upon this subject it may be added, that even if he was willing to help, Mr. M. has further broken the bruised reed of my hopes, by making his god of *limited* power, so that I should be in doubt as to whether in my case he was able.

Mr. M. apparently aware of the weakness of the far-fetched and tortured analogies whereby he has sought to prove the being of his god, tells us (par. 43) that the question is in reality not a question of *fact* but of moral influence.

After thus apologising for himself, he proceeds to the ungracious duty of apolo-

gising for his deity, and prays expediency to receive the god which sense and argument rejects, and endeavours to rest upon policy the establishment that proof fails to support. Expediency, the gutter hole of politics and sink of mortal reputation, is made the throne of Mr. M.'s pure mind god. Expediency, the apology for every crime and protect of all injustice, the tolerator of all abortions and enormities in the world: from this loathsome sea of corruption Mr. M. drags out his deity to exercise a moral influence on mankind and exalt our love of justice and excellence.

The position Mr. M. takes is this—It is *politic* to have a god. Against this I most solemnly protest. I object on the ground of economy; we are decidedly too poor to support one. God costs us now twenty millions per year, besides the curses in the shape of religions fostered in the hot-bed of the divine sanction, and the perpetual bickerings, heartburning, oppressions, gloom, cruelty, and Bonnerism," hourly flowing from their influence. Perhaps all our other calamities are not equal in amount and horror to those flowing from, and traceable to god-belief. Priestcraft in every age, and up to the last minute, has written with a bloody pen the destiny of humanity. Had men been without god in the world, this would never have been.

The real question for consideration, according to Mr. M., is this:—

Tell me (he says) the character of the gods of a nation, and I will tell you the character of that nation. * * The real question for consideration is this: "Supposing a moral model, or beau ideal of perfect intelligence and goodness, were so strongly impressed upon the mind of a nation, that they should love and reverence this beau ideal; in doing which they must of necessity love and reverence both intelligence and goodness, for these constitute its essence; would this impression, producing love and reverence for this beau ideal, have a tendency to elevate that nation in the scale of intelligence and goodness?" This question might be put conversely, and the same answer must be given in both cases. "If a nation could be impressed with a love and reverence towards a beau ideal of perfect moral evil, &c., would not this tend to degrade that nation in morals and intelligence?"

One cannot here help wondering once more at the unblushing coolness with which Mr. M. leaves the question of *fact* about the being of a god, upon which his theism only can rest, and which he contends must be established, or the Atheist will triumph. After parading this fact through forty-two sections, as one which none but vulgar Atheists question, he abandons this, and proceeds to build up the moral influence of god without it—and upon what foundation is this sought to be created? Upon a demonstration

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drawn from nature, matured by philosophy, and supported by logic? Hear it, ye Atheists, but tell it not in Gath, nor publish it in the streets of Askelon—it is founded upon a *supposition*!! This, he tells us, in italics, is the *real question*. Thus, we have *polite* and impregnable goddism, theistical and religious philosophy, resting upon *supposition* for *fact*, upon *policy* for *reason*, and upon *expediency* for *truth*.

Now, a god like the graven image of Nebuchadnezzar could be set up—and the Shadrach's, Meshach's and Abednego's of vulgar atheism, out of the way, of course, perhaps simply lodged in some fiery furnace—then will the people worship the model of goodness before them. This is the pith of Mr. M.'s argument. To which I have four objections: first, it is *impossible* to be carried out, and if possible, *useless* for the end proposed; thirdly, it is pernicious; and fourthly, degrading.

With regard to the impossibility, no nation was ever imposed upon in the way Mr. M. proposes. All gods have ever been the creations of the people who worshipped them. This fact Mr. M. more conveniently than justly says is, "besides the question." But we learn from it, that if the spirit of the people is uniformly erected into the god, unless the order of things is inverted before Mr. M.'s god can be set up, the people must possess all the morality and goodness their god is intended to give them. In fact, they must be able to do without him before he can be of any service to them. And in this state he would be a burden instead of an aid, and would have to be dragged in the rear when he should lead in the van.

The scheme is impossible, until the fact of god's existence is incontrovertibly established he cannot be set up whether desirable or not. The day is gone by when chimeras in any dress or under any pretext can be imposed upon a people, and I thought the day was gone by too, when pretenders to philosophy would propose it, and "apostles of free thought would attempt." People will no longer worship the crazy or capricious creations which expediency may invent, or policy set up. In proof of this, I point to the fact, that every religion is now and ever has been attempting the same thing, and their failures have been contemporaneous with their attempts. It is true that each sect confines its pretensions to one or three gods, but every sect's and every man's god differs from all others, and we have really as many gods as we have religionists, and fairly put the thirty thousand of the old Greeks to the blush. In this babel medley and infernal struggling of each party to set up a god, what chance has Mr. M.'s of standing on its legs? If the power of the state, of a law of

blasphemy, and logic as convenient as Mr. M.'s own has not prevented him from knocking the god of Israel and the "Jew Book" over, how many new laws of blasphemy, &c., will be wanted to enable Mr. M.'s god to drive the great multitude of more respectable and orthodox gods out of the religious market? Mr. M. ought to understand competition in our day better. We may reduce the general glut by the dissemination of atheism, but Mr. M. can get no sale for his new, plain, and ungarlanded commodity. His case, as he says of his opponents in sec. 24, "is utterly hopeless."

But if the scheme was practicable, it would not answer the end proposed, which is to make people moral. The great argument against teaching truth and undeceiving the simpletons of religion is, that when they discover the cheat, they usually become reckless in the degree of their former dupery. What means would there be of preventing this occurring continually with Mr. M.'s god, unless the people were first rendered completely stupid; which seems but a sorry preparative for morality? The influence of a deity requiring such material to operate upon, must be very choice; which would be making man seven-fold more the child of vice than before. Morality, the great business of life, is founded upon a knowledge of our relations to our fellow creatures—the theory of goddism, upon ignorance. How can the latter teach or support the former? In order for a people to progress, ignorance must be displaced by knowledge. God is invented only to hide our ignorance; this, while continued, must ever be injurious: we want stimuluses to go forward, not excuses for staying behind. Besides this, it might be shown in a hundred senses, that the institution of a god would not, in detail, answer the end proposed. Now for a word or two on the manner in which the attempt is *pernicious*.

We are imitative beings, argues Mr. M., place a good example before men, and you help their progress in virtue. As children, good example does much for us; but if fitted to make us highly moral, how comes it to be driven from the philosophy of education as prejudicial, and perception and reason cultivated in their stead? But Mr. M.'s theological theories would treat men as children in the stages of helpless ignorance, and under the guidance of ignorant instructors. It is the misfortune of feeble virtue to be incapable of rising superior to imitation; upon the cultivation of these misfortunes depend the success of the moral influence of Mr. M.'s god. The mere copyist is contemned, as an artist, as a man who can never rise to the high ranks of art. For the same reason, all men under the government Mr. M. proposes, would be incapable of rising to the high ranks

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of virtue. His god would keep men like the lower animals, mere imitators; and not only to act they know not why, but to think as their master inclined; like the slavish disciples of Pythagoras, to drink cummin juice, that they may look pale as their idol. And, as no men can create a perfect model, they must become the base copyists of error and caprice. Surely, the errors of the vulgarest superstition never descended morally below this. Thus the common taunt thrown at the Christian world is, that they imbibe their superstitions without knowing or caring why; and the man who is virtuous by accident is but little removed from he who is vicious; for the same reason, the same cunning that made him good, would succeed equally well in making him bad. Those sublime notions of deity, whose influence is to make us morally great, must be composed of better materials than these.

No scheme could more fatally strike at the roots of the noblest virtues—no absurdity could be more in unison with all the exploded errors of religious dreaming. Upon the same ground of policy, Mr. M. could defend a hell fire, and all the vengeance of Israel's god, because it is *expedient* to awe men when they cannot be allured. In the "Electrical Theory of the Universe," Mr. M. lays down as an axiom in morals, that hope and fear are the two governing principles of human conduct; according to this, Mr. M.'s god is incomplete, and unphilosophically constructed.

It requires the addition of all those hateful attributes of vengeance necessary to awe its miserable worshippers. But it might be going *too far*, and not expedient to reveal this side of the question. Let but the idea of a god be set up, as Mr. M. contends it should, and you open the wide field of priestcraft and cupidity, where men's reasons ever have and ever will be carried captive. And Mr. Mackintosh reaps no other honour than that of endeavouring to cover with the thin veil of pseudo philosophy, these grand instruments of human misery, and of giving to their dying infamies and errors the appearance of policy and reason, that they may crush again the rising aspirations after virtue which the victories gained over them have awakened in the world.

I call this suppositious and imitative theory degrading, because it betrays no confidence in truth. If there is no god, say so at once—never mind the consequence. Truth has never yet been proved to be injurious. Mr. M. would contend that, if you take away the idea of god from men's minds, you rob them of a powerful incentive to virtue. I could fill half a dozen *Oracles* in refutation of this famous and fallacious dogma. How does Mr. M. propose to remedy the evil, supposing it to exist? By cheating them into the belief that there is a god!

What a compliment for a moral teacher to pay to his species, to suppose delusion necessary to keep them virtuous, and that the reliance upon their reason is far less safe than dependance on their gullability. No priestly advocate of human depravity can exceed this—coming from a professed believer in the goodness of human nature, and who makes weekly appeals to their good sense. If Mr. M. really thinks of men as he writes to them, he pays a fine compliment to the reader of his book, who must naturally expect some of the delusion recommended. The cause of theism which needs such support as Mr. M. affords, has risen little in my estimation. To return, if the reasons and true evidences of things will not support us, let us acknowledge our weakness, and vapour no more about our virtue. Abandon intelligence and philosophy, when we are told by the initiated in them, that without systematic delusion, they are incapable of keeping us in the paths of justice and improvement. Does Mr. M. really feel his own philosophy too feeble and false to sustain him in the ways of virtue, and that was he left to reason and his own sense of right and wrong he should go astray? Men usually judge others by their own convictions. But if he would shrink from such a humiliating and degrading confession, why libel his fellow-men by imputations which would disgrace himself? When men are not guided by reason and realities, they float adrift at the mercy of ignorance, caprice, cunning, and mystery. So that, whether they can be guided by nature and honesty or not, they cannot be guided to virtue by anything else.

On the *lofty* and *elevated* ground on which Mr. M. defends his god, he might defend every infamy, shake hands with the priests, and smile at all corruption. A pretty basis this on which to place a moral god! What a humiliation for his deity! What a wretched example for mankind! What an insult to common honesty! What degradation to imagination to have bodied it forth! The errors of vulgar superstition are paragons to this. From expediency in politics, philosophy, and godism (to borrow a phrase from the church), good lord deliver me.

It would perhaps appear cynical to conclude and not say that Mr. M.'s book does contain some remarks that would be found useful to the uninformed in these matters,—but, unfortunately, as he remarks of the moral precepts of the Jew Book, *they* are "scattered like flowers in the desert." I know no book so encouraging to a young Atheist, demonstrating one thing at least; namely, *how little* can be advanced with reason against the truth of his views. G. J. H.

FEAR first formed gods.—*Lucretius.*

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

NO. XV.

“It has often been said, that nature does nothing *per saltum*; in other words, that the almighty has been pleased to show his power in the establishment of a plan of creation, founded upon an increase in the gradual development of organisation. Thus, as we ascend the scale of animated nature, we trace the first appearance, the expansion and the perfection of organs.”—*Visitor*.

PROCEEDING in regular order, it would now become my duty to enter into an examination of the formation of the various organised substances, and show their relations to each other. But before I do this, I am induced, in consequence of the misunderstanding which would seem to exist in the minds of some of the readers of the *Oracle*, to review what has already been advanced, and give a short summary of the points treated of in the various articles. By this means I hope my readers will be enabled to solve any difficulties which may present themselves in my subsequent writings, and which may depend for solution upon what may have been previously laid down as the ground-work of the theory, and thus render continual reference to it unnecessary. The smallness of the space which can be devoted to the treatment of any particular subject, in a publication the size of the *Oracle*, and the necessity of making each article complete in itself, compels the writers to condense their ideas as much as possible. Sufficient clearness to carry conviction to every mind cannot at all times be secured, and much is consequently left to the intelligence of the reader; this, however, is not presumed as a principle, only being acted upon to avoid circumlocution.

The writings of my talented friend Southwell upon this theory in the earlier numbers, are valuable as preparatives to a strict examination of the question, by cutting away the rubbish with which priestly cunning had surrounded it; also, for the information conveyed of the views of the various authors who have treated upon the subject; information which his extensive reading enabled him so readily to furnish.

Mr. S., before his imprisonment, had made some progress in the description of the animal world. Beginning with the minutest, and apparently simplest, condition of animal life (protee changeant, the monad or infusoria animalcule), for definite form it has none, changing its shape so rapidly as to baffle the sight; he next noticed the oscillatoire des murailles, or balancer of the walls, which, with the first, he says, “are the two simplest known kinds of organisms.” Next the encrinite, lilly-shaped animal; then the orthorecatite, or horn; and, lastly, the polypos. selecting the species entitled busariæ, or

purse. The first six numbers containing these notices are now out of print, with the exception of No. 4, in which appeared the article upon the “Jew Book,” it having been recently reprinted, after the rapid sale of two heavy editions; but this is also true of the others, a third edition of some being now entirely consumed. It is proposed, as early as possible, to complete the set by again printing the deficiencies.

In the second number which appeared after Mr. S.’s trial (and conviction as a matter of course), I ventured to give my thoughts upon the matter; but from the different constitution of my mind, and a want of the same facilities for continually carrying my readers back to first principles, without displeasing or fatiguing them, I was compelled to pass by all which he had done, and state my case in my own way. To this course I was actuated in the hope that, by laying down correct, or what appeared to me to be unanswerable propositions, in the first place, should any defect or instability be perceived in my subsequent papers, it would not shake the confidence of the reader, who could himself correct the error; and would only be indicative of my non-qualification for the task. For it is frequently much easier to show the feasibility of an hypothesis, from a few general principles, than it is to establish it by detailed facts.

My two first essays were devoted to the objections—that if men were once “spontaneously” produced, and were not “created,” they should be so produced now; and to the supposed existence of an “immaterial” principle, called mind or intelligence, and denied by many to be a result from matter.* These appeared in nos. 9-10. In no. 15, I contended against the notions of the creation of the world, generally entertained; showing, from orthodox authority, that worlds are now forming in nature’s crucible, upon principles and from causes which doubtless led to the existence (as a world) of our own; being nothing more than effects from the known properties of matter. No. 16 contained some criticisms upon the quotations I had used in 15, showing the inconsistencies and dishonesty of the writers quoted. No. 18 was somewhat supplementary to the two last, displaying the rotten basis upon which “holy” men have ventured to erect arguments for universal design, the whole of which, undermined by the progress of knowledge in after ages, tumbles to the ground, burying the unfortunate architects in its ruins; whilst the multitude, loosened from priestly thralldom,

* I firmly believe that the various forms of insanity, that all the affections comprehended under the general term of mental derangement, are only evidences of cerebral affections, disordered manifestations of those organs whose healthy action produces the phenomena called mental.—*Lawrence*.

and marching over it to the possession of "truth without mystery or mixture of error," trample it to dust. No. 19 was occupied by the consideration of the objections of Mr. Lyel to the theory, when I again gave my general views upon the subject; which article I would beg leave to direct attention to, in the event of any misunderstanding. No. 20 treated of motion, as a mode or condition of matter, and not as the result of propulsion by any agent independent of it; and 21, upon life, with the same view.

My principal object throughout the whole has been to prove the capabilities of unassisted, unacted upon, uncontrolled, undirected matter for the production of all the varied, complicated, and beautiful phenomena of the universe, however numerous the differences in other spheres may be in addition to our own.* By the way, a friend of mine has asked me what I mean by "unassisted matter?" I would define it to be, matter acting of itself, by virtue of its own inherent properties, our knowledge of which *properties* is all we know of it. In contradistinction to the vulgar notion of goddism-influence external to it; which idea, however much metaphysicians may labour to prove the contrary, is inseparably connected with *manipulation*.

Wherever the eye is cast, says Evers, from the icy regions of the pole to the scorching sands of the line, it beholds life displayed in forms as endless as they are enchanting. Every region and every element is the abode of numerous animals, whose peculiar living habits, and instincts are all admirably suited to the localities in which they are found. The vastness of their number may be estimated from the declaration of the celebrated Ehrenberg, that a single cubic line, which is less than a drop of fluid, contains 500,000,000 monads.

With an incomprehensible world in a drop of water, man, vain and ignorant, must travel into space, searching for infinity; forgetting, that before he can understand the whole he must study the parts.

Without doubt many of the readers of the *Oracle* are already in possession of works containing classifications of the animal kingdom, but there may be some who are not, and to them the subjoined tables will be found of great value in following out this subject.

When once engaged in this captivating department of his investigations [dissection], says the same author, he begins to observe the beautifully progressive development of organisation, varied and modified in obedience to certain laws: he will often behold the same animal, according to the particular epoch of its existence, undergoing metamorphosis, appearing under different characters, and playing very different parts on the stage of life.

* No. 9, p. 77.

Having entered a little more fully into the details of comparative anatomy, he will often observe an organ which has attained a high degree of development, and whose functions are perfectly understood in one animal; diminutive, rudimentary, and apparently useless in another. Hence it must be obvious, that he who aspires to a perfect knowledge of human structure and function, must extend his researches to an examination of the animal kingdom in general; and accordingly great advantage will be found in a previous acquaintance with some one or more of the most approved classifications in natural history. Every classification hitherto proposed, has in some particular or other its imperfections; but it matters little what scale we adopt, or whether we make use of several, provided that our object of conveying or acquiring a knowledge of the comparative structure of animal bodies be attained.

I have annexed Cuvier's and Grant's classifications, which are accompanied by familiar illustrations of each class, to assist the student, and lead him, at a glance, to the objects which each subdivision embraces. Cuvier's is taken from Dr. Houston's Descriptive Catalogue of the Preparations in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland, with a few additional examples from Roget's Bridgwater Treatise.

OUTLINE OF CUVIER'S CLASSIFICATION OF ANIMALS.

Four Great Divisions.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Vertebrata. | 3. Articulata. |
| 2. Mollusca. | 4. Radiata. |

VERTEBRATA.

Characters.—Internal skeleton, brain and spinal marrow in separate cavities, red blood and muscular heart, mouth with horizontal jaws, five organs of sense, never more than four limbs, separate sexes.

MOLLUSCA.

Ch.—No skeleton, muscles all attached to external skin, nervous system situated in the visceral cavity and composed of separate masses joined by nervous filaments; taste, sight, or as in one instance, hearing, the only senses; organs of circulation, respiration, and digestion very perfect.

ARTICULATA.

Ch.—No skeleton, two long nervous chords with ganglia at intervals, have usually taste and sight, divided in jointed rings, soft or hard, to inside of which muscles attached; sometimes lateral limbs, sometimes none, jaws when present always lateral.

RADIATA.

Ch.—Organs of movement and sense disposed circularly around a centre, not symmetrically as in the preceding, no visible nerves, no organs of sense or circulation, respiration by the outward integument, intestines often a simple bag, sometimes the animal is but a homogeneous pulp without aperture or cavity.

I. VERTEBRATA.

Class 1. Mammalia.

Order. Exam.

1. Bimana Man

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

I. VERTEBRATA. *Class 1. Mammalia.*

Order.	Exam.
2. Quadrumana ..	.. Monkey, ape, lemur
3. Cheiroptera ..	.. Bat, colugo
4. Insectivora ..	.. Hedge-hog, shrew, mole
5. Plantigrada ..	.. Bear, badger, glutton
6. Digitigrada ..	.. Dog, lion, cat, marten
7. Amphibia ..	.. Seal, walrus
8. Marsupialia ..	.. Opossum, kangaroo, wombat
9. Edentata ..	.. Sloth, armadillo, ant-eater
10. Rodentia ..	.. Beaver, rat, squirrel, hare
11. Ruminantia ..	.. Camel, deer, giraffe, sheep
12. Pachydermata ..	.. Elephant, hog, horse, tapir
13. Cetacea ..	.. Dolphin, whale

Class 2. Aves.

1. Accipitres ..	.. Vulture, eagle, owl, hawk
2. Passeres ..	.. Thrush, swallow, lark, crow
3. Scansores ..	.. Woodpecker, cuckoo, parrot
4. Gallinae ..	.. Peacock, pheasant, grouse
5. Grallae ..	.. Plover, stork, snipe, ibis
6. Palmipedes ..	.. Auk, grebe, gull, pelican

Class 3. Reptilia.

1. Chelonia ..	.. Tortoise, turtle, emys
2. Sauria ..	.. Crocodile, lizard, gecko
3. Ophidia ..	.. Serpents, boa, viper
4. Batrachia ..	.. Frog, salamander, newt

Class 4. Pisces.

1. Chondropterygii ..	.. Lamprey, shark, sturgeon
2. Malacopterygii ..	.. Salmon, herring, cod, sole
3. Lophobranchii ..	.. Pike-fish, pegasus
4. Plecognathii ..	.. Sun-fish, trunk-fish
5. Acanthopterygii ..	.. Perch, mackerel, sword-fish

II. MOLLUSCA.

<i>Class 1. Cephalopoda.</i>	Ex. Cuttle-fish, nautilus. Head crowned with tentacula, which serve as feet.
2. Pteropoda.	Ex. Clio, hyalæa. Progression by fins placed near the head.
3. Gasteropoda.	Ex. Slug, snail, limpet. Head free, progression on the belly.
4. Acephala.	Ex. Oyster, muscle, ascidia. Without distinct head.
5. Brachiopoda.	Ex. Lingula, terebata. Two long arms at the mouth for seizing objects.
6. Cirrhopoda.	Ex. Barnacle, triton. Arms very numerous, articulated, horny.

III. ARTICULATA.

Class 1. Annelida.

1. Tubicola ..	.. Serpula, sabella, amphitrite
2. Dorsibranchia ..	.. Nereis, aphrodite, lob-worm
3. Abranchia ..	.. Earth-worm, leech, nais

Class 2. Crustacea.

1. Malacostraca ..	..
2. Decapoda ..	.. Lobster, crab, pawn
3. Stomopoda ..	.. Squill, phyllosoma
4. Amphipoda ..	.. Grammarus, sand-hopper
5. Læmodipoda ..	.. Cyamus
6. Isopoda ..	.. Wood-louse
7. Entomostrata ..	.. Monoculus

Class 3. Arachnida.

1. Pulmonalia ..	.. Spider, tarantula, scorpion
2. Trachealia ..	.. Phalangium, mite

Class 4. Insecta.

1. Aptera ..	.. Centipede, podura
2. Coleoptera ..	.. Beetle, glow-worm
3. Orthoptera ..	.. Grass-hopper, locust
4. Hemiptera ..	.. Fire-fly, aphid
5. Neuroptera ..	.. Dragon-fly, ephemera
6. Hymenoptera ..	.. Bee, wasp, ant
7. Lepidoptera ..	.. Butter-fly, moth
8. Rhiptera ..	.. Xenos, stylops
9. Diptera ..	.. Gnat, house-fly

IV. RADIATA vel ZOOPHYTA.

1. Echinodermata ..	.. Star-fish, sea-urchin
2. Entozoa ..	.. Fluke, hydatid, tape-worm

Order.	Exam.
3. Acalæphæ ..	.. Actinia, medusa
4. Polypti ..	.. Hydra, coral, madrepore
5. Infusoria ..	.. Brachionus, vibrio, proteus

GRANT'S DIVISION OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM.

I. Cyclo-Neura vel Radiata.

Class.	Exam.
1. Polyastrica ..	.. Monad, madrepore
2. Porifera ..	.. Sponges
3. Polypifera ..	.. Polypes, corals
4. Acalæphæ ..	.. Medusa, actinia
5. Echinodermata ..	.. Star-fish, sea-urchin

II. Diplo-Neura vel Articulate.

6. Entozoa ..	.. Intestinal worms, hydatids
7. Rotifera ..	.. Patella
8. Cirrhopoda ..	.. Barnacle, triton
9. Annelida ..	.. Earth-worm, leech
10. Myriapoda ..	.. Scolopendra
11. Insecta ..	.. Bee, butter-fly
12. Arachnida ..	.. Spider, scorpion
13. Crustacea ..	.. Lobster, crab

III. Cyclo-Gangliata vel Mollusca.

14. Tunicata ..	.. Ascidia intestinalis
15. Conchifera ..	.. Muscle, oyster
16. Gasteropoda ..	.. Slug, snail
17. Pteropoda ..	.. Clio, hyalæa
18. Cephalopoda ..	.. Cuttle-fish

IV. Spini-Cerebrata vel Vertebrata.

19. Pisces ..	.. Salmon, shark, eel
20. Amphibia ..	.. Frog, toad, proteus
21. Reptilia ..	.. Tortoise, lizard, serpent
22. Aves ..	.. Eagle, heron, duck
23. Mammalia ..	.. Man, kangaroo, whale.

Some zoologists, as Linnæus, found their basis of classification on the vascular and respiratory systems, and others on the peculiarities afforded by the generative organs. Aristotle divided all animals into those with, and those without red blood; and Lamark into the apathic, the sensitive, and the intelligent.

W. C.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. R., who, with many others, inquires concerning the correctness of Mr. Ironside's report respecting the school of the Sheffield branch, is informed that Mr. I. was not a delegate to Congress, and did not speak officially. What he said was given in his usual off-hand manner, at which no one who knows him will feel any surprise. Instead of saying I "grew tired of the school," he might more properly have rendered it, my health gave way under my joint duties of lecturer and schoolmaster. The remark of the president, when he interrupted Mr. I., removes much of the erroneous impression conveyed.

G. J. H.

J. M., Manchester. His letter shall be forwarded to the secretary for the Defence, who will attend to it.

SCEPTIC is informed that the 1st vol. of the Life of Jesus, by Strauss, is published, price 3s. 9d.—There are 36 nos. out in the whole.

A Plain Answer to the Query, 'Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?' By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol.—This interesting work is in the press, and will be published next week.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, 179, Broomhall-street, Sheffield, and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.—Saturday, May 28, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“ FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 24.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

MR. CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

THE friends of Mr. Southwell are respectfully informed that, agreeable as it is to him to hear from them, such is the strict surveillance kept over him, that it will be better that they do not *write to him at all*: he must be considered, during his imprisonment, as *literally dead*. As he is placed, the kindest and most affectionately intended communication, may become to him a source of very painful annoyance. All letters are opened and examined by the governor, and some of them laid before the magistrates, which is very stinging where near relatives are the correspondents; and any answers returned are treated in the same way. So that all letters sent by accident after this notice, if permitted to reach Mr. Southwell, will be sent to Mr. Holyoake to be answered as he best can. Even Mr. Southwell’s visitors on visiting days, are liable to be searched, and some of them have been, on entering the gaol, to prevent them taking any scrap of paper to him. A turnkey is always present at interviews with his friends, and on one occasion has been ordered to sit between him and his friend during their conversation.

Newspapers may still be sent, but the *Northern Star* must not be among the number. The lists of these together with those of books, are carefully inspected by the magistrates. In other respects, Mr. S.’s treatment is not to be complained of. His friends are permitted to furnish his table. But the care of his soul is entirely the business of the functionaries about him; and if its enjoyment in a future state is to accord with its present nurturing, he need not sigh for its immortality. His appearance is impaired, and his health too, from a nervous affection that has seized him; his spirits are good, and his opinions, it needs scarcely be added, are unaltered; except that every hour of his imprisonment has confirmed many of them.

G. J. H.

THE COWARDICE AND DISHONESTY OF SCIENTIFIC MEN.

THE hacknied adage, of honesty being the best policy, is strikingly illustrated in the shufflings and knaveries of scientific men. The possession of that knowledge which should lead them to the practice of virtue, from the want of moral principle, degrades them (if we estimate the *effects* of their conduct), below the level of the most ignorant members of society. Instead of lending a helping hand to the samaritans of society, they link themselves (it is hoped reluctantly) to the disgusting car of vice, which they help to drag through the mire of human ignorance, and over prostrate suffering virtue.

The difference between religion and science has, on more than one occasion been insisted upon in the *Oracle*, namely, that the former is systematized folly, or ignorance, and the latter systematized facts or reason; that religion begins where science ends. and that there can be no legitimate connexion between the two, we hope those persons who may have seen this position clearly, will excuse my again reverting to it; those who do not see it, may have their eyes opened, and my cherished object will be gained. For the general appreciation of this fact, would be a death blow to *religious* faith. Unless we possess infinite intelligence, we shall always have *faith*, or a *belief* in the existences we have not ourselves seen, but then, it will be based upon the analogies of things we have seen; and not like religious faith, which demands the belief in existences which have no type in nature, and cannot be contrasted with anything we know of without palpable contradiction and absurdity, for sure

Nothing *but* themselves can be their parallel.

Man’s happiness is proportioned to his wisdom; knowledge alone is barren. Wisdom, or the application of our knowledge, is the prolific parent of all pleasurable sensations. A man may *know* a great deal, and yet be a practical fool; he only is wise who acts upon what he knows. Every moment teems with useful lessons for our guidance to happiness; but how few take

advantage of them, alas! the misery and crime which deluge society, plainly and painfully bear witness. Channing has said that it is more noble to instil one great thought into the mind of a man, than to be the hero of a hundred fights: and so say I. Ardently do I desire, amongst other things, to direct the attention of my fellows to the advantage, nay, necessity, of gathering experience from their every day associations, and the acting upon it. It is of no use that they perceive certain errors and anomalies, if they do not consistently, upon all occasions, show their possession of that knowledge by their conduct. It is of little avail that they deprecate in private the follies and cruelties in connection with royalty, if they form part of the crowds to run after the pageanties and empty shows got up every now and then to amuse and gull a starving and benighted people. Unfortunately such is the fact; and I was much pleased some weeks since, to find the talented and caustic "Censorius," in the *Dispatch*, treating upon the same subject, in reference to the opening of parliament.

Since it is by observation, and action based upon our experience of the past, that we can alone hope to experience pleasure, surely scientific men are in a better position than the masses for enjoying happiness themselves and contributing to the happiness of others. How much, then, is it to be deplored that this class should wilfully assist to continue the social miseries in which we are steeped to the lips. But such is the fact. Robert Owen has asserted, that we are possessed of a sufficient amount of knowledge, which, practically applied for the benefit of mankind, would make every being happy and virtuous to an extent never witnessed; and yet as a nation, we are suffering more than any similar number of individuals ever suffered before at one time. And why is it? Partly because those in power consider it to be to their interests to keep us in this position, and partly because those who are in the secret have not the honesty to speak the truth without an attempt at mystery, and to act themselves upon their knowledge.

Scientific men are in raptures upon the discovery of a new fossil, or a compound which had previously been considered a simple; and burn with impatience to be the first to announce it to the world, their No. 10's (self-esteem) being as active as those of any other class; but they subsequently cool down below zero, when they contemplate the consequences their acquisition leads to, or perceive the use made of it by others more honest, but less careful. And it is then they do not scruple to fasten with an additional rivet the chain with which villainy and folly have bound the mental, and consequently the physical, energies of man. This is the unkindest cut of all; coming as

it does, from those who should pour the balm of hope upon the despairing and wounded spirit; instead of which,

They smile, and murder while they smile!

The characteristics of the present age are those of humbug and philosophy. The general *compulsion* of our unsocial arrangements *compel* scientific men to adhere to their convictions in describing those natural phenomena they have investigated. They have a choice of two unpleasant alternatives, either to tell truth and strike away the crutches from religion, or to conceal and distort facts, for the purpose of bolstering it up. By acting upon the first, they lose cast, and are denounced by the blood-bounds of faith as Infidels; this is certain ruin to their worldly prospects, at least. By adopting the second, they are repudiated as dishonest or foolish, and can never hope to take rank among the benefactors of mankind—and be *immortal*. To escape from this dilemma, they generally make a wretched attempt to cover their infidelity by asserting, that whatever may be thought of their facts or deductions, nothing was more foreign to their *intentions* than to disprove the truths of religion, and that they are *not aware* that their language will bear such an interpretation. This I believe to be the substance of an apology by Dr. Buckland, for his Bridgewater Treatise: a sop for the dragon. In my articles on the "Theory of Regular Gradation," many passages will be met with from the learned gent.'s treatise, sufficient to alarm those who have vested interests in ignorance and credulity.

The ancients, said hell is paved with good intentions; those of the religious of all ages, if we are to believe them, must form considerable causeways, I should think, in this their *own* peculiar freehold.

In No. 16, I commented upon the remarks of the Messrs. Chambers, in reference to the formation of worlds. In their number upon geology, seeing the deductions to be drawn from the facts they are giving, they endeavour to blind the heedless reader, by referring certain effects to "part of the Great General Design." Dr. Buckland states them to be "striking examples of *selection* of contrivances." De la Beche speaks of "the unity of design so evident throughout the universe," and of the condensation of our system, "doubtless from design." Remarks of this kind, in scientific works, are not only irrelevant, but bear upon them the stamp of deceit, and a wish to mislead; for, if the appearances do decidedly lead to such conclusions, where is the necessity for stating them? And if they do not, but the opposite, it is wilful lying to even hint the contrary. Scientific men have only to give the world their facts, and leave it to their readers to draw their own conclusions; excepting where their *knowledge* of

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other circumstances would enable them to furnish a probable natural explanation. They are not justified, under any circumstances, in mixing up theological speculations with scientific facts.

What would be thought of a man unimpaired in vision, who seeing a blind brother upon the edge of a precipice, is not content to leave him there to take his chance of escaping by turning back, but deliberately pushes him over? Would it not be blazoned in the broadsheets as a "Most horrible outrage!—Disgusting depravity," &c., and hopes expressed that the villain would be brought to justice? Certainly! But learned, scientific, and far-seeing men, may deliberately thrust their blind brethren over the precipice of error, into the yawning gulf of misery and vice, and nothing is thought of it. Oh, no! Such conduct conspires to the selfish interests of the powerful few, and the press of course is dumb.

That which leads to a particular vice is not, in the opinion of the world, near so bad as the vice itself, although the first is the cause or root, and the latter only the effect or fruit. The conduct of society in relation to the causes of immorality, may be likened to a man who has in his garden a tree, the fruit of which is poisonous, and is hourly plucked by every passer; but who, nevertheless, contents himself with vain attempts at counteracting its baneful effects upon those who eat of it, instead of vigorously and at once digging up the roots and burning the whole.

W. C.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR,—My attention has been directed to two long, abusive articles in Nos. 22 and 23 of the *Oracle of Reason* written in a very rambling and flippant style, headed "Mr. Mackintosh's New God," which articles, I suppose, were intended for a review of a small work of mine, recently published, entitled "A Dissertation upon the Being and Attributes of God." If the spirit exhibited in these two articles is to be received as a specimen of the spirit of atheism, you will excuse me when I say, that I do not think it is the kind of spirit by which men are to be made either wiser or better. But that of which I chiefly complain, is the bold assumption, and I might say cool impudence, which runs through the whole, by which it is taken for granted that *atheism is truth* and *truth is atheism*. This is the bigotry of atheism. I have seen a ranter thump the "Jew Book," and call it "the truth," the "divine truth," and I have concluded that the man was a bigot, "a stupid bigot;" and when I find another man assuming that atheism is truth, without proving his position, I am equally inclined to consider him a "stu-

pid bigot," or, if you like, a stupid Atheist. At page 189, the reviewer says, "if there is no god, say so at once—never mind the consequences. Truth has never yet been proved to be injurious." Very good, G. J. H., but before you call upon men to receive atheism as *truth*, I hope that you will condescend to prove that it is so. At page 186, I find these words, "I do not pretend to *know* that there is no god;" then, by what rule does this same man, who does "not pretend to *know* that there is no god," pretend to *know* that atheism is truth, and truth is atheism?

It is quite true that I have regarded, and do still regard, the question of the being and attributes of god as a question of moral influence, rather than as a question of mere fact; still, if G. J. H., or any one else, will determine the case, by *proving* that there is no god, I will give up the question at once, and will "never mind the consequences." But until this be "proved," I hope I shall be excused if I continue to consider every man a "bigoted Atheist," or a "stupid Atheist," just as I would consider any other man, Papist, Protestant, Methodist, or Ranter, Hindoo, Budist, or Mohamedan, a bigot, who dogmatically asserted that which he was unable to prove.

I should be well pleased to discuss the question in the *Oracle*, because to my mind it appears a question of deep interest, not as a mere speculative matter, but as lying at the root of all practical morals. This however, it would appear, cannot be done. For if the moral code of atheism can allow its high-priest to speak of an opponent as a "cold-hearted and inhuman" reasoner, it were well, for the sake of peace to shut up the book and close the argument. I remain yours,

T. S. MACKINTOSH.

A "VULGAR ATHEIST'S"

OPINION OF

MR. MACKINTOSH'S "PURE" HUMBUG.

"Shame! where is thy blush?"

A GROSSER mixture of impudence and folly than is contained in this book could not, I think, have been produced, even by a "vulgar superstitionist;" and must equally disgust the saint with the philosopher. Although two reviews of this eight-pennyworth of nonsense have already appeared in the *Oracle*, its absurdities, thick as blackberries in autumn, readily supply food for further comment.

The work itself is really not worth so much notice, and could only have been written upon the assumption of extensive ignorance pervading the class for whom it was intended, which is generally believed to be the party in whose service the writer is at present employed, numbers of whom will doubtless swallow it as "the gospel, according to Saint

Thomas." This must be my excuse for again obtruding this "printed disgrace," as a love-spirit once designated this paper, upon my readers. Between the *Atheist and Republican* and the *Oracle*, the R. R.'s were in a bit of a "fix," not knowing what god to tack their religion and worship to, for the one cannot exist without the other. In this dilemma, Mr. M. kindly lent them his assistance; and he is now employed on "lord's day" in leading the uninitiated to a knowledge of the divine nature; the holiness of the occasion being duly preserved by the abolition of the priest-destroying principle of discussion, which was found inconvenient, I presume.

No sooner does Mr. Owen announce the *true religion*, than Mr. Mackintosh publishes the *true god*, to whom the said religion belongs, of course. Now, inasmuch as the latter came after the former, I think we shall not be far from the *true* notion, by premising that the god was specially *created* for the religion, or more properly, for the believers in it, yeleft "Rational Religionists," and perhaps *designed* to lead to a perpetual curacy in the "new moral" church.

The preface is so rich in its way, and moreover being an index to the work, which was intended to crush whom we are gravely told does not, nor ever can exist—Atheists; and to remove from the land that which, for the last reason, never could have had a being—atheism, I have extracted it entire, that my comments may be the better understood by those readers who have not read the work. It is as follows:—

The motives which have urged me to write and publish this Dissertation are these: *I am a believer in the being of one god, powerful, wise, and good; I am convinced that a belief in god, a confiding belief in his power, wisdom, and goodness, is beneficial to man as an individual; that it is a comfort, stay, and support against despair in adversity, and a corrective and reproof against pride and insolence in prosperity. The lost wanderer in the wilderness, like Mungo Park; or the shipwrecked mariner who is cast away upon the ocean, whilst he struggles with adverse circumstances, struggles with a firmer and better heart, because through this belief he feels that there is a stronger, wiser, and better being than himself controlling his destiny. Take this faith, this confidence away, and in nine cases out of ten, the individual will faint and sink under the weight of the circumstances which surround him. So also, on the other hand, the conscious belief in the existence of a being of greater power, wisdom, and goodness than himself, or any man, or all men, moderates his pride or confidence in his own power, wisdom, and goodness. So far, and perhaps farther, I am of opinion that the belief in a god, powerful, wise, and good, is beneficial to man as an individual.*

This belief is also, in my opinion, beneficial to man as a social being. The belief in a being of higher intelligence or wisdom, and of perfect moral

goodness, naturally begets in the hearts and minds of men a desire to be like him; for man is an imitative creature, as may be most visibly perceived in the development of the character of a child. The belief in a wise and good being, called god, naturally begets a love of god; and, of necessity, a love of wisdom and goodness, for these are his moral attributes; and all men, even the most ignorant and vicious, love wisdom and goodness in the abstract; for wisdom and goodness are the progenitors of happiness, as folly and wickedness are of misery: therefore, as all men love happiness and hate misery, of necessity, as soon as they have a notion of the connection of cause and effect, they hate folly and wickedness, because they are the parents of misery, and they love wisdom and goodness, because they are the parents of happiness. If the actions of all men, or even of the majority of men, were the result of reasoning from abstract moral principles, the belief in a wise and good god would not be so important as it is with things as they are at present. But even from that point of view much could be advanced in support of the beneficial tendency of such a belief, as giving a fixed moral standard from which these reasonings should commence—a kind of moral axiom, to which, under the various and ever changing circumstances by which the judgment is modified, our conclusions should be referred to as a test of their truth. But the amount of human conduct resulting from reasoning from abstract moral principles is a very small fraction indeed. Example from established customs; habits induced upon the individual chiefly by these customs, regulate more than nine tenths of all human conduct in every part of the world. If the customs be good, they will, by example, induce good habits, and individual character will, in a comparative degree, be morally good; so also on the contrary, if the established customs be bad, they will, generally, induce the opposite effect. Hence the great value of a belief in a wise and good god as a fixed moral standard of moral wisdom and goodness, which being of necessity loved by the believer, will become a steady example to which his imitative faculty will be directed, and will thus counteract the effect arising from the example of the evil customs of the world. So far as the belief in a wise and good god tends by example to make men wise and good, so far is this belief beneficial to men as social beings, because whatever promotes individual virtue promotes universal happiness.

I have one more reason for publishing my views upon this subject, which, however, being of a merely personal nature, is not of so much consequence as the preceding. I have been denounced as an Atheist in open parliament by the Bishop of Exeter, and on many public occasions by other parties of less note. In answer to this, I have only to say, that all those who know me (and I am known to many thousands in this country), know that I have *always been a steady, and, I believe, a consistent opposer of atheism, as well as the vulgar notions of the deity taught by the common superstition of the country. I know that it is the custom of intolerant bigotry to denounce every man as a Atheist whose notions of the deity do not, in every point, square exactly with its own. I may therefore expect that by some parties I shall still be denounced as an Atheist; and, if, so, I have only to assure such parties, that I shall*

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feel that they do me a high honour: for however false the accusation may be *I had much rather be called an Atheist than that it should be supposed for one moment that I entertain the grovelling, degrading, and debasing notions of the deity taught by vulgar superstition.*

The reader, I hope, will not fail to notice the great stress laid by the writer upon the *belief* in a "god, powerful, wise, and good;" which is said to be "a comfort, stay, and support against despair in adversity, and a corrective and reproof against pride and insolence in prosperity;" also, that it necessarily begets "a love of wisdom and goodness." Now it is notorious that "nine-tenths" of the world are vicious and depraved, and Mr. M. tells us that "even the most ignorant and vicious love wisdom and goodness in the abstract," which, in my opinion, destroys his own position. The catalogue of benefits to be obtained from a belief in a god is pretty considerable, and worthy of acceptance let them come from whence they may. And being told by the writer at the commencement that he is a believer in a god because these advantages are to be obtained from such belief, I naturally expected that the book was intended to prove to men the truth and value of this belief to morality and virtue: to convince sceptics and to strengthen those already in the faith. How great then was my surprise when, some few lines beyond, I find it stated, that the "amount of human conduct resulting from reasoning from abstract moral principles is a very small fraction indeed!" Which "very small fraction indeed," this superlatively trifling and insignificant benefit, is all that men get by believing in a god! What wretched remuneration for philosophical folly; it would n't find salt for one's porridge. The customs of the country, says this necessitarian, in the next page, makes men good or bad, "hence (he adds) the great value [i.e. of the very small fraction] of a belief in a wise and good god, as a fixed moral standard," &c. A fixed moral standard, like a fixed physical one, should be demonstrable: but this gent. has devoted several pages of his work to the demonstration of the impracticability of demonstrating the existence of a god. And yet, a belief in an indeterminable, imaginary being (?) is vauntingly put forward as a standard or guide to morality, in preference to reason and experience, and that too by a teacher of the all-sufficiency of reason and experience for the production and preservation of happiness! Which is to be admired most, the impudence or the ignorance of such conduct? Perhaps I may be told, that the standard must be a mental one, existing only in the minds of the believers, and not to be made apparent to the senses. Well, what then? This writer states in the pulpit, that no two individuals

are ever organised precisely alike, and consequently that their minds will not be alike; that it is impossible for any two individuals to think exactly like each other upon any given case. A belief, which must vary with every individual, is to serve as a "fixed moral standard!" Perhaps he meant for "every man to be his own standard;" or perhaps he did not know what he meant, and left it for critics to discover: thus making the enemy pay the expense of the campaign.

Again, this writer says that "*more than nine-tenths of all human conduct*" depends upon the customs of the country in which individuals are located; so that we may presume, if the belief in a god is only to benefit or improve *less than a tenth of human conduct*, and that only such belief is necessary to make men really moral, that the world is now nearly arrived at moral perfection, or is only a fraction short of it. This writer calls the world the "old immoral" one, upon what principle I should like to know, when his proposed "new moral" one can only be superior by less than one-tenth?

Men can only believe in this god by a process of abstract reasoning, which reasoning the writer states would lead men to virtue without a god; where then is the utility of the addition?

This teacher of "truth, without mystery, mixture of error," &c. has made the important discovery, after teaching the contrary for many years, that believing is *feeling*, for he says, "because through his belief he *feels*." To give it more emphasis and attract attention to it, he has put the word in italics. For some years I have entertained the notion that our feelings or sensations were the result of contact with outward objects and things, that they were classed with the known and knowable, and not with beliefs and imaginings. For instance: a person may see one at a distance whom he thinks he knows; the distance prevents his being certain that it is his friend, but he knows he sees some one; he *feels* conscious that a human being is before him, but he only *believes* it to be his acquaintance. We are told that "seeing is believing, and feeling is the naked truth," but I never heard that believing was feeling, however true the contrary may be sometimes.

So wretchedly incompetent is the writer consistently to support his hypothesis, that he discloses the real object he had in view (the usual screen of cowards and "designers") viz. *expediency*, before he gets out of the first page. He says, "If the actions of all men, or even of the majority of men, were the result of reasoning from abstract moral principles, the belief in a wise and good god would not be so important as it is with things as they are at present." An admission, that some men require no belief in a god to make

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them good, and it is only because some do that he advocates it; arguing, of course, for the necessity of such belief for the mass (because of *their* ignorance), from his own feelings.

“All men (says the author), even the most ignorant and vicious, love wisdom and goodness in the abstract [qy., where could such characters get the ideas from?]; for wisdom and goodness are the progenitors of happiness.” But of what happiness? Why, the happiness resulting from the practice of virtue. Surely it will not be affirmed that none but the wise and good are happy; and that there are not millions in the world whose only source of happiness is the misery of others. Who can say that the Thug, in proportion to his capacity for experiencing pleasure, is not as happy in cutting a throat, as the philanthropist in saving a life; or the pickpocket in abstracting a purse, as he who relieves the indigent? What is wisdom and what is goodness? Are they not relative terms; the “creatures of circumstances?” Does it follow that that which is good for to-day is likewise good for to-morrow, the next-day, and for ever? If it were so, we could speedily establish a “fixed moral standard,” based upon our own knowledge, and not upon a rotten *belief* in a nonentity.

Mr. M. is himself an Atheist to the god of the Jews, as will be seen by the last few lines of his preface, but contends for a god who *directed* all the bloody wars of extermination carried on by that nation, the horrors and cruelties practised by the inhuman monster David, in making men pass through brick-kilns, and under axes and harrows of iron; as well as the choice specimens of moral conduct, which were glanced at in the “Jew Book” article of No. 4.

Mr. M.'s book has not removed a single difficulty in the way of deism. They who contend for a god, necessarily contend for a something vastly superior to what we can ever imagine can be attained by man, and of course for the power to do or not to do that which man has not the power to accomplish. Now the leaving undone any good which might be done, is really to do evil. Could the god of this book have *prevented* the immorality he *directed*? If he could, he is a demon god, and ideas based upon such a being will partake of his nature and disposition, according to the writer's own arguments. But it is clear that he could, for he is “all powerful,” by which I do not mean that he can cause a thing to be and not to be at the same time; but, that he is “*all the power that is in the universe, AND NO MORE*”; and it would be difficult to conceive how there could be any more;* and there being more power devoted to immorality than to

* See par. 27, p. 27.

morality, it is evident that instead of a virtuous and good being we have presented to us a moral monster.

How can the idea of such a being lead to virtue and morality; excepting it be upon the principle of good coming out of evil? In this case the god is in harmony with the theory; for he has selected a god of power, wisdom, &c. who could avert all misery and vice, *if he chose*; proving him to be the foul and polluted fountain of *all* enormities. Supposing we were to adopt this god and this theory (which however is directly opposed to the second part of the “Jew Book,” which declares that good cannot come out of evil), and resolve ourselves into a nation of intellectual Thugs, the next generation would be perfect moral beings; for to our example, which would form nine-tenths of their characters, they would only have to add our *belief*!

Mr. Mackintosh has taken great pains to show the difference between knowledge and belief, in order to prove that there are no “absolute Atheists,” meaning thereby that there are no men who can *prove* that there is no god; neither are there any who can prove that there is a god (saving those who believe in Mr. M.'s *own* god—power—whose existence *can* be proved at any time) which is merely leaving the question where he found it. But it is not sufficient that this should be pointed out, we may yet see that Mr. M. has overreached himself and has gone beyond the truth. This book was evidently written with a view to damage atheism at any hazard, and in carrying out his object he has not scrupled to injure theism. If we examine this argument, we find that either Mr. M. did not know what he was writing about, or that he was determined to do the Atheist an ill turn, though it were at the expense of honesty. He has himself made a straw man, and called it an “absolute Atheist,” which he belabours most heartily, upon the Newcastle plan of “doing what he likes with his *own*.” Can Mr. M. show us any absolutes? Are not all things and conditions relative? He himself contends that there is no absolute good and evil in the universe, at the very moment that he talks of a fixed (or absolute) moral standard of goodness!

If we trace the origin of the words theism and atheism, and the ideas which gave them birth, we shall find that they were employed to designate men who *believed* and *disbelieved* in a god; and not men who *knew* and could demonstrate his existence and non-existence. If either party could have proved their case, conviction must have followed with the other. No men wilfully believe a lie, neither can any resist the evidence of their senses. Proof would have rendered both terms unnecessary; for if all men thought alike there could be

no particular designation for a portion of them which would not apply to all, and so be useless. Taking the terms in their legitimate senses, attaching those ideas to them it is obvious they were intended to represent, and which they ever will represent in the minds of rational men: do this, and they will then, with honest men, be understood in an *absolute* sense. That is to say, they will convey the idea of men who themselves have no doubts upon the matter, which ever way it might be. This, perhaps, will appear paradoxical, first to contend against and then for the existence of absolutes; but I have drawn a distinction which I think will be apparent. The man who asserts that there is no god, equally with him who asserts the contrary, is, to say the least, inconsiderate and foolish. What right then has Mr. M. to give a meaning to the terms which they were never intended to convey? Is this the morality resulting from his godism?

In sec. 24, under the head of power, we are treated to a journey through *infinite* space, in which are said to exist an *infinite* number of worlds, which have been in motion "throughout an *endless* eternity of the past, and will continue throughout an *endless* eternity of the future." In this paragraph the writer labors to prove that *power* and *motion* are not identical, and he concludes it with the following words:—

If there should be any Atheist *so absurd* as to maintain that matter and motion are enough, *without ANY power* to sustain that motion, we [that is the author] have only to say, that it would be waste of time to argue with such a person. *He is too far gone. His case is hopeless.*

Should I not blush to acknowledge that, in addition to my vulgarity, I am "so absurd as to maintain that matter and motion are enough," in my opinion. This power which Mr. M. would *add* to motion is merely another name for the spirit which "vulgar superstitionists" would superadd to matter. Why he has not hesitated to invert the order of things, and convert into a cause that which is merely an effect. Motion is the cause of what we call power, instead of power being the cause of motion. If power be not motion, what is it; is that which is said to produce and perpetuate motion inert; and if not inert what is it but motion? Is it not the *motion* communicated to the cannon ball, which propels it powerfully forward? But Mr. M. himself proves the identity of the two, for he says (par. 26), "wherever there is motion there is an evidence of the presence of power," and "the answer to the question—where is this motion? is, that it is *everywhere*," "therefore there is an omnipresent power," and of course, an omnipresent motion. Now, two things of equal magnitude cannot be in the same place at one and the same time, any

more than one thing can be in two places at one time; therefore it is difficult to conceive, everywhere being all, how two everywhere can find room in it. Is it not scandalous that such dishonest quibblings and sophistries should be gravely put forward by a teacher of morals? Is it from this that the proof of the morality to be derived from faith is superior to reason? Here we have an individual setting up an idol of his own imagination, and calling it a god for philosophers; and not content with parading his folly to the world, must grossly abuse those whom he *knew* would expose his errors, thinking perhaps, that by giving the first blow, he should have an easy victory.

But, for argument's sake, granting that power is *not* motion, we find that he has *demonstrated* the existence of *his* god; as the editor showed in the first notice, when he said men could pick him up in the lever, &c. Happy man! And happy generation to exist contemporaneously with such a genius! Mr. Mackintosh's god is power! Think of this miserably *gentle* reader, when you comfort yourself in your mildness, and contemplate the headstrong and armstrong whom you see dealing death and destruction around. Think of this when you hear the mighty rushing wind, the startling crash and reverberating echo of the thunder, pealing from cloud to cloud! Think of this when the vivid lightning rends the "monarch of the grove!!" Or, if you be a smoker, "think of this when you *blow* your tobacco!!!"

In sec. 27, the writer again gives us two infinities; he speaks of "an eternal and *infinite* universe, actuated and governed by an eternal and *infinite* mind," which is calling mind matter and matter mind. In the next sec., arguing from analogy, he shows his god to be a personal one, having arms, legs, &c., of which blunder, by the way the watch godites are likewise guilty. In sec. 31, he destroys the very being he has taken so much trouble to manufacture. He says,

But it may be said, if it be impossible to create new organised forms, without the dissolution of the older forms, could not those which live, live for ever in a state of vigour, without either new forms being created, or older ones destroyed? This also is impossible; for in order to do this everything must stand still, which would not be a system of life but of death.

Now, arguing analogically, if living for ever be in reality not living at all, but positive death, then must his *eternal* god be non-existent, or dead!

With this brief notice of the latter portion of the work I must conclude, space not warranting any further examination of this most extraordinary book; the unphilosophical language and errors in which are, to use an auctioneer's phrase, "too numerous to particularise."

W. C.

PROGRESS OF RELIGIOUS
HONESTY!

THIS is the age of progression, some say, so religious honesty has its phases. One of them may be read in the following paragraph from the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, of Wednesday last, called the Rev. Francis Close's paper:—

ATHEISM AND BLASPHEMY.—*On Tuesday evening last a person named Holyoake, from Manchester, delivered a lecture on socialism (or as it has been more appropriately termed devilism), at the Mechanics' Institution. After attacking the church of England and religion generally for a considerable time, he said he was open to any question that might be put to him. A tee-totaller named Maitland, then got up, and said the lecturer had been talking a good deal about our duty to man, but he omitted to mention our duty towards god, and he would be glad to know if there were any chapels in the community? The Socialist then replied that he professed no religion at all, and thought they were too poor to have any. He did not believe there was such a being as a god, and impiously remarked that if there was, he would have the deity served the same as government treated the subalterns, by placing him upon half-pay. With many similar blasphemous and awful remarks, which we cannot sully our columns by repeating, the poor misguided wretch continued to address the audience. To their lasting shame be it spoken a considerable portion of the company applauded the miscereant during the time he was giving utterance to these profane opinions.*

[We have three persons in our employ who are ready to verify on oath to the correctness of the above statements. We therefore hope those in authority will not suffer the matter to rest here, but that some steps will immediately be taken to prevent any further publicity to such diabolical sentiments.—ED. C. C.]

The veracity and fairness of this report will be seen from the following facts. I did not lecture upon socialism, but upon "Home Colonization, as a means of superseding Poor Laws and Emigration." And home colonization, everybody knows is as orthodox as respectability can wish. My "attacking the church of England," was but a passing remark—and that not upon the church of England, but upon the Church of England Working Man's Association, which was the Social Institution I lectured in when in Cheltenham before. Therefore I spoke of it as an old acquaintance, and having found it nicely decorated, not at working men's expense, and not being able to divine what working men could have to do with the 'church of England, I borrowed a simile from Jesus, and likened it to a whited sepulchre, outside fair enough, but inside rottenness and dead men's bones; not in the physical sense, but to rottenness of principle and deadness of morality. This is all that was said upon theology during the lecture, and before commencing I stated that my opinions must be understood as being *individually* mine, and that I stood there alone. I am particular in this, because it has lately become the fashion to charge upon me all sorts of crimes, that I have never done or dreamed of doing. The question of Maitland is correctly given in substance, as far as it goes, but a very imperfect part of my answer to it. I did not say "I did not believe there was such a being as a god." It is quite true I do not think there is, but I did not say so there. On this point Mr. Close or Maitland is far from the truth. What I did say was the following, and I subjoin the reasons for my opinions which the editor found convenient to withhold, and which pro-

duced the applauding about which Mr. Close is so sore. My reply was—

"As you, sir, have introduced religion to this meeting, which I have carefully avoided in my lecture, I will answer frankly and sincerely your question; and as you say we cannot have morality without religion, I will answer that, too. Home colonization is an economical scheme, and as we can ill bear the burden of a god here, he may lie rather heavy upon their hands there. Our national debt and our national taxation hang like millstones round the neck of the poor man's prosperity, saying nothing of the enormous gatherings of capitalists in addition to all this; and in the face of our misery and want, we are charged twenty millions more for the worship of god. This is utilitarianism *versus* divinity; and I appeal to your heads and your pockets if we are not too poor to have a god? If poor men cost the state as much, they would be put like officers upon half-pay. I think while our distress lasts, it would be wise to do the same thing with the deity. Thus far goes the political economy of my objection to build chapels in community. Again, I never like to propose to others that I shrink from myself. I am not religions—my creed is to have no creed. All religion has been driven out of me, as I will shortly show you. But what do I hear? That morality cannot exist without religion! Preposterous! Religion, in my opinion, has ever poisoned the fountain springs of morality! Connect them together! Hark ye! Morality alone is lovely—has a sweet, balmy, and healthful reputation, and sheds honest influences over mankind. Who that has felt its power, would degrade it by connecting it with religion? Read the mental degradation and oppression of your race, and there you read the history of religion; look at its bloody instruments of torture, and its fell subjugation of honesty when man would shun the revolting homage it demands; and there we read its character! Why its fierce and inhuman myrmidons have immured, within these few months, Charles Southwell in Bristol Gaol; and while the friend of my bosom lies there I wish not to hear the name of god. I shudder at the thought of religion, I flee the bible as a viper, and revolt at the touch of a christian—for their tender mercies may next fall upon my head! This, sir, is no reason why the people in communities may not introduce religion there, but it is the reason why I do not introduce it into my lectures, and I trust you will take it as my apology for not recommending god-worship in home colonies."

This, as far as I can tax my memory, is the *literal* of my reply, which was cheered throughout. I only mention this because otherwise it is very likely little would have been said about me in the *Chronicle*. The great majority of a very good meeting felt the natural force of the position before them. In fact, as all thinking men and women must have done, they had no doubt often felt as I did, but had had no opportunity of expressing their feelings unreservedly.

I have often wondered what was meant by the words "wretch" and "miscereant;" when applied to many persons known during the French revolution—the terms have often filled me with a horror of them. But now, having spoken, with perhaps unusual earnestness, in defence of true, unsullied morality, I find the same terms applied to me, I begin to guess they are employed to mean heterodoxy rather than vice.

I hope to hold a Public Meeting in the same place, to reply to this same rev. gent. and his *Chronicle*, and take into consideration the case of Mr. Charles Southwell.

G. J. H.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 25.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

ANOTHER PROSECUTION FOR BLASPHEMY!

Arrest of the Second Priest of the “Oracle.”

AGAIN the duty has devolved upon me of announcing to the readers of the *Oracle* and the public the apprehension and committal of another of my friends, for the same indefinite and imaginary offence — blasphemy! Again have I to record the active existence of the same demoniacal spirit which actuated the primitive Christians in their persecutions of the Pagans and heretics; and which has passed in an uninterrupted line from that time to the present in the blood and brains of the accursed sects professing christianity!

What else could be expected of men who deify a real or imaginary individual, a compound of ambition and folly, of mock humility and rampant tyranny; who, though called the “Prince of Peace,” declared he came to bring a sword into the world? This hellish mission he performed to perfection, for never since his time has blood and misery ceased to flow from his dogmas and mysteries. The life-blood of humanity has gushed in torrents, manuring and enriching the earth, in all ages — for RELIGION! Sighs innumerable, and tears of anguish, in quantity not to be computed, have resulted from the same source, sufficient to melt the obdurate feelings of any being composed of aught short of the damnable hateful passions which blind fanaticism has given to its god! Men, says Bishop Warburton, have made themselves gods after man’s image, taking the worst specimens they could find — themselves.

The last number contained an article from Mr. HOLYOAKE, respecting a lecture delivered by him in Cheltenham, upon Home Colonization, Poor Laws, &c., and an account of some remarks made at the close, in answer

to a question. These remarks, it would appear, by the following extract from the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, led to his arrest on Thursday night last, at the conclusion of a public meeting to take into consideration the subject of civil and religious liberty:—

Holyoake the Blasphemous Socialist Lecturer.—In reference to a paragraph which appeared in the last *Chronicle*, regarding this monster, the magistrates read the article alluded to, and expressed their opinion that it was a clear case of blasphemy. In order to check the further progress of his pernicious doctrines, the superintendent of police was ordered to use every exertion to bring him to justice.

“After the audience had retired (says the *Cheltenham Free Press*) Sup. Russell intimated to the lecturer, that he had been ordered by the magistrates to bring him before them, but he had no warrant. Mr. HOLYOAKE said he would go with him peaceably, and walked down arm-in-arm with a friend to the station house, Superintendent Russell following behind.” The same paper contains an excellent account of the meeting, as well as some liberal comments upon the arrest by the editor.

Writing to me from the police station, Mr. H. says, “The meeting at which I spoke till half-past ten, was enthusiastic. It was twelve o’clock when I was lodged here.”

The subjoined account of his committal is extracted

From *The Cheltenham Free Press*.

COMMITTAL OF A SOCIALIST LECTURER ON A CHARGE OF BLASPHEMY.

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE was charged with blasphemy. Mr. Bubb appeared for the prosecution.

Mr. Bubb.—I attend to prefer the charge of blasphemy, and I shall take my stand on the common unwritten law of the land. There have been a variety of statutes passed for punishing blasphemy, but these statutes in no respect interfere with the common unwritten law. Any person who denies the existence or providence of god, is guilty of blasphemy, and the law has annexed to that offence imprisonment, corporal punishment, and fine. I shall give evidence of the facts, and I shall ask that he be

committed for trial, or required to find bail for his appearance. The offence is much aggravated by his having put forth a placard, announcing a lecture on a subject completely innocent, and having got together a number of persons, has given utterance to those sentiments which are an insult to god and man.

James Bartram.—I am a compositor; and on the 24th of May, I attended a lecture which was delivered at the Mechanic's Institution, in this town; it was just after the clock struck nine in the evening; about 100 persons were present, or more; there were some women and a few lads; from a placard over the door I understood the lecture was on "Home Colonization; the Poor Laws, and Emigration superseded;" I did not take notice whether it was stated who the lecture would be given by; when I went into the room that gentleman (prisoner) was lecturing; a question was put to him by a person whose name I understood was Maitland; that question had reference to our duty to god; the prisoner made some remarks, *which I can't of course recollect*, as I was not paying sufficient attention to the first he said; he stated he thought the people of this country were too poor to have any religion; he stated he was of no religion at all; he stated he did not believe there was such a thing as a god; that he would have the deity served the same as the government served the subalterns—place him on half-pay; there was a general expression of applause; I heard no expression to the contrary; there was cheering at the end of his sentence.

Cross-examined.—I am sure you used the word "thing;" what you stated was after the man Maitland asked the question.

William Henry Pearce.—I am a printer; I attended on the 24th of May a lecture that took place at the Mechanic's Institution, Cheltenham, a little after 9; I should think there were upwards of 100 persons present, men, women, and boys; I was induced to go in by a person named Russell telling me there was a lecture; I saw a placard over the door; I scarcely noticed it; I think I saw the word "Colonization;" the prisoner was lecturing when I went in; I heard Maitland say the lecturer had said a good deal about teaching man his duty towards his fellow, but he had not said anything about teaching him his duty towards god; the prisoner made some remarks about education, and having rooms for teaching the children in this colony. and he said for his part he thought the people of this country ought not to have any religion, for they were too poor; he spoke of how many millions it cost; he said, "For my part, I am of no religion at all;" he made some other remarks which I do not recollect; he said those who professed religion were worshippers of Mammon; he said, *to the best of my belief*, "For my part I don't believe there is such a thing as a god;" I firmly believe he used the word "thing;" when he was speaking of the people of this country being too poor, he said, "If I could have my way I'd place the deity on half-pay in the same way as the government do the subaltern officers."

Holyoake.—I should wish to ask whether it is customary to take persons from their homes without authority and without a warrant?

Mr. Capper.—I believe any person in that assembly had a right to take you without a warrant.

Cross-examined.—My motive for going was I thought it was a political lecture; to the best of my belief you said "the people of this country ought not to have any religion;" you said you were no religion; I can't state what reasons you gave for your statements in answer to Maitland.

Pearce.—After the lecture was concluded, the chairman said any person might ask any question of the lecturer; and Maitland got up.

Bartram recalled.—The lecturer was endeavouring to show that there ought to be a universal toleration of religious principles, and those who were in those communities might or might not have a religion, and he for himself claimed the same privilege.

Mr. Overbury.—Whether you are of no religion is very little to us, but your attempts to propagate the sentiments that there is no god is calculated to produce disorder and confusion, and is a breach of the peace.

Mr. Capper.—It is not only wickedness, but folly; no heathen in the world denies the existence of a god.

Holyoake.—I am not allowed to argue it?

He was ordered to enter into his own recognizances of £100, and find two sureties in £50, to answer the charge at the sessions.

Mr. Henry Fry and Mr. Partridge offered themselves as bail, but Mr. Bubb applied to have twenty-four hours' notice given of bail, which the bench agreed to.

A friend of Mr. H.'s writing from Cheltenham, furnishes these additional particulars:

"Friday evening.—Mr. Holyoake has just been sent to Gloucester, *handcuffed between two policemen!* It was their intention to make him walk, but we interfered, and he has ridden."—And in another letter just received, that "When the evidence was finished, the magistrates took it upon them to lecture Mr. H.; Mr. Capper asserting that his conduct was dictated by a feeling of bravado, and should like to hear him say there was no god on a death-bed, and he would then call him a *bold man.*"

These proceedings are even more disgraceful than those connected with the arrest of CHARLES SOUTHWELL in Bristol. Here is an individual arrested *without a warrant*, for an alleged offence committed nine days previously, during which time it must have been well known to the parties in office, at whose instigation it took place, that the offender would visit Cheltenham again in a certain period.

It would appear from Mr. H.'s remarks of last week, that a reverend gentleman is at the bottom of this righteous affair, and that, too, the saintly, but *fashionable*, parson of Cheltenham, the Rev. Francis Close, the denouncer of music meetings, &c. "The greater the saint, the greater the rogue." This "March-hare of the church," as Chas. Southwell called him,* is the individual who said that "The more a man is advanced in human knowledge, the more is he opposed to religion, and the more deadly enemy is he to

* No. 7, p. 59.

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the truth of god!" How perfectly in keeping with such an opinion is the assertion that there were in the employ of the editor of the *Cheltenham Chronicle* (called this same rev. gent.'s paper) three persons "ready to verify on oath" [their words were not to be credited; parsons believe none but swearers, though the "Jew Book" says, "swear not at all"] the correctness of the statements made by the editor, the greater part of which Mr. H. showed to be a lie; and to which statement one of the said veracious authorities would not swear positively, but said "to the best of my belief," &c. Upon the mere belief of a man—used to do the dirty work of his interested employers—that another expressed certain theological opinions, the latter is committed to a prison and treated like a felon against whose criminality there is not a shadow of doubt; for it is usual in cases of felony to discharge or remand the suspected party, when the evidence is not of a positive nature.

The motto of *Saint Francis*, of Cheltenham, being that "a little learning is a dangerous thing," he acts upon the "better-to-be-safe" principle, and employs those only who have none; doubtless from the impression that the possession of virtue is in the proportion of the absence of knowledge. But herein he either forgets or wilfully closes his eyes to the fact, that the possession of information sufficient to see this supposed fact by himself, entitles him to high rank among the dangerous and worthless character of society. The three disgraces of whom he speaks would doubtless swear to anything for which they were paid, holding their situations upon such tenure; being found of great use, no doubt, as spies upon the liberals of the town.

It is a singular circumstance that three parties from one firm, and that not a very extensive one, evidently opposed to anything like socialism, should have attended a lecture upon "Home Colonization," wherein there was not much probability that theology would be touched upon, unless introduced by questioning at the conclusion; which, singularly enough, took place, and very probably formed a part of the plan. Unless one of the trio was a reporter, I can speak from pretty extensive experience in these matters, it is somewhat unusual for journeymen to furnish editors with reports of lectures or public meetings, voluntarily; the intimacy between the two parties not generally leading to such results. But supposing one to be a reporter, the other two would still appear to have gone as witnesses.

Again, we are told that the police were "ordered to use every exertion to bring him (Mr. H.) to justice," and yet they allow him to attend a public meeting, and speak there for some time (when he might have again blasphemed) and never attempt to interfere with him. This fact, to my mind, is conclu-

sive, that they delayed his arrest *in the hope* that he would, by reiterating his former opinions, or by defending them, furnish a better pretext for his detention. An attempt was made to revive the question of "the existence of deity, but Mr. Holyoake declined entering into the question at that time as the meeting was called for another object."

Query.—Is the person who induced Pearce to attend the lecture the same with the superintendent? The coincidence is singular, if not so.

The sapient Mr. Capper *believed* any person had a right to arrest the prisoner without a warrant, and upon his belief he does not scruple to interfere with the liberty of the subject, and send a couple of blue-coated ruffians to drag an "unresisting youth" before him, whom he insulted and disgusted with his ignorance and want of decency. "No heathen in the world," said this Midas, "denies the existence of a god," and for this reason he thinks it "not only wickedness but folly" to dispute it. Henceforward philosophy must be tested by ignorance, and that only be considered true which the heathen will admit. I would suggest the test being applied to Christianity, and acted upon.

The following is from the editor's remarks in the *Free Press*:—"A young man, named Holyoake, who had become embittered against "religionists" through the imprisonment of a friend who avowed atheistical principles, publicly denied, in answer to a question, his belief in the existence of a god. Such an avowal called for a visit from some minister of religion, to reason and converse with him, in order that he might be convinced that there is a god who ruleth over all, and that the spirit of christianity is holy, just, and right. Such was not the course adopted, but policemen were despatched to bring the unresisting youth before the civil magistrates, and he is now committed to take his trial for the offence, and his punishment will probably be a long term of imprisonment. And is this calculated to soften his heart? No. His sense of the injustice which he endures will harden him in unbelief, and he will walk forth from his dungeon with his heart steeled against conviction, and with a stronger determination than ever to obtain converts to his mode of thinking. Oh! when will Christians cease to act as though they disbelieved the power of those doctrines they profess?"

Dismissing the idea of malice aforethought, and looking upon it as unpremeditated, how like a well-paid son of the "scarlet whore," is the resort to physical force instead of argument; to the brutal instruments of magisterial tyranny, instead of the influence of the holy ghost; to the dungeon, instead of the church! Do those in authority imagine they will ever be allowed the exclusive use of physical force, and that the insulted and in-

jured multitude will not, at no distant period, turn and rend them? Do they imagine that the examples of violence they so industriously set, will not be copied, and practised upon the teachers?

Every prosecution for blasphemy, by producing feelings of disgust and indignation in the minds of the intelligent members of society, and in its re-action upon the public mind, obliges bigotry to moderate its fury, and restrain its thirst for freemen's blood! Every gross outrage against the common rights of humanity, by the surpliced bandits that infest society, or in support of their interests, proves the absolute necessity, if we ever expect to emancipate ourselves and our children, of declaring war, uncompromising and exterminating to the altar and the priest! Aye, even WAR TO THE KNIFE!

Those who would be free, themselves must strike the blow!

The enemies of tyranny, and friends and advocates of freedom of expression, are again called upon to exert themselves, as they did in the case of Mr. SOUTHWELL, with the certainty that similar good will be the result; and that the means taken to stop these opinions only accelerate their diffusion.

No sooner was Mr. H. arrested than an order was sent by a party at Cheltenham, to a bookseller, for a large supply of the chief atheistical and Infidel works, which was immediately supplied. Thus, books which otherwise would not have been heard of for months or years, are now generally diffused in an important and extensive locality; and through the channel which is opened a constant and healthy stream of knowledge will not cease to flow.

One word at parting, every exertion made in SOUTHWELL's cause should be trebled on the present occasion, for Holyoake "has given hostages to fortune"—having a wife and two children; whereas his friend had neither. The last remarks made by G. J. H., on Thursday evening last, were to the following effect:—

I have always found a great deal of kindness and courtesy in this room. Should anything happen to me it is not unlikely attempts will be made to traduce my moral character. I have a wife and two children of whom I am fond. If I have periled my liberty it is not without knowing the truth of those principles. We have attended meetings; I want to know whether the principles of liberty exist as they are talked about, and I have taken up the pen of Charles Southwell; I believe my wife would take a pleasure in my suffering if she knew it was caused by my daring to be an honest man.

W. C.

'Tis the saint's godly maxim to beg for the pelf
In behalf of the poor, and then keep it himself.
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THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XVI.

"In reference to the phenomena of organic life, they had a classification and structure of their own, often not the same we now behold; but it was impossible to doubt that the same class of agencies were concerned in influencing their forms and modes of life."—PHILLIPS, on *Fossils*.

In my last, I gave Cuvier's and Grant's classification of the existing animal kingdom, which will be found of great value to the reader in considering the gradation and classification of extinct animals, or what are generally called fossils, found in the earth's strata.

At the commencement of my labours (in No. 9) I stated my conviction, that animals were originally produced from the earth in consequence of a favourable condition of matter at the time, and that their lives were subsequently sustained from the same reason; but that whenever any material alteration of the locality in which certain animals resided took place, they either accommodated themselves to the different circumstances, or became extinct. This opinion or hypothesis, the arguments and illustrations I shall now bring forward, in connection with the discoveries of geology will, I think, fully substantiate, or at any rate amply support. In fact, an unbiassed examination of fossil remains, taken in connection with the state of the earth at the period of their animated existence, and the changes which took place when they would appear to have been destroyed, must lead to such conclusion.

At one time, we find the earth unfitted for the existence of any condition of animal or vegetable life, the matter then consolidated having evidently been subjected to so great a heat as to melt or fuse it, and is thence called the plutonic series, consisting of the various granites. To these succeed deposits which may have contained organised forms, but from their proximity to the former series they have been so changed as to obliterate their remains. The next, or transition series, being further removed from these unfavourable circumstances, and apparently fitted for the support of life, is found to contain plants and animals. And as we proceed from the lower to the higher strata, so do we find the life-producing and life-sustaining properties of the strata increased; or, if this be not the case, we have evidence of a gradual increase in the varieties of organised matter, and an approximation to those forms which now inhabit our sphere.

The following extract from a lecture delivered a few weeks since, by Professor Phillips, at the Manchester Royal Institu-

tion, beautifully illustrates my views, and is valuable as showing the heavy blows the progress of science is dealing to superstition generally, and more particularly to the Mosaic creatorial folly. He says :

But, in reference to the causes which govern organic life, in reference to the degree in which these operate in a given time, it was tolerably apparent from the magnitude of some of the dislocations which have affected thousands of feet in height, and an immense extent of area—and it appeared to be clear from the evidence as to change of climate over a large surface of the ancient globe, derived from the study of organic remains—that the conditions under which these causes influenced life, and those influences and agencies of the aqueous and igneous rocks were different in the ancient world from what we now behold; and accordingly, it was probable therefore that the rate of progress must also be different. Now, upon this view, two speculations seemed naturally to arise:—Should we have the present state of the earth, its temperature, and the aspect of organic life, as one of a circle of changes which there may have been previously to it, in which some may be more violent than others? Or shall we suppose that the evidence leads to a different conclusion, and, instead of geological phenomena forming a circle, regard them as flowing on in a series, having something like a beginning, and tracing a series of alterations from the most ancient times to the present? First, in reference to the grand distinction between the stratified and unstratified rocks, the evidence was, that below all the stratified rocks there was a very extensive system of rocks produced by heat, but not such as any volcanoes were now producing; and not only did that ancient period produce a far greater mass, but the rocks produced by heat appear to underlie all the stratified rocks, and were subject to fusion in consequence, as was supposed, of the communication of heat from the interior of the earth. Another fact was, that the most ancient stratified rocks very unequivocally showed themselves derived from the disintegration of the igneous rocks; those parts having been aggregated in water. This looked like the beginning of a series. The millstone grit was evidently a rock derived from disintegrated granite, and it was supposed that the sandstone rocks, if melted again, would form a granite. Perhaps it was hardly worth making a supposition about, unless the fact was found largely existing in nature. But he had shown the probability that there was an original condition of things totally different, in which the rocks, formed by the action of heat, were disintegrated, and again aggregated and deposited in new forms by the action and influences of water. As to organic life, he had shown that plants and animals had formed several series of creations; that we were able to class them into several successive groups of life; and it was very interesting to know that those lowest in the series were the most unlike existing types, and that most of the plants and animals of the lowest parts of the series were extinct; their general conformation unlike what we now behold, and we could trace a certain order of change; not like that of repetition, moving in a circle, but rather such

as would belong to a series. We trace these forms of organic life rising higher and higher, till we could connect the whole in one general classification. *This looked like a series and not a circle.* Another thing looked still more important in this particular consideration, viz., the numbers of these organic remains. He had shown that in the lowest rocks, in a hundred feet of thickness, there were perhaps two or three species of shells; in the next above them, four or five; in the next they increased to eight or ten; and, in the tertiary series, he thought they exceeded 140 species. These lowest were not disturbed, but well preserved amongst the rocks, yet showing that the circumstances of then existing nature permitted but few species of organic life; yet they continually augmented, till, in the upper parts of the series, the numbers of species became extremely large; showing that, at that period, circumstances were extremely favourable to organic life.

Then, as to the forms of plants and animals, those found in the upper series were most like what we have now; so that the present aspect of the earth was most like the most recent change. Below these last the strata were of vast thickness, and in these were no traces of life; not that they were peculiarly unfit to preserve them, quite the contrary. He would only, in conclusion, venture to place before his audience, in a very few words, the causes according to which a great number of geologists think, when fully worked out, we might have a tolerably clear knowledge of the series of these phenomena, and their way of influence. If we first consider the fact proved, that over the greatest portion of the northern zones of the world, during a large portion of time when the stratified rocks were accumulated, there was a high temperature both on the land and on the sea. If, further, we consider that, in the breaking up of the crust of the globe, the enormous effects of which operation were connected with the action of heat, and below all the stratified rocks there are proofs of the existence of immense masses of igneous rock; these considerations would link themselves into one general scale of speculation—that the earth must originally have been of the nature of a body so highly heated, that neither the atmosphere nor the water (if water existed at all) would be fit for organic life; and that, as the globe cooled down, both the atmosphere and water might acquire a condition more and more favourable continually to the *development* of organic life; so that the temperature, still going on cooling and breaking up the bed of the sea, dividing the mass of water into land, there would be introduced upon the globe that great variety of climates and combinations of circumstances which did not obtain in the earliest periods. That view, if worked out, would be found exceedingly interesting and fruitful of results—much more so than was at present supposed. This, he might mention, was a view not thought unfavourably of by astronomers, but rather the contrary. However, there was this general speculation thrown out, in the hope that eventually the facts might be thus united. He believed that we had to pass through long periods of time before the establishment of any one general view as the explanation of this long series of phenomena.

Another important feature in this inves-

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tigation must not be overlooked. It is this: not only does geology prove that in no one instance in the petrified world are superior organisms, as they are termed, found unconnected with inferior ones, as stated by me in page 159; which, I contend, is an argument against *creations*, for we do not find a coach-maker, when he has to build a nobleman's carriage, begin by making a mud cart or pair of trucks. But that, taking the whole series of depositions, from the granites to the diluvial of the tertiary, it would appear that the lowest or simplest organisms in the animal scale, existed in greater numbers contemporaneously with the lowest strata of the geological scale. And that the progress of the former to their present state was regulated and determined by the progress of the latter.

For instance: in the grauwacke or transition group, the lower part of which is called the "lowest fossiliferous group," we find the polypus, lily-enerinite, trilobite, &c., forming the greater portion of the animal remains of the period. Many of these belong to the lowest division of the animal kingdom, and one of the most prolific to the lowest order but one.

Whether or not I am justified in using the terms inferior and superior in relation to organisations, is not worthy of consideration here; in every instance I have, and shall continue to use the words in the popular senses, the better to convey my ideas. Although I shall begin from the fossils of the lowest stratum, and proceed upwards to the tertiary, the following table will be found of service to the reader, forming an appropriate companion to those given last week, and scarcely to be dispensed with in our present inquiry.

FOSSILIFEROUS.		AQUEOUS.	
SUPERFICIAL.			
Vegetable soil			
Peat		Remains of animals, ma-	
Gravel beds		ny of which still exist.	
Blue clay beds			
TERTIARY.			
Marl beds			
Shelly Millstone		The first distinct appear-	
Gypsum		ance of mammalia.	
Coarse limestone			
Plastic clay			
SECONDARY.			
<i>Chalk Group.</i>			
Chalk		Similar	
Greensand		Some fishes	
Weald clays			
<i>Oolitic Group.</i>			
Oolite			
Sand stones		Same as red sandstone	
Lias			
<i>New Red Sandstone Group.</i>			
Variegated marls		Ichthyosaurus	
Muschelkalk		Plesiosaurus	
Variegated sandstones			

<i>New Red Sandstone.</i>	
Zechstein	Iguanodon
Red conglomerate	Pterodactyle
Rock salt	Tortoises
<i>Carboniferous Group.</i>	
Coal	Zoophytes
Sandstone	Mollusca
Shale	Crustacea
Mountain limestone	Few fishes
Old red sandstone	
TRANSITION.	
<i>Grauwacke Group.</i>	
Grauwacke	Polypi
Clayey and sandy slates	Encrinite
or lowest fossiliferous	Ammonites, nautili
	Trilobites
NON-FOSSILIFEROUS.	
PRIMARY.	
<i>Inferior Stratified Series.</i>	
Clay slate	<i>Metamorphic.</i>
Mica slate	
Primitive limestone	
Protogine	
Gneiss	
PLUTONIC. <i>Granites.</i>	
Granite, in varieties	

The table reads from the bottom upwards.

Commencing then with the *transition* series, composed of the grauwacke group, we first find vegetable and animal remains. The former consist of algæ, or sea weeds, showing that seas like our own then existed; some land plants of simple structure, as ferns and club mosses, are also found, showing the *flora* of the era to have been of a very simple kind, and suited to live in marshy grounds. Amongst the animals there were abundance of *polypi* resembling plants; but the most numerous class consisted of shell-fish, possibly, because better calculated for preservation. Also, the *lily-enerinite* a remarkable example of the radiated tribes; it is so called from its resemblance to a lily resting on its stalk. "It is supposed," says Mr. Gesner, "that the animal resided in the bottom of the flower; and those portions of it which were moveable, stood stretched out like arms to seize its prey." It is altogether extinct, and has been so for many ages. Of the shell-fish, there were the *ammonite* and *nautilus*, the former receiving its name from the curved horn on the head of the statue of Jupiter Ammon; they are very common, and are called in some parts "snake stones."

The *trilobite*, another of the early species deserving particular attention, is now extinct, but the class to which it belongs (crustacea) serves to afford some knowledge of its habits. "The trilobite had a head and eyes, below which there was a body of no great length, covered with shelly plates in the manner of a lobster's tail, and terminating in a narrow rounded point. It is supposed that it had soft paddles to make way through

the water, which have not of course been preserved. But the most interesting feature in the trilobite was its eyes, of which several specimens have been obtained in a nearly entire state. The eye of the trilobite has been formed with 400 spherical lenses in separate compartments on the surface of a cornea projecting conically upwards, so that the animal, in its usual place at the bottoms of waters, could see every thing around. As there are two eyes, one of the sides of each would have been useless, as it could only look across to meet the vision of the other; but on the inner sides there are no lenses, that nothing may, in accordance with a principle observable throughout nature, be thrown away. It is found that in the serolis, a surviving kindred genus, the eyes are constructed on exactly the same principle, except that they are not so high, which seems a proper difference, as the back of the serolis is lower, and presents less obstruction to the creature's vision. It is also found that in all the trilobites of the later rocks, the eyes are the same."

"A few bones of fishes have been found in the grauwacke; but some obscurity rests on the point. If such really have been the case, the remains of this era may be said to include specimens of all the four divisions of the animal kingdom—radiated, jointed, pulpy, and verterbrated animals, or radiata, articulata, mollusca, and vertabrata."*

In the carboniferous group of the secondary series, the animal remains are much the same as those of the grauwacke. The vegetable remains of the new red sandstone group are much the same as the preceding; but in the department of animal, when we arrive at the muschelkalk, or shell limestone, we find a great difference, leading to the supposition that, at this era of geological chronology, "circumstances had arisen changing the character of marine life over certain portions of Europe; that certain animals abounding previously, and for a great length of time, disappeared never to reappear, at least as far as we can judge from our knowledge of organic remains;" † and that certain new forms of a very remarkable kind were added. The new creatures were of such a class as we might expect to be the first added to the few specimens of fish which had hitherto existed; they were of the class of reptiles, creatures whose organization places them next in the scale of creation to fish, but yet below the higher class of animals which bring forth their young alive and nourish them by suck (mammalia). The earth was as yet only fit to be a partial habitation to creatures breathing its atmosphere and living upon its productions. It is sup-

* Chambers's Information.

† De la Beche's Manual, 408.

posed to have been under so high a temperature as to be unsuitable for mammalia: the lands which existed were probably low and marshy, with a hot, moist atmosphere, so as to present an appropriate field of existence only for lizards, crocodiles, and creatures of similar character. It is also to be supposed that the land was at this period undergoing frequent changes and convulsions, so that only a class of creatures to which submersions and deluges were matters of indifference, could reside upon it without a great waste of life.*

"When we see," says Dr. Buckland, "that so large and important a range has been assigned to reptiles among the former population of our planet, we cannot but regard with feelings of new and unusual interest the comparatively diminutive existing orders of that most ancient family of quadrupeds, with the very name of which we usually associate a sentiment of disgust. We shall view them with less contempt, when we learn from the records of geological history, that there was a time when reptiles not only constituted the chief tenants and most powerful possessors of the earth, but extended their dominion also over the waters of the seas; and that the annals of their history may be traced back thousands of years antecedent to that latest point in the progressive stages of animal creation, when the first parents of the human race were called into existence." †

One of the most remarkable of these reptiles has received the name of ichthyosaurus (fish-lizard), seven species of which have been discovered. The head is like a crocodile's, body like a fish, with four paddles, like those of the whale tribe, instead of feet. It is mainly allied to the lizard tribe, but combined in itself the fish, the whale, and the ornithorynchus." ‡

"As the form of the vertabræ by which it is associated with the class of fishes seems to have been introduced for the purpose of giving rapid motion in the water to a lizard inhabiting the element of fishes, so the further adoption of a structure in the legs, resembling the paddles of a whale, was superadded, in order to convert these extremities into powerful fins. The still further addition of a furcula and clavicles, like those of the ornithorynchus, offers a third and not less striking example of *selection of contrivances*, to enable animals of one class to live in the element of another class." §

Such deviations, says Chambers, cannot be considered as monstrosities; they are perfect adaptations of a creature to its pur-

* Chambers's Information.

† Bridgwater Treatise, i. 167.

‡ An aquatic of New Holland, enabled to descend to the bottoms of water to search for food.

§ Bridgwater Treatise, i. 185.

poses in the theatre of being. Only the spine of the ichthyosaurus as yet existed in other animals. Its head, its paddles, and its breast-arch, were all detached parts of future animals. How strange to reflect, that some of these contrivances were allowed to become extinct, and, as it were, lost to nature, and ultimately, after a long interval, were revived in connection with new creatures!

These apparently strange circumstances are stumbling blocks in the way of supernaturalism, but do not trip up the follower of reason. No one thing in existence is to him more strange and wonderful than another; he is equally incapable of understanding the grain of sand as he is the world, and the world as the universe. Looking upon all as necessitated, he knows that there must have been adequate causes for every effect, and where he cannot arrive at a knowledge of a cause, is content to remain in ignorance, or wait until some circumstance assists him to unravel the mystery. The religious world may be truly said to *know all*, for by assigning one cause for every effect reason won't explain they get over every difficulty with the greatest self-satisfaction.

The name *plesiosaurus* is applied to another remarkable animal which inhabited the world before the days of mammalia. To the head of a lizard was attached a long neck like the body of a serpent; it was not calculated for such rapid motion as the ichthyosaurus. The *plesiosaurus* probably lived chiefly on or near the surface of the water, breathing the air, and dabbling for prey like a duck or swan, but might also be able to descend to the bottom, and even to move, though awkwardly, upon land. One part of its organisation is peculiarly striking, as foreshadowing a structure of a more important kind. The paddles, which may be considered an advance or improvement upon the fins of fishes, are at the same time the type of the legs of quadrupeds and of the arms and limbs of man. The fore-paddle consists of scapula (shoulder blade), humerus (shoulder), ulna (upper bone), and radius (lower bone), succeeded by the bones of the carpus and metacarpus, and the phalanges, equivalent to those which compose the palm and fingers of a human being. The hind-paddle presents femur, tibia, and fibula, succeeded by the bones of the tarsus and metatarsus, and five toes. Thus "even our own bodies, and some of their most important organs, are brought into close and direct comparison with those of reptiles, which at first sight appear the most monstrous productions of creation; and in the very hands and fingers with which we write their history, we recognise the type of the paddles of the ichthyosaurus and plesiosaurus."*

* Buckland's Treatise, i. 213.

The *iguanodon*, of the crocodile family, is found in abundance in these rocks. The greatest wonder of this age, was the *pterodactyle*, a reptile of the lizard kind; it had the wings of a bat, the neck of a bird, and a head furnished with long jaws, full of teeth, so that in this part of its organisation it bore some resemblance to the crocodile. Eight species, varying from the size of a snipe to that of a cormorant, have been found.

Tortoises also existed during this age, as is proved by the marks of their feet on sheets of sandstone, and by their remains. But as yet no animals of a higher class had appeared upon earth—for the remains of certain creatures of the opossum family, found in the oolite at Stonesfield, near Oxford, stand as yet so solitarily, that we cannot consider them as proving that mammalia were added to reptiles. With, then, flocks of pterodactyles flying in the air in pursuit of huge dragon-flies; gigantic crocodiles and tortoises crawling amidst the jungles of low, moist, and warm shores, and such monsters as the ichthyosaurus and plesiosaurus swarming on the surface of the sea, while its depths were peopled by infinite varieties of fish, shelled and vertebrated; we can form some faint idea of what sort of world it was while the strata between the coal and the chalk were in the course of being deposited.

It is a pity the "Jew Book" does not particularise the day of *the week* in which such a scene could have been witnessed. It must have afforded fine sport for the heavenlies, who could have whiled away their time by "fly-fishing" for pterodactyles, when not engaged in bawling or trumpeting.

In the *oolitic* group the animal remains are nearly the same as in the preceding, but the species more varied; and in the *cretaceous* group some fishes are added, and the number of saurian reptiles diminished.

W. C.

RIDDLES FOR THE RELIGIOUS.

Continued from Oracle No. 20.

Of space again, what sayest thou—can'st tell where
once 'twas not?

Or when—or being *ever thus*, if god-made or begot?

Deny that it were *self-create*—plead deity its dad—
Spacemaker god, in *spaceless state*, would seem a
tiny lad!

Admit all regions *self-create*—boundless—or bounds
unknown—

What mockery on this *complex vast* to build a *ma-*
ker's throne! G. A.

NOW READY,

A Plain Answer to the Query, 'Ought there to be a
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THE ORACLE OF REASON;

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“ FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 26.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE SOCRITICAL MODE OF DISPUTATION.

THIS famous manner of disputing, according to some persons the least liable to objection of any, derives its name from Socrates, who acquired celebrity and great skill in the use of it. Dr. Watts recommends it to the study of young Christians, in his excellent work on the improvement of the mind, which contains advice it would be well if Christians would take. If I remember rightly, Dr. Franklin was fond of socratical disputation, but gave it up because he perverted it; which was silly. The mode is followed partially in our courts of justice, or more properly courts of *law*. It seems to consist in asking a few axiomatical questions which lead to the answers the questioners wish to elicit. Persons with false systems to support should generally avoid such interrogations, as they may be seduced into indiscreet admissions of the truth.

The following dialogue between a sceptic and a Jew-Booker may serve as an illustration of the mode of proceeding.

Sceptic.—Is it not true, sir, that the greatest of rogues get on best in this world?

Jew-Booker.—Yes, true enough!

S.—Then, generally speaking, not only the dead, but the live-stock property, of the earth, is in the hands of the worst of men?

J.-B.—Just so: as the people in Derbyshire say.

S.—But the fulness of the earth, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are the lord’s, according to the Jew Book?

J.-B.—Yes, the bible does say so, but what do you mean by it?

S.—I mean this, that it clearly seems that the lord selects the greatest scoundrels to be his stewards on earth; or, to speak after the manner of Matthew, he entrusts the greatest number of his talents to men of the least honour and principle. But further, permit me to ask, does not the same book declare god to be no respecter of persons?

J.-B.—O yes, and so I have always been taught that he is.

S.—You may have been taught so; but from your answers, it is plain that he is not only a respecter of persons, but to speak of him as we do of men, he appears to have the greatest respect for the greatest rascals, since he commits the good things of this life to the worst of men, who use them to suppress liberty, bolster up superstition, and degrade humanity.

J.-B.—Umph!

S.—I would ask you another question. What think ye of the intrigue, corruption, jesuitry, tergiversation, misery, and despair, every where around you? Are these the specimens of *good* you can thank god for? Or perhaps you do not see these things at all, but, like Capel Loft in his critique on poor Bloomfield’s Farmer’s Boy, “the sours of life less offend *you* than their sweet’s delight.”

J.-B.—I do not partake of feeling’s like those, so you may save your sarcasm for those who do. I think, as all must think, that man has fallen, and the world has degenerated.

S.—Then the church’s signifying “as it was in the beginning, is *now*, and ever shall be,” &c., amen, is so much nonsense; and if you admit it is, then I think all things were not good when god said in Genesis, he had made them so. For his son laid it down long after, that good trees bring forth infallibly good fruit. There seems a mistake somewhere. But, now on this subject, I remember your Jew Book calls us the “lords of creation.”

J.-B.—The bible does, sir, and I rejoice in the noble distinction.

S.—Then also should yonder poor wretch, in whose face despair and famine speak at once, who is worked harder than the horse, fed worse than the ass, and has a million chances against him of being damned everlastingly in addition—a misfortune from which both the others are exempt. If you rejoice in these distinctions of your race, I cannot compliment you upon your taste. Your Jew Book being made and kept true by act of parliament, it is well protected against being called false, whatever may be thought of it, but when I think of the poor man being the *lord* of creation, I feel ’tis a great pity it is not true.

G. J. H.

CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY.

"Mr. OVERBURY.—Whether you are of no religion is very little to us, but your attempts to propagate the sentiments that there is no god is calculated to produce disorder and confusion, and is a breach of the peace."—HOLYOAKE'S *Committal*.

IGNORANCE and impudence, it is said, usually go hand-in-hand, and there can be no question of their close connexion in the persons of the Cheltenham Dogberries who presided at the committal of friend HOLYOAKE. One of these representatives of her majesty, who is stated to be the *head* of the church, said it was of very little consequence to them the prisoner's being of no religion. Very likely not, in a spiritual point of view, though it should be otherwise, but far different in a temporal, and so his worship showed; being cunning enough to know that upon the continuance of superstition, usually called *religion*, depends the necessity for his magisterial authority, and all the machinery for the generation and support of villany, in the shape of policemen, magistrates, judges, lawyers, parsons, etc. etc. The fact being notorious, as may be proved by reference to prison statistics, that the great majority of unfortunate victims to bad laws, the usual occupants of such places, are those who are steeped to the lips in ignorance and credulity.

But is it of little consequence to a *Christian* (?) magistrate that one of her majesty's subjects should be an Atheist—the disbeliever in the being of a god, the repudiator of *all* religions; and one who would, as soon as possible, dispense with all the mummeries connected with "the holy catholic," and every other church; beginning with the crowned or mitred head, and ending only with the scarlet-caped and be-stuffed tail? Is it of little consequence to a Christian that a human being and a brother should place in jeopardy his *eternal* happiness by treating with contempt the warnings and threatenings of an almighty, jealous, and revengeful being; of whose existence, power, wishes, etc., all Christians profess to be well acquainted? Of what materials could that man be made who should say, and that sincerely, that it was of very little consequence to him to see another wilfully blinding his eyes and walking into a sea of molten lead? If he were possessed of the ordinary feelings of humanity, would one not imagine he would try to prevent him, for his own sake; could he witness such a sight and not suffer severe mental agony? But what would that be to the portion of the damned in the Christian's hell? Read the following by the eloquent R. Dale Owen, copied from his delightful tract on "Consistency," which should be read by every man, whether sceptic or believer:—

It has been calculated that the distance from hence to the sun is nearly one hundred millions of miles;

and the distance to Syrius, the nearest of the fixed stars, more than five hundred thousand times greater. The distance to the more remote among the fixed stars has never been calculated. But conceive, if it be possible, how immense the distance from our earth to the remotest star that telescope ever aided us to discover. Then imagine a circle drawn at that inconceivable distance all round our earth, and suppose a globe of sand of such stupendous dimensions that its circumference should fill up that mighty circle. Imagine each grain of that sand one million times less than the smallest animalcula which microscope ever made visible. How utterly beyond the power of imagination must be the number of these grains that should go to make up the whole enormous mass! And now imagine that one of these imperceptible grains were detached from that mass at the close of each million of centuries; how long, think you, would it require ere the whole immeasurable globe was thus dissolved, grain by grain? Do not your human senses refuse even to imagine the period? Do you not feel that you are approaching a region of imagination that belongs not to man? If I asked you how many moments that period might contain, might I not seem to ask it in derision?

And yet each single moment it contains is millions on millions of times longer, compared to the period itself, than is the period compared to eternity. Let such a globe be formed and thus lessen by one grain each million of centuries, until, grain by grain, it pass away. Let another of equal dimensions replace it, in like manner to lessen and to disappear. Then another and another, until thousands has been added to thousands, and millions to millions in stupendous succession. Then take the sum of these immeasurable periods, and deduct it from eternity.

Have you obtained a tenth, a thousandth, a millionth part? Have you obtained the smallest expressible fraction? Have ye shortened eternity even by one fleeting instant? Would ye be, even by one single moment, nearer the end of eternity, if these unimagined periods were come and past, than you are at this day?

Now, it is this period of eternity which, we are told, is to be spent in heaven or hell!

A popular preacher, at Langton-street chapel, Bristol, used nearly the same words in an attempt to describe the torments of the damned, whilst over his head, as if in fiendish mockery of his sobbing congregation, were emblazoned in letters of burnished gold, the words, "GOD IS LOVE!"

And yet a Christian, and one in authority, could say it was very little to him to know that the prisoner before him would suffer this eternity of torture; which, supposing it to consist of merely the remorse arising from a knowledge of evil committed, and despair at the impossibility of escape from such thoughts, is enough to drive one mad to contemplate. But a Christian magistrate could, on the judgment seat, and in open court, say it troubled him but little to look upon one who would be subject to such treatment! I feel sick with the picture my limited imagination

can paint of such a condition—totally disbelieving it; what would my feelings be could I think it fact!

But these men are liars, and the truth is not in them, when they profess to believe in a god, and that too a “jealous god,” one who “visits the sins of the father even unto the third and fourth generation!” They are all of them PRACTICAL Infidels, acting continually disregardless of the existence of the being whose name they have always in their mouths. Not infidels in the vulgar acceptance of the term; for so-called Infidels are generally men moral, just, and humane; but as infidels to their professions of love for a good god, whilst acting like demons. We are told by the mawworms of the church that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that needeth no repentance, and yet this Christian says it is of little consequence to him that there is a sinner in the world without hope of redemption; but that it is of consequence that the peace of her majesty should be preserved from even the shadow of a chance of violation. Here then we have her majesty Victoria, by the *grace of god*, queen of England, placed above the deity, whose subject she is, and *her* peace considered *before* his; and that too by one who professes to believe in the almighty power of this jealous god, his capability of depriving him of life, and of consigning him to everlasting damnation. It is clear, if the Christian’s god be so jealous of the love of his creatures, as they represent him to be, that the surest way to secure his love would be to get those to love him who do not now; and quite regardless of mundane affairs, look only to heaven and its joys: the joys of this world are finite, those of another infinite. “Were I a religionist—did I truly, firmly, *consistently* believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another—the spirit of truth be my witness, religion should be to me *every thing*. * * I would esteem one soul gained to heaven worth a world of torture. * * I would kindle the hot enthusiasm of youth, till it blazed with holy fervour, consuming by its scorching influence all human feelings, and human reserves, and human interests; and if reason melted away before the burning power, and the convulsions of conversion were succeeded by the ravings of insanity, that should not for a moment arrest my course. Believing that it is better to enter into heaven insane, than, having the soundest reason, to be cast into hell-fire, in a world changed to one great lunatic asylum, I would see but the nursery of heaven!” * What then should a Christian and a magistrate do, when a sinner is brought before him who states his disbelief in

this said jealous god? Should he not, as a good Christian, *first* “Seek the kingdom of god and his righteousness,” with a view that “all other things should be added thereunto?” This he would have done had he succeeded in turning the “unresisting youth” from the error of his ways, plucking him “like a brand from the burning.” And would not this suggest itself as the proper course: first to show the misguided man the fallacy of his disbelief and the danger to himself if he did not reject it; and next, the immoral tendency of such doctrines, in a state of society like our own? And not, without any attempt to convince him of his error, commit him to a dungeon for conduct “*calculated* to produce disorder and confusion,” saying that the preservation of his *soul*, and even god’s happiness, was of little moment when compared with England’s queen—or rather, I should say, England’s hell-hounds, born of sin and the devil, called parsons—monsters who feed on human flesh, and are drunk with the blood of humanity! Who, so fond of blood themselves, would cram their dupes with the blood and carcass of their god! One of these vampires has given to the world some “slaughterhouse rhymes,” containing a lie, taken figuratively or literally, but strongly illustrative of their never-dying thirst for blood; they are:—

There is a fountain filled with blood,
 Drawn from Emanuel’s veins,
 And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 Lose all their guilty stains.

Were these demons to obtain a footing in such a place as they describe heaven to be, instead of singing “holy! holy! holy!” they would flap their horrid wings, and howl—“Blood! blood!! blood!!! that we may drink damnation to the damped in the skulls of those who endeavoured to subvert our power on earth!” Heaven would be hell with their presence, and hell a heaven by their absence.

But to return, by converting the prisoner to christianity, a *threefold* object would have been gained, viz., the wresting of a soul from the devil, the addition of another to the army of the lord, and, seeing that all good Christians obey those placed in authority over them, her majesty the queen would have been saved any expense for maintenance and detention on the said prisoner’s account, in order that her peace may be preserved. Not only are these benefits lost, but additional mischief is likely to accrue, according to the *Cheltenham Free Press*, by the course pursued, for the editor says, “He (the prisoner) will walk forth from his dungeon with his heart steeled against conviction, and with a stronger determination than ever to obtain converts to his mode of thinking.” Aye, that will he, and his friends in the meantime will exert themselves more than ever to show the ab-

* Dale Owen, “On Consistency.”

surdities of the system, said to be for the support of a god, under which such cruelties and villanies are practised. For "The great truth has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth, that man shall no longer render an account to man for his belief, *over which he has no control*. Henceforward, nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or blame any one for that which he can no more change, than he can the hue of his skin or the height of his stature." *
W. C.

MR. MACKINTOSH'S CHALLENGE!

IN consequence of the forcible detention of my friend HOLYOAKE by some Gloucestershire godities, he is unable to reply to Mr. M.'s letter of last week; and being myself guilty of the same misconduct as that charged upon G. J. H., and, of course, open to the same challenge, I shall say a few words in reply to Mr. M.

The above gent. begins his letter by abusing the editor for using improper language in his review, and continuing throughout in the same strain, concludes by stating, that he "should be well pleased to discuss the question in the *Oracle*," provided it could be carried on in a proper spirit, but this (he says) it would appear, cannot be done, because the high-priest of atheism is impudent, trifling, discursive, bigotted, stupid, &c.; and that "it were well, for the sake of peace, to shut up the book and close the argument."

Mr. Mackintosh has not commenced any argument, and furnishes the above objections as his reasons for declining any, unless it can be carried on in a proper spirit. Now, I should presume that the editor in reviewing the work in question, treated it, as he imagined, according to its deserts; at any rate, that was the course I pursued. Had the "Dissertation" contained evidences of a desire on the part of the writer to arrive at truth, which ever way that might be, and not a determination to uphold a certain opinion, quite regardless of the means by which it could be accomplished; had it been void of dogmatism and abuse, and not, as it has been shown to be, filled with both—had this been the case, I would say that any other than calm, argumentative reasoning, would be open to objection, and the user of it deserving of reprobation. Does Mr. Mackintosh imagine that he is to be quietly allowed to write and publish a work upon a question of vital importance to the social happiness of mankind, with the avowed object of establishing an opinion of his own; that he is to be allowed to abuse and call by opprobrious names those holding an opposite opinion; and to use with a shameless disre-

* Lord Brougham.

gard of decency or truth his philosophical knowledge, for the purpose of supporting his hypothesis—does he suppose he is to be allowed to do all this, and then to be treated by his opponents as though he was a consistent and honest inquirer after truth? Gentlemanly feeling would be thrown away in such a case. Mr. M. would have laughed at a serious attempt to refute a work, whose gross inconsistencies, and "bold assumptions," would to all inquiring and logical minds be its own refutation, and which would not live a day, were education more generally diffused.

Whatever *assumptions* on behalf of atheism the reviews may contain, there are likewise many *arguments* against godism. Why not reply to them? Can he do so, every flippant and unjust word or expression will fall, and that too, with additional weight upon the "impudent" and "stupid" author of them.

Mr. M. calls upon the editor to prove the truth of atheism. It was never intended by the writers in this work to attempt to prove the truth of atheism, but merely to show the *probability* of its truthfulness, over its opposite, theism. In fact, as quoted by Mr. M., the editor stated that he did "not pretend to *know* that there is no god," and unless it be known that there is no god, atheism can never be *proved* to be truth; the obverse, of course, applies to theism. Whenever we cannot arrive at positive knowledge, it becomes a question of probabilities, and atheism has been argued throughout as such in these pages.

The expression of the editor, quoted by Mr. M., "if there is no god, say so at once, *never mind the consequences*," was used by him whilst contending against the *expediency* of setting up a god. And though, if taken by itself, without the context, might lead to a wrong impression, taken with it cannot be mistaken to mean "if you *believe*," &c.; for it is upon the belief or disbelief in a god the question has been argued; never once has it been "dogmatically asserted," that there is no god.

For my own part, until Mr. M. has attempted a refutation of the objections to the "Dissertation," contained in the reviews complained of, I shall not consider myself called upon to discuss the general question.
W. C.

A VOICE FROM CHELTENHAM GAOL.

Cheltenham Gaol, June 3rd, 1842.
MY DEAR CHILTON.—I had a glorious meeting last night, which I expect will be reported in the *Cheltenham Free Press*—a very independent paper, considering the truckling

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in godliness for which this town is famous. The meeting continued until 11 o'clock, and would have stayed, I believe, all night, had I not requested them to withdraw, seeing that the policemen (the messengers of the modern gods) wanted me and their suppers. The meeting was a public one in defence of civil and religious liberty, and to take into consideration the case of CHARLES SOUTHWELL. I promised to do this when here the week before, but it was rumoured by the saints (in glory, that of persecution) that I should not return. The meeting passed resolutions denouncing SOUTHWELL's persecution as unjust, impolitic, and immoral in the very teeth of my own prospective fate of the same kind. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock when I was apprehended. Quite a crowd followed me to the station-house, cursing the fiendish spirit of christianity from the bottom of their hearts. And the most cheering circumstance was, that there were numerous ladies among the concourse who had shaken off the superstition of the nursery; their manner told the indignation they felt, and as their love is said to be more lasting than ours, so is their hate more enduring. When once they are awakened the knell of all cant is tolled! I was seized without a warrant; so it seems the days of the bloodiest inquisition are come again, when the fiat of the priest is sufficient to drag a man from his friends and home, at the hour of midnight, and plunge him into a gaol! when religion is the pretext for any oppression, and the glory of god an incentive and excuse for any brutality! I must, in justice to the superintendent of the police, Mr. Russell, say, that during the first night I was treated in a very gentlemanly manner. But to-day satisfied me I owed this rather to humanity than the lord. I will try to scribble you a few lines more, if allowed pen and ink, when I return from court. Yours, you know, G. J. H.

Cheltenham Gaol, June 3rd, 1842.

DEAR PATERSON. — Don't I wish you could officiate for me, as my curate, as you did in Sheffield. I would give my dinner for one of your hearty jokes to drive down the piety, damnation insult, and abuse, which has been heaped upon me this morning. Glad, too, you were not here, your blood would have been 202° above boiling heat. You know what a quiet piece of equanimity I am, but how the devil SOUTHWELL could brook the same treatment, and not go mad, I cannot tell. But to business. I am just returned from court. Three magistrates were on the bench. I am told, the more intelligent, and liberal ones, consequently, kept away, ashamed to be mixed up in the affair. A solicitor named Bubb opened the charge,

and verily I never saw so much zeal for god in any human face before. I thought well, if any *good* comes out of this Nazareth, Dr. Watts is right, and that—

— Behind a FROWNING Providence
He hides a smiling face.

However, it was none of my luck to see any of the smiles—those, I guess, are reserved for the Rev. Mr Close. His mien was full of fierceness, which, as he knew I was brought up for conviction, I felt as so much demonism. It struck me, while he was speaking, that in the days of Bloody Queen Mary, Bishop Gardiner would have mistaken him for Bonner. And on the bench, the senior magistrate, whom the people here quaintly call “old Capper,” who must stand here, as I am not familiar with him—and god, if there be one, grant I never may—as Mr. Capper. He and Bubb seemed to me—Gardiner and Bonner come again. Two witnesses were produced, an old man and a young one; of the young one I thought little, but the older one had such a care-worn face, I felt for him—I don't think he has a bad heart. He looked one of those fathers on whom fate and a large family had pressed hard; his poverty, and not his will, I think, consented to all he said against me. Both, I believe, depend for bread upon the *Chronicle* office, and Mr. Close is said to be prime mover there, so there is no doubt of the wheels within wheels, as Ezekiel has it. I expect the rev. gent. found a prosecution more convenient than argument to oppose me with. Never was anything more skilfully managed than the evidences of the witnesses. Neither of them *could recollect one word*, save the expressions selected for indictment. Though the part following produced the approval of the meeting, and the part indicted was lost in that. Mr. Henry Fry, editor of the *Educational Circular*, a very respectable carver and gilder, in the town, stepped forward as one of my bail; and swore to being worth more than £50, &c. I ought first to have told you that bail to the amount of £200 was demanded for my body. So valuable I suppose I am become to the godly. But considering that I was but a stranger in the town, with few friends, beyond those the occasion made for me, it was proof they intended to take good Christian advantage of my helpless condition and keep me in their fangs. Well, to return, Mr. Fry was rejected after he had sworn to all the facts required, because he said, when questioned, that to the “*best of his belief*” he was worth the sum wanted. I reminded the magistrates, as I requested my friend to withdraw his offer, that the evidence against me in many parts was admitted, on the grounds refused to my bail—viz., the “*best of the belief*” of the witnesses. “Oh no,” rejoined

the Reverend Mr. Newall, one of the committing magistrates, "we can have no quibbling," although I stood at that bar, because I could not, and would not "quibble" in answering Maitland's question. Another gentleman generously offered his self as my other bail, and was accepted. It was not from accordance of sentiments, but from humanity and sympathy for my family and friends, that this friend came forward. But when Mr. Bubb saw things likely to be accommodated, he demanded twenty-four hours' notice of bail, and immediately Mr. Capper, the Rev. Mr. Newall, and his brother magistrates assented to its benevolent propriety, and my commitment was made out to Gloucester Gaol. I did think that mere respectability would, in a town like Cheltenham, have induced godliness to, or at least a courteous appearance, and that some show of feeling would have paved the way to the cold-blooded brutality of the dungeon. Mr. Capper sharply stopped me in the midst of a question I was putting through the bench, to the witnesses, with the malignant remarks that, he "would hold no argument with a man who did not believe in god." It was evidence, and not argument I wanted, was my reply, but he began arguing his self about death beds, and all such balderdash, and ending as usual in such cases, by imputing to me the worst of motives, vanity, desire of notoriety, &c., when he knew I was completely in his power and could not reply. How much would I give at this hour to express all I felt at such conduct. I have felt, since, a thousand times, that expressive sentence of Thales, the Milesian philosopher, quoted by Mr. SOUTHWELL, in reference to Wood, the Bristol Bonner, that the most hateful thing he ever beheld was a *tyrant old*. I little thought then I should so soon understand this in all its bitterness. In Sheffield I became acquainted with such fine old men, that I had begun to venerate the ancients of days gone by, and to regard those men of the antediluvian world, chroniclers of times, never to be seen by me; and having been the recipient of their wisdom and love, I at first hailed with delight the appearance of an old man on the bench, and from him expected kind counsel and generous advice. Oh! how bitter was the contrast! Adversity does not make us acquainted with stranger men than does religion. When being taken from the court, I saw numbers of my friends of the over-night, whose admiration of the new revelation of christianity my case afforded, was nothing diminished. At the station-house I was had up for private torture, not, I suppose, having had enough in public, where a surgeon and military gentleman were inquisitors. The captain (as I take him to be) was gentlemanly, but the

other behaved like a demon. I told him that unless I was permitted to converse on equal terms I would not converse at all; still he raved on. I of course, like a lamb at the slaughter, opened not my mouth. Among other things, he asked whether Robert Owen did not make me an Atheist. I said no, I never was an Atheist until the imprisonment of CHARLES SOUTHWELL took place, and whatever of doubt remained on my mind on the subject, was now removed by the treatment I was receiving; that what of god-belief might have been left in me before, was thoroughly and for ever shaken out of me then. His reply was the following kind and Christian one: "*I am only sorry the days are gone by when you, Owen of Lanark, and all like you, would be unable to hold up your heads.*" I never thought anything so perfectly, so religiously hellish in my life before. At this I was put into an infernal hole with a poor miserable old wretch, it was harrowing to look upon, the sense of whose sufferings engrossed my own. The cell I speak of and write in, has the fetor of death in every corner. A grating at the top reveals light to show the dampness of the grave creeping up the bed, which is made of a few boards, with a plank for the pillow—no clothes—nothing but cold, filth, and stench. And if bail is still refused, I expect to pass several days and nights here. I am told this place is not worse than others, but you may gather from this in how nice a place I am learning "the truth as it is in Jesus;" a kind friend has just left me some dinner, which, in another place, I could relish. Show this to C. and tell R. my next shall be to him. Cannot say more now. I have put part of my dinner out for the poor wretch mentioned just now; and instead of mine, I am having a meditation on the goodness of god—certainly of his servants—which is likely to prove unusually profitable to me. Do not let this meet the eyes or ears of Mrs. Holyoake, I cannot bear the thoughts of that yet. Yours, truly, my dear fellow,

G. J. H.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Conductor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR,—The anticipated immolation of the *third* victim to the brutal lust of persecution, induces me to address to you a very few lines; not with a view of inciting your readers to a full appreciation of the enormous tyranny of this last attack on freedom, nor to incite them to a vigour and promptitude of action equal to the emergency of the case. I pen this scrap with a view to suggest a plan which I feel satisfied will be immediately acted upon the instant its simplicity and practicability are made evident.

That there is a demand for the *Oracle of Reason*, infinitely greater than the facilities for supply, cannot

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be doubted. That the ordinary publishing and trading channels are closed against it, is equally notorious. I propose then that each friend to the cause of Free Expression of Opinion, shall undertake to obtain and supply twelve new subscribers; the supply to be continued as long only as the regular book-selling trade are afraid or unwilling to vend it.

This might be effected by those who objected to run any personal risk with perfect safety, by obtaining the dozen or more copies of publishers or others (Social institutions or classes, for example) who might be guaranteed as to integrity by the editor of the *Oracle*, or the nearest known general publisher of Infidel works. The persons supplied would be guaranteed by the person's own knowledge or after inquiry.

Shortly I hope to see that all will be matured; an organisation for this purpose is, I am happy to say, now in active formation. Yours, in haste,

M. Q. R.

[Every week I am receiving information of the difficulties attending the procuring the *Oracle*; in some places it cannot be obtained at all, and in others not until a week or more after date. To remove these obstacles, the editor suggested, and I have determined upon offering the following to the consideration of those parties who are anxious to procure the work regularly: viz., *To forward by post THREE numbers for every FOUR penny post-office stamps*, as may be directed. This plan will be an invaluable auxiliary to that of my friend, M.Q.R.'s, and will be readily perceived not to be tendered for the sake of profit—the three numbers just clearing a two-penny stamp. Where there is only one person, they could be forwarded once in three weeks. Letters, with stamps enclosed for one month or three, directed to the undersigned at 26, Upper Windsor-street, Ashted, Birmingham, will be attended to.—W. C.]

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR,—I perceive in your last number (June 4), an extract from the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, alias, the Rev. Francis Close's paper, appealing to the prejudices of "Jew-Bookers," with your explanation attached, by which it is shown that, with priestly consistency, it is very far from the truth; but who ever knew a holy bull-dog to speak truth of an unbeliever? I never did; therefore it is clear to me that it is in perfect keeping with the saintly character. Sir, it is time you set about using all your influence *boldly* to check the power of these demoniac fanatics. I see that another "moral Nimrod," yclep'd *Standard* (of bigotry) the prototype of Francis Close, has reared its head in Birmingham, in defence of that horribly stupid book called "bible;" in which the editor (a parson's lacquey) takes the pains to show the glorious progress of atheism, and its probable effects upon society to his dupes of readers, and calls upon the "legal butchers" of the people to annihilate all the cheap literature of the day, to make way for his sixpenny balderdash. In a long article, he labours hard to show that to the works of Voltaire, Rosseau, and others, we owe the reign of terror in France; just as if the middleocracy of that day in that country, any more than the same class in our own, when they wished the people to struggle for any privileges they wanted to obtain, would go to the populace of Paris with the volumes of philosophers in their hands, instead of the more genteel method of corrupting them with money and drink, as is done at our elections,

and where our rev. bloodsuckers take such prominent parts! No, no! The working men of this country are not to be caught with chaff like this.

But I deny that either the revolution or its consequences were brought on by the reading of the works of these philosophers; it was the wretched misgovernment that existed, and the barefaced oppression and grasping extortion of the priesthood, that were the main causes of the popular outburst. But then, say these vicious-gerents of the deity, "they were Atheists that directed it." But I would have working men read any impartial account of that event (say O'Brien's), and they will find that the characters who figured most conspicuously, cruel were believers in a god. But priestly cunning and dishonesty has tried to throw a veil over the bloody deeds of the "faithful" at that period, and to misrepresent the actions of those virtuous characters who endeavoured to open the eyes of the people, and stem the popular indignation; but who fell victims to the undermining machinations of our liberty-loving government. But was it Infidels and Atheists that encouraged the grand and wholesale slaughter of the Crusades? Were those priests, such as Peter the Hermit, and the kings of the earth, who led forth their thousands to the land of the foreigner, to butcher and be butchered, Atheists and unbelievers? Or who organised the slaughter of Bartholomew, when nearly 100,000 innocent people were murdered in cold blood? I might mention the horrid massacres of the Waldenses, Albigenses, &c., or the man-hunting through the mountains of Scotland, in search of Covenanters, and ask were these the works of Atheists? No; those were the works of priests, who defended their actions from that accursed book which is the record of every crime, and the authority for every cruelty.

I have often been amused at the impudence with which these holy babblers set off with the supposition that none but those who hold notions like their own have a right to express them! Now, none but impudents or fanatics could hold such erroneous notions; but they have a purpose to serve; yes, they well know that their dogmatisms cannot stand the test of free discussion, therefore their only chance of blinding the human race lies in exterminating their opponents and annihilating their works. They must destroy free discussion or it will destroy them.

But the public are now beginning to see the errors of religion, and the duplicity of its imbecile propagators; and, Mr. Editor, it now becomes you to energetically strike at the root of superstition, for it has been, and is now, moulding the human mind to sloth and apathy. This is the inevitable consequence of its action upon a nation; or else "It would," in the words of the late amiable Pemberton, when speaking of priestly domination, "make the cradles of sleeping babes dens of hissing adders, and change all the chrysal waters of the universe into stagnant ponds and seas of putrid blood; and the monster talks of faith and religion too!"

Birmingham.

THOMAS PATERSON.

[The following letter was intended for insertion in that number of the *Oracle* having a note relating to it: and the note was improperly inserted without the letter. But it was deemed of little consequence that the letter was not put in, as it contained admissions of departure from principle

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

which then would have been found injurious to the cause Mr. H. essayed to serve, as Mr. Owen and his friends then denied it.

Further, I have found from a gentleman in Bristol that Mrs. H. had addressed a letter to Mr. Southwell under the impression that he had written the notice of Mr. H.'s communication, although it bore my initials. As I think enough has been laid at Mr. Southwell's door, I must say that it was written by me in Sheffield, on the day Mr. H.'s letter arrived there. She thinks I spoke harshly, in the notice. Let those judge so that can, when they have the letter below. All the notices to correspondents and articles are written by the parties whose names or initials are attached. And the initials of correspondents are real not fictitious. The suspicion of the contrary, being without foundation, is disingenuous, and it was this spirit in Mr. Hagan's letter which induced me to write the notice of it I did.—G. J. H.]

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

HAVING been reading some remarks in the 17th no. of that publication, in which I do not agree, I should take it as a favour if the few following remarks may find a place in it. Speaking of the changes that have taken place in the Social body, J.C.F. says, "That it has been unwise, no one acquainted with the events of the last two years can for a moment doubt." Now there are many who do not "doubt," but will deny the truth of the assertion. "Mr. Owen's plan is this, teach truth and error will fall by its own weight; there is no necessity of dealing with it in any other way whatever: this argument is partly true and partly false." I would ask what is meant by our being the creatures of circumstances? Is it not, that if we place individuals under the influence of bad circumstances, will not their characters be bad; then, of course, if under the teaching of truth and truth only, shall we not then have truth speakers as well as actors? Then, as Mr. Owen says, "teach truth, and error will fall to the ground." "The policy I wish the Socialists to adopt, is beautifully described in one of the Social hymns:

"Free to examine various creeds,
And follow where conviction leads;
Free to embrace within her arms,
The truth in all its native charms.

"And not only free to examine, follow, and embrace, but to boldly and unflinchingly advocate it upon the public platform and in private circles upon all suitable occasions, when it does not interfere with other duties of life." By quoting the above few lines of poetry, we have a right to suppose he allows all to follow convictions; then, if R. Owen or others have departed from their first principles, they must be hypocrites, or acting from conviction; the last I believe to be true; and I admit that there may be some difference in their conduct, but it must be admitted that we are moving under different circumstances. Does the writer intend to infer that our leaders should continue the same course when the circumstances are removed or partly so? If that is his opinion, I differ from him, and let me advise the writer to put a little farther off the fear of man, by letting the readers see his name; so much boasting as there is on that paper of not fearing man, there is not one writer in the present number that has ventured to put his name. In another part of the same no. I find a piece signed R.R., who, speaking of the *New Moral World*, says "that it was a disgrace to

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the society;" here I beg to differ from him. Although the subjects may not be adapted to work upon the feelings of some weak minds, I do believe it is calculated to do much good; much more than the *Oracle of Reason*. He says that "Mr. Jones denied that the society had deserted its principles, and that the statements made were not true." "But should any one not be convinced, let them look to the principles of the society and attend to the five fundamental facts." These I have looked at, and yet can find no deviation from their principles. As far as I am able to judge of the writers in the *Oracle of Reason*, their principle object is to attack the prejudices of others; but the Socialists wish to show by practice what is good; this plan, I have not the shadow of a doubt, will gain more converts than the other.

Derby, 4th mo. 23, 1842.

B. HAGEN.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Correspondents sending communications for the first time are requested to send also their true names and addresses. Their initials only need appear with their articles—the other particulars are for the convenience and satisfaction of the editor. G. J. H.

ANONYMOUS WRITING.—One friend thinks the remarks under the head "Stray Thoughts," in No. 18 of the *Oracle*, hypercritical. He is of opinion that the public relish the mystery attached to anonymous writing. Another is of opinion that, so long as the name of the editor is weekly published, that is a sufficient guarantee, should questions arise about the articles which appear. By way of general answer, the reader may be referred to the excellent manner, to my thinking, in which Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, in his "England and the English," argues against all nameless writing—and he gives most of the *pros* and *cons*. of the question. But the moral tendency of it is so ably set forth by that excellent orator W. G. Fox, in the following passage on class morality, that particular attention is requested for it:—

"Perhaps, the man of literary avocation earns his subsistence by that *anonymous* writing, in connection with newspapers, which, though it may, and assuredly does consist, in some cases, with the purest and the highest principle, has temptations which lead towards the grossest delirium. * * * Even more loathsome than political profligacy are the depths to which he may descend. Screened by his *namelessness* from all responsibility; ministering fuel to every fierce and foul passion; catering for every grossness; blazoning turpitude for the filthy appetite that feasts on such garbage; with an interest to serve, or a spite to gratify, in every direction; perhaps pandering at once to both political parties, and to any other parties that will pay; the *masked wretch* goes forth in the dark with his poisoned dagger—now striking at his friend's reputation—now at his country's freedom; and if his thunder please the infernal gods to whom he has sold his soul; he may at last, when faction improves a momentary success, to plunder the nation, be rewarded by place or pension, at the expense of that public which has had him for its intellectual guide, political director, and moral teacher."

Apart from moral influence, there are considerations which make it desirable to know the personality of all whose papers appear in the *Oracle*. If we cannot find out that of god, we may that of correspondents, and for this purpose, is the notice to them this week upon this subject.

G. J. H.

NOW READY,

A Plain Answer to the Query, "Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?" By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers.
Saturday, June 18, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 27.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

BRUTAL PERSECUTIONS!

MORE HELP TO THE LORD.

ARREST OF GEORGE ADAMS AND
HARRIET ADAMS (HIS WIFE),
FOR SELLING THE “ORACLE OF REASON.”

THE bigots of Cheltenham having once buried their fangs in the flesh of an Atheist, like the tiger that first tastes human blood, they could not rest until fresh victims were furnished to satiate their sanguinary maws. Success had made them bold; strong-ribbed doors and massive dungeon-bars secured the “unresisting” HOLYOAKE; and the teaching of atheism was of course prevented, at least so thought the Rev. Francis Close and his worthy brother Newall, with the Cheltenham magistrates who presided at the inquisition at the police-court. But atheism, like the hydra, has many heads, which it will puzzle religion, with “the poor-man’s church” for a club, to destroy. If public speaking be prevented, the press may yet make known the principles so much dreaded by bigotry, and denounce its villany; and so it happened in Cheltenham, for HOLYOAKE’S imprisonment was the signal for the introduction of liberal works, unheard of there before, and the natural consequences were the very general execration of the injustice committed. This speedily attracted the attention of the obnoxious few, and their sleuth-hound, loosened from his chain, was put upon the scent, and as no concealment was attempted, the game was soon run down.

On Monday evening, June 13th, at a public meeting called to consider the cruelty and injustice of HOLYOAKE’S case, GEORGE ADAMS, a member of the Social body, was arrested for selling No. 25 of the *Oracle*, and he was therewith conveyed to the station-house. As soon as a knowledge of the arrest came to the ears of Mrs. ADAMS, she went to the station-house, to see her husband, when she, likewise, was served with a warrant for selling No. 4.

In writing to me, Mrs. ADAMS says, “I went to see my husband at the station-house, when I was detained; a policeman was sent

home with me to fetch my infant, whilst I left four at home in bed. The man that went with me to the station was a rude fellow; he was quite abusive to me, telling me I should be locked up from my husband; saying, it was quite time such things were put a stop to. When we arrived at the station-house he would have locked me in a cell with drunken women, had I not sat down in the yard, and insisted on seeing the superintendent, who then allowed me to sit up in a kitchen, where policemen were coming in and out all night. My husband was much troubled on my account.” Mr. A. was, at the time, suffering under a severe ophthalmic complaint. During Mrs. ADAMS’S absence from home, her kind (and of course Christian) landlord, went to the house, locked the door, and took the key away with him, leaving the children to shift for themselves.

The next morning the prisoners were taken before the magistrates, and the following is the account of their examination, copied from the *Cheltenham Free Press*:—

CHARGES OF PUBLISHING BLASPHEMOUS LIBELS.

GEORGE ADAMS was charged with publishing a blasphemous libel, contained in No. 25 of the *Oracle of Reason*.

Mr. Bubb—The prisoner stands charged with the publication of a blasphemous libel, and perhaps my duty will be the best fulfilled by merely proving the sale of the libel and reading it. It has been said that we are prosecuting here for the entertaining of opinions merely. That proposition I deny. The entertaining of opinions is not opposed to law if they keep them to themselves. If they step out of the way, and seek to propagate them by undermining the institutions of the country, by denying the existence of a god, by robbing others of “the hopes set before them,” without offering the flimsiest pretext, it is the duty of all to prevent this. Such is the opinion of those gentlemen who set on foot these proceedings, and no clamour of persecution will prevent them from doing what they believe to be their duty. And if there are any here present disposed to take up this unfortunate trade, I would assure them that as long as the law punishes, and the magistrates uphold the law, so long will they bring offenders to justice. So long as men say there is no god, or that the religion of the state is a farce and a fallacy, these gentlemen will not be deterred by any clamour. The libel here does this and more.

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

Mr. Bubb then called the following witnesses:—

Thomas Kendrick—On Saturday last I bought the *Oracle of Reason*, No. 25, of the prisoner; I gave the paper to John Russell.

Mr. A. Campbell asked the magistrates to inquire whether he paid the money to Mr. Adams.

Witness—I did; he did not ask me to buy it; I asked him to sell it to me; I asked for No. 25, and whether that was not the latest; he gave me two or three tracts.

Mr. Campbell—Was he requested by a party for a special purpose to buy it?

The Bench did not think that was a necessary question.

John Russell—On Saturday evening, about nine o'clock, I received this paper from Kendrick; it is No. 25, of the *Oracle of Reason*.

Mr. Williams submitted that the paper must be read all through, as one part might explain the other, so as to deprive the part pointed out of its sting.

Mr Bubb said in the case of Southwell, the judges would not allow it to be read; this was in the nature of a newspaper, and if that was necessary, every newspaper that contains a libel must be read all through.

Mr. Campbell said Southwell was punished for publishing No. 4 of this work, which is a weekly periodical; but it did not follow that because there was a libel in that number, there was in every other number.

Mr. Williams (clerk) read the commencement of the article, and pointed out the passage which had been marked.

Defendant said he wished it to be known that he never denied the existence of god, and he believed it as much as any one; he had never read the work.

Mr. Campbell could not see the effect of Russell's evidence; he asked Russell whether he had read the work?

The bench thought this an immaterial question.

This closed the case for the prosecution.

Mr. Adams said he never denied the existence of a god, nor did he read the publication, nor know that they were illegal except one, all the numbers of which he put by; he did not intend to sell any more.

Kendrick examined—I gave the penny into the hand of the man.

Mr. Campbell said he would call evidence to prove that the penny was not paid to Adams.

Mr. Bubb suggested that was immaterial.

Arthur Parker entered the box, and Mr. Bubb asked him if he believed in the testament, but he refused to answer.

On the question being put from the Bench, Mr. Parker replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Blagdon—Do you believe in almighty god?

Mr. Parker—I do.

Mr. Blagdon—Do you believe in a father in heaven?

Mr. Parker refused to answer the question; he had been asked one direct question, and he had given a direct answer.

Arthur Parker deposed—I was in Mr. Adams's house when Kendrick came in for a book; I asked him what book it was; he said he did not know; there was a number of the *Oracle of Reason* in the

window; he said he wanted that; that book was not paid for; there was money placed on the table for books; there was one penny left on the table.

Mr. Campbell said after what they had heard, it would be for the bench to consider whether they would proceed with the case. Mr. Campbell said he did not justify the language; the paragraph was of so ambiguous a nature that it could not be proved to refer to any deity; there were many thousand deities.

The bench called upon him (Mr. Adams) to find bail, himself in £50 and two sureties in £25 each.

Mr. Fry said he came forward because he knew the parties; he had never purchased or read a number of the *Oracle of Reason*. He was accepted as bail. Mr. Edwin Parry offered himself as bail and was refused as he said he did not believe himself worth £25 after all his debts were paid.

HARRIET ADAMS was also charged with selling a blasphemous libel.

Mr. Bubb said—The charge was for selling the *Oracle*, No. 4, for which Southwell is suffering imprisonment, but as I see the woman with a child at her breast, I will not press the case, but beg you to take her own bail, and if she does not persist in selling them, it is probable it will never be heard of.

The parties wished the case proceeded with.

William Watts—I bought No. 4 of the *Oracle of Reason* on the 7th of this month, of this woman, at her house in King-street; I did not see her husband; I bought two other papers, and on the following morning paid threepence for the lot to this woman; I gave the paper to Richard Russell.

Cross-examined—I work at the *Chronicle* office; I am an errand-boy there.

Mr. Campbell—You were requested by your employer?

The Bench objected that the question was immaterial.

Cross-examined—I do not know whether there is more than one apartment at 21, King-street; I don't know whether the husband was in the adjoining room; I went to the house and said Mr. Fry sent me for papers; Mr. Fry requested me to go; I said I came for some of the *Oracle of Reason*, Mr. Fry sent me; Mr. Fry told me where I could get them.

Re-examined—I went to Mr. Fry to buy the *Oracle of Reason*; he said you go to Mr. Adams and you will get them.

Mr. Fry—The boy came to my shop for some books; I was not there; I sell some books; I sent for him, he told me he wanted Mr. Holyoake's books, I told him he could get them at Mr. Adams's; I understood on the following morning that he had got them in my name; I told him I should appeal to the magistrates for he had got them dishonestly; the following morning the editor of the *Chronicle*, Mr. Thomas Rawlings, called upon me and said he did not send for them, but it was sent for by his men; he did see them.

Mr. H. Beckett became bail for the husband, conjointly with Mr. H. Fry. There was no bail required for the wife.

During the proceedings at the police-court, which was crowded, there were continual expressions of disapprobation, which the magistrates could not suppress.

I copy the following from a letter of G. A.'s, correspondent of the *Oracle*, which was written in answer to some queries forwarded to him upon HOLYOAKE'S case:—

“The magistrates committing for *blasphemy* on a charge of *felony*, are doubtless actionable for so doing—they ought to have dismissed the charge of felony, and taken up that for blasphemy, as a separate case. But the probability is, that there really never was a charge of felony before them, and that it springs from their own *pure* inventions. With a sufficient command of money, a good counsel, and a tolerable lawyer, there might be abundant retaliation reaped for all these things. I shall now touch upon a point which I hope will also prove somewhat discomfiting to these justices, who are so clever at *reasoning* upon deity existences. Mr. Bubb, in his opening, talked very pompously about proceeding upon the ancient unwritten law of the land—the *common law*—and why? Because his object was to make it a *sessions* case, and to take it out of the statutory law, which (9 & 10 W. c. 32) would have required that information of the words spoken should be laid before a justice of the peace, within four days from their utterance, and would likewise have insured a trial at the *assizes*. So that instead of these prosecutors being entitled to take credit for the respectability of their proceedings, the latter are actually discreditable as being at variance with the more humane provisions of the *written* laws, which provisions are certainly those which, on the part of a public prosecutor, ought always to be preferred, as being more in accordance with the (supposed) will of the community; this statute, too, gives the party an opportunity of renouncing his opinions, and thereby escaping punishment for the first offence; whereas, the common law is of infinitely more barbarian a character, and the contrast will, I think, afford fine scope for animadversion upon the trial.

“As regards your note of the 14th inst., I cannot help laughing outright at the magnanimous junta who are going to prosecute all persons publishing sentiments calculated to bring ‘act - of - parliament religion’ into contempt. Why, no man writing sensibly on *any* subject could scarcely avoid bringing such a religion as this into contempt, even though he should say not one word about it. The *tepidity* of all sensible writing being to bring into contempt whatever is *senseless* or *bad*—nay, even the very act of writing in favour of this institution, as it at present stands (or *totters*, if you please), is looked upon by the sensible and unbiassed, as at best nothing better than *burlesque*; the prosecutors will therefore have plenty to do, they themselves actually starting to put down that which they are all the while *producing*—contempt to the uttermost degree!!!”

I have much pleasure in informing my readers that the magistrates accepted the bail tendered for Mr. HOLYOAKE, on Friday last, and that he is now actively engaged in preparing his defence.

W. C.

IS THERE A GOD ?

XVI.

“Mr. CAPPER.—It is not only wickedness but folly; *no heathen in the world denies the existence of a god.*”

—HOLYOAKE'S *Committal*.

“A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel!”—
MERCHANT OF VENICE.

ONE of the Jew-Bookers says that “there is no new thing under the sun,” Mr. Capper was not then in being, or the truth of the assertion might have been questioned. In the mind of this venerable vender of “justices’ justice”—a queer compound of prejudice and stupidity—wickedness and folly are convertible terms: ergo, he would treat the idiot precisely as he would the villain. Wicked actions are those performed with an evil intent, and foolish ones without design or evil premeditation, in pure ignorance of the consequences. A man may, for purposes of his own, commit an act, hoping to get somewhat by it, which might lead to consequences injurious to society, and would call for the forcible interference of his fellows; whilst another, committing the same offence, but from ignorance, would only require to be reasoned with to induce him to desist: surely there is a vast difference between the two! As much as there is between the assassin and the self-murderer. But Mr. Capper thought and acted otherwise, for had he imagined HOLYOAKE'S conduct to result from folly—and no man would deny a god, did one exist, except from ignorance—he should have reasoned with him, or have gotten some one else to do so, instead of sending him to a prison, as though he had acted from wilfulness. But the two motives—wickedness and folly—appearing to this second Daniel precisely alike, the remedy suggested to him would be similar in both cases.

My present purpose, however, is with the latter part of his worship's remark, wherein we are informed that “no heathen in the world denies the existence of a god,” and consequently that it is wickedness and folly for a sensible man to disagree with the heathen. Now, at first sight, to numbers this would appear confirmation strong of the truth of the proposition, it being a godism, that the universality of the god idea proves a god; also, that the god idea is innate. That the god idea is nearly universal, or has been so, cannot, I presume, be denied, but that it is innate is a falsehood. Ideas are the effects of contact with outward objects and elements, and cannot exist until the organism is in a

THE ORACLE OF REASON:

condition to be acted upon from without; therefore at birth, and for some time after, the child is devoid of ideas, or they are so transient as to leave no trace behind, for in the life of every individual the events of his earliest years are a blank, which his brain has taken no minutes of. How then is the existence of an innate idea to be shown? Supposing it to have a latent existence, it should be the first developed and the strongest, and being innate in all men should be alike in all men. Neither of these conditions do we find fulfilled. Children have no idea of a god until taught. The pleasures and pains of everyday life interest them, and *all men*, more than futurity and its inhabitants; and the god idea differs in the precise ratio of the brains that entertain them, clear proof that they could not have been derived from one source.

Godism is supernaturalism; witchcraft and the gift of prophecy are derived from the same source. The advance of knowledge and the discoveries of science have proved the two latter imaginary powers to have been the result of ignorance or roguery, and there is no doubt on the minds of thousands (the great majority being in the aristocracy of the middle and upper classes) that godism originated in man's ignorance, and has been perpetuated by his villany. The parties I have named smile at suspicions of their heterodoxy, and where they have confidence, acknowledge that in their own circle *it is understood* they are Atheists, no man of discernment being credited with so much credulity as a belief in a god demands.

The celebrated Matthew Hale burnt old women for witchcraft, which executions are now pretty generally considered as so many "cruel and barbarous murders;" still, in his day he could have declared that "no heathen in the world denies the existence of witches," and that it was wickedness and folly to dispute it. I remember that Blackstone, in his "Commentaries," is in a dilemma to get over the advancing opinion of the age in reference to this subject, because it runs directly foul of the Jew Book, wherein it is expressly stated that witches existed; another evidence of its damnable effects upon society; inducing men to become the conservators of ignorance and apologists for murder. For if witches existed in the time of Saul they might exist now, and the believers in that book say they have the word of one who never lied that they did; and if it was right in his eyes to put them to death in those days, it is right now, for he is a being in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning, who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

This "concentration of abominations" also talks of *angels* in attendance upon the lord of carnage: this too has been exploded by moderatists. "Not only their appearance

and intervention in the affairs of humanity, but also their very existence, has been held as doubtful, because that the principle end of their existence ought to be arrived at in the functions themselves. Relatively to the question of the reality of angels, the criticism of Schleiermacher may certainly be considered as terminating the discussion; because he expresses exactly the result of modern intelligence, in opposition to the ancient. In truth, says Schleiermacher, we cannot prove the impossibility of the existence of the angels; nevertheless, that conception is such that it can never rise again in our time; it belongs exclusively to the idea that antiquity conceived of the world. We may presume that the belief in angels has a double source; the one in the desire natural to our minds to suppose in the whole world more of spiritual substances than we commonly behold incorporated in the human kind; but that desire, says Schleiermacher, so strong in us who now live, is satisfied when we represent to ourselves that other celestial globes are peopled like those we inhabit, and by that thought is dried up the first source of the belief in angels. The second source is in the idea men form to themselves of god—as of a monarch surrounded by his court; that idea is no longer ours. We know how to explain the natural causes of the changes in the world, and in humanity, that in former times were imagined to be the work of god himself, acting by the ministry of angels. Thus, the belief in angels has not one single point by which it may fix itself firmly and truly in the soil of modern ideas; and now it no longer exists than as a dead tradition."* And yet a man, for a bribe, in an open and crowded court, † could be found to stand boldly forward and declare that the defendant was contravening the law, because it was "the direct tendency of the quotation to prove the non-existence of angels, whose existence and office was one of the truths revealed in the bible!" This opinion was echoed by the judge a "saturation of ancient prejudices," in whom the good citizens of Bristol had vested the power of life and death, to be awarded according to his judgment. I agree (he said) with the learned counsel, that it is attacking one of the truths of our holy religion. *And that it is what I will not sit here and listen to.*

A century since and Schleiermacher and Southwell would have been sacrificed as a burnt offering to the Christian Moloch, for their wickedness and folly in denying that which "no heathen in the world denies," if we make allowances for difference of customs.

But why should we go to the heathen, can there be stronger evidence of the folly of such reasoning than is furnished by the following

* Strauss's Life of Chr'st. Taylor, Birmingham.
 † Mr. Smith, counsel against Southwell.

extract from the "Apocryphal New Testament,"* intended to prove the certainty of the resurrection, which opinions were entertained by some of the early Christians, and there cannot be much doubt were considered necessary to eternal salvation by the party espousing them, just as the belief in the present Jew Book is by the Christians of this day:—"Let us consider that wonderful type of the resurrection, which is seen in the eastern countries, that is to say, in Arabia. There is a certain bird called a Phœnix: of this there is never but one at a time, and that lives for five hundred years. And when the time of its dissolution draws near, that it must die, it makes itself a nest of frankincense and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But its flesh putrifying, breeds a certain worm, which being nourished with the juice of the dead bird brings forth feathers; and when it is grown to a perfect state, it takes up the nest in which the bones of its parent lie, and carries it from Arabia into Egypt, to a city called Heliopolis: and flying in open day in the sight of all men, lays it upon the altar of the sun, and so returns from whence it came. The priests then search into the records of the time; and find that it returned precisely at the end of five hundred years. And shall we then think it any very great and strange thing, for the lord of all to raise up those that religiously serve him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird he shows us the greatness of his power to fulfil his promise?"

Doubtless there were men, when this was first written, who said it was "not only wickedness but folly" to disbelieve it, and that the man who did so was worse than the devils, for they "believed and trembled."

I am aware that all this is not enough to convince an out-and-out godite, a follower of parsons through thick and thin, that *belief* of any kind does not rest upon fact but upon faith; and that, though a hundred millions entertained a similar belief, it would be no better *proof* of the truth of the opinion, than its advocacy by units only, would be of its falsehood.

Tait once described the Tories, with their cry of "Church in Danger," as never to be beaten. First you dislodged them from the porch, then they mounted to the roof, from thence to the clock, and at the last, in despite of your exertions, you found them bestriding the vane, bawling out as lustily as ever. Just so is it with a believer, you can't beat him. The godite, in persisting that the god idea proves a god, overlooks this difficulty, that, inasmuch as every man has a different idea of a god to his neighbour, arising out of the varieties of organisations, every

individual must be an *Atheist* to every other individual, although in reality they are all Theists, or believers in a god. For if there be but *one* god, of the eight hundred millions of inhabitants on the earth, seven hundred and ninety-nine millions nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine at least must be wrong, seeing that they all differ, and they may *all* be wrong. Of two antagonistic ideas of a person or thing, if one be right the other is, per consequence, wrong; the same holds good of a god.

W. C.

THE EFFECTS OF PERSECUTION.

REPORTS OF PROGRESS.

To the Sub-Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

DEAR SIR.—I have pleasure, great pleasure in informing you that a splendid meeting was held in Manchester, on Monday evening, June 13th, in favour of G. J. HOLYOAKE, and arrangements entered into to collect subscriptions for his defence and support, in case of conviction. A good meeting was held, also, in Stockport, on Tuesday, 14th, for the same purposes and with the same results; also in Macclesfield, on Wednesday evening; the latter was not a splendid meeting, but still a satisfactory one, and ended with the same result as the two above mentioned; the resolutions were unanimously passed in each place, and memorials to Sir James Graham, home secretary, adopted. The principal speakers at these meetings were Socialist and Chartist lecturers; among the former were Messrs. Watts, Farn, and Ellis, Social missionaries; among the latter Messrs. Campbell, Warren, and Clark. I send this report for insertion, trusting that other parties in other places will follow our example. I hope the suggestion as to penny subscription cards, in No. 21 of the *Oracle*, will be immediately acted upon, and some sent to active individuals in every town.

Yours, in the cause of liberty,

J. C. FARN.

[Friend Farn's wish was accomplished before he could utter it. Cards have been issued by the Birmingham committee to several places, and a circular containing the information, with bills enclosed, has likewise been forwarded to every Social branch in the kingdom.—W. C.]

Social Institution, Glasgow,
June 12th, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR.—Your very appropriate ap-

* I. Corinthians. Taylor, Birmingham.

peal in behalf of our persecuted brother, Mr. G. J. HOLYOAKE, was laid before our executive, and by their most particular request, I have to say, we shall not neglect our duty in assisting, and as early after the opening of our new institution, which takes place on the 26th inst., as we can conveniently do it. Meantime, you will perceive by the enclosed bill, that we, as well as Edinburgh, have commenced to do our duty.

You will give our best regards to our respected brother, and our hope that a consciousness of the rectitude of his conduct will help to support him in his time of trouble, and trust that a knowledge of our principles will be of some service to him; and although we cannot love the viper that stings us, still let us feel for the horrible state of those who persecute us, and let us persevere to rid ourselves of our enemy by making them tolerant and better beings. You may depend as early after our opening as we can conveniently attend to our duty in a pecuniary way we shall do it. My dear sir, sincerely yours,

T. Paterson. J. NOCKLES, Sec.

Bishopwearmouth, June 12th, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR.—I am requested by Mr. Hartzburg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, conveying the sad intelligence of the arrest, imprisonment, and gross persecution of the noble-hearted HOLYOAKE. While Mr. Hartzburg, in common, with other friends, deeply sympathises with the sufferings of Mr. HOLYOAKE, regarding him as a martyr to *friendship* and principle, he has to regret that his means of manifesting his sympathy are very limited. The Socialists of Newcastle and of Sunderland, ought, as the professed friends of reason and truth, to have taken up this case in the spirit of brotherhood, and combined their resources as one man to protect and support him, on whom the power of a priest and the priest-ridden had fallen with evil power. But Mr. HOLYOAKE will not, I believe, be surprised to learn that, as a *body*, they will take no part, and no sympathy or succour need be expected from them *individually to any extent*. A few there may be, who know the essential principle of socialism is mental freedom, and who feel that its noblest fruit is sympathy with the moral heroes who are battling against error, sin, and suffering, yet, generally, they will be found characterised by cold prudence and base servility to popular prejudice and influential tyrants. Mr. Hartz-

burg, however, has found beyond the pale of the Socialists body, men who possess more of its social sympathy than its professed, or its official, adherents. The subscription that is now being raised, Mr. Hartzburg purposes forwarding to Mrs. HOLYOAKE, in compliance with the wish of the subscribers. A gentleman possessed of wealth, and dignifying its possession by a liberal mind and heart, will, Mr. Hartzburg believes, be a handsome contributor, but as he is now in a distant part of the country, it will be some time before Mr. Hartzburg hears from him. If you have published an appeal on behalf of Mr. HOLYOAKE, please to forward copies of it to Mr. Hartzburg and to myself, and insert our names for the receipt of subscriptions.

I am, sir, on behalf of the priest-scourged HOLYOAKE, yours, faithfully,
T. Paterson. J. WILLIAMS.

A numerous party of young people from Birmingham, went by packet-boat to Dudley Castle, on Tuesday, June 14, the profits of the festival being intended for the assistance of C. SOUTHWELL. The day was most delightful, and the perfection of good humour and harmony prevailed throughout. The time was wiled away by a visit to the caverns, rambles through the woods, and dances on the green sward in the ample court-yard. Similar parties in other towns are recommended to the social brethren, by the conductors of the above. The sum of £4 was cleared.

A public meeting was held on Monday, June 13, in the Clarence Gallery, Cheltenham, with the most favourable results, to consider the case of G. J. HOLYOAKE, and to memorialise the Home Secretary and the House of Commons; the announcement, at two different periods of the proceedings, of the arrest of Mr. and Mrs. ADAMS, produced considerable excitement.

A VOICE FROM GLOUCESTER GAOL.

Gloucester Gaol, June 10, 1842.

DEAR CHILTON.—I do not write to you for either love or money, but for the reason Eve told Adam she eat the apple, because she liked it. I have nothing at command, nor any hope of anything for my defence, except my head, which is often in requisition you will guess. Mr. Jones, a magistrate, in the presence of the governor, assured me yesterday that I may use pen and ink, and what I write will not be taken from me. I could not, after being deceived in Cheltenham, bring myself to write a word until I heard this. If any one tells you I grow pale, you must conclude it to be rather owing to my application than to my confinement, as I now make the best use I can of my *elegant* accommodations. The press have beset me like so many tigers, but I suppose the

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Van Ambürgh of public opinion knows how to tame them. I understand a friend brought me Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary," which was immediately sent back. Should I not have cut finer capers than Crusoe's poor Friday did, to have laid my hands on those blessed books, to while away the dull hours. I have had two interviews with Samuel Jones, Esq. He was very civil to me, and said he would be kind to me, but his kindness promises chiefly to be religious kindness, which is the worst kindness of all, and after the samples I have had I dread any more. However, as he is a father, and I really believe he means no harm, I have hope. My business with him was about my papers. He returned me a few pencil notes upon my examination, and some papers of a private kind, and said *he did not deem the others necessary for my defence*. [Doubtless he required them for my friend's assassination, as will be seen by his reply. Practical christianity!—W.C.] I reminded him that as men judge from the outward appearance, while some one else, Isaiah says, looks upon the heart, so he might think they were not needful for me, but no one knew my case or my thoughts but myself. That there would be brought against me legal acumen, power, bigotry, theological learning, law, and what not, and in justice I should be allowed possession of my own thoughts. Had I stolen any man's property, and his officers had found it upon me I would make no request, utter no word of complaint; but my papers were my own thoughts, my own property, and no man had any right to them. He said, *my papers*, if taken into court, *would condemn me*. I added, I expected no other fate—that never but one charged with my crime, guilty or not guilty, ever escaped; that the righteous hold their victims very fast; that the law in my case was *unwritten*, and the punishment *optional*, and that my character was of more consequence to me than my liberty. That all I asked was a fair chance of meeting my accusers, that the press was blasting my moral reputation, that I should defend myself, as I could not bear the idea that money should be spent for me in law, while I had a wife and children who might be left to experience the bitter scorn of the world, or the blighting of Christian charity. Still the old man was inexorable, and would give nothing up. [Israel's god, whose *mercy* endureth for ever, had specially hardened his heart. Holyoake ought to have known the folly of asking for justice of a Christian, on account of his wife and family; does not the great bashaw "visit the sins of the father even unto the third and fourth generation?"—W.C.] With regard to what is necessary to my defence, he proved his self a tolerably good judge, for he kept just everything I wanted. Law and gospel, rather than humanity, appear to me his polar stars. However, I bowed in silence, thinking that the ways of justice like those of the almighty, were past finding out. I do not expect to die here just yet. Every morning I have prayers, gruel, and bread—which make the *word* of life, the *staff* of life, and the water not being forgotten in the gruel, *life* itself. So far I am safe, but I can with all humility assure you, that my love of god does not grow by what it feeds on. During the day, now, I have an open yard to walk in, and so don't suffer for want of air. And during meals I have seven companions. I am locked up in a cell every night, at a quarter past seven. My

companions are the drollest sticks god ever let live. No fear of my imparting anything to them of consequence. I do not think they have twenty-one ideas among them. They would puzzle Helvetius and his theory of education. Euclid would never have written his elements had he been born here. But they are simple men, there is not a *bad* man among them. So I do not dwell among pollution and crime, as I expected I should. I have had a warm letter from my friend G. Julien Cameron Harney. His name is enough to frighten a host, and what is better, he is one of those rare fellows who, when his name does not answer the purpose, soon looks out for what will. Watts, of Manchester, has written to me, what think ye of the following extract? "Would to god the priests would hold a meeting and debate the sacrifice necessary to know how *much*, or how *many* lives, they require, so that we might walk forth to the slaughter. If we could at once pay the price of liberty, I am sure the men are ready and willing. I am sure patriotism is not dead, and the liberty of the world from the yoke of the priests is worth a struggle. Ay, their own liberty from their own miserable condition is worth a struggle, for the glutton never enjoys good health; and the lovers of human blood, however much they may gloat over their victims, can scarcely have peaceful minds." I can tell you an anecdote, though not a very good hand at it. When in Cheltenham two years ago, hearing what a firebrand and bigot Close was, I went to hear him preach, taking care to select a cold morning, that I might relish his hell-fire the better. Finding the church full of gentility, I suspected that, like the prudent dean celebrated by Pope,

"He never mentioned hell to ears polite;"

but observing an unusual sprinkling of the fair sex right and left of him, I inquired of a young lady in the porch the reason, who archly said it was owing to the rev. gent.'s ears being more admired than his gospel. I heard this many times after in Cheltenham. I only mention it because it struck me there might be many items in the attractions of true religion not dreamt of in my philosophy. I have had an interview with the clergyman here, who spoke with much kindness to me; I observed none of that hellish venom about him I have remarked upon in others. He said he supposed I should not like to read anything on his side the question? I answered, that I should most gladly read everything I had not read, and that I should deem myself quite incompetent to speak upon any question, of which I was familiar with only one side. He spoke to me as though I had *human* feelings, a rare thing for a priest. The class I am in is called the *finest* class, nobody very dreadful is placed here—ergo, I am like the lion, not so fierce as the papers have pictured me. Some of them work during the day, and are rewarded with mint tea, &c. When they came in and found me here, one said, "What are you come for? We always tells one another." "O, blasphemy," I replied. "What's that?" said one. "Arn't ye religious?" said another. I gave them clear answers, but mark the result on these unsophisticated rustics; seeing my first loaf there unbroken, and that I could not eat, "Here," said four or five at once, "will ye have some of this tea, zur." It was the nicest thing they had, and so offered it to soothe and cheer me. What a contrast was this behaviour with the treat-

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ment I received from genteel and polished Christians in Cheltenham.

I conclude, as I expect to see Mr. Lear from Cheltenham. Alexander Campbell has called upon me. He looks better than usual. A meeting was to be held in the Clarence Gallery last night; he would be there I think, from his looks, to lay on the saints.

Yours, demonstrably as Euclid,

G. J. H.

Gloucester Gaol, June 8, 1842.

MY DEAR HARNEY.—Your letter was handed to me this morning; it is the first I have received; it came like a beam of the sun on chaos. For all your kindness and offers, take a million of thanks, the only things I am now rich in. I brought manuscripts for my defence here, on the good faith of my gnolers in Cheltenham, which are all in the hands of the magistrates. They were seized as soon as I was here. Your aid will be a giant to me, in making all facts known to the public; and “we gentlemen of the press” are not to be burked and no one write our epitaph. Of one thing you may rest sure, they will never convert me in a gaol. I must say the Chartists of Cheltenham behaved like heroes to me, and I will some day return their kindness. They hold the Mechanic’s Institution, where my lecture was delivered, and although they were threatened with the loss of it if they permitted any of my friends to join them, even *individually* they nobly refused to hold it on such terms, and gave me again the use of it, and in it I gave persecuting christianity some lusty knocks, and in it the same night I was apprehended between eleven and twelve, the meeting execrating to a man. I am told Englishmen are allowed a fair trial; grant me but that, and all will be right. Yours, very truly,

G. J. H.

P.S. The worst part of the affair was, I was returning home, weary with a long journey, to my family, when I was apprehended. I do not care for myself; when Mrs. H. and my little girls are provided for, I can bow to the fates. A man cannot be honest in these days, Julian, without paying dearly for it.

G. J. H.

FROM A CORRESPONDENT.—Considering that Mr. SOUTHWELL is suffering imprisonment principally from the *style* of his writing, I am induced to send you the following extract from Lockhart’s “Life of Scott,” vol. 4, Paris ed. Speaking of Calais, he says, “Lost, as all know, by the bloody papist bitch (one must be vernacular when on French ground), Queen Mary, of red hot memory. I would rather she had burned a score more of bishops, if she had kept it. Her sister Bess would sooner have parted with her virginity.” The above is *verbatim*. With best wishes for Mr. S. and all concerned, I remain, &c. C. DENT.

THE MORALITY OF BELIEF.—Some time ago, a man who had led a rather loose kind of life, and was a notorious swearer, and consequently very passionate, happening in the nature of things to be drawing to a close (being old), the clergyman of the place thought proper to attend him, thinking that now, per-

haps, when life was near an ebb, he might be made to think of eternity. So after the usual apologies, he put the question, “Was he afraid to meet his god?” “I am not afraid to meet him, but it is the other h— I’m afraid of!”

T. P.

NOTICE.—Copies of this work sent by post to any parts where they cannot be otherwise obtained, at the rate of THREE for FOURPENCE. Post-office stamps for one month or three, with directions, addressed to E. N., 26, Upper Windsor-street, Ashted, Birmingham, will receive attention.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. CUPPEY, Liverpool, in speaking of Mr. Mackintosh’s New God, says, “I have heard him declare that ‘there was no god, and he who attempted to bring into society the mention of the existence of such a being, was deserving of the greatest punishment that society could inflict upon him.’”

W. B., LEEDS. The least a person can do, when asking a question, is to pay the postage. The editors of liberal works are seldom overburdened with cash.—Most probably *yes*, not certain. W. C.

P. M. is informed that it is in contemplation to issue a PORTRAIT of Mr. Southwell, to be bound up with the first volume of the *Oracle*.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

2s. 6d. for Charles Southwell the Atheist, from as sincere a believer in a god as ever existed, but a mortal enemy to persecution.

From Mr. James Betts, profits of an excursion to Dudley Castle, to assist Charles Southwell	£4 0 0
From a few Friends near Northampton	1 3 0
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London. M. RYALL, *Gen. Sec.*

SECRETARIES’ DIRECTIONS.

GENERAL SECRETARY.—M. Ryall, 3, North-place, Lambeth, London.

PROVINCIAL SEC.—E. Nicholls, 26, Upper Windsor-street, Ashted, Birmingham.

NOW READY.

A Plain Answer to the Query, ‘Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?’ By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers. Agent for Bristol, J. Chappel, News Agent, Narrow Wine-street.

Saturday, June 25, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

No. 28.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

CIRCULAR OF THE ANTI-PROSECUTION UNION.

TO THE FRIENDS OF FREE DISCUSSION.

8, Holywell-street, Strand, London,
26th June, 1842.

IN accordance with resolutions passed at various Public Meetings, both in the Metropolis and the Provinces, condemning all legal interference with the expression of opinion, guaranteeing support to the victims of the Blasphemy Laws, and sanctioning the formation of a Permanent Union to carry these views into effect; the Committee of the "ANTI-PROSECUTION UNION" have matured their plan, for the carrying out of which they look forward to your steady and earnest co-operation.

The Committee are now prepared to issue the Subscription Sheets and Collecting Books for regular periodical subscriptions.

They appeal not to free thinkers only, but to those of whatever sect or party who would uphold the Right of Private Judgment and Free Discussion for all, whether Christian, Jew, Turk, Theist, or Atheist.

All who desire to defeat the bigots in authority, whose aim is to crush the writers, speakers, or publishers of free opinions—as in the case of SOUTHWELL, HOLYOAKE, and Mr. and Mrs. ADAMS—can materially assist by taking charge of a Subscription Sheet or Book.

You will greatly aid our efforts, if in addition to your personal services, you will transmit the names of others who may be willing or likely to co-operate with us.

M. RYALL, SEC.

REPORT OF PROGRESS.

A public meeting of the Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty, and to unlimited Freedom of Expression, took place on Tuesday evening, June 21, in the Hall of Science, Lawrence-street, Birmingham, which had been kindly granted for the occasion by the proprietors. The rain descended in torrents just before the taking of the chair, but, notwithstanding, the hall was filled with the most orderly and intelligent of the working-classes. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Holyoake, and Messrs. Hulse, Mason, Mackintosh, Soar, and White, and various resolutions and petitions adopted.

A meeting was held the same evening at the Social Institution, John-street, Tottenham-court road, London, with like beneficial results. Mr. Blumenfeld, the talented author of the "New Ecce Homo," delivered an excellent speech upon the occasion.

BRIEF REMARKS ON THE PROSECUTIONS FOR BLASPHEMY.

By Mr. George Jacob Holyoake.

"The only fruit I have received from my philosophy is to speak plainly to all the world, and to tell freely my thoughts of things."—ARISTIPPUS.

So have I learned of socialism, but whether I shall be permitted to practice so useful a lesson and pursue so simple a course, religion will shortly answer. I know it savours more of the simplicity of youth than experience of the world, but I could wish that truthfulness and life may terminate together. It has long been clear to me that in any course of rectitude the misapprehension of friends is a far heavier penalty than the fiercest opposition of enemies. So at the present time I find it.

The general objection to my recent conduct in Cheltenham is thus expressed: "We deprecate the injustice exercised for your destruction, but think you might have avoided it; there was no occasion for what you did, you might have expressed the same thing in another manner." This is in fact an apology for my oppressors, and a reproof for me. Now if I *could* have avoided the course I took, I ought not to have done as I did, and I, in reality, *provoked* the treatment I received; and if I rashly or wantonly brought it upon me I *deserved* it, forfeited all claim to sympathy, and those who have undertaken my correction, though they may have apportioned an excess of punishment for my offence, yet are they not wholly to be blamed. But this objection is grossly defective and unreasonable, for if they had no moral right to interfere with me (which is conceded), I had done no moral wrong, nor given any legitimate excuse of offence, and hence the charge of rashness or wantonness in the use of language can have no meaning in such a case. That I outraged no feelings or prejudices is plain from the circumstance that my remarks, according to all reports, were received with general applause; therefore, as far as the meeting was concerned, no inducement was presented for me to take a different course to the one taken. But then, "I forget that bigots out of doors could *construe* or *construct* a *case* of blasphemy from my words, and therefore I should have used others—I might easily have

avoided' all that has happened.' Yes, I might have avoided it just as a man can avoid doing his duty as a citizen or teacher, whenever some danger threatens or some convenience allures. But can he avoid it honourably? I felt that I could not honourably do otherwise than I did, which I think will appear from the following statement:—

My lecture on Home Colonization was over, and I was folding my papers to depart, when the man Maitland put the question to me—"Why do you not introduce churches and chapels into community? You tell us of our duty to men; why not of our duty to god?" The stupid fanaticism of the question excited in my mind no little contempt; but having no reason to feel certain of the man's insincerity, I answered him candidly and honestly. Some think I should have given no reply, but that would have subjected me to the suspicion that I was opposed to religion on insufficient ground, and could not tell why I objected to it; or, that I held notions I had not the courage to avow. So I had to choose whether I would be estimated as an ignorant pretender or a cowardly sceptic, and, at the very least, as an uncourteous teacher, who would not answer a public question put to me.

It may be thought I should have given no answer at all to Maitland, and have said, as a member of the Rational Society I had *no opinion* upon the subject; but I could not lay a society, to which I had the honour to belong, open to imputations from which I shrunk as an individual. So, as to whether I should or should not answer the question I did not hesitate a moment, on these grounds; and as an individual, it is my custom to answer all questions to the best of my judgment and ability; therefore, custom and duty coincided in the decision. This being clear, the *kind of answer* to be given, whether a true or a false one, never presented a doubt; having a dislike to lying, I answered frankly, just as I felt and believed, without one particle of reservation. It is true, hypocrisy might have served my turn instead. I might have shuffled and equivocated; I might have given a mean-anything answer; have professed a respect where I felt a contempt, and pretended regard while entertaining the strongest dislike; but I should have thrown myself open to contempt and distrust; I should have been despised by even Maitland, and what I think much more of, I should have despised myself, and, in my opinion, brought public disgrace on the cause I advocated, which, if such conduct was needed to support it, I would never stand up in its defence again. I put it to the meeting whether a course thus candid was not also more honourable than any other to christianity, inasmuch, as it appealed to truth which christianity vaunted as

its foundation, and did honour to morality which christianity boasted to nurture and conserve, and the meeting answered in the affirmative. Had I done differently, how the saints would have gloried! Passing through Bristol about that time I found every window with a print of Mr. Brindley, representing him in the act of burning one of Mr. Owen's books at a public discussion. I half felt I would rather he had burned me. Perhaps the preceding will satisfy those who think I "*ran into it.*" I could no more help the question being put to me than prevent Cleopatra being born; and when asked, my duty was to speak conscientiously in reply. I had spoken in praise of truth, justice, and freedom of thought and expression; without which latter, freedom of thought is a mockery, and I could not vapour about them to others and not practice them myself. Having eulogised truth, who could do less than speak it? Having contended for justice, what a mockery it would have been to have departed from it, as I must have done in giving a deceptive answer to the meeting! And having commended sincerity to others, how would equivocation have condemned me? Some regret I should have thrown myself away on such a trifle. I cannot understand this. It is said I am sacrificed for a trifle, and that christianity will be eternally disgraced thereby—the truth will be told. It was assuredly no doing of mine. Not the slightest notion that my language could be construed into blasphemy, and until the Rev. Francis Close's *Chronicle* reached me in Bristol did not dream my language could be styled objectionable. In my lecture the witnesses swore I introduced no question of religion, and in my reply I attacked no man's faith, and thought of nothing but simply stating my convictions, and certainly neither *intended* breaking the law nor offending the most fastidious taste.*

Another class of objectors think it a pity I should incur the risk of being immured in a distant gaol, far from home, &c. I have shown that I did not cause it. But if it means I should not have spoken my mind in such a place, I scarcely understand that virtue which varies with the latitude of every place, and assumes a new phase in every town.

Those who fancy I have sought my position, know no more of my motives, than does Mr. Capper, one of my committing magistrates, who uttered the cold and heartless imputation that love of notoriety was the incentive to my conduct. My intercourse with Pemberton

* It is true, as "Philo-Publicola" sarcastically intimates, in his brilliant article on "Religious Persecution," in the *Weekly Dispatch*, of this day, that I did not attune every metaphysical sentiment to the nice ear and tender conscience of a policeman; but for this omission I hope to be forgiven.

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

and a few other such glorious spirits, taught me to sum up all virtue in sincerity and benevolence, and all vice in cruelty and hypocrisy. Into whatever situation the practice of these precepts may lead me, I trust conscious integrity will support me. Martyrdom was never an object of my aspiration, but when punishment lies in the way of duty, I hope to be able to bear it. Gaols are my antipathies, for the vulgarities, crime, and pollution congregated within them no more assimilates with my taste, than the rude brutality of my treatment and diet accords with my delicate constitution.

I gladly acknowledge the able manner in which the editor of the *National Association Gazette* defends mental freedom violated in my person; but when he concludes that I am "as bigotted in my atheism as my opponents in their belief," he does me an injustice. I would not punish any man for his opinions, and I never put my own dogmatically or intolerantly forward.

My trial takes place this week, and having had but a few days to prepare my defence, I cannot more at large notice the objections that have been made to me. The *Cheltenham Free Press*, of June 4, contained a defence of my crime and conduct, delivered on the night of my apprehension, to which I should like to refer all my friends and foes. Those who cannot see that will find in the Report of my Trial, should I have a fair one, a more complete vindication of my motives and conduct.

I cannot conclude without saying that, though I expected to have only censure, I have been most agreeably disappointed—the kind assistance and sympathy I have received from friends new and old, has exceeded all I could have hoped for. Mr. Alexander Campbell was incessant in his endeavours on my behalf, as were all our friends in Cheltenham—Socialists, Sacred Socialists, Goodwin in Barnby's disciples, and Chartists. In Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and many other towns, a generous interest has been felt in my behalf. Of the press, the *Cheltenham Free Press*, *Weekly Dispatch*, *Northern Star*, *Sun*, *Statesman*, *National Association Gazette*, etc., quite regardless of my peculiar opinions, have rendered important services. The two first especially. The *New Moral World* must not be forgotten on this occasion.

I was liberated on Friday, June 17, after 14 days and a night's imprisonment. The magistrates having captiously refused my first bail, Mr. James Barnes, of Worcester, one of our oldest friends, and Mr. J. D. Stevenson, of the same city, well known as a talented defender of chartism, proceeded to Cheltenham and became my sureties. They argued humorously, that it would be strange if there could not be found two righteous men

in the city of Worcester. Mr. Whiting, of Bristol, the gentleman who was principal bail for Mr. SOUTHWELL, generously offered to proceed to Gloucester for the same purpose, if wanted.

Birmingham, June 26, 1842.

Mr. Roebuck's reply to the Cheltenham petition, sent to him for presentation:—

London, June 23rd, 1842.

SIR.—The petition you sent me is of a nature that demands serious inquiry—and I thought I should best discharge my duty towards the petitioners and Mr. HOLYOAKE, by at once addressing myself to Sir James Graham. He has very promptly taken up the inquiry, and I have no doubt but that substantial justice will be done. If, however, the petitioners should hereafter deem that justice has not been done, I can present their petition, after the inquiry which has been undertaken by the Home Secretary has been closed. I have taken this liberty with the petition on my own responsibility, hoping that the petitioners will here trust to my discretion, and they for the moment will put confidence in my judgment. I will write you word so soon as I hear from the Home Secretary, who has now the petition in his hands for the purpose of immediately instituting a searching inquiry. I am, sir, your obedt. servt.

Mr. H. Fry.

J. A. ROEBUCK.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XVII.

"In the tertiary formation we find a striking and wonderful change of appearance. These strata are rich beyond all that go before them in animal remains. At the time of their formation, the aptitude of the earth for the maintenance of organic life had vastly increased, and was continually increasing, as the period approached when man himself and the higher orders of being were to become its inhabitants."—*Chambers*.

In the strata previously examined, no distinct traces of mammiferous or sucking animals have appeared, either terrestrial or aquatic, and yet they form a large portion of the existing animal kingdom. The rare cases of supposed exception, have been found capable of such explanation as to leave the general truth unshaken.

After the chalky formation, a considerable repose seems to have ensued, during which a large portion of the existing continents, and especially the hollows and basins on their surface, appear to have been the site of large lakes, rivers, &c. From this resulted the first fresh water formation, called the eocene period. While this deposit was going on, says Chambers, the globe, no longer an entire stagnant marsh, but as yet incapable of affording much support to terrestrial animals, was tenanted only by such quadrupeds as live beside rivers and lakes. Nearly fifty extinct species of mammalia, chiefly of this character, were discovered by Cuvier in this formation. The most of these

belonged to the class pachydermata (*thick-skinned* animals), of which the elephant, the rhinoceros, the hog, the tapir, and the horse, are remarkable existing examples. Among these extinct creatures, the most worthy of notice are the palæotherium, the anoplotherium, the lophiodon, anthracotherium chera-potamus, and one or two other families, including, some of them, not less than eleven or twelve distinct species. These mammiferous families had some general traits of resemblance, and the description of the great *palæotherium* may afford an idea of the main features of all. This animal was of the size of the horse, or about four feet and a half in height to the wither. It was more squat and clumsy in its proportions than the horse; the head was more massive, and the extremities thicker and shorter. On each foot were three large toes, rounded, and unprovided with claws; the upper jaw was much longer than the under. The tapir, and partly, also, the hog, if large enough, would closely resemble the great palæotherium. "The palæotheria (says Buckland) probably lived and died upon the margins of the then existing lakes and rivers, and their dead carcasses may have been drifted to the bottom in seasons of flood." The other mammiferous families of the first eocene formation, were all, like the palæotheria, herbivorous, and had, it is probable, similar habits. The number of animals, aquatic and terrestrial, whose remains are found in the other deposits of the eocene period is immense. In some gypsum (sulphate of lime) quarries of that era, scarcely a block can be opened which does not disclose some fragment of a fossil skeleton. The following list of the animals found in the gypsum quarries of Paris, will show sufficiently how very different from the gigantic reptiles of the secondary eras were the creatures that tenanted, and found fitting sustenance on the earth, during the eocene period. Besides various extinct pachydermatous families, there were found extinct species of the wolf and fox, of the racoon and genetie, among the carnivorous tribes; of the opossum; of the dormouse and squirrel; nine or ten species of birds, of the buzzard, owl, quail, wood-cock, sea-lark, curlew, and pelican families; freshwater tortoises, crocodiles, and other creatures of the reptile class; and several species of fishes:—all of these animals, be it remembered, being *extinct species* of existing families, exclusive of the pachydermatous animals, and the fishes, which were extinct species of *extinct families*. The occurrence of the birds mentioned in the preceding list of the eocene animals, forms (says Dr. Buckland) "a remarkable phenomenon in the history of organic remains." The number of fossil shells found in the eocene formation is estimated by Mr. Lyell

at 1238. As in the case of the terrestrial creatures, few of these shell-fish are of recent or existing species, not more, at the utmost, than $3\frac{1}{2}$ in every hundred.

Here then we perceive for the first time the existence of a similar order in the animal kingdom to the present. Lyell thinks the earth to have been fit for the habitation of man at this period, but he is almost alone in his opinion. Crocodiles and palm-trees, which existed, it would appear from their remains, in large numbers, as well as the frequency of volcanic action, would seem to indicate too high a temperature, and too unsettled a state for an animal so long in coming to perfection.

The second, or miocene period, brings us a step nearer to the existing condition of things. We find that the miocene deposits present us with the earliest forms of animals existing at the present time. In Dr. Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise a table is given, exhibiting the animals found at Darmstadt, in a bed of sand referable to the miocene period. In this list are mentioned two skeletons of the dinotherium, a large herbivorous animal, called by Cuvier, the gigantic tapir; two large tapirs; calicotherium—two large tapir-like animals of this name; two rhinoceroses; hippotherium, an animal allied to the horse; three hogs; four large cats, some as large as a lion; the creature called the glutton; agnotherium, allied to the dog; and machairodus, an animal allied to the bear. From this list the reader will perceive the gradual approach in the miocene animals to existing species. The discovery, also, of true terrestrial mammalia, as the rhinoceros and hog, in the miocene formations, shows, that since the era of the gigantic reptiles, no slight portion of the earth's surface had assumed the condition of dry land, fit for the support of the common herbivorous creatures. At the same time, the occurrence of such animals as the dinotherium in the miocene strata, proves, as Dr. Buckland remarks, that many regions were still covered with great lakes and estuaries. In the third, or older pliocene period, the first traces appear of ruminant animals—of oxen, deer, camels, and other creatures of the same class. The pliocene ages were not less rich in enormous organic productions than those periods already described. The enormous creature called the *great mastodon*, belongs to the pliocene era. Of all the fossil animals whose skeletons have been found *complete*, or nearly so, the mastodon is the largest. Another creature, belonging to the later pliocene ages, if not indeed to the era of the diluvial formation, has been discovered in America, both north and south. This is the *megatherium*, an animal more widely removed in character from any existing creature, than

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

any of the other fossil remains that have been yet observed. Another extinct tardigrade creature, presenting many of the characters of the megatherium, was discovered in a calcareous cavern in Virginia, and received from President Jefferson, who first described some of its bones, the name of the *megalonyx*. Jefferson conceived the claw to be that of an extinct feline animal of vast size (that is to say, an animal of the same description as the tiger, lion, cat, and lynx, all of which are beasts of prey); but the French naturalist declared the possessor of the claw to have been herbivorous, or calculated to live on herbs; and this was triumphantly proved by the discovery of others of its bones. Another fossil animal of this period is that long called the *mammoth*, under the impression that it was a distinct genus, but which is now universally denominated the *fossil elephant*, as being an extinct species of that existing family.

The period when the *diluvium* was deposited, being that immediately preceding the existing order of things on the earth's surface, is marked by the remains of animals, many of which still exist, while others are extinct. The chief evidence on this point is derived from bones, and fragments of bones, found in caves which are supposed to have served about the time of the diluvial action, as retreats for hyænas and other beasts of prey. That of Kirkdale, in Yorkshire, discovered a few years ago, was found to contain remains of twenty-three species; namely, hyæna, tiger, bear, wolf, fox, weasel, elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, horse, ox, three species of deer, hare, rabbit, water-rat, mouse, pigeon, raven, lark, a species of duck and partridge. The bones in all these cases were broken into angular fragments or chips, and were all more or less decayed, though the gelatinous matter yet remained in some of them. They were covered by a layer of mud about a foot deep, the nature of which led to the supposition that it must have been deposited during the action of the diluvium. Till a recent period, no trace of any animal of a higher order was discovered in rocks. Some remains of a human skeleton had been found in a cave in Guadaloupe, imbedded in stony matter; but it was concluded, in that case, that the enclosing matter was of recent formation, and that the human being whose relics were discovered in it, might have been alive at no distant era. Latterly, however, fossil zoology has made one step in advance. In 1838, a fossil jaw-bone of one of the *quadrumana* (four-handed or monkey tribes) was discovered in the tertiary formation at the northern foot of the Pyrenees, in the department of Gers, in France. Two deposits there are very rich in fossils, affording remains of no fewer than thirty mammiferous animals.

In the second and newer of these, which is lacustrine, or a deposit from a fresh-water lake, the jaw-bone of the monkey was found, containing four incisor teeth, two canine, four false grinders, and six true grinders in a continued series. The monkey is supposed to have been about three feet in height. The bone occurred in a stratum of marl, covered by compact limestone. Another jaw-bone of a monkey was discovered with other remains, in August, 1839, in a brick-field at Kingston, near Woodbridge, in the county of Suffolk: the particular bed in which it was found has not been stated. The bone indicates a species of the *quadrumana* not now existing. These must be considered as very interesting discoveries. The earliest animals and plants are of the simplest kind. Gradually, as we advance through the higher strata, or, in other words, as we proceed through this record of progressive creation, we find animals and plants of higher and higher structure, till at last we come to the superficial strata where there are remains of kinds approximating to the highest of all the animated tribes, namely, man himself. But, before the above discoveries, there remained one remarkable gap in the series. The *quadrumana*, or monkeys, who form an order above common mammalia, but below the *bimana*, or human tribes, were wanting. Now this deficiency is supplied; and it is shown that every one of the present forms of animated existence, *excepting the human*, existed at the time when the superficial strata were formed. The only zoological event of an important nature subsequent to that period is the creation of man; for we may consider of a lesser importance the extinction of many of the specific varieties which flourished in the geological ages, and the creation of new.*

Here then we find it now almost universally admitted by naturalists that there has been a regular gradation or succession of organised forms upon the earth, and no facts in support of the opinion still maintained by many, that all the animals, plants, &c were created at *one* time, the earth being at that time fit for their habitation; the earth presenting such appearances as to warrant the assertion that all the animals that have lived upon it could not at any *one* period have existed had they been upon it. And that, in every case, the earth was only suited for those animals which had it for their inheritance during the periods pointed out by geology. The only dispute between me and others, that is to say, scientific men, is simply whether there have been *successive creations*, or whether all is not merely results from the different conditions of matter — consequent upon the never-ceasing change of position of its particles.

W. C.

* Chambers.

[A portion of these papers appeared in a small work, called *Common Sense*, published by Taylor, Birmingham, some time since. Mr. S.'s executors have determined upon giving them to the public entire.]

THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

Why is nature said to be the parent or cause of all the effects we behold?

Because nature is the great whole, or universe, and contains within itself the seeds or causes of effects; and, figuratively speaking, all effects are as children of causes. By kindling a little alcohol, while holding in solution nitrate of copper in a watch glass, a fine green flame will be produced. The green coloured flame is here the effect, caused by the kindling of the alcohol when holding in solution nitrate of copper. Pliny, perhaps the most learned of the ancient naturalists, calls the universe "an uncreated and eternal god, which has never been produced, and which can never be destroyed; the great whole or universe is all in all, or rather is itself all. It is at once the work of nature, and nature itself." According to this notion, the universe is at the same time the workman and the work; which modern naturalists would call flat blasphemy. But, as observed by Dupuis, "Metaphysical refinement is of a comparatively recent date, and men believed in the evidence of their senses before they delivered themselves up bound hand and foot to the illusions of the imagination, and circumscribed their worship to the world they saw, before they created a god, by abstraction, in a world that they saw not."

Why have men so violently disputed about the origin and probable end of all things?

Because we see but a part, and that a very small part of the great whole; and seeing but a part, we know but in part—grasping only a few links in what appears the endless chain of causation, all our opinions regarding beginnings or endings of things should be given with modesty and caution, if we would maintain a character for wisdom. Ancient, like modern philosophers, seemed to have held various opinions with regard to the universe and its origin; some contending that all sprung from Mercury, or the divine word; which (if we substitute the word god for that of Mercury) is the notion of modern theologians; whilst others, and by far the greater number, denied the creation of matter, and contended that all proceeds from the confused seeds of things; in other words, all the changes or effects we behold are produced by the action of matter upon matter, which matter is self-existent and necessarily eternal. The universe, says Ocellus (one of the most ancient philosophers whose writings have

reached us) considered in its totality, or as a whole, announces nothing which is a sign or mark of its origin, or presages its destruction; none have seen its birth, growth, or decay; it is ever the same, in the same manner, always equal and like unto itself. This latter opinion is held by many philosophers of the present age, who are called Atheists (a term compounded of two Greek words, signifying without god in the world) by theologians who display abundance of passion and are most bitter in their denunciation of Atheists, Deists, and in short all whose opinions do not happen to square and dovetail in with their own, seemingly forgetful that a satisfactory solution of this question is beyond the grasp of the most powerful intellect. Let them, each one, if he can, be convinced in his own mind; but those who cannot, and hug the Aristotelian precept, that "incredulity is the parent of wisdom," are not to be treated as wild beasts, or hunted from society. But, alas! in this age of cant, belief, which is the opposite of knowledge, is lauded to the skies, and woe to those who cannot sound the sharps and flats of discourse, so as to tickle the ears of the vulgar, or disdain to make their voices sweetly chime in, and harmonise with, the flutes and trumpets of orthodoxy.

MR. MACKINTOSH'S CHALLENGE.

[The following came into my possession shortly after No. 26 had been issued, containing some remarks of my own upon the same subject, and I withheld its publication until I had seen the editor, thinking it unnecessary. But his opinion being that Mr. M.'s letter related to his articles, he wished his view of the matter to appear.—W. C.]

LIKE the Baron of Thunder-ten-Tronckh, I expected to have been slain twice by this new *Candid*—but destiny promises my bones shall remain whole.

I have but a transient recollection of his remarks—having read them but once—and since doing so, a thousand things have arisen to obscure the impression they left. But I remember he complains of "flippancy and abuse."

If I am flippant, it is not aimed at. It results from accident rather than design, and in this case has been suggested by the subject—not imparted by my taste. But censurable or not, I confess no ambition to write homilies for reviews.

With regard to abuse, as far as I am concerned the reciprocation of this charge shall stop here. I thought Mr. M.'s book abusive. He thinks my review of his work abusive too. I did not intend my observations to be so, and if they are, they deceive me. I am quite willing to believe he may have been equally unfortunate in conveying *his* meaning. For my own part I care not to substantiate or repeat charges while abundance of argument is on hand.

If I called his reasoning "cold-hearted," &c., I did not think the reasoner so—I have often had the happiness of experiencing the contrary, and hope again

to do so. May not a man's reasoning lead to cruel consequences and he not be aware of it? I think so. The head may err and the heart still be right. I wished, and still do, to be credited with believing this when I wrote the words complained of. Infallibility is no pretension of mine—I can conceive how my own logic may be baneful though I never intend it.

Was Mr. M. willing to discuss the morality of the question at issue, I am now denied the pleasure of joining in it. But more than this do I regret that any language of mine should have impressed him with a distaste for it, because there is no man with whom I would sooner have debated the matter. Not for triumph, but for profit. I am not vain enough to think victory would have been easy—only that the satisfaction to me would have been great.

Though Mr. M. disclaims argument in reply, I remember he uses a little—but I remember it too indistinctly to reply to it. I trust from the circumstances under which I write, this will be ascribed to a *defective* rather than a *convenient* memory.

Still, I am surprised at Mr. M.'s letter. In declining discussion he declines embracing all the advantages laying at his feet, if he has truth on his side. It appears either to imply apathy or doubt on his part—disregard for the cause he has espoused, or suspicions as to the validity of the ground he has taken. For he is an older man than I—more familiar with the weapons of disputation—he could easily expose my errors, and disturb my fancied security where I am wrong. He can build a case more adroitly than I from his greater experience, and make a point where I should fall into an error. For my own part where I can be afforded fair play, as I was prepared to afford him in the *Oracle*, in discussing any question—I would welcome the fiercest attack upon my principles & smile at the most virulent abuse. Hoping that error will ever be *unmercifully* rejected, and conscious that truth can never be injured where equal justice prevails, I am willing to give wings to calumny, licence to misrepresentation, and pardon to insult—if thereby I can gain permission to discuss on equal grounds the important principles mankind ought to understand. I have *full faith* in the invincibility and power of truth. Once *equally matched* against error anything may be perilled on it as the victor. With the proviso just named, like Milton, I would let all the winds of doctrines upon her; and, with the earnestness of *Lear*, cry to error,

“Blow, blow, and crack your cheeks!”

I have no convenience for enumerating the various points in my review, I wish the reader to attend, and Mr. M. to reply, to. Because he has not replied, I do not deem them established, but certainly claim a little presumptive evidence in their favor.

Gloucester Gaol.

G. J. H.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR.—In your notice to correspondents, in last week's number (27), I find that a Mr. W. Cuppey, of Liverpool, is made to assert that he had heard Mr. Mackintosh declare that “That there was no god, and he who attempted to bring into society the mention of the existence of such a being was deserving of the greatest punishment that society could inflict upon

him.” Who Mr. Cuppey may be, I know not; nor do I know whether there be a Mr. Cuppey at all, never having had the honour of his acquaintance. This, however, I do know, that neither Mr. Cuppey nor any other person, at Liverpool or any where else, at any time has heard me give utterance to any such words or sentiments. To speak out plain, Mr. Cuppey's charge is a downright falsehood. I could point out one or two *errors* of the same kind in the *Oracle* in reference to myself. However, I forbear, with this one remark: if the cause of atheism is obliged to descend to personal abuse, for lack of argument, it is a poor cause. Yours,

T. S. MACKINTOSH.

[The extract was inserted without the editor's knowledge. It should have been—Curphey, not Cuppey. Mr. M. has seen the letter, but declares he knows nothing of the author.—W. C.]

EFFECTS OF PERSECUTION. LEGAL MURDER!

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

FRIEND OF THE HUMAN RACE.—In forwarding the enclosed amount of subscriptions, received by me up to this date, allow me to observe that you must not judge of the number of your friends in Sheffield by the small amount of money subscribed; hundreds of your Chartist (to say nothing of your Socialist) friends are too poor to give even a penny, and fervent are their wishes for your triumph over your persecutors. Another martyr has been sacrificed at the shrine of tyranny. SAMUEL HOLBERRY, convicted at the York spring assizes of 1840, of *sedition*, and sentenced to *four years' imprisonment*, expired in his dungeon (York Castle) yesterday morning, at half-past four o'clock. As if in mockery of his dying agonies, an order for his release came from the home office, a day or two before his death, with the conditions annexed that he should find bail himself £200 and two sureties of £100 each to be of good behaviour! His poor wife (whom you have seen at my home) was refused permission to see him only two or three weeks since; she is distracted. Shall there be no retribution for this foul, bloody murder? When, oh when will the human race rise in its might and trample in the dust the monarchical, aristocratical, priestly, and profit-hunting villains who oppress, plunder, and murder them?

That the fates may preserve you from the torture under which poor gallant, noble-hearted HOLBERRY has sunk into his grave, is the heart-felt hope of,

My dear HOLYOAKE,

Fraternally thine,

GEO. JULIAN C. HARNEY.

Sheffield, June 22, 1842.

P.S. I must work hard to get some support for Mrs. Holberry, with whom every friend of liberty and the rights of man must heartily sympathise. I shall keep open my book for subscriptions for you and SOUTHWELL, and hope to have the continued help and aid of every friend of free inquiry.—G.J.H.

NOW READY.

A Plain Answer to the Query, ‘Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?’ By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence.—This work should be universally read.

WRITTEN ON THE CONVICTION OF
MR. CHARLES SOUTHWELL,
FOR BLASPHEMY.

DEEP in a dungeon's gloom immured,
The victim of Oppression lies;
Priestcraft's dark fables he abjured,
For Nature's bright realities;
But fierce Oppression's galling chains
Were being forged in gothic fanes!

I ask not if the streams that flow
From Reason's fount be dark or bright;
His right to drink them I but know,
Is man's unalienable right—
More ancient than the tales of pride,
And blood, and lust, "time sanctified."

Vainly shall Superstition scowl
Demoniac malignity,
From 'neath the priest's crime-covering cowl,
On reason's mighty energy;
Or shackle limbs, for thoughts will be
Like ocean's gales—unfettered, free!


Truth shrinks not from Inquiry's light,
Nor suffers from its scorching glare;
But Error seeks congenial night,
And growls defiance from his lair.
In monkish cells or gothic fanes,
Inquiry's lamp but dimly wanes.

O! for the day when moral worth,
Unfettered by religious creeds,
Shall free this fair but suffering earth
From Priestcraft's dark and fearful deeds!
When man shall proudly scorn to nurse
Religion—earth's most direful curse!

Free is the captive's soul, at least,
'Mid fetters, dungeon-gloom, and whips;
The iron symbol of the priest—
The cross—polluted not his lips!
Emblem of pride, and blood, and lust,
Too justly trampled in the dust!

SOUTHWELL! thy name will be enrolled
On history's page, with glowing ink,
As one of that small band, and bold,
Who dared to teach mankind to think:
Who dared to brave Oppression's frown,
And tear his blood-stain'd banner down!

M. A. L.

 NOTICE.—Copies of this work sent by post to any parts where they cannot be otherwise obtained, at the rate of THREE for FOURPENCE. Post-office stamps for one month or three, with directions, addressed to the Editor, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, will receive attention.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. C. F. says, "It is absolutely necessary that some new arrangements should be made to promote the sale of the *Oracle*; I KNOW that great difficulties stand in the way of its circulation even in Newcastle, Leeds, and Manchester districts; if it cannot be obtained readily in these quarters, you may easily guess the difficulties elsewhere. I propose that you advertise a list of retail agents once a month in the *Oracle*, and that persons willing to sell it be requested

to forward their names forthwith. I know that many persons have ceased to purchase it through the neglect of agents, because they could not complete their sets, and obtain the current numbers regularly. I speak from extensive experience in this matter. Mr. Roche, Hall of Science, Macclesfield, will become agent for that town."—The difficulty is to get agents; if friends to the cause would exert themselves to obtain the names of those willing to sell the work, they could appear in the *Oracle* every week. In the mean time, the plan recommended in the preceding notice would be advantageous.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c.

The proceeds of a Public Meeting in behalf of Civil and Religious Liberty, Lawrence-street, Birmingham £1 6 4½
Leicester, per Mr. Billson 1 1 0
Rochdale, per Mr. Jenkinson.. .. 0 10 0
Derby, per Mr. Roche.. .. 0 5 0
Manchester, per Mr. Watts 1 11 0
Mr. Evans, Sheffield 0 10 0
Birmingham, a few Friends, per Mr. Hulse 0 10 0

SHEFFIELD, PER G. JULIAN HARNEY,
To June 22, 1842.

An Old Friend to Freedom £0 7 6
A few Friends at Pocklington 0 10 0
G. J. Harney 0 2 6
Horatio Martin 0 1 0
Wm. Melliush, Wm. Wragg, J. H., Mr. Western, Congreve Poulton 0 2 6
Twenty-three Chartist Friends of Mr. Holyoake 0 2 8
Collected by Geo. Wilkinson, among the friends of Mr. Holyoake, assembling at the Hall of Science 1 5 6
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Collected at a Public Meeting of the Friends of Liberty, at John-street, Tottenham-court road, London £2 0 0
Mr. Saul 0 6 0
Mr. Birch.. .. 1 0 0
Mr. J. Watts.. .. 0 5 0
London. M. RYALL, *Gen. Sec.*

SECRETARIES' DIRECTIONS.

GENERAL SECRETARY.—M. Ryall, 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London.

PROVINCIAL SEC.—E. Nicholls, 26, Upper Windsor-street, Ashted, Birmingham.

HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL.

On Saturday, July 9, in conjunction with the *Oracle*, but so as to be separated and bound up by itself, will be published the First Number of G. J. HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL, at Gloucester, for BLASPHEMY. Specially Reported. Price 1d.

Printed by G. J. HOLYOAKE, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, and Published for him by all Liberal Booksellers. Agent for Bristol, J. Chappel, News Agent, Narrow Wine-street; Macclesfield, Mr. Roche, Hall of Science.

Saturday, July 2, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 29.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE TRIAL.

Gloucester, July 2.

THE trial that was to be is all of which I can speak. The judges of the sessions have postponed it until the assizes of August next. So all the expenses, which have been neither few nor small, incurred on this occasion, will have to be incurred again. By way of compensation, I suppose, £1 9s. were extracted or extorted, I scarcely know which is proper, under the head of court-fees for discharging former bail and registering new recognizances for my appearance at the assizes. My friends, Messrs. Stevenson and Barnes had to proceed from Worcester to become my sureties again. The amount now is only £100—half the former.

The work of god goes bravely on, you would say were you here. Poor Mr. ADAMS, though still suffering most painfully from ophthalmia, and Mrs. HARRIETT ADAMS, his wife, and infant child, were dragged over here too for trial. The cause of the lord must be woful indeed, if the miserable shifts had recourse to, and the injustice and barbarity their case evidences, are necessary for its support. Their trials also are postponed to the assizes. Although no one was bound over to prosecute Mrs. Adams, yet was she compelled to appear, and £1 17s. 6d. charged for discharging the bail for her and Mr. Adams and entering new sureties of the same amount as before, for their appearance at the assizes, and the clerk of the sessions threatened in open court to estreat their bail unless they immediately upon that notice appeared. He was told that they would rather take their trials than endanger the property of the friends who had become sureties for them; then time was allowed to fetch them, Mr. H. Fry and Mr. H. Beckett, from Cheltenham, who again became bail for their appearance. Mr. Adams, and Mrs. Adams, with her infant at her breast, will have another time to leave their home and family and present themselves for torture and punishment at the bar of this Christian inquisition. The affection of the eyes under which Mr. Adams has been for sometime suffering, was so much increased by the cold draughts to which he was subjected during his imprisonment in Cheltenham

as to threaten the total loss of his sight. On the first day of the sessions, I and a friend had to lead him to his lodgings, so painful was it to him to endeavour to see his way. Yet in this state had he to dance attendance for three days on these lowly and humane servants of the most high. Still more distressing was it to see Mrs. Adams, an interesting and intelligent woman and most affectionate mother, parading for hours the cold aisles of the court, with endeavours to quiet her little infant—until an order was sent permitting her absence. The man who could look upon or hear of a scene like this, and not execrate the name of religion, must be lost to all sense of dignity, humanity, manliness, and virtue! Is there a woman that can behold an amiable and virtuous mother thus dragged from her home and family—so brutally exposed and tortured by still prospective imprisonment with the most degraded of mankind,—and not tell how infernal is the spirit of piety, and how revoltingly inhuman the sacrifices offered up at the shrine of the lord?

The expences entailed upon Mr. Adams are such already as would quite ruin him were they not to be defrayed by the subscriptions made for the defence. Thus the energies of an industrious family would be prostrated for ever by this pious prosecution. How intensely sickening to talk of god being good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all, after this! Had it not been for the subscriptions sent in they must have both inevitably gone to gaol until the assizes, for the court was prepared to award that sentence, and, as it has been remarked, were even prepared to do it. Had this been done, Mrs. Adams’s family and the poor orphan whom they have kept, would have been consigned to the poor-house, unless funds had been found for their support; and not knowing whether this would be done the parents expected this fate for their poor children when they parted from them to go to Gloucester. Conjure up, if you can, the horrors of an English poor-house to a fond mother’s mind as the house of her children whom she has for years nurtured with the tenderest care; see the desolation cast over the domestic hearth—all lone and forsaken—and fancy, if you can, the anguish of mind for both mother and father,

and say, if Christian malignity ever gloated upon a more torturing spectacle! Collect all the misery that irreligion, according to the most rabid priest, ever produced, and I deny that, congregated together, it could equal in cold-blooded barbarity this one scene prepared for—and, if the preparers are to be believed, commanded by—a god of *mercy*—a *kind father*! A mother made childless and a widow; children, orphans; and father, mother, and children shut up in so many living tombs to suffer all the indignities a Christian can so well heap upon the helpless in his power, and all the cruelties a priest can inflict—how delectable the music of their groans for the ear of god! How sweet the harmony of their sighs for the portals of heaven!! What acceptable offerings their miseries must be at the throne of mercy!!! When will the time arrive for insulted reason and humanity to speak out;

When man shall proudly scorn to nurse
Religion—earth's most direful curse?

And it may be added, earth's most direful mockery too! Give us the gory wheels of Juggernaut to crush us at once out of consciousness and life; Moloch, with his swift and ready sacrifices, or catholicism, with her poisoned bowl, faggot, and rack! They are better than the mode in which the victims of Christ are now sacrificed; for it is done with us under the pretence of promoting virtue and morality, and the glory of god, at a time when people see not and dream not of the infernal demonism these pretensions always cover in the cause of religion. With catholicism we had open undying detestation; we had that glorious hate which hurled the firmest, subtlest, greatest, most impregnable church the world ever saw, or ever will see, into the dust, and the recollection of her cruelties will ever keep her there, and send every other religion of the same revolting practice to the same long account. Let these Christian men but go on as they have begun, and we shall soon have this scorn, contempt, and detestation of their principles and pretension; let but a small band of men be called out with the nerve of the brave old martyrs; let but a few glorious, courageous, unbending women, like Mrs. Adams (from the spirit in which she has borne her persecution she well merits this character), and the fierce, tyrannical, intolerant, and mind-crushing spirit of christianity will no longer bestride our country like a colossus, and we petty men creep under its bloated legs to find ourselves dishonourable graves! G. J. H.

NOW READY.

A Plain Answer to the Query, 'Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?' By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence. — This work should be universally read.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

"Who by searching can find out god; who can find out the almighty to perfection."—JOB.

THE above is, perhaps, the only sensible passage upon this subject in the holy book. Much, very much has been said and written on both sides the question, "Is there a god?" And in their speculations upon the visionary and useless, men seem in accordance with the subject to have forgotten all their philosophy; they seem to have thrown experience to the winds, and to have built castles in the air to their hearts' delight; men or gods of straw have been continually set up, and like punch's wife, they are no sooner up than down. Every possible inconsistency with every personation of folly and abomination has been called by the name, until it has become such a common-place thing with us to have, or to say we have, a god—that we know not how to speak without *him*, or *her*, or *it*.

The subject of deity is one which has grown into importance from the neglect of the first rule in philosophy; it has no importance in itself, and the speculations and prejudices, we can't call them beliefs, upon the matter, are the result of ignorance or of reason run wild.

The proper study of mankind is man; and if men had attended to the axiom, had fulfilled its dictates, if the recommendation, know thyself, had been adopted, we had never been pestered with the thousands of fancies representing no tangible idea and called by the name—god.

Suppose the existence of the purest of men's visions in a personal form, what is it? And what is it to us? These questions for their proper solution involve others which every person engaged in the study had better put to himself. What am I? What can I know? And let us be sure that it is knowledge we seek, remembering that the meaning of the term is "things known," not believed, supposed, or fancied.

What is all our experience? A series of excitements caused in the mind by passing events, and treasured up in the mind's storehouse, memory, to be recalled at pleasure. Can we comprehend aught beyond the capacity of our own mind? The question itself is absurd! We are men, with men's thoughts, men's minds, men's capacities; and if the believers in and preachers about a god would only bestow a few minutes in analysis of the idea, if they would only ask of what it is composed, they would find that in their highest aspirations and loftiest conceptions, in their noblest and purest ideas, they have just embodied their own conceptions of a

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man, christened him afresh, and called him god!

If we could by any possibility comprehend and appreciate anything above ourselves, we must necessarily become the very image and counterpart of the being appreciated; by this means men learn; objects cause excitements, pleasurable or painful; and we endeavour to renew the pleasure and avoid the pain in future: the ignorant listens to the intelligent man and acquires his ideas, his knowledge, and thereby becomes in this respect the personation of his teacher.

Here, then (supposing the existence of god as a fact), there is an impassable barrier to our knowledge, it is far, far beyond the circumference of our circle; and though we continually stretch forth into the darkness beyond, glean new facts and enlarge our capacity, yet we do not comprehend the infinite, and until we do that, or in other words, until we ourselves become gods, we cannot comprehend god.

It may be answered to this argument, that god could assist us to comprehend the subject of his existence; to this we answer, no, he could not! All that could be done by what is called divine inspiration would be to change the nature of the inspired, and to make him as useless to us as the supposed deity is; for, if a man's nature be changed he can no longer associate with or teach his fellow man, any more than we can teach arithmetic to a mouse, or logic to a bird. If man's nature be not changed by inspiration, then we, the mass of society, could only get a repetition of the tale told by an ancient one, that he had been into the seventh heaven, and had seen sights upon which mortal could not gaze and live, "that he had heard words which it was unlawful for man to utter; that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things in store." All this might be done, and there we should find, what the readers of our holy volume know already; that revelation means not a bringing to light, an opening up; but that it means darkness, ignorance, and folly.

We have said that it is of no consequence to us whether there exist a god or not, and we are not afraid to repeat the assertion. Our knowledge is made up of experience; we have to find out the things which make for our good, and to pursue them; we know that "virtue is its own reward," and we shall therefore, without any help from above, follow its dictates. Admitting the existence of a deity, if he incline to good, we cannot then suffer; and if the "old man in the clouds" love "darkness rather than light," and "evil rather than good," we have no dependence upon and nothing to hope from him.

IS CHRISTIANITY FAVORABLE TO LIBERTY OF SPEECH AND ACTION?

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

YES, the Christian will answer, we are told in sacred writ to prove all things and hold fast that which is good, but this good precept like the few others that appear in the Jew Book, is forgotten in theological strife. One thing is certain, and that is, that if people had proved the goodness of the Christian religion by their practice, Infidelity long ere this, would have been banished from the world. It is said, that we have no right, nor is it sound logic to cast the failings of Christians upon christianity; we answer, that the characters of Christians have been formed for them by their system; that their characters and principles, stand in the same relation to each other, as effect to cause, and that which condemns the one will condemn the other, by their fruits shall ye know them, is the test laid down by the *supposed founder* of the system, and by this do we judge, from the time of Constantine, falsely called the great (for he was great only in crimes), down to the present moment. Christians, when they have had the power, have done the utmost to destroy the right of free discussion; they pretend to believe that the gates of hell will not prevail against their system, and yet they are afraid of every wind that blows; if they had confidence in the truth of their doctrines they would not invoke the strong arm of the law to keep it in existence; the fact, that they do so, is a clear proof that they have no other effectual argument to use, and even this is effectual only for a time, it becomes effectual by silencing the objector by the dungeon's gloom, not by imparting conviction to his mind; a system that can be supported by no other means than these ought not to exist. Not one of the 40,000 priests in Britain who are pocketing £20,000,000 per annum; not one of this vast number with this immense revenue at command is bold enough to challenge a SOUTHWELL or a HOLYOAKE to public discussion, on a public platform, on the existence of a god and the truth of the bible; this, in my opinion, proves the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the paid advocates of christianity, and yet these men, in the face of wholesale prosecution and persecution have the effrontery to declare that christianity courts investigation—that the more it is criticised the brighter it will shine. There is one comfort for them, according to their own doctrine, for they can wash away these *falsehoods* in the blood of Christ, and sing

I, the chief of sinners am;
But Jesus died for me.

"Commit ten thousand crimes (says Richardson), all of the blaekest hue, all will be forgiven, for Christ has said, come to me;"

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verily, verily, there is no comforts like those of the gospel, for godliness is great gain and profitable for all things, especially for the priests.

It is the fashion of some Christians, when they are told of the wholesale intolerance of their "brethren in the world," to say, oh, I disapprove of that, christianity does not sanction that, and yet they will do nothing to prevent it; they forget that they who allow oppression share the crime, and in fact, they sanction the doctrine of persecution to the *fullest extent*, by advocating the doctrine, "he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." I deny the right of any power, *divine, infernal, or human*, to punish any one in this world, or "that which is to come," for his opinions; man cannot believe as he likes, he must believe according to the strongest conviction made upon his mind; *no power, therefore*, has any right to send a man to hell, any more than one man has a right to punish another for his convictions; in fact, the doctrine of damnation for belief is the foundation of all intolerance, and I therefore maintain that christianity is not a tolerant system, that it is not worth what it costs, that it has been proved a failure, if it ever was intended to do good, and that, in consequence, it ought to be destroyed, root and branch; its scraps of morality have been gathered from other sources; its theology nothing but reformed paganism; at best, in short, its place can be supplied very easily, by a much better system, in every respect. If Christians wish it to retain any portion of respect—if they wish it *not* to be considered the greatest curse that ever afflicted humanity, they must oppose firmly and unitedly, both prosecution and persecution, in principle and detail, otherwise, their wishes will not be gratified.

If we were to inquire of the Protestant, what he means by the principles of protestantism, he would say, the principles of unfettered thought and speech, and yet, the whole history of Protestant christianity, proves that Protestant Christians have done their utmost to fetter the one by supernatural fears, and the other by the strong arm of the law, such are the professed principles and *real* practice of the Protestant world. Professing to discard the authority of the church in religious matters, they have retained it in practice, and thus have they cheated the world into a belief that there has been a change for the better; the fact is, that Protestants have been as intolerant *as they could, and dared*. Catholics have been no more; previous to the revolution of 1688, the churchmen and dissenters were continually engaged in virulent contests with each other; as soon as these quarrels had, in part, subsided, they joined their forces for an Infidel crusade, and passed

the following disgraceful and atrocious law, entitled the "Act of Apostacy;" this law is on the statute book at the present hour, and may be enforced at any moment; hence, the necessity of demanding its immediate repeal, let us call on the bible-believers to help us—to test their sincerity.

By the 9th & 10th of William the Third, c. 32, it is enacted that "If any person educated in, or having made profession of, the Christian religion, shall, by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny the Christian religion to be true, or the holy scriptures to be of divine authority, he shall, upon the first offence, be rendered incapable to hold any office or place of trust; and for the second be incapable of bringing any action, being guardian, executor, legatee, or purchaser of lands, and suffer three years' imprisonment. Such disabilities may for once be avoided by a public recantation, within four months after."

There, Christians, what think you of that? Infidels, what think *you* of that law? Surely, the first will be ashamed of his own system; and the second redouble his exertions to destroy it. Oh, religion, what innumerable atrocities have been committed in thy name, what a curse hast thou been in all ages of the world. The Jew-Book sanctions these things; the *truth-telling, faithful* apostle, Peter, tells us, to "submit to every ordinance of man for the lord's sake," and of course this apostacy law among the number. Rare doctrine this! To be given by divine inspiration, Christianity favourable to liberty! Out upon such nonsense—it is scarce worth a refutation. Paul, another of the faithful, says, let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of god, the powers that be, are ordained of god; whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of god; and they that resist *shall receive to themselves* damnation, so that the penalty of seeking liberty of speech and action, in this world, is to be, damnation in the next, according to the Jew-Book. Hence, it is evident, that that which promotes the best interests of humanity in this world, is heresy, infidelity, blasphemy, atheism; and yet, we have men declaring in the present day, what Lord Bacon ignorantly declared in his, namely, "there never was found in any age of the world either philosopher, or sect, or law, or discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good as the Christian faith." Of the ignorance of Christians, of the contents of their own book, we shall have something more to say in a future article. What is a Christian, measured by the orthodox standard? He must express no doubt of the truth of the extraordinary statements contained in the sacred books, he must implicitly believe the doctrines drawn from those statements by holy-ghost

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inspired priest; not daring to exercise his reason, therefore, he must attend the "house of god," twice or thrice on the sabbath day, and also during the week, if possible; he must condemn in strong terms, in others, all attempts to enlighten the mind or to improve the health of the body by exercise and amusement, especially on the sabbath day; he must denounce as blasphemous every thing that has a tendency to thin the temple of the priest; however good it may be in itself, he must pay well to the religious funds, from motives of benevolence, and yet expect for his payments, in the world to come, interest, at the rate of some millions per cent; he must be very devout in appearance, and though professing to be very humble, he must, if a Calvinist, fancy himself one of the elect, and cannot fall from grace; if a Methodist, he must have the witness of the spirit "that he is a child of god," and consider, when speaking of the divine goodness, that all other sects but his own are more or less damnably in error. He must be sensibly alive to the interests of religion, and neglect the public affairs of this world, by being *content in his situation*; he must not suppose that science is superior to faith; he must abandon reason when it militates against doctrine; and denounce knowledge when it is opposed to his creed; last, but not least, he must be an avowed hater and denouncer of infidelity, and if he can throw in a little slander and persecution, now and then, so much the better; finally, he must be a physical, mental and moral slave, be a stumbling block in the path of human improvement and human happiness, and then it will be said to him at the great day—"well done, good and faithful servant, enter ye into the joy of your lord." Such are the effects of religion on the individual and general character of the people; it must be removed before the world can be effectually reformed. Cut it down! Why cumbereth it the ground?

Survey the varied globe, and mark the spot
Where superstitious fears and dreams are not.
In every clime, from pole to pole,
Some fancied vengeance terrifies the soul.

The universality of its domains does not prove its impregnability or utility; it must, it shall be destroyed. The utility of fearless examinations, no one can doubt, who has thought upon the subject. Already, inquiry has buried the tomb of oblivion an immense number of those offsprings of human insanity, the religions of the world. May all those that remain soon experience the same fate, and man learn that he is destined for, and capable of happiness in this state of existence, and that, whether he is happy or miserable does not depend upon the influence or decrees of any supernatural power; but upon his own conduct. Trusting that each and all of your readers

will exert themselves individually to bring about this state of things, I am yours, in the cause,
J. C. F.

[The following letter was received from Mr. CHAS. SOUTHWELL by a friend of his, and being of opinion that anything emanating from Mr. S. would be interesting to the readers of the *Oracle*, he has kindly forwarded it to the editor.]

Bristol Gaol, Friday, July 1, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am sorry Mr. MACKINTOSH has been affronted; *if possible* he should have been soothed—not shocked. His excuse for abandoning the contest was paltry; but I presume he thought any excuse was better than none. It is, however, to be regretted that our friends furnished him with the ghost of one. The net was well thrown, but not well lined, so the big bird, *the only* Social philosopher, contrived to break away from it.

I have been visited by one Mr. BAIRSTOW, a crack Chartist leader. The conversation was spirited and miscellaneous. My tongue is growing too large for my mouth from sheer want of exercise; but please god, as the folks say, I will reduce it by and by. I don't mean *shorten* it, but rather gain in length what I intend it should lose in thickness. But I have not quite done about Mr. Bairstow. He is a Theist, and has gallantly undertaken to prove in the sight of all who have intellectual eyes to see, that there is at least one god. We agreed to have a single combat, a fair stand up fight, when I am out of the state's keeping, and am allowed to pay for my own lodging. The war is to be a paper one. I have agreed to allow him equal space, in whatever paper I have to do with. If he can convince me that there is one or many gods, I shall be greatly obliged to him. He will have nothing to do or say for the god of revelation, but undertakes to show a bright and shining god of nature. He is a clever young man—talks to admiration, and, I am told, writes as cleverly as he talks. Success to him! If he combine the talents of Demosthenes and Cicero, so much the better for the cause of truth, whether that truth be material or spiritual, polytheistical, pantheistical, theistical, or atheistical. I really long for a discussion with some one who is competent for the task, and having appealed to reason, dares abide by it; such men are rare, almost as rare as flowers in December. Discussion is, as Tully well observed, the file which best polishes our intellectual weapons; but where are the men who profit by old opinions, however crazy, and are well pleased to wear the tottering, rich and respectable livery of cant; where are there, I say, such men, who dare discuss freely all questions, and hold fast only that which is good? Echo answers, where?

Give my love to H., the trial will not, I learn, come on till the assizes; well, so much the better. The 18th of August, I believe, the assizes commence, so that our friend will have more than seven clear weeks to prepare his paper pellets, and manufacture some thunder. He should pay Bristol a visit *on* his way, or *out* of his way to Gloucester, when, as the advertising people say, he will undoubtedly hear of something to his advantage. The petition from Cheltenham, condemnatory of the conduct of

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the authorities, was, it appears, entrusted to Mr. Roebuck. An admirable move—a better man than Roebuck could not have been selected. He occupies a proud position in the House of Commons, and his greatest praise is, that he is feared and hated by all the bigots, and all the scoundrels in St. Stephens.

If I mistake not, the miserable gang of Cheltenham bigots will find that in this instance they have been over cunning, and made a halter for their own richly deserving necks. Don't forget to agitate, agitate, agitate! The Home Secretary should be besieged with memorials and petitions. I have no room to say more, than that the Rev. F. Close is at the head of the merciful scoundrels—a man whose character is hit off in the following lines:—

One of the savage murderous brood,
To carnage and the ——— given;
Who thinks through unbelievers' blood
Lies the directest path to heaven!

In good health and spirits, faithfully yours,
CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

B. HAGEN *versus* J. C. F.

SIR.—Those sentences commencing with B. H., are extracts from Mr. Hagen's letter; those with J. C. F. my remarks upon them.

B. HAGEN: I do not approve of your reasonings in No. 17 of the *Oracle*; I deny that an unwise change has come over the Socialist policy during the last two years.—J.C.F.: Indeed! Then perhaps you are prepared to prove that more good has been done during the last two years than in the two years preceding; if so, I shall be happy to hear you, as I am not aware of the evidence on which your opinion is founded, except it be that we have more money at command; but this I consider a paltry consideration when compared with the emancipation of the human race from the evils of superstition.

B. H.: "If we place individuals under the influence of bad circumstances, will not their characters be bad," if under good ones the reverse?—J. C. F.: Certainly; but the existence of superstition prevents the removal of bad circumstances, and also prevents the establishment of good ones, hence the necessity for its destruction; is it not wise to clear away the rubbish from the foundation, before we attempt to erect the building?

B. H.: I admit there has been a change, but I also believe that change is the result of conviction.—J. C. F.: I do not doubt the sincerity of those who oppose theological discussion; but the purity of their motives is no proof of the general utility of the course they have adopted.

B. H.: But why not throw off the fear of man, and put your name to your articles?—J. C. F.: When you prove that the *name of a person adds weight to his argument*, I will do so; I have no fear of man.

B. H.: As far as I am able to judge the object of the writers in the *Oracle of Reason*, their principal object is to attack the prejudices of others; but the Socialists wish to show by practice what is good: this plan, I have not the shadow of a doubt, will gain more converts than the other.—J.C.F.: I deny that the writers in the *Oracle* have any object in view than that of doing good; it is very *unliberal* to suppose

the contrary, in the absence of proof; if you can read of the treatment of SOUTHWELL and HOLYOAKE without determining to exert yourself to destroy the creeds that cause such *atrocities*, then I can only say that your feelings differ widely from mine, nor would I exchange with you on any account. As to the merits of the two plans, read the first part of the first article in No. 20 of the *Oracle*; refute that reasoning, and I shall be convinced. In discussing theology, I always avoid the use of *harsh* expressions lest I should create feelings of combativeness where I intended to impart conviction. The foregoing is a *correct* statement of the differences between B.H. and J.C.F. I have done with the subject. Yours,
J. C. F.

Derby, July 2, 1842.

DEAR SIR,—I expected to have increased the subscription by inducing MR. BUCHANAN to speak a few words in behalf of the victims, at the close of the two lectures he delivered here last week. But no! socialism has not taught Mr. B. charity. No religionist could have spoken with a greater asperity of feeling than did Mr. B. He contended that the existence of deity was not a legitimate subject for discussion, that neither the negative or affirmative could be proved; so that, according to this advocate for free inquiry, upon all subjects, we are to allow all the evil consequences that result from the assumptions of the affirmative, without endeavouring to shew that such assumptions are not founded in reason; so much for free enquiry. H. R.

THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.
(Continued.)

Why do the majority of mankind maintain that mind is distinct from matter?

Because the majority of mankind believe what they are told to believe, and feel rather than reason; so that, errors which have once taken root are made fashionable, strengthened by age, and handed down through countless generations; in the words of Milton, "error supports custom, and custom supports error," which, from being a weak and sickly plant, presently, like some deadly upas, flourishes in rank luxuriance, standing unscathed amid the lightning of reason. The longing after immortality—the almost universal tenacity of life—has been triumphantly adduced as irrefragable evidence, "confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ," that the mind or soul of man is distinct from the body; whereas, our desires prove nothing but our desires, while the soul's dependence upon body is matter of fact; so closely, indeed, are they united, that if two, like man and wife, they are two in one. As to the argument so often rashly used, that whatever thinks necessarily has a soul, which soul is immaterial, indestructible, and therefore immortal, like a two-edged sword, it cuts in more ways than one; for if the act of thinking prove that we have an immortal soul, we

are irresistibly led to the startling conclusion that brutes, birds, and fishes, have immortal souls: for that they think, it seems hardly necessary to prove. Leibnitz bears witness to a hound in Saxony that could speak distinctly thirty words; the sagacity and mischievous propensities of monkeys are well known, while the faithfulness of dogs, who never betray their masters, nor fawn on those they love not, is most surprising, but little regarded, because they are seen so often; nay, even the wild horses on the plains of America to the south of the Rio de la Plata, are called insurgent, because in troops of 10,000 individuals, preceded by videttes and detached skirmishers, they advance in a close column which nothing can break. If a travelling carriage, or a body of cavalry is perceived approaching, the leader of the wild horses advances upon a reconnaissance, and then, according to the movements of the chief, the whole body passes at a gallop to the right or left of the caravan, inviting at the same time the domestic horses to desertion. The latter often join their late companions, and are never again observed voluntarily to return to the domestic state. To multiply instances of the reasoning power of animals would but fatigue our readers' attention unnecessarily, as the poor bird, fluttering its wings against the bars of its cage, or the domestic cat, which may be seen by our hearths, do by their acts prove that they are not merely lumps of earth, but organised thinking substances.

* * * This subject will be continued at greater length in future numbers.

REVIEWS.

“STRAUSS' LIFE OF JESUS.”

The *Life of Jesus* (now publishing in weekly numbers) is certainly the most extraordinary production that has issued from the press. The perseverance and research that must have been required to produce such a work is astonishing. The learned Doctor shows that the writers of the New Testament disagree and flatly and plainly contradict each other in the relation of every event of Jesus' life. His criticisms clearly prove the utter impossibility of these disagreements ever being reconciled. This celebrated work will undoubtedly introduce a new mode of thinking and reasoning upon all questions connected with christian theology; for it *must* become evident to *all* who study it that the evangelical writings can *not* be founded in truth. The following quotations are interesting:—

THE TRADE OF JESUS.

“The occupation of Jesus in his infancy and youth, appears to have been determined by the trade of his father, who is called a *carpenter* in Matthew xiii. 55. The Greek word employed, to denote this trade, is ordinarily taken to mean *faber lignarius*, or *carpenter*. But some parties, from motives of mystery, have endeavoured to make out that he was a *locksmith*, others a *goldsmith*, and some even a *mason*.

The wooden articles which he is said to have manufactured were of different kinds, according to different authors: Justin and the *gospel of Thomas* tell us they were *ploughs* and *yokes*; consequently they make him a *cartwright*. According to the *Arabian gospel of the Infancy*, he made *gates* and *milk-pails*, and *sieves*, and *boxes*, and was, therefore, a *joiner* or *box-maker*. On the contrary, the *Protevangelion of James* makes him work at *buildings*, and consequently considers him a *carpenter*. Now, according to Mark (vi. 3), Jesus appears to have worked himself at the occupation of his father; for when the Nazarenes ask who Jesus is, he makes them say, *is not this the carpenter?* and not, *is not this the carpenter's son?* like Matthew. It is true, that when Celsus speaks with railery of the Christian founder having been a *carpenter*, Origen replies, that Celsus must have forgotten that *in no gospels received by the church is Jesus called a carpenter*. The passage in Mark, cited above, has been, in fact, varied by some, and read *son of the carpenter*; and it was thus, probably, that Origen read it, unless it escaped him altogether. This reading has even been preferred by some modern critics; but Beza has well remarked upon the subject, *Fortasse mutavit aliquis existimans hanc artem Christi majestati parum convenire*; and no one has yet had interest enough to make the change to the contrary; and in fact, from this very indication, many fathers of the church, and the Apocryphas, have supposed that Jesus really did follow the trade of his father; and Justin even attaches some importance to his having fabricated *ploughs*, and *yokes*, and *scutes*, as being symbols of the activity and justice of his future life. According to the *gospel of the Infancy*, Jesus went with Joseph to the places where he went to work, and assisted him, that is to say, when Joseph made any thing too long or too short, Jesus, by extending his hand towards it, reduced it to its proper dimensions—a species of assistance very useful to Joseph, since, according to the quaint remark of the Apocrypha, he was *not very skilful at his carpenter's trade*: apparently they thought the profession too vulgar even for him.

“THE APOCRYPHAL NEW TESTAMENT.”

The Books of the *Apocryphal New Testament* (now in the course of publication in cheap weekly numbers) are as ancient and as *genuine* as those of the New Testament. But the unnatural and astonishing feats of Jesus described therein, were considered even too preposterous for the very ignorant (and consequently deluded and religious) fanatics of former times to swallow, and therefore a few wily bishops formed themselves into a council, at Nice, and undertook to separate these books from those of the New Testament. To determine which were and which were not the word of god a show of hands was taken upon each book, and many of those now called *genuine* were made so by a majority of one! and many of those called *apocryphal* were determined to be apocryphal by a casting vote!! But so equally divided were the opinions of these Nicean *judges* upon several of the books, that there was no majority either way, and, after much wrangling and strife, it was at last decided that those books upon which the show

of hands was equal, should all be placed under the table together, while they retired to pray that god would, during their absence, place the true gospels upon the top of it, and leave the false ones underneath—which was accordingly done, and which god accordingly did. Hence the *New Testament*, and hence the *Apocryphal Books*. The work is curious and entertaining, and of much more value than the “*genuine*” books. We give an extract from the first gospel of the infancy of Jesus, which also appears as a note in “*Strauss’ Life of Jesus* :”—

“And Joseph, wheresoever he went in the city took the lord Jesus with him, where he was sent for to work to make gates, or milk-pails, or sieves, or boxes; the lord Jesus was with him, wheresoever he went. And as often as Joseph had anything in his work to make longer or shorter, or wider or narrower, the lord Jesus would stretch his hand towards it, and presently it became as Joseph would have it. So that he had no need to finish anything at his own hands, for he was not very skilful at his carpenter’s trade. On a certain time the King of Jerusalem sent to him and said, I would have thee make me a throne of the same dimensions with that place in which I commonly sit. Joseph obeyed, and forthwith began to work, and continued two years in the king’s palace before he finished it. And when he came to fix it in its place he found it wanted two spans on each side of the appointed measure, which, when the king saw, he was very angry with Joseph. And Joseph, afraid of the king’s anger, went to bed without his supper, taking not any thing to eat. Then the lord Jesus asked him, what he was afraid of? Joseph replied, Because I have lost my labour in the work which I have been about these two years. Jesus said to him, fear not, neither be cast down; do thou lay hold on one side of the throne, and I will the other, and we will bring it to its just dimensions. And when Joseph had done as the lord Jesus said, and each of them had with strength drawn his side, the throne obeyed, and was brought to the proper dimensions of the place; which miracle, when they who stood by saw, they were astonished, and praised god. The throne was made of the same wood which was in being in Solomon’s time, namely, wood adorned with various shapes and figures.”

FREE DISCUSSION.—The most capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy, is the liberty of discussing every subject which can fall within the compass of the human mind; while this remains, freedom will flourish; but should it be lost or impaired, its principles will neither be well understood, nor long retained. To render the magistrate a judge of truth, and engage his authority in the suppressions of opinions, shows an inattention to the nature and design of political society. When a nation form a government, it is not wisdom but *power* they place in the hand of the magistrates; from whence it follows, his concern is only with those objects which *power* can operate upon. On this account, the administration of justice, the protection of property, and the defence of every

member of the community from violence and outrage, fall naturally within the province of the civil ruler, for these, may all be accomplished by *power*; but an attempt to distinguish truth from error, and to countenance one set of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner mischievous and absurd.—*Robert Hall*.

A PROPHECY FOR THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.—Inasmuch as the expected earthquake has been postponed, a prophecy of as grave import may have some interest. In the *Monthly Repository’s* review of “*Howitt’s History of Priestcraft*,” when the *Repository* was edited by Mr. J. Fox, these remarkable words occurred:—“On this age the happiness of centuries, the prosperity of truth depends; let it not disappoint the expectations, and mar the destinies of millions.” On the margin of a copy belonging to the late C. R. Pemberton, whose great trustfulness in the progression of humanity was only equalled by his intense reverence for it—against the words just quoted was written in his hand this emphatic sentence, ‘ON THIS POINT IT WILL.’ The great misfortune is, that this melancholy prediction is very likely to be fulfilled. One consolation however, remains, every lover of his species may do much, very much, to avert it. May it share the general fate of prophecies! In which wish Pemberton his self joins heartily, if the dead do join in any thing.

G. J. H.

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HOLYOAKE’S TRIAL.

On Saturday, August 27, in conjunction with the *Oracle*, but so as to be separated and bound up by itself, will be published the First Number of G. J. HOLYOAKE’S TRIAL, at Gloucester, for BLASPHEMY. Specially Reported. Price 1d.

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Saturday, July 9, 1842.

THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 30.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE DEBASING EFFECTS OF RELIGION.

“*Superstition, or what the world calls RELIGION, is
the greatest possible encouragement to vice.*”

WILLIAM PITT.

THE above frank and correct admission of the dangerous effects of godism, occurs in a Letter on Superstition, addressed to the multitudinous sects of Great Britain, ascribed to the first earl of Chatham. Never has the truth of the assertion been so fully borne out and demonstrated as in the recent Cheltenham persecutions. Magistrates may dogmatize from the bench, lawyers do the same in courts, and parsons rant in their pulpits, until they tear their sacred gabardine, about religion being of a moral tendency, that a holy christianity is interwoven in our laws and constitution, and that to the belief in a god we owe the preservation of social order; but when the barbarity, outrage, fierce malignity, illegality, dangerous doctrines and practices of which these persecutions are composed, are calmly weighed, the conclusion seems inevitable, that religion, christianity, and god-belief together are the greatest curses at present afflicting society!

In the days of the inquisition, a wretch of a bishop, named Gardiner, and a villain called Bonner, pounced on people and thrust them into dungeons; because they, the most depraved and morally hideous of all perhaps that ever catered for the glory of a god, happened to differ from them in opinion. Then men rose in rage, execrated the miscreants, and hurled their church and power into the dust! **CAN NOT THIS BE DONE AGAIN?** The same scenes have been levied before *our* eyes! Humanity demands to be vindicated once more—**AND FOR EVER**, from the savagery of religion!!

Christians! attend to the following narrative, and blush for your infamous practices!

Infidels! hearken to the treatment insolent Christians prepare for you, and say if you are willing to submit to it! Lover of liberty! talk no more of your principles, till the degradation you have suffered has been wiped away!

A sober, industrious, and intelligent family residing in King-street, Cheltenham, sell books, rather with the hope of benefiting society, than from care for profit. Some men in the *Chronicle* printing-office in the same town, sent, a few days ago,* a boy to get them two numbers of the *Oracle of Reason*. The boy failed at his first application, which was to Mr. H. Fry; he then proceeded to the family in King-street, and uses Mr. Fry’s name, without his knowledge or consent, and on this ground, & thus deceived, Mrs. ADAMS sends the two numbers, for which the lad *did not pay*, but took them away on the pretence that they were for Mr. Fry. These papers, thus *fraudulently*, and under *false pretences*, obtained, were then carried to that sapient champion of the lord, Mr. Bubb, and forthwith, in the name of a god, Mrs. ADAMS is seized, and late at night torn from her family and thrust into a dungeon, where her husband has been put just before; and there, were it not for public opinion, to be kept for the remainder of their lives. This is precisely the unvarnished case of the ADAMS’S.

Here, be it remarked, that it mattered not to the cause of god if the fellows who sent the boy from the *Chronicle* office were the most infamous scoundrels on earth—it is sworn by the lad, under their directions, that the paper bought was blasphemous, and forthwith the emissaries of religion are sent on their inhuman, infamous, and murderous errand, and domestic affection is blighted, children are made orphans, and parents prisoners! What a state of liberty, law, and justice is this, in which a few men, no matter of what charac-

* See No. 27.

ter, and a boy, a mere child, can drag parents from their homes, plunge them in gaol, and their children in a poor-house. Thus religion pours upon us its blessings! Thus promotes social order! Thus renders men virtuous and kind! Rightly did Pemberton exclaim of the religious—

Still they gather! Fierce they throng:
 Fraud their weapon! Blood their song!
 CHURCH their word! Oh then be strong!
 Compact as a rock.

A lad swears to words being blasphemous he very likely could not read, certainly not understand; a child, who could not tell the holy ghost from a pidgeon, swears that god is affronted. Poor god, if he has no better servants! no better advocates! Mark, also, the lad appears first to have been tutored in his lessons of craft and deception—the young rascal had been taught the maxim of Paul, “Being crafty, I caught you with guile.” But for his deception, false pretences, and fraud he would never have obtained the books at all from Mrs. A. unless he had fetched his employers. Two things arise here for consideration. First, the employment of deception and falsehood, are pretty moral instruments to bolster up a case of blasphemy with. Who will say, after this, that christianity and persecuting godites will not stoop to anything to effect their hateful purposes? Secondly, a fine boy this! a credible witness for god! kissing the bible and taking oaths with his lips warm with lying, and his heart full of deceit! This was publicly understood in court, as Mr. Fry stated before the magistrates his intention to indict him for forging his name, and thus, by false pretence, effecting his dishonest purpose. It appears the lad’s employers sent the money some hours after, and had Mrs. ADAMS been a Christian she would have refused it, and prosecuted the juvenile scoundrel for obtaining property from her *fraudulently*.

Good Christians! Look on this case, and talk again how religion and the service of god conserves morality, truth, and virtue. Tell us what moral or infernal curse could have committed more vices in the same time than the cause has done which you patronise?

Mr. ADAMS’S case was worse supported legally than this, as a witness swore he did not sell the number he was indicted for. And the principal witness against him admitted he gave the *Oracle* he produced to the other witness. The same law that punishes ADAMS would, if impartially administered, punish him too.

Shall we call ourselves men, and sit down quietly, while christianity vests a power in the hands of every abandoned wretch of destroying honest men and ruining a virtuous family? The same spirit and holy cause which thrust ADAMS and his family into gaol

would whip them to death or strangle them in their cells, as Dr. Pincher regretted he could not do to me,* where it not that indignant humanity has learned mercy and justice at a better source than the bible and a holier throne than heaven!

The best answer to the supposed immoralities of atheism, is an exhibition of the real immoralities of religion. When men, *acting on the affirmative that there is a god*, perpetrate these enormities in his name, and are transformed into demons by their belief, and spread misery and hypocrisy in their path every hour, while the religion arising out of their unfortunate belief is, in the emphatic words of Pitt, the “greatest possible encouragement to vice,” shall we be told that *atheism is speculative, and without a practical bearing*; since it alone can bring men back to reason and realities, to nature ever truthful and kind, to humanity and virtue? Because the Theist cannot *prove* his affirmation, that there is a god, nor the Atheist cannot *prove* a negative to it, it must not be supposed, as by too many it erroneously is, that no good can result from the discussion. Let us but convince men that there is *good reason* to disbelieve that there is a god, and the whole cabinet of creeds and all the injustice and cruelty they create would be at once swept away, and men, in the dignity of nature, would rise to the loftiest virtue. Were it true that the Theist or godist contented himself with *disputing* merely about his affirmative, then it might be of little practical use to disturb his dreamings; but while all our laws, customs, and institutions, while the very foundations of morality are made to rest upon the assumption that there *is* a god, while all men every day, to the danger of our liberties, lives, and best principles, **ACT ON THE AFFIRMATIVE**—the question of atheism is a grave and serious one.

Religious liberty in its present state is a brand on christianity, and a reproach to freedom, it reflects infamy on believers, and disgrace on Infidels: the one is infamous for his tyranny, and the other disgraceful for his tame submission. Let us resolve no longer to be debased by the insolence of religious pride nor rendered contemptible by submission to it.

G. J. H.

SUNDAY.—One should suppose the great Jehovah, every Sunday morning when he awoke, and recollected the day, would call to Gabriel to keep the doors and shutters close, that he might not be bored with the horrible din of the Christians, about the carpenter’s son and the ghost; or say, as Quin used to his man, in very gloomy mornings, “Call me to-morrow, John.”—*Yahoo*.

* See page 214.

IS THERE A GOD?

XVII.

“Atheism is a point of metaphysical abstractions. The metaphysician asks, “Who created matter?” The answer is, “The first cause.” The rejoinder says, “Did he make matter out of nothing? If so, the nature of the human mind receives this as an absurdity. If he made it out of something, this is not creation but reformation, and then, who made the something; and the inquiry goes on *ad infinitum*, until the mind is lost in what, by its nature, it cannot comprehend, and the case rests between a choice of an absurdity or an incomprehensibility.” This is one part of the metaphysical subject. Now let me come to the other. The metaphysical philosopher asks, “Who created this first cause?” The reply is, “It is self-created.” Then comes the argument, He must have made himself either out of nothing or something—if out of nothing, we have nothing creating itself into something, and that something endowed with omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. It is not, therefore, a first, but only a second cause, nothing being its parent, and the whole philosophy rests upon nothing being the first cause or creator of everything. If what we call the first cause did not create itself out of nothing, it must have created itself out of something, having a previous something, and again the human mind is in the dilemma of adopting an absurdity or an incomprehensibility.”—PUBLICOLA.

THE above is rather long for a motto, but it must pass as an illustrative extract. It is from the pen of the most subtle and philosophical of our political writers, and very well expresses the current and philosophical objection to the discussion of atheism among the reasoning and liberal portions of society. They regard it as a question equally balanced—a pendulum of mystery, ever vibrating between the poles of unintelligibility—and think, the questions of deism and its negative the Scylla and Charybdis of the metaphysical ocean.

However, as is the case more or less in all controversy, these opinions are not shared by every body. When we are told god created the world from nothing, the human mind instantly rejects it as a palpable absurdity, as an act not only contrary to experience but absolutely inconceivable. The creation of matter from nothing is admitted as an absurd idea, but it belongs to, and is held by, the Deist not the Atheist. The Atheist accounts for the existence of matter without having recourse to an “incomprehensibility.” The existence of the universe is plain enough, it is an axiom requiring no proof. It is perfectly comprehensible. But whence came it, cries the restless and uneasy theologian, who, when it suits his purpose will pry into hidden things with as much ardour as the Infidel? The Atheist answers, we suppose matter to be eternal

since it is as easy to conceive matter to have always been as to have never been. The difficulty is not greater of comprehending that there must always have been something than that there once was nothing. Hence we conclude, since matter plainly *is*, that it always *was*. If we really had to choose between the absurd and the unfathomable it would be rational to choose the latter, as ignorance is better than folly. But it is not so. The Theist, upon the question of creation, has the absurdity. The Atheist deals only in plain, clear, comprehensibilities—and plain and clear the existence of the universe is.

With regard to a creator—came he from something or nothing? If it were as plain to our eyes, as is matter, we should have some ground to conclude it self-existent. But this not being the case, the Atheist knows nothing of it, and does not busy himself with the “dilemma” at all. The absurdity of the supposition made by the Deist he at once rejects, and leaves “incomprehensibility” to be studied by the theoretically mad. The Deist, by *supposing* a god, does nothing more than defy his own reason, and multiply difficulties no mind can remove. The Atheist is more of a utilitarian, and takes care not to squander his invention in such a worthless manner.

Supposing atheism and deism to be really questions equally supported by facts or probabilities, which Origen Bachelier in his discussion with Dale Owen ably and acutely proves can not be the case—still this would be no excuse for the snipeness and apathy displayed upon this subject by professedly liberal and philosophical thinkers.

He who really believes deism to be but a speculative question, should take care *that his fellow men so regard it*, and not allow them to rest the question of morals, human rights, and liberty on a *speculative* basis. And what is much worse, to assume their question *proved* and every day ACT upon it, to the expenditure of millions, the sacrifice of all honesty and virtue, the negation of philosophy, and frustration of the benevolent schemes of philanthropy.

G. J. H.

The following whimsical, and of course blasphemous, placard was printed and published by Richard Carlisle, in 1828. Daring man, had he no fears for his immortal soul?—**HANGING OF THE HOLY GHOST.**—Every clergyman of the established church, is at his ordination, declared to have received the holy ghost. The Rev. Peter Fenn, who, for forgery, is ordered for execution, on Monday next, is an ordained clergyman of the established church. The clerical or law-established inference is, that the *holy ghost is to be hanged on Monday next.*

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XVIII.

“The reader will find that, proceeding through a series of forms, from the sponges to the highest of the polypifera, namely, the sea anemonies or actiniae, an increase in the development of organic structure characterises the successive links of the chain.”—*Visitor*.

UPON a reconsideration of the plan I originally laid down for the development of this theory, and a review of the arguments and illustrations I have already adduced, I am of opinion that to trace the successive links of organisation throughout the entire animal kingdom, from the sponges upwards to man, would tire my readers. I have, therefore, determined upon giving the distinguishing points only of the different divisions, considering sufficient has already been said to satisfy an ordinary mind that it is not upon mere conjecture the gradation theorists have based their opinion. There is an old saw, that one fact is as good as a thousand, and in all that relates to physics, it may be relied on. I have given many facts in support of my views, and combated what objections I have fallen in with, which I considered worthy of notice; in fact, those objections which are urged by the more intelligent of the creationists, both Jewish and otherwise. The remaining papers will therefore be intended to serve the double purpose of strengthening the convert in his newly acquired views, if there be any such; and also be of use to those who have not the time or means to procure illustrations for themselves.

I shall commence then with the *invertebrata*, or those animals having no vertebral column. Three of the four great divisions of Cuvier, belong to this head. The *radiata* or *zoophyta*, or those animals that branch out in rays from a centre, like the madrepora, is the lowest division, and the *avrita* (from a, negative, crino, to perceive), or animals in whom no distinct nerves can be perceived, the lowest in the animal scale. As in No. 23, p. 191, I gave an outline of Cuvier's arrangement of the animal kingdom, which contained the most important differences of the four divisions, I shall not repeat them, but add what other particulars I may deem necessary. The skeletons of this division are met with internal or external, soft, horny or calcareous; branched, globular, or filiform; free or fixed. The sponges and zoophytes belong to the *avrita*, and though no nervous fibres have been detected, it is very probable that nervous matter in some subtle form may be blended with the gelatine, or pulpy substance of which they are composed; true blood-vessels do not exist; their power of locomotion differs materially, some live and die upon one spot; none have true limbs, but many have tentacles or feelers for securing their prey; there is no distinction

of sexes, and reproduction takes place by simple division or by buds, termed gemmules, which spout and become detached from the parent.

The sponges (*porifera*) have been considered by many naturalists as vegetables, at this we cannot be surprised when we look at them as we find them sold in commerce; when in the sea it is covered with a gelatinous film, both inside and out, very like the white of an egg; it drains away when removed from the water; chemically tested the sponge is purely animal, azote or nitrogen forming a large portion of its composition. “Sponges exhibit a great variety of forms, and often the most fantastic shapes. Fixed plant-like to the rock, they festoon the deep sea caves; they line the walls of submarine grottoes, and hang as grotesque ornaments from the roof; some like inverted goblets, aptly termed Neptune's drinking cups; some like fans, some like globes, and others like intertwined branches of uncouth growth.” Though every species of sponge has its characteristic figure, still no two individuals of the same species agree in external form, or in the number and precise directions of their large canals. Among the higher animals, as we know every species resembles the rest of its species, in the form of the limbs and teeth, in the length and figure of the ears, tail, muzzle, etc., and also in the arrangement and colouring of the hairs, spines, scales, or feathers. But this definiteness of figure, involving a constancy in the number and arrangement of composing parts, diminishes in degree as we verge towards the lower groups, and when we arrive at the lowest, we see diversity in the midst of sameness, being in this particular very much like trees, for no two oak trees have the same number of branches, form of trunk, etc.

The *zoophytes* or *phytozoa* (Ehrenberg; phyton, a plant, zoon, an animal), called by Grant, polypifera, or polype-bearers, follow the sponges. The demonstration of their animal nature is due to John Ellis, F.R.S., 1754, who, however, had many opposers, who contended they were vegetables. Highest among the polypifera, in the scale of organisation, are the fleshy polypes, namely the actiniae, or sea anemonies. The actinia consists of a soft, fleshy, cylindrical body, the base of which, acting as a sucker, enables the animal to adhere to rocks, stones, and pebbles. The opposite extremity presents a striated disc with a central oral orifice, and is surrounded by a tentacula, either in a single row, and adorned by enlargements, covered with minute suckers, as in actinia alcyonoidea, from the South Pacific, or by two or more rows of simple tubular tentacula, as in a. senilis and equina of our own shores. These tentacula are capable of being expanded.

contracted, and moved in every direction, When fully expanded, while the creature waits for its victim, they present a most beautiful flower-like appearance, increased by the fine colours which they usually exhibit. In the actiniaz, for the first time in this class, we recognise distinct muscular fibres, giving to the body the power of contraction and expansion, and even locomotion. It is not only on being touched that these creatures contract; so extreme is their sensibility, that a dark cloud passing over the sky, is sufficient to make them draw in all their tentacles; and the actinia senilis will, at once, bury itself in the sand on the approach of an intruder.

W. C.

THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

III.

Why have some philosophers assumed that matter is capable of thought?

Because they hold it as an incontrovertible axiom, that nothing can come of nothing, and contend that we have an idea of matter, but none of spirit or soul, distinct from matter. They conceive that the atoms of which bodies are composed, have, when combined in different proportions, different degrees of energy; and that, as fermentation is produced by the mixture of an acid and an alkali, so thought, or intellectual energy is composed by the atoms which compose the human structure; and, in reply to those who contend that it is incredible that matter should think, they urge that it may be incredible, *but it is a fact*, and insist that no mere assumption can be allowed in an argument of this nature, still less an assumption which involves the whole question in dispute—yet, it is true, that upon this frail twig hangs all theological reputation, and those innumerable and complicated theories of a future life, to which theologians have given birth; by this thread is the weapon of the free inquirer suspended, like the sword of Damocles, over the heads of all traders in human credulity. We cannot conceive why an acid and an alkali should produce fermentation, and yet fermentation is produced; we cannot conceive how life should be a property of organisation, and yet organised matter always lives; we cannot conceive how plants grow, or the moon moves through her orbit, travelling at the amazing rate of 2000 miles an hour; we cannot conceive why matter should gravitate, attract separate, mix, preserve, putrify, regenerate; but, in reality, all that we can do in any case, is to observe matter, and the change or phenomena it exhibits. The distinction between man and nature used in the first instance, perhaps, to help the understanding,

has only served to clog and choke it, leading to the growth of absurd and crude notions about soul or spirit, which, to the great scandal of right reason, have been crammed down the throats of the people. If theologians would leave railing and deal with facts, with a view to ascertain why the mind of man is superior to that of the most intelligent brute, the reason is to be found in the following observations by Lord Bacon, "That of all things in the universe, man is the most compounded and re-compounded body, so that the ancients, not improperly styled him a microcosm, or little world within himself. For, although the chemists have absurdly and too literally wrested and perverted the elegance of the term microcosm, whilst they pretend to find all kinds of mineral and vegetable matters, or something corresponding to them in man; yet, it remains firm and unshaken, that the human body is of all substances the most mixed and organic; *whereas, it has surprising powers and faculties.* For the powers of simple bodies are but few, though certain and quick, as being broken or weakened, and not counterbalanced by mixture; but excellence and quantity of energy reside in mixture and composition."

Why has life been called a property of organisation?

Because all elements and all atoms, or particles of matter, whether organic or inorganic are the same in essence; the only difference consists in the arrangement of them; dead matter is called inorganic, that is, not so arranged as to display the phenomena called living, so that the terms inorganic and dead mean exactly the same thing; whereas, when we speak of an organised substance, we speak of a living substance. The difference between the life of a man and that of a beetle or caterpillar, is one of degree, not of essence, and is a necessary consequence of the different arrangement of the atoms which compose them. Arrangement, generally termed structure or organisation, is life, derangement or decomposition is death; so that the phenomena called life, is a consequence of the organs, their powers, and their susceptibilities. "Life," says a modern author, "as far as we affix any *scientific* meaning to the word, is a peculiar mode of being, in which a certain series of phenomena are observed to take place; these phenomena are never found associated with any other conditions but that one to the designation of which the term life is appropriated; hence, we use this word merely as the short expression by which this peculiar state of being, or the associated phenomena which constitute it are denoted." What life is, independently of this series of phenomena, we are wholly ignorant, as we are of everything but appearances in relation to every object in

nature." We say that matter is the permanent subject of certain qualities, such as extension, divisibility, attraction, repulsion, and so on. We say that mind is the permanent subject of certain faculties, such as perception, memory, association, reason. In like manner, we imagine that there is a permanent subject, which we name the vital principle, upon which we conceive the phenomena of living beings to depend. But these permanent subjects, these substrata, in which qualities are supposed to inhere, must be considered, so far as our real knowledge is concerned, fictions of the imagination. All that we really know are the ascertained phenomena, beyond these everything must of course be conjecture; and the most eminent men have fallen, and at this very time, are constantly falling into gross errors, by not keeping the distinction here suggested steadily in view. The opinion held by almost all the ancient philosophers, and some few of the moderns, that the mind of man is nothing of itself, like putrefaction, excitability, contraction, gravitation, separation, attraction, &c., merely certain conditions of matter, has been deemed harsh and incredible; as it is contended that the nature of man, including body and soul, or mind, could not spring out of senseless or unreasoning atoms, seemingly forgetful, or perhaps not having known, that dead substances are composed of precisely the same particles as living ones, which only differ in their arrangement; so that dead, or inorganic matter, arranged and modified in a certain manner, becomes living or organic; how this is accomplished none are wise enough to answer, but that *it is done* all must know who place any reliance upon the evidence of their senses. The opinion that the vital principle, or mind of man, is a self-existent immaterial agent, is a mere opinion, and has nothing whatever to do with science. Others, assert that the soul, or mind, is a very subtle fluid, which enters into, and makes use of the body as a shell or covering; so that man thus considered is a twofold being, material and immaterial, body and soul, something and nothing, which body and soul are not to be considered as necessarily connected, but merely for the time being. Others contend, that the soul is but a manifestation of the principle of heat, generated by the motions of the atoms which compose us. It is observed by Dr. Arnott, that the temporary absence of heat may be called the sleep of nature, the more permanent torpor about the poles appears like its death; in like manner it has been presumed, that the temporary suspension of motion, and its consequent heat among the particles of organised beings, is sleep, whilst the absence of heat, in consequence of its entire suspension, is death.

HISSING AN ATHEIST!

(From the *Monthly Repository*, for 1834.)

THE *Times* of November 29, contains the report of the trial of Henry Berthold for stealing a boa, the property of Messrs. Leaf and Co., the firm which figured some time back as defendants in a dispute with the custom-house, touching sundry alleged irregularities relative to the revenue. Few public matters have occurred of late more calculated to excite disgust in a well regulated and reflecting mind than the conduct of almost all the parties connected with this trial, either as actors or spectators, if the *Times* report be correct.

Henry Berthold, a native of Saxony, and writer to some of the penny political periodicals, was charged with shop-lifting, by concealing a boa in his hat, for which he was put upon his trial, and he hired Chas. Phillips, barrister of alliterative notoriety, to prove him, if possible, not guilty. The prisoner also read a defence, stating that "he had published several works of a highly moral tendency, and in testimony to the character of his writings solicited the attention of the court to the letters he had in his possession from his present majesty, when Duke of Clarence, from the Duchess of Kent, the Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Wellington, Earl of Stanhope, and other distinguished personages." He then by way of proof of his innocence placed the boa in question in his hat, so that it would not go on his head. Upon which, a witness for the prosecution, by the direction of the recorder, twisted the boa into a form which made it easy to conceal in the hat when on the prisoner's head.

A witness named JULIAN HIBBERT then presented himself, under a subpoena, to speak to the prisoner's character, but on being put on his oath, stated that he did not believe in the contents of the book presented to him, whether it might be the Old or New Testament. Mr. Charles Phillips then elicited from him that he was an Atheist, whereat he professed to be deeply shocked, and refused to examine him. The witness calmly replied "very well," and descended from the box amid loud hisses. Mr. Phillips, however, to make the thing still more explicit, again called him back for an explanation of the word Atheist, and then concluded, "I will not disgrace myself by asking you another question." The witness then retired amidst the strongest manifestations of disgust and execration from all present.

A second witness, WILLIAM M'PHERSON, was then called, whose conduct gave sufficient evidence that he was disgustingly coarse-minded, as well as absurd. He also stated that he was an Atheist, and the remainder of the trial was as follows, according to the *Times*:—

Mr. Phillips (with great energy): Begone, sir; I will not, after the disgusting exhibition made to-night, degrade myself by asking you another question; nor will I disguise the answer you made to me in an under tone, when I asked you if you had been sworn, that "you had gone through the ceremony." I will not insult this Christian jury and assembly by putting another question to you; begone, sir! It was some minutes before silence was procured, so general were the expressions of execration at the declaration and the demeanour of the

witness, who left the court amidst hisses and loud cries of "Turn him out," in which several of the jury joined.

Mr. Alderman Brown then said, addressing Mr. Phillips, "The public, Mr. Phillips, owe you much for the course you have pursued."

No other witness answering when called, the recorder proceeded to sum up the evidence to the jury. He was satisfied they would not suffer the prisoner to sustain any prejudice in their minds from the exhibition that had just now been made in court. It would have perhaps been well if the court had used its authority to repress the disturbance which that exhibition had occasioned, but he could not help saying, however irregular the conduct which flowed from right principles might be, it was most pleasing to witness with what disgust and execration the declarations of a party (whether real or affected) that he was not dependant upon a supreme being, were received in a British assembly.

The jury, after a short consultation, found the prisoner guilty, but recommended him to mercy, believing this to be a first offence. The recorder told the prisoner if he had respectable witnesses who could depose to his character and mode of life, he would hear their evidence before he passed sentence. The prisoner said he had such friends, and that he had no notion that the witnesses he had called would have been guilty of such conduct.

In commenting upon this I shall render justice, so far as my reason will enable me, to all parties.

Henry Berthold was clearly guilty of the crime of stealing the boa, and the recommendation to mercy was most ill judged. Infinitely greater was his crime than a similar offence committed by a private individual. He had set himself up as a teacher of the people, and an advocate of their political rights, therefore it behoved him to be of irreproachable life and morals, even if his intellect were infirm, and if he erred through want of intellect; still more certain should be his punishment, in order to prevent other half-informed men from lightly arrogating to themselves the office of moral and political teachers as a mode of getting their daily bread. The principle of the bloated churchman, "do ye even as I say, and not as I do," should not be allowed to gain ground amongst those who profess themselves patriots. Children who play wantonly with fire are punished on account of the risk that mischief may occur, and he who sets up for a public teacher should, when he errs, be more severely punished than an obscure man, for his sphere of evil is greater. I have not read any of the writings of Henry Berthold, but he is evidently a man of very inferior intellect. He was the author of the political handkerchief, a puerile attempt to outmanœuvre the stamp-office, by printing political articles on calico, or rather on crossed cotton thread saturated with damaged American flower or plaster of Paris. The thing was unreadable after a single "man handling," becoming a dirty mass of printer's ink and white powder. He could not even have looked at the act of parliament, or he would have seen that the stamp-duties were protected by the words "paper, or any other material." A man thus shallow could be but a blind guide to others. In stealing the boa—supposing him not to be possessed of the idiosyncrasy peculiar to some

persons, of appropriating every thing they lay hands upon—he must have been actuated by one of two causes—actual want, or utter profligacy. If the latter, he was a worthless being; if the former, it is an evidence of the absence of intellect, or beggarly pride. A writer in want would scarcely be refused employment as a labourer in a printing house, and a man of moral feelings would at once have said, it is better to labour for a bare subsistence than to break down the barrier of integrity. Nothing but the pangs of hunger can warrant any man in taking the property of his neighbour without his leave, and even then the violence only becomes excusable on the plea that hunger is like madness, preventing a man from being master of his own actions. Had there been a fragment of high mind in Henry Berthold when put upon his trial, he would at once have crossed his arms and said "I am guilty; and the cause of my guilt was want (or profligacy) for which I am content to bear the punishment the law awards." But not so; he meanly shuffled and prevaricated, and endeavoured to controvert direct and positive testimony by a trick so absurd and glaring that a child would have been ashamed to attempt it, as an imputation on his intellect. Still more contemptible than this was his citing such persons as the Dukes of Clarence, and Gloucester, and Wellington, in proof of his good character. A portion of his business as a public teacher had been to bring into contempt the factitious respect attaching to such men on account of their rank, and upon the principle of the cringing meanness ever inhabiting the soul of a sycophant; only upon that principle can his conduct be accounted for. A man of high mind, even after the commission of a crime, would at once have disdained such disproof of his own unworthiness. Yet, "the recorder told the prisoner that if he had respectable witnesses who could depose to his character and mode of life, he would hear their evidence before he passed sentence." That sentence, when translated, means, if you will abjure all your former radical doings, and can by proper sycophancy to sundry dukes and duchesses, persuade them to give you letters of recommendation, I will let you off. How perfectly this tallies with the statement of the "schoolmaster in Newgate," that great men can influence the punishment of a prisoner, from hanging and transportation down to respite and reprieve. It is another proof of the mischief of suffering a "pardon power" to lie in irresponsible hands, thus making it a tool for political tampering. Punishments should not be defined by law, save under the direction of unprejudiced philosophers, and when thus defined, they should be imperative—not left to the regulation of the passions of a judge. Thus far Henry Berthold, criminal!

(To be continued.)

Some time ago, a party of ranters returning from a prayer-meeting, made up with an old woman with a lantern in her hand, who had been out charing; they, thinking she had been on the same errand as themselves, asked her, "Had she been seeking the lord?" Eh, bless me! (cried she), I did not know he was lost!

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR MAN.

KHEMNITZER.

So goes the world; if wealthy you may call
This friend, *that* brother;—friends and brothers all;
 Though you are worthless—witless—never mind it;
 You may have been a stable boy—what then?
 'Tis wealth, good sir, makes *honourable men*.
 You seek respect, no doubt, and *you* will find it.

But if you are poor, heaven help you! though your
 sire

Had royal blood within him, and though you
 Possess the intellect of angels too,
 'Tis all in vain; the world will ne'er inquire
 On such a score; why should it take the pains?
 'Tis easier to weigh purses, sure, than brains.

I once saw a poor fellow, keen and clever,
 Witty and wise: he paid a man a visit,
 And no one noticed him, and no one ever
 Gave him a welcome. "Strange," cried I, "whence
 is it?"

He walked on this side, then on that,
 He tried to introduce a social chat;
 Now here, now there, in vain he tried;
 Some formally and freezingly replied,
 And some

Said by their silence—"Better stay at home."

A rich man burst the door,
 As Cræsus rich, I'm sure.

He could not pride himself upon his wit;
 And as for wisdom, he had none of it;
 He had what's better; he had wealth.

What a confusion!—all stand up erect—
 These crowd around to ask him of his health;

These bow in *honest* duty and respect;
 And these arrange a sofa or a chair,
 And these conduct him there.

"Allow me, sir, the honour;"—Then a bow
 Down to the earth—Is't possible to show
 Meet gratitude for such kind condescension?

The poor man hung his head,
 And to himself he said,

"This is indeed beyond my comprehension;"

Then looking round,
 One friendly face he found,


And said—"Pray tell me, why is wealth prefer'd
 To wisdom?"—"That's a silly question, friend!"
 Replied the other—"have you never heard,

A man may lend his store
 Of gold or silver ore,

But wisdom none can borrow, none can lend."

CHRISTIAN RIBALDRY.—The *Cheltenham Examiner* filled its pages with godly cant about my remarks upon religion, and praised the employment of policemen, to prove the existence of god, because, if the idea should not be conserved all religious things would forthwith fall into contempt. In order to show the *great importance* which is really attached to religion, by this worthy, the following extract is given from the same paper of June 15th:—"Too FAST.—The Rev. Mr. Kirk is preaching from six to fourteen sermons per week, in Boston. If he goes ahead

at this rate he will burst his boiler to a certainty. Take it moderately, and you will do more good." Just conceive some earnest and faithful preacher of the gospel whose ardour induces him to be instant in season and out of season, as Paul recommends, and diligently warning men to flee from the wrath to come, then fancy the pious editor of the *Examiner*, accosting him with all the rude and coarse vulgarity of a drunken sailor. If you go ahead at this rate, you'll burst your boiler! to a certainty! Take it moderately and you will do more good! Yet, this man affects extreme horror at my proposing to reduce the church revenue one half, and is of opinion, that the magistrates do very rightly in committing me to gaol for my irreverence. There is something peculiarly *reverential* in the idea of a fellow going ahead at the throne of grace, like a navigator up a tunnel, and supposing the preacher to be a church parson, duly consecrated by the laying on of the bishop's hands, the bursting of his boiler, would be a regular explosion of the holy ghost. Bravo, Mr. Editor of the *Examiner*. G. J. H.

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Saturday, July 16, 1842.

THE
ORACLE OF REASON;
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 31.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

RELIGIOUS POLICY.

“Never can true reconcilment grow,
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so
deep.”—MILTON.

By some species of metaphysical analysis, oftener talked of than practised, some men are enabled to separate evil from the evil-doer, and to cordially hate the one while the welfare of the other is regarded. So would I do with regard to christianity and Christians. I wish them no harm, nor would willingly do them any; but their principles and practices I do most heartily execrate, and from them, in every form or colour, shape and shade, cry “good lord deliver me!”

Joseph Sturge has placed it upon record, that in his opinion the cruelties practised in our gaols tend only to harden the heart, lead to despair, and infidelity. I can honestly testify that upon my taste only of Christian mercy in one of those schools of god’s evidences, my infidelity and atheism was a balm—an adonyne to my spirits. To any one who has fallen into the hands of god’s servants, the grave is less appalling a thousand times than is the horrid book you are asked to believe in, the horrid principles drawn from it, and the still more horrid, revolting, and inhuman propounders of them. The man who has had the misfortune to fall into the fangs of the disciples of Jesus on a charge of blasphemy, will ever afterwards shudder at the sight of a bible—shun it as he would a poisonous viper, or a loathsome reptile. It comes, saying “Search me, for in me you have eternal life!” You listen to its guleful and deceitful allurements, and directly you find certain torture and prospective death. To him no sight is more detestable and revolting than a Christian; who approaches with honied words of love and mercy; he lures with boastings of paths pleasant and peaceful; but doubt his dogmas and cruelty—rudeness, gibes, jeers, manacles, and gaols are his kind replies. The hypocrite! when he but once has lured you to his lair, he takes your liberty, blasts your character, damns your soul, execrates you before a jury, gloats like a demon as the sentence is pronounced, and adds, with the bitterest glee and pretended affection, that he does it for the

good of your soul! Bulwer says Swift libelled man by calling him a Yahoo; Bulwer was never indicted for blasphemy, or he would have envied the horses their want of souls, and would thank god from the bottom of his heart to give him Houyhnhnms instead of Christians for his neighbours. Some one has said, the man who first planted a stake in the ground to mark out his portion was the greatest enemy of his species, but a far greater was he who first found out we had souls, or more properly, persuaded us we had. Priests immediately took possession of them, and woe has been our portion since.

I do not think Christians should be served as they serve those who differ from them, but they must be fairly and resolutely met and their tyranny destroyed. It is needless to say they should be personally shunned, detested, and abhorred, their own practices will effect that for them the moment they are understood. No man is a more deadly foe to liberty—moral, social, and political—than is a Christian. He upholds, whether he knows or not, all tyranny, when he supports mental despotism. The inhumanity of man to man is never so fully displayed as by Christian men to unbelievers. It is easier to twist ropes of sand than to make men Christians by persecution. The arguments of Luther would not in an eternity of time have overthrown the church of Rome. But he made religion display its hellish propensities in persecuting his followers, and down was old Rome tumbled in a few years. “Human feelings are stronger than creeds,” and humanity once aroused, will, from its love of justice, extirpate all who insult and degrade it. This will soon be the fate of christianity and the reward of its inhuman policy. A Christian is an object of unmitigated horror, to any man who dares think for himself, and has honesty enough not to be an hypocrite in expressing his thoughts. Christians keep no faith—outside they are mild, winning, and full of kind pretence—let them but throw off the mask, and the Bubbs, Cappers, and Newalls are recognised in every face. It is said, god hides the future from men that hope may live on hidden destiny. Would it not be an equal or greater blessing to take from us the idea of a god, since so much demonism is awakened in hu-

man bosoms in their servitude of him? By not knowing the future, we are saved from being miserable; by not knowing god, we should be saved from making others so.

Christians' policy is to attack a man of liberal opinions and taunt him to express them. If he does, candidly and honestly, down they call the law, dungeons, and police upon him, and hunt him out of life. If he, through fear of these prospectively, keep back any part of his sentiments, or give them an orthodox version, they shout out "coward," "hypocrite," and thus after having made him damn himself, they damn him too, and thus doubly damned, their triumph is complete. This Brindley has proved a hundred times, and every pulpit in every town aims weekly at the same thing. Glorious victory this for a system said to be founded upon truth!—winning its laurels by force and fraud, and gaining strength from falsehood and deception—its true trophies from men made disingenuous hypocrites. But let this fail; let men meet them, disdain their overtures, and despise their power, and Christians will shrink within the dark sphere of their own infamy, and dwindle into the paltry littleness of meanness and vice. To a fate like this they are fast hastening, morally; and as for the success of their persecution, while they have the power to employ it, instead of suppressing what they aim at, the experience of all persecutions proclaim that, as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, so Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham, and a few more gaols, will be the seed and pillars of atheistical faith. Years of preaching and volumes of argument do less to the advance of opinions than the opposition of sword and dungeon performs in a few weeks. This has been amply borne out by the recent prosecutions. G. J. H.

IS THERE A GOD?

XVIII.

"The word god, is for the most part used to denote the impenetrable cause of those effects which astonish mankind, which man is not competent to explain."—*System of Nature*.

THERE *is* or *is not* a god. There *is* or *is not* a somebody or a something—a nobody or nothing, who existed *before* the worlds. There *is* or *is not* an intelligent existence, large or small, good or bad, local or universal, by whom all things were made, itself *unmade*. There *is* or *is not* such a being or existence, but whether it is more probable there *is* than that there *is not*, reason alone can determine. There may be a score of gods—there may be one god—there may be none at all. It is not *impossible* there can be a million of gods, it is only *improbable*; it is not *impossible* there can be somewhere, or somehow, *one*

god. The supposition of *one*, or a *million* of gods, implies no contradiction. The supposition that there *is neither* one nor a million implies no contradiction, but the supposition that there are and are not a million of gods, or that there *is* and *is not* a god is quite inadmissible. One or other of the propositions *must* be true, both *can't* be, we are quite sure of this, whatever else may be doubtful. This is called by philosophers "*the principle of contradiction*." The great foundation (says Leibnitz, in his controversial correspondence with Clarke) of mathematics, is the *principle of contradiction* or *identity*—that is, that a proposition cannot be *true* and *false* at the same time. Of course, to deny this principle, to say, for example, that a belief in god is both true and false, would not merely plough up the foundation of mathematics, but every other science. I conclude, therefore, that there *is* or *is not* a somebody or a something, a nobody or a nothing, a material or immaterial, an intelligent or utterly stupid existence, who created the universe, that is all things *visible* or *invisible*, and now preserves and governs the same. Here, however, we require another principle. It must be as already shown, that there *is* or *is not* a god; but how are we to get at a conclusion thereupon, either affirmative or negative? How are we justified in deciding for or against the existence of one or a million gods. The principle we require, the principle without which we are not justified in forming an opinion for or against theism, polytheism, or atheism, is clearly stated by the author above quoted. He says, that in order to proceed from mathematics to natural philosophy, another principle is requisite. I mean (he continues) the principle of the *sufficient reason*, or in other words, that nothing happens without a *reason* why it should happen so rather than otherwise; and accordingly Archimedes was obliged in his book, *De Equilibrio*, to take for granted, that if there be a balance in which every thing is alike on both sides, and if equal weights are hung on the two ends of that balance, the whole will be at rest. It is because no *reason* can be given why one side should weigh down rather than the other. Now by this single principle of the *sufficient reason* may be demonstrated the being of a god, and all the other parts of metaphysics or natural theology; and even, in some measure, those physical truths that are independent of mathematics, such as the dynamical principles, or the principles of forces. This is all quite true, even that part of it which relates to demonstrating the being of a god. The sufficient reason *MAY* be given for the being of a god, and whenever it *is* given I will not cavil about words, but readily allow the being of a god to be demonstrated, but not till then. Leibnitz does nowhere affirm that this single principle of the

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

sufficient reason has demonstrated or will demonstrate the being of a god; he only affirms what no Atheist denies, that it *may* be demonstrated. The Atheist, however, it is proper distinctly to say, *does* deny that the sufficient reason can be adduced in proof of a god, he does most emphatically deny that reason has been or can be given why that scale of the argument should "weigh down rather than the other." The Atheist thinks the weight of reason lies in the opposite scale, that, in short, the sufficient reason *may* be and HAS been given in demonstration that there is no god; and why, I should like to know, may not the principle of the sufficient reason be as legitimately applied to the denial as to the affirmation, to the disproof as to the proof of a god. This argument acquires additional force when we consider the fact that if there be presumption and pure loss of labour in reasoning about a god or gods at all, the folly cannot be charged upon Atheists; no, Theists and all other supernaturalists have exclusive right and title to it. They asserted there is a god or gods, then, and of course, not till then, others were stirred up to examine their reasons, to test their sufficiency. I never could understand upon what principle one man is to be deemed presumptuous for denying the sufficiency of another man's reasonings; still less can I understand why it should be quite legitimate for a fanatical blockhead to affirm a god, yet quite illegitimate for a philosopher or a fool to deny one. This has been put in a clear point of view by Mr. SOUTHWELL in his lately published "Reply to a Discourse on the subject of Deity." The Atheist, says he, simply denies that there is reason to believe in the existence of a first cause, which denial is the necessary consequence of materialism, a philosophy that admits not the creation or destruction of matter. This denial of an intelligent being, said to be not material but distinct from all that sense can conceive is called dogmatic. But in truth, the charge of dogmatism more properly attaches to those who affirm, than to those who deny a proposition. If god had never been affirmed, he could not have been denied. It is a rule of logic, and a very sensible rule, that the *onus probandi*, that is the burthen or weight of proving, rests on those who affirm a proposition. Priests have affirmed the existence of a god, but who will maintain that they have complied with the rule of logic? Who is convinced by their "strong reasons," that an immaterial being first created and now governs the universe? Before being convinced, it is necessary to understand, but I never yet heard either priest or layman say *he understood* god. It is therefore important the reader should remember that the denial of god results from the lack of proof on the part of those who affirm such an existence, and

that it would be absurd, or rather a contradiction in terms, to talk of a negation where there has been no affirmation. Nor are those who reject as inconclusive the reasons urged by supernaturalists called upon, from the simple act of denying, to prove a negative. For example, my hot-headed neighbour may affirm that the moon is made of a peculiar kind of pudding, but I cannot see upon what reasonable grounds I, who might be disposed to disbelieve him, am called upon to disprove his assertion.

Can you disprove the existence of a god? cry the theologians. No, gentlemen, no, it is not the Atheist's business to *disprove*, but yours to *prove* a god. This is intelligible, and fixes the saddle on the right horse. It is obvious, that though a proposition may be affirmed without being denied, it is inconceivable that anything should be denied, before it is affirmed. If, therefore, there be any dogmatism or presumption in declaring that there *is* or is *not* a god, like the famed Irish reciprocity, 'tis all on one side, and that the affirmative side of the question. There is not one tittle more dogmatic presumption in denying a god, than there is in denying devils, angels, or witches. If people with heated imaginations will declare, and not only declare, but act upon the declarations that there are gods, devils, angels, furies, &c., why are sober-minded men to be refused liberty to question such existences? Why should Phillip drunk be heeded and his words cherished as oracles, while Phillip sober is either to be beaten down, or at best have no attention paid to him? Why, I should like to be informed, are we to be denied an appeal to the *principle of the sufficient reason*, as well with regard to the existence of a god as any other existence? It would be difficult for sophistry itself to frame a satisfactory answer to these questions. Upon what principle do all but the merest rabble deny the existence of witches, angels, or devils? Upon what other principle *can* they deny such imaginary existences, but that of the sufficient reason; and is it not preposterous for men to demand good, sufficient reason for one class of supernatural existences, and not for another? There is or is not reason to believe in a god; if there is, it can be shown, if there is not, such belief should be rejected. Reason, to consistent inquirers, is all or nothing, and it cannot be admitted that those who embrace a principle are allowed to pick or choose in its application. Gibbon tells us that the gods of the ancient Germans originated in the hopes, fears, and ignorance of that fierce people. The gods of other nations can boast no nobler origin. Ignorance created, knowledge will destroy them. Knowledge has destroyed witchcraft—it will destroy, utterly annihilate godcraft. No one has proved, no

one ever *can* prove the impossibility of witchcraft; no one has, no one ever will prove the impossibility of godcraft, yet both crafts will be annihilated by reason, both will sooner or later be held in equal contempt. And is it not edifying to hear free inquirers, who go about the country preaching against devilism, angelism, and witchery, in all its branches, yet shrink from exposing godism; nay, not only shrink from exposing the pernicious absurdity, but stigmatise as rash, illegitimate, and dogmatic all who are more consistent and less cowardly than themselves? They laugh at and scout the devil, speak with scorn of witches, and profitably amuse themselves at the expense of the angels, but gods they cover with the mantle of their protection. They attack superstition every where but in its stronghold, and shake away, in Samsonic style, at a pillar here and a pillar there of the Dagonish temple, but let any one tug at the main prop of the building, without the removal of which it cannot tumble, and they cry out—illegitimate, consider our thin skulls, act upon the "better to be safe" principle, and don't "go too far." M.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XIX.

MY paper last week treated of the lowest sub-division of the great division of the invertebrata; that is, if we make two instead of four distinctions—the vertebrata and the invertebrata. The members of that sub-division, it was seen, possessed few if any of the characteristics commonly associated with the term animal. The distinctions between animals and vegetables, so perfect and apparent under some circumstances, cannot be determined at all times with sufficient certainty to convince and carry conviction to every mind. Just so is it with the distinctions, arbitrary ones, erected to assist our imperfect senses in the animal kingdom. The change from one animal to another is so gradual, that it is only by an examination in the first place of decidedly-marked specimens, that investigators are enabled to determine where a positive distinction exists, when compared with some others, from whence they were doubtless derived; but having once got a clue they follow it to its real or apparent source, and there, for convenience, make an imaginary distinction. As an illustration, I may quote the following from Chambers, which will show the true state of the case, and the difficulties to be contended against. "From the vertebrata we might pass, in descending the animal scale, either to the mollusca or the articulata, both of which exhibit some points of approximation with them. In both we meet, as in the vertebrata, with very highly organised as well as very simply constructed beings.

In both we find animals much superior to the lowest vertebrata; and in both, also, we find species which are, in many respects below the highest radiata. It is the necessary consequence of a *natural* arrangement, which aims at grouping together the different forms of living beings according to the type or plan on which they are constructed, that such should be the case. Neither of these two sub-kingdoms can be regarded as in all respects superior to the other. The high development of the locomotive power in the articulata strikingly contrasts with its usually slight possession by the mollusca. On the other hand, the digestive and nutritive systems in the mollusca are much more complex, and attain a higher organisation; so that the heart, for example, of the tunicata (the lowest class of mollusca) is as powerful in its action on the circulating fluid as that of the highest articulata."

Having taken the arrangement of Cuvier, who places the *articulata* near the *radiata*, I shall proceed to describe their leading features. There are four classes in this division, the *annelida*, *crustacea*, *arachnida*, and the *insecta*. The general form of the bodies of these animals is long, cylindrical, and divided into segments. Among the articulata are found all the senses, and for the first time a symmetrical body, or that form in which too similar halves appear to be joined together, as in a man. The solid parts or skeletons are always placed externally. The crab, spider, beetle, and butterfly are specimens of this division.

The articulata exhibits a peculiarity in the nervous system, which often enables the real character of doubtful animals to be distinguished. A double cord runs along the centre of the *lower* surface of the animal studded with knots or *ganglia* at regular intervals, which are so many centres from which the nerves pass off to the different segments. The head, also, has its ganglia in which the double cord terminates anteriorly. Where the members, however, are not uniformly distributed along the whole body, but are concentrated to one part, as in insects, arachnida, and the higher crustacea, we observe a corresponding concentration of the ganglia in that region. The degree of this concentration indicates the elevation of the animal in the series. The following classes must be arranged in the articulated series, though in some of the the characteristic structure is very indistinct. Annelida, or worm tribe. In these the body is prolonged, without any distinct appendages for locomotion. The habitation is usually aquatic, though sometimes terrestrial. The division into segments is not very distinct, the entire skin being soft. Myriapoda, or centipede tribe. These ha

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also a prolonged body, but it is provided with legs; and the articulation of the covering both of the body and legs is very distinct.—Insects, which are distinguished in their perfect state by the possession of one or two pairs of wings; by the restriction of the legs, which are never more than six in number, to the thorax; and by the division of the trunk into three portions, the head, thorax, and abdomen, which are usually very distinct from one another. They are also distinguished by their remarkable metamorphosis, commencing from a form which resembles that of the Annelida.—Arachnida, the spider and scorpion tribe, which differ from insects, in having the head and thorax united, in undergoing no metamorphosis, and in having eight or more legs.—Crustacea, which have a hard envelope, principally composed of earthy matter, and which are adapted for aquatic respiration. Many of them have the form of insects; but their legs are never less than ten in number.

The foregoing constitute a tolerably regular series, into which we must also introduce the entozoa, which seem to exhibit the characters of the worm tribe in their most degraded condition, and the animals composing which are parasitic upon or within others; the rotifera, or wheel-animalcule tribe, of which some approach the holypifera and polygastrica, whilst others approximate the crustacea; and the cirrhopoda, or barnacle tribe, which bear a strong general resemblance to the mollusca, but unquestionably belong to this series.

The annelida, or red-blooded worms, lead us a step higher in the development of skeleton; for although the halithea, the leech, the naia, &c., possess a flexible membranous covering, many others, as the serpulæ, are shielded by adventitious, solid, calcareous tubes. The common earth-worm is provided with four pairs of sharp spines, or setæ, for the purpose of progression. The skeletons of insects is for the greater part composed of a thin, epidermic layer, and a thick internal one, resembling the woody fibres of plants, but of an animal nature, termed chitine and coccine, blended with portions of phosphate of lime, magnesia and iron. These animals also present distinct legs and wings. In the arachnida we meet with a more consolidated form of skeleton; generally more than three pairs of legs; and, at the sides of their head, a pair of sharp-pointed piercing instruments, suited to their retired, cunning, and carnivorous habits. These animals throw off periodically their exterior coverings, like the larvæ of insects; and like the crustacea, they are capable of reproducing their members when destroyed. The crustacea affords us by far the most solid form of skeleton met

with in any of the articulata. These animals have generally five pairs of legs, two strong mandibles, two pairs of slender maxillæ, and two pairs of antennæ. The solid crust forming the skeleton of crustacea is cast off periodically. This is accomplished by the animal first detaching the cutis and muscles from the inner surface of the old shell; then secreting from the surface of the cutis a new layer of epidermis; next a layer of colouring matter; and within this the calcareous materials of the new shell. W. C.

THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

IV.

Why has the science of man been treated of as physical and moral?

Because that branch of science which treats of matter, its bulk, weight, figure, density, and general properties, is called physical or natural (the term physics being derived from a Greek word, signifying nature). The term Natural Philosophy, in its comprehensive sense, includes all the sciences, but receives in its primary divisions different names according to the kind of properties which it is its object to investigate. That which has for its subject quantity in general, is called mathematics, figure geometry, motion—that is, motion of entire masses—dynamics, from two Greek words, signifying power, or force and motion; while that which investigates the motion of the integrant particles of masses, and the results of such motion, is denominated chemistry. Now, sensation, intelligence, and all that phenomena commonly understood by the term mental, belongs to moral science, as before observed; the notion that mind and matter were separate existences was not held by the ancients, who considered the mind or mental phenomena like attraction and repulsion. Life has been called a property of organisation, by which is meant that all atoms of matter, whether organic or inorganic, are the same in essence, the only difference consists in the arrangement of them. Dead matter is called inorganic, that is, not so arranged as to display the phenomena called living, so that the terms inorganised and dead, mean exactly the same thing. Whereas, when we speak of an organised substance, we speak of a living substance. The difference between the life of a man and that of a beetle or caterpillar, is one of degree, not of essence, and is a necessary consequence of the different arrangement of the atoms which compose them. Arrangement generally termed structure, or organisation, is life; derangement, or decomposition is death; so that the phenomena called life,

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is a consequence of the organs, their powers, and susceptibilities. "Life," says a modern author, "as far as we affix any *scientific* meaning to the word, is a peculiar mode of being, in which a certain series of phenomena are observed to take place; these phenomena are never found associated with any other conditions but that one to the designation of which the term life is appropriated; hence we use this word merely as the short-expression by which this peculiar state of being or the associated phenomena which constitute it, are denoted. What life is, independently of this series of phenomena, we are wholly ignorant, as we are of everything but appearances, in relation to every object in nature." We say that matter is the permanent subject of certain qualities, such as extension, divisibility, attraction, repulsion, and so on. We say that mind is the permanent subject of certain faculties, such as perception, memory, association, reason. In like manner, we imagine that there is a permanent subject, which we name the vital principle upon which we conceive the phenomena of living beings to depend. But these permanent subjects, these substrata, in which qualities are supposed to inhere, must be considered, so far as our real knowledge is concerned, fictions of the imagination. All we really know, are the ascertained phenomena; beyond these everything of course must be conjecture; and the most eminent men have fallen, and at this very time are constantly falling, into gross error, by not keeping the distinction here suggested steadily in view. The opinion held by almost all the ancient philosophers, and some few of the moderns, that the mind of man is nothing of itself, like putrefaction, excitability, contraction, gravitation, separation, attraction: merely certain conditions of matter, has been deemed harsh and incredible; as it is contended that the nature of man, including body and soul, or mind, could not spring out of senseless or unreasoning atoms; seemingly forgetful, or perhaps, not having known that dead substances are composed of precisely the same particles as living ones, which only differ in their arrangement; so that dead, or inorganic matter, arranged and modified in a certain manner, becomes living or organic; how this is accomplished none are wise enough to answer; but that it is done, all must know who place any reliance upon the evidence of their senses. The opinion that the vital principle, or mind of man, is a self-existent immaterial agent, is a mere opinion; and has nothing whatever to do with science. Others assert that the soul, or mind, is a very subtle fluid, which enters into and makes use of the body as a shell or covering; so that man, thus considered, is a twofold

being, material and immaterial, body and soul, something and nothing; which body and soul are not to be considered as necessarily connected, but merely for the time being. Others contend that the soul was matter under a certain point of view, as colour is nothing but effects produced upon the retina of the eye, by the situations and motions of substances. To them the soul was, as regards the body, as the sound of the organ in relation to the instrument which produced it; the sound being nothing of itself—a result, as every one knows, of the undulatory motions of the air, when set in motion by the apparatus called an organ. All the phenomena of sound is but a consequence of the action of one substance upon another, whereby we become the recipients of shocks or sensations which induce in the brain ideas of sound; and life is nothing more than a succession of shocks or sensations. Those who demand a more minute explanation of what life is, may as well ask what heat is, or require a particular explanation of light, darkness, motion, or gravity. The motions of a steam-engine cannot be separated, even in thought, from the steam-engine, and yet motion is not an independent existence. Those who can erect motion into a something distinct from matter, will find no difficulty in doing the same for mind.

'YOU WILL INJURE OUR CAUSE.'

"Bubb, in his *bubbism*, complained that the irreligious doctrine tended to undermine the institutions of the country. Why should they not be undermined, if they cannot stand the test of reason? and if they can stand that test, why cover, cloak, screen, or suppress reason by indictment?"
PHILO-PUBLICOLA.

"YOU will hurt *our* cause!" has been the selfish, cowardly cry of all pseudo reformers, looking for the countenance and support of wealth and respectability, when honest men, guided by a love of principle alone, have stepped to the front, and asked no man to help them, but he who felt like themselves. Men who are honest in the expression of their opinions, look only to the surest mode of carrying them into practice without compromise or injury. To them the stern truth is everything, the selfish interests of themselves or others nothing. It were much better to allow mankind to remain in ignorance of certain truths, than for the advocates of those truths, by their indiscretion or cowardice, to bring disgrace upon themselves by subsequently compromising, though it be but an iota, what they had previously declared to be essentially necessary, and which they still, perhaps, think necessary. The uneducated and unreflecting seldom distinguish between principles and men; and the defalcation of a professor is generally looked upon as a consequence of his opinions, thus presenting a barrier to their introduction to such minds. Besides, parties who desert generally ruin themselves and those who may be willing

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to stand fast, preferring annihilation to falsehood. Truths are immutable, it is men only who change. If it were indispensably necessary to the real happiness of man eleven years since, that every particle of superstition should be rooted out of his constitution and his institutions, it is necessary now, and will remain so so long as man is man. With the word reform is associated the idea of loss or injury to some one, who had previously been living upon the corruption to be reformed. The men who lose by a change do not necessarily become enemies to such change; it depends upon their philanthropy or love of justice. The just man would smile at his own ruin, if it effected the happiness of a large number; and the honest reformer views with delight the advance of sound principles, though they may go beyond those held by himself, or may be even such as he cannot openly advocate for a fear of the consequences. It is not always wise for men to ruin their social prospects, by an open advocacy of obnoxious principles, unless the good to be accomplished for the mass be greater than the evil to be suffered by the few. When men cannot publicly support certain principles without danger, which danger they are not willing to incur, it were better that they did it privately or not at all; by which means they would not lead the party representing those principles into error with respect to their real numbers, strength, etc., and not be, as in too many cases, its ruin. Where, also, it may be dangerous to defend, care should be taken not to decry; where the public may confound the public principles of a party with the private speculations of some individuals of that party, the strict adherents to what they imagine or know to be the principles of their body, should not hasten such a conclusion, by rushing with breathless anxiety to decry the speculations of their companions, for it not unfrequently generates the opinion so much dreaded: it also most unjustly injures the individuals or party complained of, who are looked upon in a false light from the circumstance of their first denunciation by those most intimately connected with them. Let the moderators show by their conduct *their* principles, let them live down calumny, and not declaim against those who go beyond them. What party in this or any other country was not at some period the extreme party? What were the feelings of its members then, when they were denounced and vilified? The truth is seldom told, be it remembered, when we view principles through the spectacles of fear, and it needs not a love of lying to distort the image or picture presented. As a general principle men should always speak the truth; but it does not follow that they should at all times and seasons speak all the truth they know. A man thrown by accident into the company of thieves, would be mad to tell them he had fifty pounds and a gold watch in his pocket—simply because it was a fact; but if asked the question, it would be immoral to tell a lie. So it is with respect to principles; the Atheist dependent upon a godite for support, is not called upon to *declare* his unbelief, unless placed in such a position as, by his silence, to convey a wrong impression, which would be a virtual departure from truth upon his part. I am myself of opinion, that it would be better for mankind if reformers never lied, let the consequences to themselves and families be what it may; and can imagine the Spartan like virtue of the man who, with

a wife and family, would neither by word *nor* action lie to save himself and them from ruin. Such men have been and are now, I doubt not: in fact, I know there are. We are the beneficers by their self-sacrifices; they watered the tree of liberty with their blood, and we pluck the fruit. Who will say they died in vain? And yet some cringing sycophants, some deal-tenderly-with-prejudice mongers, soft-spoken temporisers, contemporary with them, doubtlessly exclaimed—"Oh! you go too far, a great deal; there's reason in roasting eggs, but there is no reason in you. Besides, you will injure *our* cause!" The Rev. Henry Vincent, Sacred Chartist, once said in my presence, when speaking of SOUTHWELL, "*I* like argument; and for discussions to be conducted on philosophical principles; and *not* to use abuse and declamation. He (S.) could expect nothing else (than twelve months' imprisonment, etc.), when he so violently attacked people's prejudices!!" Heavens! what was my disgust, to hear a fellow just shot out of Monmouth gaol, where he had been imprisoned for not only hurting people's prejudices, *but* for *endangering their lives*, talk after this rate! What wonders solitary confinement for some few months, with bread and water and the Jew-Book, will work! And this is one of the rotten reeds upon which some of the working classes are relying themselves for emancipation! Working-men, cast them off, as your deadliest enemies! Slaves themselves—miserable crawling, cringing slaves—to the worst of tyrants, they only labour the more surely to enslave you! These men will be forgotten, or their acts and memory execrated, whilst their deserted, betrayed, and persecuted brethren are immortal.

W. C.

(To be continued.)

HISSING AN ATHEIST!

(Concluded.)

TURN we to Charles Phillips, the hireling advocate of criminals. When JULIAN HIBBERT, the witness who presented himself to speak to the prisoner's character, declared himself to be an Atheist, Charles Phillips affected the extreme of horror, and exclaimed with his usual theatric air, "Witness, I will not disgrace myself by asking you another question." But not satisfied with this display, when the witness had retired, he called him back again, and made him go through the definition of an Atheist, which the witness described as "a man who does not believe in the existence of a god." Fancy the vapouring absurdity of a man like Charles Phillips, talking about "disgracing himself," his hand being polluted daily and hourly by the vile coin of thieves and murderers, and ruffians, and reptiles, of all descriptions, who pour in upon him with their five-shilling briefs. He is grateful to his supporters, and does his best to maintain their respectability and their lives. He lives by the life and not by the death of thieves, and he preserves them as country squires do their game. But Atheists bring no grist to the mill, and therefore he makes war upon Atheists, knowing that the vulgar mob, of high and low, will join with him. It is a capital thing to make a sensation amongst the religious folks, especially when there is no fear of consequences. It seems, however, that in point of respectability, JULIAN HIBBERT is far before Charles

Phillips: for while Charles Phillips lives on five-shilling briefs, JULIAN HIBBERT lives on an independent property, and as to his attainments, he is a skilful Greek critic, having written and printed, at a printing-press of his own, a work of considerable erudition in that language. He is, moreover, a highly benevolent, though not a wise man. And now a few words to JULIAN HIBBERT. When he was asked to kiss the book, he gratuitously declared that he had no belief in its contents. He must be supposed sincere in his declaration, for it was courting public obloquy, but in so doing he deprived a court of law of the benefit of his evidence. It was a kind of seeking after a martyrdom, a sort of testifying for conscience sake, which was quite uncalled for by circumstances, and therefore it became a ridiculous bravado. What if the trial had been a cause of the highest importance to the community, ought JULIAN HIBBERT in such case to have destroyed his utility to the community by his flippancy? The whole system of oath-taking is vile and absurd. All that is needed is that due punishment await the giving false evidence in a public court. Upon every paltry matter of pounds, shillings, and pence debated in a court of justice, god is invoked to help them, times without number. If this be not blasphemy, what then is? If a tradesman swear to a debt he calls god to witness it, though in many cases the matter is plunder, and in others he has no knowledge of the transaction beyond hearing. What is the value of a sailor's or a merchant's oath at the custom-house, and what is the real distinction, whether the smuggler kisses the book or kisses his thumb, a mode of evasion considered very quieting to the conscience? When Jonathan had to give evidence as to the occupation of land, he was required by his employer to swear that he had seen corn grow on it at a stated period. His conscience was in the way, and to quiet it, he and his employer took a journey to the spot, and planting some heads of growing maize in a running brook, they suspended to a tree, on one side the figures 1814, and to a tree on the other the figures 1815. Jonathan then went into court, and swore that he had seen some wheat growing in the spring, between 1814-15. The fact is, whenever ceremonies are substituted for substance, the substance is apt to be forgotten.

Now, touching this matter of belief in a god, it is clear that JULIAN HIBBERT spoke without due reflection. He probably had been somewhat annoyed in his youth, with the cant of religion, while he saw through the hypocrisy of its professors, and that gave him so much distaste for the whole thing, that the hatred of the one became synonymous with the hatred of the other. I myself remember passing through similar sensations in my boyhood, being driven to churches and chapels innumerable, sometimes thrice in the day, to hear dull and measured routine services, and still duller sermons, wherein dogmas were made to supply the place of logic, till the very name of religion became loathsome to me, as something invariably connected with privation and suffering; and christianity became synonymous with jesuitry and bigotry. Hatred of this tyranny practised in his name, made me blind to the beautiful spirit of Christ, blind to the fact, that he was a beneficent and radical reformer of the numerous evils to which the human mind is subjected. It was a most unfortunate religion for a race of oppressive rulers to live under, and therefore was it they did what in them lay to change its beautiful morality to vicious practices. Oppression is utterly incompatible with pure christianity. When JULIAN HIBBERT professed his disbelief of the existence of a god, he was illogical. He may ask others to prove the existence of a god, but they may also challenge him to prove the non-existence. Those who logicize in favour of belief, state their articles very briefly: "Does the general system of the universe give internal evidence of plan or no plan?" If the answer be in the affirmative, then the existence of the plan must premise also the existence of a planner. This, allowed, opens another argument; "Does there seem in the race of men a gene-

ral and constant tendency towards perfection through all his changes?" This cannot well be disproved, and the inference must be, that the nature of the planner of the universe must be beneficent. I apprehend that JULIAN HIBBERT would experience some difficulty in disproving this argument, notwithstanding no two witnesses can be found who can say, "We have seen god face to face." Most probably, JULIAN HIBBERT, stung by the illiberality and oppressive nature of those who wield religion as an implement for keeping down the poor, has been driven into the not very mathematical conclusion, that two wrongs make one right. The religious traders say to him, "You shall believe, or we will bait you;" and he replies, "I am bent therefore upon disbelieving, and will disbelieve in spite of you all." The fact is, belief or disbelief does not seem in any way to depend on the will of the individual, but on the peculiarity of his mental organisation, and it is possible for a believer to be a much worse member of society than an unbeliever. A man may readily profess a belief, without examining the premises, just as men profess themselves Christians; though a true Christian, i.e. a being regulating all his thoughts and actions upon the principle of "do as you would be done by," is scarcely to be met with. A cold, pure logician, even if he professes to believe in the existence of a god, is not therefore necessarily a benevolent man, nor even if he does really believe. Something of an enthusiastic spirit is necessary to produce good fruit in the shape of religion, and enthusiasm is a matter of temperament. But it is quite certain that a man professing to be an Atheist may nevertheless be a moral man, as far as regards the transaction of his social duties, and if he be a punctilious man in regard to truth, which declaring his belief in opposition to public obloquy, is mostly a proof of, it is utterly absurd and mischievous to incapacitate him from giving evidence in a court of law. It seems by the report, that several of the jury joined in the cry of "Turn him out," when WILLIAM M'PHERSON declared his unbelief. It is a proof that they were far less fitted for jurymen than JULIAN HIBBERT was for an evidence. Their conduct was most disgraceful to them. This boasted trial by jury seems, in many cases, to be very like trial by party. Like Charles Phillips, they would rather justice should be left undone, than that an individual personally obnoxious to them should be instrumental in doing it.

Mr. Alderman Brown addressed Mr. Phillips, "The public, Mr. Phillips, owe you much for the course you have pursued." Mr. Alderman Brown is doubtless a highly respectable person: like Bel, the idol, "eating much meat." But the judge, the recorder, sitting in the seat of judgment and approving the interference of the spectators with the course of justice, and clapping them on the back! "Go it, good people all, as has been done by church-and-king mobs, before now! You are a 'British assembly,' therefore show your zeal for the supreme being, by your want of charity to one of his creatures! Hunt him out of the pale of society as fast as possible." The recorder had a predecessor who was commonly called by the name of "Black Jack." He did many things, but none more extraordinary than this.

[Some remarks upon the foregoing will appear next week.—ED. O.]

Per Mr. Watts, Manchester £1 12 6
Mr. Follows, card..... 0 5 0
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THE
ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“ FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 32.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1d.
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

MORE PERSECUTION.

J. CHAPPEL, agent for this work in Bristol, has received notice from his Christian landlord to quit his present residence, for announcing the *Oracle* to be on sale in his shop. Bravo! bigotry: Christians! worshippers of the son of a god of war, the lord of hosts—the “meek and lowly,” who brought a sword into the world—like unto the inhabitants of the valleys, the lord won't be able to overcome us—because of our *nerves* of iron.

W. C.

MR. RICHARD CARLILE.

THE friends of liberty will be glad to hear that this gentleman, so long and deservedly known for his brave and manly advocacy of mental and political freedom, is at this time in the enjoyment of his health and faculties. I have had the great gratification of meeting him in London, and from him have received much valuable advice.

The priests had boasted the lion had retired to his lair, but I found him active as ever, lecturing on Sunday evenings in the City Road, upon his views of theology; and such views they are, that while mankind have much, the priests have nothing to rejoice at—unless one can suppose them rejoicing at a useful interpretation of their scriptures, a thing to which they are little addicted.

Mr. Jones, one of the Gloucester magistrates, specially boasted to me that, “that horrible man, CARLILE! who had used to be in Fleet-street, was sincerely sorry for what he had done, and was now a humble penitent at the feet of Jesus.”

This received no reply; but I thought that, if he was there, it had taken *nine years and a half* of barbarous imprisonment, besides heavy fines, ruinous confiscations, and the incarceration of his wife and numerous servants, to bring him there. So that Jesus had not much to boast of; besides, awful discounts must be deducted from the gentleness and

mercy of Jesus, if that was the way he converted sinners.

Knowing Mr. Carlile to be no ordinary man, I suspected he would show his “sincere sorrow for what he had done,” like nobody else. Nor was this conjecture far wrong, as he has adopted the following curious and extraordinary mode of showing it.

He has written a letter to Sir R. Peel, stating that he thought the fiendish practice of punishing men for what is called blasphemy (alias, speaking the truth of theology), was abandoned as unworthy a people professing a particle of enlightenment. Also, enclosing a letter from Mr. SOUTHWELL, bearing the stamp of his keepers, showing that all his correspondence was read by them; thus proving that not only his body but his mind too is imprisoned by his clerical oppressors. Mr. Carlile adds, that if it is thus men are treated for heterodox opinions in 1842, he himself will endeavour to furnish a few more cases of blasphemy, to hasten the termination of the system. Instead of finding Mr. Carlile at the feet of Jesus, I found him posting off to the feet of the Cheltenham Daniels “*wot*” lately came to judgment. For he was completing arrangements to deliver lectures in that town in explanation of his views of the bible. He intends to do the same in Gloucester, and be present at the trial.

Mr. Carlile's plan is to give rational interpretations to the scriptures, and though the trouble he takes may be much more than they are worth, his curious, ingenious, and profound conjectures are worthy of careful consideration, and to many persons would be very acceptable.

It has been a grand object of the pious to decry so formidable and powerful a thinker and actor as Mr. Carlile, and many persons from whom better things were to have been expected, have been seduced into aiding such injustice. However, this is fast declining—he promises fair to outlive all calumny: Die when he will, his noble and useful “works will follow him.” Not as the saints follow them, to execrate their memory, but to render his name ever fresh and beautiful. Reformers of every grade owe much to Carlile—for their honour may their regard ever be commensurate with his merit!

G. J. H.

DOGMATISM AND GOD.

"Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."—JEW BOOK.

THEOLOGIANS, notwithstanding their high pretensions to all reason, are themselves the most unreasonable. I do not pretend here that they manifest a want of reason in their attempts to answer unbelievers with dungeons, and remove the scruples of sceptics with handcuffs—it is always convenient to power, to silence objections with brute force, and perhaps judicious where argument fails; and as my experience at the hands of god-worshippers convinces me that their profession converts them into inhuman wretches, stifles the impulses of humanity, and dries up that sympathy for their fellows that by some persons and societies is manifested for beasts, I am willing to give them credit where I can, if only for the employment of cunning in their cruelty, and subtlety in concealing the hollowness of their pretensions. Upon these subjects they are not unreasonable, though very dangerous. But when they come forth clothed in logic to stigmatise those who differ from them in opinion, as unreasonable, presumptuous, and dogmatic, as is their favourite custom, they signally fail.

"Oh," cries a sage priest, "you Atheists are a dogmatical set of fellows, you *deny* there is a god, but you cannot *prove* it;" a case is forthwith concluded to be made out, and unthinking persons are soon found to reiterate it. When an individual feels certainly convinced of the truth of a proposition, there is propriety in affirming it. If priests feel so upon the question of the existence of a god, they are not censurable for the course they have taken. But it must be borne in mind, that any person feeling convinced of the opposite question that there is no god, acts quite as properly in affirming his position, and is so far quite justified in *denying* that which priests have *affirmed*. Both parties should be prepared under these circumstances to PROVE their affirmations. Have priests done so? Have they *carefully* weighed their evidences—*warily* scanned all objections urged against their conclusions, and modestly, after anxious investigation of apparently indubitable evidence, made their positive statement that there is a god? That they have not done this is most plain—that they have been presumptuous is most clear—that they are unblushing dogmatists can easily be proved. Why do they offer premiums at the eleventh hour for Bridgewater Treatises, to bolster up their case? Why inundate the country with tracts, books, pulpits, and parsons to strengthen their arguments? Why prohibit discussions? Why shrink from inquiry? Why put down by policemen's truncheons all investigation? Why rest the evidence of god's existence on acts of parlia-

ment—call on attorney generals to prove it, and gaolers to carry home conviction of its truth? These acts of theirs abundantly prove that *their affirmation* is without foundation, their assertion without reason, and their own conduct presumptive, wilful, gross, and unblushing dogmatism. Persons opposed to them who *deny* that there is a god, and seek to prove it by calm argument and sober reason behave more wisely and rationally, the presumptive evidence is in their favour, and though failing to prove their case as strict logic demands, *their dogmatism* is of a milder and more reasonable character, and free from the fierce and murderous presumption of the priests.

Formerly, pretenders to reason and philosophy regarded with a jealous eye all positive assertions, Socrates doubted, to some extent, everything but his own ignorance. Metaphysical philosophers remembered with the Italians, that "every medal has its reverse," and that to every question there are two sides; it was and is the custom of the wisest men to speak with modesty of their knowledge, and to make very cautious pretensions to infallibility. But not so with priests, modesty is not their vice, nor consistency either—proclaiming the erring nature of man on the one hand, and the infallibility of their own conclusions on the other, they employ, as the Cheltenham magistrates did to me, the coarsest and rudest insults upon all who see reason to demur to their opinions.

Some believe that we have no right to deny anything, however absurd: if so, we have no right to affirm anything, however reasonable. To apply it to this case, if the Atheist is not to deny because of the uncertainty of human knowledge, the Theist is not to affirm because of the dubious nature of all things more or less. This arrangement would do if the Theist is made to *act* upon it. But as was remarked, page 243, the Theist must not be allowed to erect so formidable and dangerous an engine as religion, and interweave it into the political constitution of the country, and with it confine the Atheist in a gaol. To this equal justice will not consent.

It seems proper again to repeat here, that the Atheist is too well aware of the nature of the question under discussion to deny that there is a god, because the possibility of proof is not with him. His simple course is to state that he sees not sufficient reason to believe that there is one. This course is at once both modest and safe for himself, quite free from dogmatism, and respectful to those who entertain an opposite opinion; since it allows that *they* may see sufficient reason to believe the contrary. His practical object is to convince as many as possible that priests have always been in error in their positive assertions respecting the existence of a god,

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and that it is *very probable* there is not one. And such being the case, we can know nothing about one, and may be for all we can tell, insulting him by the mummeries and nonsense commonly called religion, and if there be a god with any of those noble feelings we admire in men, he must shrink with horror and disgust from the fiendism and meanness exhibited by Christians, even in their pretended protection of him. G. J. H.

[The preceding remarks were not perceived to refer to the subject of "M.'s" article in last week's *Oracle*, until they were set up; but as they appear to place the subject of theological dogmatism in another practical point of view, it has been deemed useful to present them. W. C.]

IS THERE NO GOD?

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR.—It has often occurred to me, as well as to other parties who have given their attention to controverted subjects, that if men would take the pains to give clear and precise definitions of their terms, there would be much less wrangling, cavilling, and disputing in the world than there is at present. In the *Oracle* of last week there is an article headed "Is there a god?" and signed "M.," which, from a want of this necessary qualification, appears to my mind an awfully absurd jumble of conflicting ideas, beginning from no recognizable principle, and winding up without any tangible conclusion.

The writer begins with a quotation from Mirabaud's (or rather, Baron D'Holbach's) "System of Nature," which he places at the head of his article, as a kind of motto, and if he had attended to his own motto, he certainly could never have fallen into the absurdities which are exhibited in his article. In combatting the idea of a god, he strikes all around, like an Irishman at a fair (a fault or failing common to Atheists); hitting now at the philosophic idea of god, which he jumbles with the bible idea, then at the bible idea, which he jumbles with the philosophic idea. In short, it is difficult to say what object "M." is attacking; and I have some doubt whether he had any *distinct* conception himself whether it was Juggernaut or Jehovah, the *animus mundi* of the ancient philosophers, or the *vis viva* of the moderns, against which he was exhibiting his prowess and exhausting his valor. Let us take a few specimens, beginning at the beginning, that is with the motto. "The word god is, for the most part, used to denote the impenetrable cause of those effects which astonish mankind, which man is not competent to explain." Here then is the philosophic idea of god. The idea of an

unknown cause or causes, which taken in a collective sense may signify a number of causes co-operating or working together conjointly, and which may be and are expressed by the collective term, "The unknown power." Is this the idea of god against which "M." is contending? Let us see, "There is or is not a god"—very good; of course nothing can be plainer. But pray, Mr. "M.," what do you mean *here* by the word god? Do you mean Juggernaut or the *vis viva*? Have you any definite idea under the term? Again, "There is or is not a *somebody* or a *something*, a *nobody* or a *nothing*, who existed *before* the worlds. There is or is not an intelligent existence, large or small, good or bad, local or universal, by whom all things were made, itself *unmade*." Here is a jumble! What idea is "M." attacking now? Certainly not the idea contained in his motto; certainly not the philosophic idea of god—of the *unknown power*. No philosopher ever asserted that god existed "*before the worlds*," or that "all things were made by him (out of nothing), himself *unmade*." Mr. "M." next runs on with a long string of "there is or there is not," to which the reader is referred, see p. 250.

The question of *demonstration* on either side is very frankly and very properly given up, and the discussion is referred to the "*sufficient reason*." Ask a Jew, have you a "sufficient reason" for believing that your Jehovah, or lord of hosts, who you say drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and helped you to massacre the Philistines, the Ammonites, and others of your neighbours, and to rob them of their lands in order that he might give them to your forefathers, who were such a highly moral and humane people that they were despised by all the civilised nations of the earth, at that time existing? What will be the answer of the Jew? Of course that he has a "sufficient reason" for believing. If the lord of hosts would give Mr. "M." a land flowing with milk and honey, perhaps he also would have a "sufficient reason" for believing. To avoid details, it may be affirmed that if we go round the world, we shall find that every superstitionist "from Indus to the pole," has a "sufficient reason" (to him) for believing in the *kind* of god or *unknown power* in which he does believe; and by the same rule we shall find where we meet with an isolated case of an Atheist here and there, he likewise will declare that he perceives (what is to him) a sufficient reason for believing that there is no god at all. But if we ask for demonstration on either side, we shall be at once told that the world is governed by an "impenetrable cause, which man is not competent to explain."

When a difficult question like the present is started, it is amusing to observe how anx-

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ious each party is to throw the burden of proof upon their opponents. Mr. "M." says, "It is a rule of logic, and a very sensible rule, that the *onus probandi*, that is, the burthen or weight of proving, rests on those who affirm a proposition. Very true Mr. "M." it is a rule of logic, and a very sensible rule too; let us see then how it applies. "There is a god;" here is an affirmation, and whoever makes such affirmation is bound by the rules of logic to prove his assertion. But here is another proposition equally dogmatic, "There is not a god." Now the same rule of logic which calls upon the Theist to prove his assertion "there is a god," also calls upon the Atheist to prove his position, "there is *not* a god." Oh! but I shall be told this is not a fair and correct statement of the question; the Atheist does not say dogmatically or affirmatively "there is *not* a god." Then I tell you, unless he affirm this much he is not an Atheist, but a sceptic. If the Atheist claim the convenient privilege of advancing his proposition with a qualification, saying, "I think, or believe there is no god; in that case the Theist may claim a like privilege, and then the *onus probandi* lies—on neither side—each side may be asked for their "sufficient reasons" why they think or believe so and so, but neither side is bound to *prove* by the rules of logic.

The question, after all, is not so very difficult, so far as the *general* conclusion is concerned, as some people would fain make it appear. Adopting "M.'s" phraseology, "there is or there is *not* a power which controls the general operations of nature; or there are or are not a power or powers operating conjointly by which the general results denominated the phenomena of nature are effected." The real question, so far as it may be regarded as a question of mere fact, is not whether there be a power or powers operating throughout the universe in accordance with fixed laws or rules of action, but the question is, what are the qualities or attributes of this power or powers? And this question can only be determined by referring to the laws or rules by which this power operates, so far as these laws or rules come under the observation of man. All the powers of nature, whether we call them by the names of god, attraction, repulsion, affinity, or by any other name, have this one characteristic, they are invisible—no man hath seen them at any time, Yours,

T. S. MACKINTOSH.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

xx.

I SHALL this week describe the leading characteristics of the remaining subdivision of the *invertebrata*, namely, the *mollusca*. The

shells of these animals are remarkable for their want of symmetry on the two sides of the body and their inconstancy in animals of similar structure. The shells of the *conchifera* (the muscle is an example) usually consist of two moveable pieces placed on the exterior of the body, connected by ligament and muscle; they have a muscular foot and a pair of tentacula. In the *cephalopodous mollusca* we recognise the transition from the external unorganised shells of the *invertebrata* to the internal organised bones of the *vertebrata*. The shells are sometimes external, as in the *nautilus*, and sometimes internal, as in the *sepia*. In this complicated class of animals we find a near approach to the cartilaginous fishes, in the presence of cranium, spinal column, &c., in a rudimentary form. "The greater number of the *mollusca* being aquatic, their nerves present the same pale and soft characters observed in the other aquatic *invertebrates*; hence the difficulty of indicating their particular distributions. Here, as in the *radiata*, the same tendency to accumulate nerves around the entrance to the alimentary canal prevails, but in this case more generally accompanied with ganglia. In the lowest classes of the division, as the *tuicata* and *conchifera*, the nervous chords are placed beneath the alimentary canal; in the two next classes, *gasteropoda* and *pteropoda*, they are more in the vicinity of the stomach; and in the *cephalopoda*, which is the last and highest of the division, the nervous ganlia attain a more elevated position, they cease to embrace the *oesophagus*; and a distinct brain, as in the *vertebrata*, with numerous symmetrical ganglia along the abdomen, take their place."

This great division of the animal kingdom living chiefly on soft food, masticating organs are little required by them, hence they are often but slightly developed, and in some cases wholly absent. But their food is greatly varied and often coarse, so as to require a complicated form of alimentary canal, and a high development of glandular apparatus. The greater number of the animals which compose this class are aquatic, and enjoy a branchial respiration; some, however, breathe by lungs in the air. In the *ascidæ* the heart is very simple, consisting merely of a thin membranous ventricle destitute of valves. The *conchifera* have two auricles and a ventricle; the *gasteropoda* and *pteropoda* possess a strong auricle and ventricle provided with valves. In the *cephalopoda* there is an aortic heart, and two branchial hearts, or dilatations; in these animals the blood having been carried to the system by the arteries is returned by the veins to the branchial fringes; in some bivalves, however, a portion of it is sent direct to the heart without passing through the

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respiratory organ. In the gasteropodous and other mollusca the rectum passes through the ventricle.

A curious circumstance connected with the conchifera is, that the eggs on escaping from the ovary, are deposited between two layers of the branchial membrane, where they increase in size, and undergo incubation.

W. C.

'YOU WILL INJURE OUR CAUSE.'

(Concluded.)

THE reflections in my last, under this head, were suggested by a recent visit to Bristol, where the circumstances connected with the starting of the *Oracle* were brought forcibly to my mind by the conduct, or rather the expressions, of certain parties there during my stay. Having accompanied Mr. HOLYOAKE from Gloucester to my native place, I suggested the advisability of his lecturing in the Hall of Science, on the Sunday evening, there having been no Social lecturer there for some time. He stated that he had no objection, if it was agreeable, and gave me leave to apply to the president, to know his opinion. This I did, and received in reply that he "should not like it; for he had reason to believe they had lost a large sum of money through not letting the hall, to some parties who wanted such a place, in consequence of SOUTHWELL'S conduct," which had made socialism stink in the nostrils of the *respectable* inhabitants of Bristol. Knowing the character of the individual, I did not waste any time by remonstrance, but determined to wait until Sunday evening, when I knew there would be a tea-meeting, at which the quarter's accounts would be read, and the officers or officer of the branch be there with the members. Just before, I believe, the tea was served, the president left, and did not return until its conclusion; this did not prevent my entering upon the subject of the refusal of the hall for a lecture that evening, and to my surprise I found that nearly every member, every one to whom I spoke, declared their willingness to hear any one, and for the hall to be open to every one. I learnt, however, at the same time, that they had never expressed such an opinion to the president, and that he might be truly said to represent their conduct, if not their feelings or wishes. I also discovered, that they were in such a strait that the really liberal-minded could do nothing for the cause of free inquiry, which since Southwell's death had been miserably burked in Bristol, its former companions being ashamed of such company. I then seriously advised the formation of a class of Free Inquirers, out of the remnant of the branch, before it was completely scattered; to be entirely distinct from the Social body, the members already in that society either leaving it or remaining, as they may prefer; I advised the former, as it would leave the class untrammelled, and enable the members to contribute more liberally to carry out its objects. These would be the distribution of liberal tracts; delivery of lectures; providing suitable lecture rooms upon the occasion of a visit similar to Holyoake's, in which a lover of truth might communicate his views to those who chose to attend to hear him; and to be, in fact, ever ready

to assist any or every party, as far as their means would extend, in destroying the barriers to man's freedom and happiness—WITHOUT FEAR OF THE CONSEQUENCES. This was the light in which some of them I knew had looked upon socialism, and I hope yet to see them resolve to carry it out. In this proceeding I felt myself honest, and fancied my conduct honourable; I had merely expressed my opinions and my wishes, to both my friends and acquaintances, and upon the arrival of the president informed him of my labour. He charged me with acting underhandedly. And why? Because *he* was not present. What was his presence to me—I had to do with principles, not with men? But no sooner did he come, than he stated that he wanted the attendance of the members *only* to hear the accounts, &c., which of course led to my departure; so that, had I neglected the opportunity which offered at tea-time, I should have had none, for I left the city the next day. Here are a number of individuals holding a large hall, capable of accommodating between two thousand and three thousand persons, making no other use of it than for dancing on a Monday evening, or occasionally letting it for the same purpose to other parties—and why? Because they cannot, they will tell you, get a lecturer—a *rational* lecturer, one who carries the Jew-Book in one hand and the "Book of the New Moral World" in the other, giving you a quotation from each alternately. But these parties would fain have you believe they are free inquirers, lovers of truth, the whole truth, and *nothing but the truth*; yet when an offer is made for a Socialist lecturer to address the public in their hall, they say, "He will injure the property; he has been prosecuted for blasphemy; we must not countenance him; our name is bad enough, without having atheism tacked to it." Sage regenerators of the human race! Were the Socialists *first* denounced as Atheists upon the appearance of the *Oracle*? No! Years before that time, when Robert Owen made his celebrated declaration that "all the religions in the world were founded in error," they were rightly judged to be such; for all the religions in the world rest upon a belief in a god or gods, as a first principle. But what if the two circumstances were contemporaneous, viz.: the appearance of the *Oracle* and the denunciation of the Socialists as Atheists? Am I or others to hold our peace, and suffer those to whose welfare and happiness we have devoted ourselves, to remain in the dark, with respect to an important fact, viz.—that there are as many probabilities in favor of atheism as there are in favor of goddism; one which well understood would speedily remove their misery—are we to remain supine, and hold our peace, lest we might injure *a party* who could not go so far as we did? What if we were the cause of their utter annihilation, if, in addition to establishing their economical views we likewise destroyed the very foundation of superstition and removed the cause of an immense amount of misery and degradation? What would the destruction of a party be to the happiness of a state? We were prepared to take the consequences of *our* movement, we have met them unflinchingly, and glorious have been the results!

No sooner did the *Oracle* appear, than numbers of the Socialists (or so called ones) in Bristol busied

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themselves in making it clear, without being asked, that they did not agree with Southwell and me; and were continually deploring that we should have come out so, because we should injure the branch and the cause; and they wished Mr. S. had done it in any other town but theirs. Their terror was so great, that it was recommended by the council to the late president, to request me to resign my office of "Superintendent of Classes," lest I might injure them by the dissemination of my doctrines. Of this I was informed by one of the members (I could not attend myself that evening), and, to spare my friend the unpleasantness, I resigned, by note, my office, and withdrew at the same time from the society. On the Sunday evening following Mrs. Chappellsmith was requested to explain—in consequence of a misconception of what Southwell had said on the previous Sunday—that he had *really* left the body, and that his opinions were his own private ones; this was done at the end of her lecture, to a crowded hall. When she had concluded, I rose and explained that, in consequence of the active part I had taken in the proceedings of the Social body in Bristol, I deemed it as well to state that I likewise had left them, and intended to devote myself to the support and dissemination of the views I entertained conjointly with Mr. S. When the audience were gone, S. and I were charged with a desire to break up the branch, and with a wish to injure the cause. To this I replied, as I do now, if any cause would be injured by my conduct, it would argue a rottenness which it were meritorious to destroy rather than to conserve, and that they ought not to be in a position to be injured by me or any one else.* Their weakness was their disgrace. That cause, the cause which they assumed to represent, which had withstood the united assaults of all the bigots and villains in the country, and had obtained a footing in society by the honesty and intrepidity of its advocates—was endangered by two of its body avowing themselves as Atheists, and by calling upon all who thought with them to lend them a hand in destroying the laws which denied the holders of such opinions the liberty of expressing them! Monstrous doctrine! One right principle hurt another? Does not socialism embrace all known truths; and are not its economies based upon justice? Can truth be annihilated, and justice be proved to be a chimera? If this cannot be done—what has socialism to fear? No power in the universe can shake her, she is invulnerable!

It has been very generally disseminated, that the *Oracle* party wish the Socialists to declare themselves Atheists. Never was there a grosser imposture. The Social body has nothing to do with theories, especially theological theories, as a society, but simply with facts; but at the same time it did profess to be a body of free inquirers—advocates for the unlimited freedom of expression; and for the investigation of every subject likely to promote the happiness of man and remove ignorance. Yet these very men were the first to denounce the *Oracle* party, as "men who went too far, and who wished to make men Atheists, and nothing else." Where they obtained this latter information, I know not; myself and every one con-

nected with the paper being zealous advocates of the *original* Social principles, though perhaps not of the recent modification. If the Atheist be right in the advocacy of his views, and socialism be injured thereby, the latter must be wrong; if the Atheist be wrong, and the Socialist right (and I know the latter and believe the former to be the case), what has socialism to fear? The cause of socialism, as I have before said, could not be injured by me or any man breathing; but the false position taken by the advocates of the system might be injured or destroyed. They have undertaken liabilities not warranted by their strength, and encountered a storm they were not prepared for, and now tremble at the slightest appearance of danger, which to their affrighted eyes is visible in every movement which does not conciliate those in power and dovetail in with their prejudices. Those loudest in their denunciations of our policy were those most active in getting into trouble. I, with others, opposed the step as long as we could, having no confidence in the majority of the members; but when it was taken we worked hardest and grumbled least.

Reader, if you have forgotten it, look again, at the article in last week's Number; are not the arguments and principles there laid down, illustrated by the example I have here given? In all that I have said, I have "nothing extenuated, nor set down aught in malice," but have here delivered a "plain unvarnished tale."

W. C.

PANTHEISM IN PRUSSIA.

"What's in a name?"

I MUST premise my present communication by saying, that I consider pantheism and atheism synonymous, still the former name is *positive*, whilst the latter implies more of a *negation*. However this may be, a party has lately sprung up in Prussia, which shows that Germans know something besides talking. This party call themselves the *Free* (Die Freyen), and proclaim the following axioms. The ideas lately broached by German philosophers, Hegel, Strauss, etc., have demonstrated, that the now existing *crude* ideas of the church and churchmen are *incompatible* (!) with reason and every sound induction. To remain any longer within the pale of the church, and thus to recognise the truth of her tenets, would be (the Free say) hypocrisy and dissimulation. Of this they will not be guilty. They will, in the first instance, not perform any of the ceremonies imposed by the church, except such as are politically imperative, say, baptism and matrimony. Some of the members propose to go even further, and to secede altogether from the church in all and every respect. But the question has been muted, whether the state will not interfere with such determined action. But even for this, our worthy neighbours are *fully prepared*. "Expatriation"—is this to be their lot, and the United States to be, also in this case, the receptacle of this new tendency of our age? *Wherever we look, it cannot be doubted, that a new era of human affairs is approaching.*

A GERMAN PANTHEIST.

NOW READY.

A Plain Answer to the Query, 'Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?' By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence. — This work should be universally read.

* See "Philo Publicola," at the beginning of this article in last week's *Oracle*.

REVIEW.

IN the shape of a pamphlet, and for the price of a penny, has just been published by France, of Newcastle Upon-Tyne, a speech by Mr. Larkin, on the sabbath question, delivered to a set of those morbid, melancholy, and selfish men called Christians. It appears that at a meeting of the Central Exchange News-room a motion was made to close it on the Sunday. Mr. Larkin, in opposition to it, among other warm remarks, spoke as follows:—"I regard a motion of this kind as doubly offensive—offensive from the arrogant pride of its pharisaism—offensive from the insolent tone of its implied censure. I tell you, gentlemen, your censure is impertinence, and your interference with our occupations on a Sunday is tyranny mingled with impudence. You have no right to compel me, who dissent from your views, to spend the Sunday according to your ideas of holiness, and your fashions of sabbatical observance. Why cannot you be content with being holy yourselves (hear, hear) without forcing me to adopt your legal and ceremonial affection of sanctity? What right have you to take your pail of whitening and your whitening brush and whitewash me into a spectre of holiness? (Laughter.) What right have you to whitewash us into as nice and clean-looking sepulchres of sanctity as yourselves? I protest against your right to drive me into sanctimony—to compel me to wear a white cravat, a black coat, and a long face. (Laughter.) Of what advantage would success be to you, supposing that you could succeed in shutting up the room on the Sunday? Would the exclusion of the minority make them one whit holier than before? (Hear, hear.) Supposing that whips, and thongs, and scourges, were put into your hands; that you drove us to church, and compelled us to pray and warble forth hymns and psalms; what else would this compelled devotion be but to insult god with a lip service, and mock him with a knee homage? In addition to tyranny to man, you would be guilty of impiety to god! God will accept of no service but that which is willing; and one heartfelt burst of prayer and penitence at any moment is worth all the sabbaths and all the sacrifices of all the scribes and pharisees in the world. (Loud cheers.) God loathes the religion you would compel. He turns with aversion from the adoration of slaves. He will have no service but the service of the free. (Cheers.) I stand forth then on this occasion to raise my voice boldly against this tyranny of religion. I stand here to denounce this presumptuous interference between man and his creator."

Mr. L. does well thus to lash men who, not content with damning us hereafter, do it also on earth, by forcing their miserable

notions upon us by law; he does well to denounce the tyranny of religion, and to assume, that if god has honesty, humanity, or nobleness, he must spurn the paltry pretences, crawling adulation, and inhuman practices his servants exhibit. So far he does well. But how does Mr. Larkin know that god "will have no service but the service of the free," while he drags a whole family of his creatures, as in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Adams and infant in Cheltenham, to a modern inquisition, because they did not "render the service of slaves?" How does he know that "god is insulted with lip service, and mocked with knee homage," while he permits his servants to drag me to a loathsome dungeon because I did not offer the "service" of despicable hypocrisy? I once thought the god of the Christians was noble and generous, but Christian men have lately taught me better. What does Mr. L. know more of god than lineal descendants from the apostles, or at least, self-styled successors all filled with the holy-ghost? What does he know more than any else? The fact is, nobody knows anything of him, and it is most unfortunate any one ever attempted it. Every enormity is committed by those in power in the name of god. Would it not be better to let all reasoning against the injustice and tyranny of religion, rest on moral, independent, and nobler ground than mere goddism? G. J. H.

INTELLECTUAL LOCOMOTION.—Public institutions and philosophical systems, like railway carriages, should be well adapted to run through the world. They should always be in advance of the plodding wagons of plodding men. The van is their proper place not the rear. Better for them to be couriers or scouts, than baggage wagons. They cannot be too lightly built, nor too easily run over the ground. Hitherto they have been loaded with the lead of exploded errors, have sunk in every miry place, thrown out grappling irons round every post, and demanded the labour of after ages to disentangle and help them on. When shall we order these things better?

A literal translation from the German of a joiner's bill, for repairs in a church in Bohemia:—

For solidly repairing St. Joseph	0s. 4d.
For cleaning and ornamenting the Holy Ghost	0 6
For repairing the Virgin Mary, before and behind, and making her a new child ..	5 6
For turning a nose for the Devil, putting a horn upon his head, and glueing a piece to his tail	4 0

Star of the East. 10 0

The scene of christianity has been always a scene of dissension, of hatred, of persecution, and of blood.—*Bolingbroke.*

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends; nor thy rich neighbours; call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind (Luke 14). Aye! catch 'em at it! A pretty rig! to see all the beggars in Lambeth sitting nose to nose with his grace of Canterbury, forsooth!

A Mexican chief, when bound to a stake, was asked by a Catholic priest, if he believed in the Christian religion; "No, I do not," was the answer. "Don't you wish to go to heaven?" said the priest. "Are there any Christians there?" inquired the chief. "Oh, yes, the place is full of them," said the priest. "Then I had rather go to hell, than have any more of their company," was the reply.—The Mexican was right in his choice; I almost envy him his taste; for as the Christians have been such bad members of society in this world, we reasonably infer that they will be so in the next. When a Christian speaks to me of heaven, I say, what are people to have there, the question almost strikes them dumb, and then they quote the Jew Book, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which god hath prepared for those who love him." Rare answer this, Ezekiel's food, to wit! Rare answer this, to pay £20,000,000 per annum for!

J. C. F.

RIDDLERS FOR THE RELIGIOUS.

Continued from Oracle No. 25.


Of nature, too, what thinkest thou, was this thy maker's scheme,

Or, wanting rule from god, would'st fear, the weight should kick the beam?

Seeing each thing within itself inherent law retains, Why need a maker's law to say, "part gone, the less remains?"

Were it not part of nature's law cohesives should cohere,

How had thy boasted world been made to last one short-lived year?

 NOTICE.—Copies of this work sent by post to any parts where they cannot be otherwise obtained, at the rate of THREE for FOURPENCE. Post-office stamps for one month or three, with directions, addressed to the Editor, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, will receive attention.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. M'CULLOCH, BRIGHTON.—Our warm and excellent friend is informed his communication, if possible, will not be over-looked. The number of determined friends in all parts of the country, the present prosecutions have awakened, promise well for human redemption. It would be easy to fill several *Oracles*, weekly, and not exhaust all the cheering sentiments that come to hand. I intend to study Ebenezer Elliott, to acquire condensation, to give the pith and marrow of all until other or enlarged means can be made available for their publication, which promises to be the case shortly.

G. J. H.

W. BROOK, MANCHESTER.—Mr. SOUTHWELL, in reply to his inquiry, says, with regard to Mr. Brook—"I have not received his note. The *Guardians* regularly come to hand. Convey my thanks to him, if you find opportunity." G. J. H. Remarks upon "Hissing an Atheist" next week. T. H. W. declined.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c.

E. P., London.. .. .	£5 0 0
W. W. Cobham	0 10 0
W. J. Cobham	0 5 0
John Haxton	0 2 6
Friends to Free Inquiry, Yorkshire, city..	0 10 0
London.	M. RYALL, Gen. Sec.

Particulars of the sum forwarded by Mr. Watts, as per last no. :—

Collected at Hall of Science	10s. 0d.
" Hyde	4 0
Tristram Shandy	1 0
A few Friends to Free In. per T. S.	16 8
Robt. Tamplin	1 0—1 12 8

Birming., Mr. Wright, 1s., Mr. Padham, 1s.	£0 2 0
Preston, per Mr. Drummond	0 5 2
Rochdale Hall of Science, per Mr. Farn ..	1 5 0
Congleton Social In., per Mr. Burslam ..	0 5 0
Nottingham Branch, per John Davies ..	0 15 0
A Few Friends near Northampton, sub. card	0 5 0

SHEFFIELD, PER G. JULIAN HARNEY,
From June 23 to July 25.

Mr. Hodgkinson	£0 2 10
Messrs. Crow and Tyrrell, Leicester ..	0 2 0
Mr. Joshua Hobson, Leeds	0 10 0
Five Friends	0 0 10
A few Friends to Religious Freedom, Leicester ..	0 5 6
Proceeds of a Festival held at the Hall of Science, Sheffield, July 5, 1842	1 0 0
Mr. Hodgkinson	0 1 1
Mr. H. Case, subscription card	0 3 4
A Friend, per Mr. Case	0 2 0
Mr. Stevenson, subscription card	0 2 7

Birmingham. B. NICHOLLS, *Prov. Sec.*
All persons having cards filled; or partly filled, are particularly requested to forward them immediately to the Secretary.

HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL:

On Saturday, August 27, in conjunction with the *Oracle*, but so as to be separated and bound up by itself, will be published the First Number of G. J. HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL, at Gloucester, for BLASPHEMY. Specially Reported. Price 1d.

Now Publishing, in Numbers, at 1½d. each,
THE JUSTLY CELEBRATED
Y A H O O !

Printed and Published by G. J. HOLYOAKE, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, and Sold by all Liberal Booksellers. Agent for Bristol, J. Chappel, News Agent, Narrow Wine-street; Macclesfield, Mr. Roche, Hall of Science; Barnsley, Mr. Thos. Lingard, New-street; Preston, Jas. Drummond, 112, Friar-gate.

Saturday, July 30, 1842.

SUPPLEMENT TO
THE ORACLE OF REASON:

OR, PHILOSOPHY VINDICATED.

EDITED BY G. J. HOLYOAKE.—PRICE ONE PENNY.

CIRCULAR OF THE ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION:

TO ASSERT AND MAINTAIN THE RIGHT OF FREE DISCUSSION, AND TO PROTECT
AND DEFEND THE VICTIMS OF INTOLERANCE AND BIGOTRY.

TREASURER: J. WATSON, 5, Paul's Alley, Paternoster Row, London.

SECRETARY: M. RYALL, 8, Holywell Street, Strand.

8, Holywell-Street, Strand, London, July 19, 1842.

It is now forced on the attention of all parties, that "Liberty of Speech," the Briton's boast, and "Freedom of the Press," his supposed palladium, are mere chimeras or fancy pictures, which the admirers of the "glorious constitution" delight to eulogise, but which the continued acts of authority and power show to be naught but fictions. The real liberty of speech is the liberty to speak as allowed by the dignitaries of the state church, and the liberty of the press is the limits prescribed by the attorney-general. Recognizances, securities, judge-made and parson-justice-administered law, police and private espionage, meet at every step the free-thinker and the free-writer. The "right of private judgment" is a hollow pretence put forth by one sect to exalt themselves at the expense of another, instead of a great principle inclusive of all opinions without reference to time or place. High and noble efforts have been made by bold enthusiastic men to resist the tyranny of power, and who, in winning for others a nearer approach to justice, have fallen sacrifices themselves. Not only so, but numerous as have been the supporters of such arduous struggles, and large the assistance rendered in proportion to the numbers and the means, the fight has still to be fought again—the full and complete triumph has yet to be achieved.

It has become necessary to adopt for the protection of Free Discussion, the plan so effectual for the furtherance of the narrower purposes of party or faction. "Union is strength." It has been strength to partizans; it shall be strength to the lovers of liberty. A union is now evoked, not for the promulgation of dogma religions or new religions, but for the protection of all who may be disposed to publish their speculations on all subjects, being assured that the only legitimate correction for erroneous doctrine is free public investigation and discussion. With such views the Anti-Persecution Union has been formed.

Its *principle*, that of the right to the free publication of opinion.

Its *objects*, the promulgation of such principle, and the attainment and maintenance of that right.

Its *means*, the organisation of an association for the periodical collection of funds, to be managed by a committee selected by subscribers.

The promulgation of the principle will be at first necessarily confined to occasional addresses by the committee, with every other information calculated to benefit the cause. It is in contemplation, when the resources

are adequately strengthened, to publish a periodical organ, and issue tracts. Public and friendly meetings have already taken place, and will be convened from time to time to rally the friends of freedom, diffuse more correct information and assist the movement generally. The obtainment and maintenance of the right to freedom of expression will be comprised in the defence and support of the victims of persecution, until the iniquitous laws are either virtually or constitutionally abrogated. The union will recognise *all* as having claims on their assistance, who may be interfered with by the law in the publication of speculative opinions. No money qualification, by subscription or otherwise, will be required as a title to the society's support. This support will have no reference whatever to the kind of opinion, whether religious or anti-religious, orthodox or heterodox, nor to the style or manner of the language, which is understood to be a mere matter of taste, to be decided by the individual and the public. Thus, Christian, Jew, Turk, Theist, Pantheist, or Atheist, all of every sect or no sect at all, are embraced in the scope of the society's operations.

The actual business of the organisation will be the collection, receipt, and disbursement of the funds for the defence of the prosecuted, the alleviation of their condition, if subject to prison discipline, and the support of those dependent on them, and the arousing of the public to a sense of the iniquity of all measures to shackle the mind; the collection of a body of information for the service of all sufferers for conscience-sake, is also occupying the attention of the union. These proceedings include operations of a varied and complicated description. A rapid outline of past proceedings will serve to show what may be expected with extended means.

In the case of Charles Southwell, the best legal assistance was secured, as far as required, and the most eminent counsel were consulted at every step; large and sympathising public meetings were called, and contributed to the objects; the assistance of Henry Hetherington and William Carpenter was obtained at his trial; a full and accurate report was extensively circulated; an ample allowance has been supplied daily at the prison; memorials and petitions have been presented to the houses of parliament and the queen, and other important aid has been afforded, not only to Southwell but all future sufferers. Finally, a nucleus, now principally occupied with the affairs of Holyoake and the two Adams's, has been formed for the "Anti-Persecution Union."

A Public Account will be rendered, at the end of the quarter, of the proceedings of the union, when auditors, a committee, treasurer, and secretary will be appointed by the subscribers.

The warm responses that have already succeeded our appeals, and the increasing contributions from various parts of the country, as well as the metropolis, afford grounds for hope greatly exceeding previous anticipations. It will be best for each to act as though the success of the great and noble movement depended on his individual exertion, and a speedy defeat of all the mind-restrictive laws must be the result.

The Machinery of the Union is as follows:—The number of collectors in London now exceeds eighty; we calculate on one hundred. Each has a book: dated, numbered, and signed, and having printed instructions. The book is to enter periodical subscriptions, and any sum, however small, and at any period, however short (as little as a penny per week), to suit the circumstances of the subscribers. Circles of collectors are being organised in the provinces; the books to be issued by the liberal publishers and their known friends. Penny subscription cards will be substituted for books for the use of those who collect under a shilling weekly.

Subscription sheets for casual donations or subscriptions are issued to the liberal institutions or places of resort, where they may be advantageously located. These may be obtained by known friends, or those who can give known references, by applying to the Secretary. Drafts of petitions, and all other information, furnished on application. Donations, &c. to be transmitted to the Treasurer, Mr. WATSON, St. Paul's Alley, London. Returns will be periodically published of the result of the collections; no names will be printed of collectors or subscribers without permission. Names and addresses are requested both in London and the country of either active or passive friends; such, for instance, as could collect or subscribe; who can advantageously dispose of subscription sheets or otherwise assist the cause. It is requested that all those who still hold books and subscriptions for Mr. Southwell will hand them over to the committee. There are arrears of subscriptions in Whitechapel, London, and in Bolton, Lancashire.

M. RYALL, SECRETARY.

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## THE RECENT PROSECUTIONS FOR BLASPHEMY, AND INTENDED ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

ON Monday evening, June 21st, a PUBLIC MEETING took place at the Social Institution, John-street, Tottenham-court-road, London, for the purpose of taking into consideration the cases of CHARLES SOUTHWELL, now undergoing his sentence of twelve months' imprisonment in Bristol gaol, for blasphemy alleged to be contained in the *Oracle of Reason*; of GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, present editor of the same publication, now under bond to take his trial for the same offence, said to have been committed at Cheltenham; and of GEORGE ADAMS and HARRIET ADAMS, his wife, also out on bail for vending the same publication.

The business was opened by the Secretary of the Defence Fund reporting to the meeting the circumstances connected with the arrest and imprisonment of the above-named persons, and the course the committee had adopted with reference to them. He stated, in the first place, that the committee repudiated any identity of opinion with either the prosecuted parties or their antagonists, and took the part they did, on the broad and easily defined ground of the right of every man to the free expression of his opinion, without reference to the *kind* of opinion, or the manner of putting it forth. Their purpose now was, in the resolutions which they had prepared for the public approval and support, to assert, first the general principle; next to obtain immediate pecuniary assistance; and, thirdly, to organise an association, which should continue to assert and maintain the rights of conscience, so long as they were menaced, or in danger of being menaced, by unjust power.

The first resolution, as follows, was moved by Mrs. MARTIN, and carried unanimously:—"That this meeting express their strong disapprobation of all legal interference with the free expression of opinion, and considering the public neglect, or disapproval, the only legitimate correction of erroneous doctrines, do emphatically deprecate the recent prosecutions for the alleged crime of blasphemy, as unjust and impolitic."

The second resolution was moved by Mr. BAKER, and seconded by Mr. BLUMENFIELD, the talented author of the "New Ecce Homo," whose observations forcibly recalled to his hearers the impassioned language of that work, and were received with acclamation, it was as follows:—"That this meeting deeply sympathises with the victims of bigotry and intolerance—Charles Southwell, George Jacob Holyoake, George Adams, and Mrs. Adams—and resolve that a subscription shall be collected for defraying the expenses of their defence and support."

Mr. BLUMENFIELD spoke to the following effect: Friends,—Before I venture to pronounce a few broken words on the subject for which we are assembled, I must make you know that I am a foreigner. It may happen that there be amongst us one two or many of those loyal and dutiful men who are charged to teach the people the sublime and mysterious sciences, of calling out “Hurrah! and Hosea!” when they meet with hereditary body-eaters, or with sanctioned soul-eaters. It may happen, I say, that such loyal and dutiful men are amongst us, who would say to me, “Sir, you are a foreigner, an exile, you ought not to be here; and if you are here, you ought not to speak against our gracious masters, whose protection you enjoy.” To these dutiful and loyal men I would say this, you are a little wrong, my good gentlemen, your masters do by no means protect me; if I am allowed in England to swallow the air for nothing, and half a pound of beefsteak for fourpence, which I earn by my labour, I owe my gratitude to the law of hospitality, which has been made in the name of the nation, and not to your masters. I dare say I ought not to be here; that I ought not to speak here! What, you loyal and dutiful men, do you mean to insinuate that I am a smuggler? When I came over from Calais to London, you asked me at the custom-house if I have brought with me French laces, French brandy, French eggs? But you did not put your fingers into my brains and into my heart, to see whether I had there concealed republican ideas, and republican feelings, you did not even ask after such articles; and now you say I must not go to a democratic meeting, as if my words were contraband. That is not fair, loyal gentlemen. I will, however; abstain myself from speaking, if the people are not inclined to listen to a foreigner on a subject that concerns every man of the world! People! Will you allow me to speak a word on blasphemy? (Yes, yes!) Well, I will speak, then. Blasphemy is a compounded Greek word, and may be translated, “the injured word of god,” or “an insult to god.” Now what do you think of a god who is sensible to an insult, from one of his poor creatures? Is there a man upon earth who can reconcile his idea and feelings of the greatness and perfection of the creator of myriads of worlds and beings, with the knowledge that the same creator can be offended like a girl of eighteen years of age, when her lover, not knowing her age, is so ungallant as to guess twenty-five? And with all the weakness and silliness of the girl, does she not appear much more justified of feeling herself offended by the error of her lover, than a god? The lover sees the girl, but who sees god? God offended! Can such a miserable god exist? He does exist the priests say. Well, let us believe one moment on the existence of such a childish god; for the sake of argument; let us even suppose, with our fat bible-bankers, that man can give a black eye to the fame of a god, or give a good kicking to his holy name, but do they not say, at the same time, that god is powerful? That he punishes himself the crimes or offences committed against him? Do they not say that god drowned the wicked contemporaries of Noah; that he burnt Sodom; that he tempted poor Pharaoh to sin, and punished him afterwards with ten plagues? Do they not say, that there is no sin which god does not punish, or by his vassal the devil? Why does now the church assume the character of her devilish god, or of her divine devil, in punishing a Southwell and a Holyoake for blasphemies? Is there no more god or devil? Does the church think god alive and doing well, why does she interfere in his business? Is god dead (a very bad thing for priests)?

Why punish an imaginary blasphemy? Are the bishops so mad as to forget all that is due to this great destroying god? No, friends, they are not mad! There is a secret in it. Listen, listen to me! The pope, the bishops, the parsons ARE ATHEISTS! Atheists? Do they not point out with their fingers to heaven, and whisper in the ears of men, that there is a god? But hear me! hear me! I have told you but half of the secret. They are pickpockets! They show with one hand, heaven, and with the other pick your pockets! The old and new testament, the creed, the prayer-book, are their enchanting keys to your treasures. There was a man in Switzerland, Gesler was his name, his hat is become famous in the world. He hung his hat on a tree, and compelled the people to kneel down to it. The people did kneel before the hat, for it belonged to their tyrant. Christianity, my friends, is the hat of the priests, which they have planted on the heights of the world, and the people do kneel down before it, for they fear the hell of the priests! This, my friends, is the great secret of centuries, which in the dark ages no tongue dared to reveal! I do reveal it, they can burn me, if they like—and if they can. After this revelation you know, my friends, why they persecute for blasphemy. But now we may ask, what has Mr. Southwell and Mr. Holyoake done to their hat, as to justify their persecution? "Oh," the priests say, "they spat upon it." They did so, I admit; but would it not have been wiser for the hat proprietors to wipe it silently clean again, without kicking up a dust about it? Is it not dangerous, extremely dangerous, for a thief to prosecute a man who called him thief? Are not the priests fools in rendering themselves suspected to the public mind, by their noisy proceedings? No, they are not fools, these poor devils are in a great dilemma; they float between two dangers, the one greater than the other: in short, the people's head and the people's stomach, are now this terrible Scylla and Charybdis. They fear the people's head, but they fear more the people's stomach. Do you know, friends, why the poor Irish women smoke? They smoke in order to forget that they are hungry. This the priests know. They see that the empty stomach of the English people is now in an agitation which threatens most horribly their full stomachs. The people's stomach presents a frightful sight to them. It is empty, it convulses, it burns, it agitates every muscle of the body, it makes the hands and feet to tremble, it throws in the eyes a light, which leads to the grave, it opens the mouth as willing to swallow the universe; the priests are perplexed, they tremble, they fear to be swallowed by the people's stomach, they know not what to do. They see hungry Irish women smoke, they take the hint, and they put quick in the mouth of the people, the burning pipe of blasphemy, in order that they may forget that they are hungry. Curses to them! Curses to their god! For they give to man the bible, and they take away his reason; they give to man their god, and they take away his bread. Curses to them all! curses!! curses!!! And let us admire, henceforth, that god who has given us reason and bread; and when such a god will be acknowledged by man, then history will be no more an epitaph of nations, whom kings and priests have murdered under the bloody banners of their gospel and their god!

The third resolution, moved by Mr. Pollard, seconded by a gentleman on the platform, stated "That the meeting recommend the im-

mediate formation of an 'Anti-Persecution Union,' to be superintended provisionally by the present committee, that they report progress during the next quarter, and that a public meeting, convened especially, the subscribers present, be invited to choose auditors to examine the accounts." Carried unanimously.—The Secretary then entered into an explanation of the future intentions of the committee, who would gladly, he observed, have deputed their duties, which had been extremely onerous, to others; but aware of the difficulty of inducing individuals to act except under the influence of a well-organised association, they would use their utmost endeavours to get the union into an efficient acting order throughout the kingdom, in the course of a week or ten days; and had confident hopes of being able to present a most favourable report of improved public opinion and extensively enlarged support, by the time it became their duty to publish their progress.

The meeting, after a vote of thanks to the *Dispatch*, *Cheltenham Free Press*, and *National Association Gazette*, for their bold, able, and efficient advocacy of the noble cause which they had met to support, retired. A number of volunteers presented themselves to be enrolled as active co-operators in the forthcoming struggle.

*Speech of Mr. Holyoake immediately preceding his arrest.*

Mr. HOLYOAKE returned thanks to the chartists of Cheltenham, for allowing him the use of the room, and proposed a resolution denouncing the imprisonment of CHARLES SOUTHWELL as impolitic, unjust and immoral. He said—I do not remember my saying there was no god. I did not say that then, I believe. It is perfectly true that it is my opinion. I would defend it before any one, but not before the police. Their's are arguments I don't understand, and although their inferences are very *striking* they are not in the category of logic. He quoted from an article by "Publicola" in the *Dispatch*, and agreed with the sentiment expressed, that "policeism is of infinitely more importance, as far as the protection of society goes, than providencism." He said—"It would be putting me on very unfair ground to lay down the bible, and if I doubted one word, that a cold cell should be my portion, and yet tell me to search the scriptures and determine for myself. It is trepanning me into error. I hope the day is coming when no kind of dogma can be uttered which shall interfere with truth and justice. England has been famed for her intelligence, and I would ask you how you have so become but by free inquiry? There shall be no subject in heaven or earth, sacred or profane, that I will not attack or investigate. I care not how it is bolstered up by law, if there is error, corruption and crime there, I for one, will have the pleasure of pointing it out." He quoted from a sermon by the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, in which he asked "shall we be ever free inquirers into everything else but drivellers in religion." He continued—"I have never been accustomed to vapour about liberty, to talk about truth, I have never been practised in speaking about justice without knowing what I mean by liberty, truth, and justice. When I speak of free inquiry, I endeavour to act upon it; when I speak of liberty, I endeavour to obtain it; and when I speak of truth, I am not afraid of any difficulty in searching it out. How came Mr. Close and all the myrmidons belonging to him in possession of their religion but by doing the very same thing that I am doing—

by quarrelling with the *ipse dixit* of those who went before them. The progenitors of Mr. Close were burned at the stake, and tortured at the rack to gain the system by which he gets his living. What right has any man to assume that he has all truth? Truth can only be obtained by discussion. It is wide as the universe—eternal as the heavens—and no man can get the whole of it. When they come to threaten me with legal enactments, they have some interest, they have some lock on your liberty. Men do not make themselves instruments of gross justice unless they have something from which to deter you. The best interests of your pockets have ever been chained to the car of religion, and as long as it is so, they will prevent you approaching it. I have seen men devoting themselves to justice, and the ministers of religion have been foremost in frightening men away, by calling them blasphemers. I will defy any one to contradict it. I will not only prove that the different systems are entirely wrong, but that it is the most unfortunate thing that they ever existed in any shape or kind. Charles Southwell wrote eleven lines and a half against the bible, which he called the Jew-Book, because they, the Jews, wrote it, and it is an affair of their own, for this he was sent to a gaol for a twelvemonth, and fined £100, which amounts to perpetual imprisonment; while so many idle well-fed parsons did not endeavour to refute what he wrote." (He referred to the writings of "Historicus," in the *Morning Chronicle*.) He proceeded—"Now, mark you, with regard to free inquiry, Will you grant that error is useful? He that grants that may shut up his book, his eyes, and his ears, for you can always go wrong without trouble. Truth then is necessary, but there is no way of getting at it but by discussion. No man can put up a standard of truth. To say that the bible is a standard of truth is utterly idle and absurd. Nobody can prove it. Why did it not teach those men who went to the *Chronicle* to come and answer me? If they could not do that, why did not they bring their employers, their big brothers, as the children would say, and if they were not able, Mr. Close himself, for he is better paid than I am? I saw Charles Southwell in prison, and so far from it having altered his opinions, he will come out, to use a phrase from the Jew-Book, like a giant refreshed with new wine. It would be useful to grant to every human being the right to speak whatever seems to him honest and just. You might then repose with safety on the honesty of those who speak. So long as you punish men for stating their honest sentiments, you bribe men to deceive you. One word about the religion with which I have been charged of speaking against—of violating. What kind of religion is that, or morality which tends to make men better, which comes forward with policemen to hear every word uttered, and with cold dungeons to make me a liar? That is the evil of religion, against which I lift my voice, and which I as heartily abhor, and more so than I ever did in my life. When I was much younger, I had the advantage of a pious mother. I lisped the accents of piety; I read; I thought; I prayed. I feel how much valuable time I wasted, when I have dared to dissent from that, and if any person should search the scriptures under my directions, they will be placed in dungeons. This has made me execrate the name of religion, and made me regret that I ever heard the name of it; the conduct that is being pursued towards me, will strengthen those sentiments, and no punishment will induce me to recant those sentiments.

I look on men as my brothers. I regard those men who reported it, not with feelings of hatred. I would assist them if I had the power, but I abhor their principles. Those I believe to be wrong, and I do them the honour to tell them so. The course which these persons take with regard to religion, is not only impolitic, but it is unjust, and has an immoral tendency. Christianity will permit you to be a detestable rascal, but it won't permit you to be an honest man without giving you a twelvemonth's imprisonment—*Cheltenham Free Press.*

When the meeting (says the *Dispatch*) which was most respectably attended, broke up, Superintendent Russel, of the Cheltenham Police, presented himself to the lecturer, with an intimation that he was instructed to arrest him. Mr. Holyoake desired to see the magistrates' warrant authorising the caption. The superintendent admitted that *no warrant had been issued.* The lecturer, however, agreed to accompany the officer to the police-court; where Robert Capper and John Overbury Esqrs., and the Rev. T. B. Newall were sitting. The prisoner was charged with blasphemy. He asked "whether persons might be arrested, and dragged from their homes, without a warrant?" Mr. Capper instantly advanced the monstrous doctrine that "Any person in a public assembly has a right to arrest an individual who speaks blasphemously." Mr. Overbury added that "he did not care what religion the prisoner might profess; but that no one must be allowed to propagate doctrines contrary to the law." Thus, these worthy magistrates were quite indifferent to the state of the prisoner's mind, and only anxious to display their petty despotism. They ordered him to find bail, himself in £100, and two sureties in £50 each, to answer the charge at the Sessions. Bail was immediately tendered by two respectable housekeepers. We cannot, however, dismiss this case without a few observations. The proceeding of arresting a man without a warrant, in this instance, was entirely opposed to the common practice of the written law, and should not be allowed to pass without investigation by the secretary of the home department. Mr. Overbury, who cared nothing for the state of the prisoner's mind, and was only anxious to *vindicate* the law, commenced the whole proceedings by *violating* the law, in directing the arrest without a warrant. But as the entire case was argued upon the "common unwritten law," another mode of practice was required, as unconstitutional and despotic as the adoption of a law "unwritten," and consequently, ill-defined. Again, even if a breach of the peace were proved to have been committed, the *intent* remained to be shown, and this point was not even touched upon. But there was no breach of the peace—no intent. The charge was blasphemy—an ill-defined crime, which any Mussulman, Hindoo, or Jew, who happens to reside in this country, must, necessarily, commit every day. Without here entering into any discussion upon the merits of sectarian opinions, we will, however, boldly assert that every man has a right to entertain and proclaim his own.

#### HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL.

On Saturday, August 27, in conjunction with the *Oracle*, but so as to be separated and bound up by itself, will be published the First Number of G. J. HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL, at Gloucester, for BLASPHEMY. Specially Reported. Price 1d.

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# THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 33.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.  
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

## DEBATES IN PARLIAMENT ON THE PENDING PROSECUTION FOR BLASPHEMY.

“There is a rabble amongst the gentry as well as the commonalty; a sort of plebeian heads, whose fancy moves with the same wheel as these; men in the same level with mechanics, though their fortunes do somewhat gild their infirmities, and their purses compound for their follies.”—Sir T. BROWN.

IF in this extract is written “men *below* the level of mechanics,” Sir T. Brown may be supposed to be speaking of my Christian friends, the Cheltenham Daniels.

I was in the House of Commons on Monday night, July 18, when Mr. Roebuck, the member for Bath, asked the secretary for the home department for the correspondence relative to the “improper committal of a person named Holyoake, in Cheltenham.” Sir Jas. Graham owned that “*serious irregularities* had been committed by the Cheltenham magistrates, and he had expressed his opinion to them to that effect.” But he declined to furnish the correspondence required, “as *legal proceedings might arise* out of what had occurred.” Now if these magistrates could not without “serious irregularity” administer the law lying on the table before them, are they not much more likely to commit “serious irregularities” with regard to the defence of god, whom I presume did not lie upon their tables, at least I did not see him if he did, nor was he observable anywhere else in the office, unless the fiendism of Bubb and the bench were evidences of his presence. Then why not produce the correspondence? When the servants of the public convert a court of justice into an inquisition, and instruct policemen to act the part of *Spanish familiars* of cursed memory, to drag people secretly, and without warrant, in the dead of night to loathsome dungeons, why should parliament, who boasts the freedom and virtues of the British constitution, refuse the public the means of correcting such atrocious proceedings? No answer can be given but that it is the genius of christianity so to act when a supine public opinion permits, and for certain state reasons its enormities must be winked at.

On the Thursday night, the Hon. Mr. Craven Berkeley rose in the house on behalf

of the magistrates, with the view of relieving them from the “imputation which the expression ‘serious irregularities’ had cast upon them.” He sought to justify his attempt by a sophistical reference to the 2nd and 3rd of Vic., the 3rd sec. of which act, he argued, gave the magistrates in petty sessions assembled no control over the constables in the discharge of their duties. Sir James Graham soon exposed this fallacy by asserting that his “observations more properly applied to the capture of Holyoake and the unnecessary harshness used in his conveyance from the magistrates’ office.” Mr. Berkeley made no attempt to deny anything, only to shift the blame to the constables. He also bore “his testimony to the high character for *honor! UPRIGHTNESS!! and JUSTICE!!!* which so eminently distinguished the three gentlemen who adjudicated in my case.” These gentlemen were Messrs. Capper and Overbury and the Rev. Mr. Newall; whatever their character was, I am sure that now it is anything but enviable, and Mr. Berkeley will never succeed in wiping away the stigma their treatment of me has attached to it. I suppose it was *honourable* to send me to gaol because I did not, after lecturing on sincerity conclude with an act of hypocrisy; and after recommending truth round my period with lies. It was *uprightness*, peradventure, to receive evidence against me on the *belief* of the witnesses, and reject my bail because they did not do more than believe concerning their property. It was *justice* in the Rev. Mr. Newall to declare that they could have no quibbling in court, while he was committing me to gaol because I did not quibble and lie too, in a lecture room. It was creditable in them to tell me, as Capper did, that I was unfit to be argued with, since I did not entertain the crotchety notion of god they held. Such a speech half a century ago would have ended in my being torn into pieces; and had the populace in the court been half as brutally bigotted as the bench, I should have been so then. If these things, Mr. Craven Berkeley, constitute that conduct you call honourable, upright, and just, you must refer exclusively to the magistrates *as Christians*, for no conduct could be more disgraceful to them *as men*. Even the magistrates at the petty sessions,

Messrs. Cooper and Jones, grossly misrepresented to Sir James Graham the facts of a memorial I addressed to him in Gloucester gaol. Thus no means have been left untried to prevent me obtaining justice in any way. I dispatched to Sir J. Graham corrections of the misrepresentations to him, and also a letter to the editor of the *Cheltenham Free Press*, and since its appearance the *Examiner*, a paper that with peculiar Christian kindness classed me with Francis, the regicide, has admitted that if my statements are true, "the magistrates greatly overstepped their duty." How finely contrasts with Bubb, "boobies," and parliamentary panegyrists of Christian infamies, the decided, useful, and manly tone of the *Old Fellow* :—

We believe that the persons who set blasphemy prosecutions going, receive a great deal too much of apology even from those most opposed to their tyrannical conduct. They pretend to be actuated by disinterested motives, and thus not only get assistance, and sympathy, and *cash*, from the weak-minded of the believers, but also, from the public generally, receive that sort of respectful consideration which is awarded the conscientious performers of an action, however vile that action may in itself be considered. And we would like to put an end to this. We are ambitious to hold up prosecutors of blasphemy in their true colors, as *malignantly* stinging a man because he sympathises not with their religious feelings, and because he is striving so to alter other men that they will not sympathise with them either.\*

This is precisely as it should be, and persecutors ought to be so understood and estimated. The following remarks from the pen of the editor, upon the words which gave rise to the present prosecution, breathe a healthy and refreshing moral tone, belonging rather to the days of Regulus and Epaminondas than to the nineteenth century.

We cannot refrain from saying, that under the peculiar circumstances, Mr. Holyoake (presuming his disbelief in a god to be sincere) could not have said other than he did say, and at the same time have continued honest. It is true, he was not asked, "Do you believe in a god?" but a question was put to him which assumed his belief in a god, and had he not testified at once his disbelief, he would have sanctioned the false assumption: and if not a liar, would have been at least the permitter of a lie; between which is no distinction recognised by an honourable man. In arguing thus, we would not express any sympathy whatever with Mr. Holyoake's atheism, we are merely concerned to show that it was not Mr. Holyoake's right alone, but absolutely his DUTY, to say that "he did not believe in a god." It was his duty, if it be the duty of man to be honest; he could not have spoken otherwise, unless he had "lied against his heart," and lied towards mankind.

The odd fellows, with an organ breathing such lofty and noble sentiments, may consider themselves *lucky fellows*. A few lines in the spirit of the last extract are worth volumes of that cold and heedless expediency now so fashionable. A paper to which reference has often been made in this, of much higher pretensions to moralising the world than the *Odd Fellow*, does not, in twelve months pronounce so cheering a eulogy on unqualified truth as that conveyed in the quotation made. G. J. H.

\* See *Odd Fellow*, July 23.

ARGUMENT "A POSTERIORI,"  
FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

"The lord hath made all things for himself; even the wicked for the day of evil."—JEW BOOK.

WE are really surprised, not to say shocked, at the wickedness of the present age. Men are actually found to deny the existence of a personal intelligent deity. To ourselves there is no truth plainer, and we are inclined equally to condemn the lecturer, with two hundred feet of diagram to prove it, and his employers the Bishops of Chester and Norwich, with the Atheist himself. The very fact of their employing a man to prove it, shows that they themselves consider it a debateable point, and perhaps we should not be far wrong if we were to say that they doubt its truth; at any rate, they either want confidence in the power or will of god to prove his own existence. If god has not the power to prove his own existence, the employment of John Brindley to help him is excusable; if he lacks the will, then the work of *honest* John, being opposed to the will of god, is the work of the devil.

We should not ourselves have taken up the subject, so plain do we consider it, only that an oft-repeated lie is at last believed as true, and men have so long been told that it is a difficult question, that they seldom bring common sense to the discussion. We say the truth of the existence and providence of god is plain, even to doubt it is to us a mark of idiocy! Look around society, view its complicated arrangements, try to comprehend them—we defy you! You may suppose, if you please, that it was at first simple, and that the blunders of men have brought it to its present anomalous position; you may reason to try to prove it, but you have no facts, and all is suppositious when you have done. You will perhaps tell us society is not happy, and point to the different sects and parties into which we are divided; you will show us nation at war with nation, and people quarrelling with people, as if their nature were made for strife; you may point to the reigning monarch, trembling for her life, unable to move abroad without fear of assassination, and to the condemned culprit about to be murdered by the law for committing a murder against the law; to the rich rolling in luxury, pining in idleness, sloth, and disease, and to the poor toiling for dirty water, under the name of soup, and to all classes between, proving all miserable, and ask if we can, seeing all these anomalies, advocate the existence of a god? These are the very things to instance for the proof; for we know that "high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts;" how can we expect to understand the ways of god? If we could understand and appreciate what we call god's ways and doings it would amount to proof that there exists no being higher than man; it is

sufficient for us to know that "god hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; yea and things which are not hath god chosen to bring to nought the things which are." We can understand what we call goodness well enough, because it is the way of man, and is consistent, but we cannot understand what we term evil, because it is of god, and we know not its function. We have no wish to deny the existence of evil, we know that society is wicked and miserable, and we know that its arrangements are complicated and anomalous; so twisted and twined, that the best of intellects cannot unravel the mystery, and this is our stronghold for the existence of deity; that it would require the ingenuity and forethought of a god to design, plan, execute, and keep in existence such a hell as we have upon earth! Man is ever striving to improve; all his aspirations are onward toward a higher destiny which he sees in prospect and wishes to fulfil; and this is not the feelings of one man alone, it belongs to the race, it is an attribute of the whole family. How could man produce what he cannot understand, and how prevent the realization of the very thing he is struggling to attain? No! Who seeth not "that it is not of him that runneth, but god giveth the victory?" The power of a god alone could prevent us from possessing, and yet we deny his existence. If there were no other proof, we should rest secure upon the fulfilment of prophecy, "I will laugh at your calamities and mock when your fear cometh;" who can deny the fulfilment of this promise; who, when they see men put out of the union bastille by the shoulders, when they apply for relief; and hear the jeer of the overseer—who does not recognise the *vice-gerent* of god, and appreciate his loud and soul-harrowing laugh; who that knows of hundreds petitioning, after their bridewell term has expired, to be allowed to remain, subject to all the rules of the prison, and they are thrust out; who does not recognise bad times as a *judgment*, and see that god mocks our fears? Can Atheists deny the existence of god after this? If so, let us have their strong reasons; if not, let the question rest for ever.

W.

THE "NATIONAL ASSOCIATION GAZETTE" & MR. HOLYOAKE.

"It is possible that Mr. Holyoake, as an individual is above the narrowness of intellect which can see no truth but in its own conceptions, but the publication with which Mr. Holyoake is connected, and from which alone we formed our opinion, was, we must in candour say, conducted in the most scurrilous and one-sided spirit. Were we to listen to the opinions of this *Oracle*, we should believe that christianity had existed in vain, and that it was from its origin a system of the grossest falsehood, trickery, and deceit. Every epithet of abuse was cast upon Christians, and the source from which they derived their faith; and although we do not

pretend to say that Mr. Holyoake is responsible for this, he could hardly blame us for thinking so, before we received his disclaimer."—*N.A. Gazette*.

SOME few weeks since the editor of the above, in common with other papers, made some remarks upon Mr. H.'s arrest and imprisonment for blasphemy; and whilst he warmly deprecated the course pursued, expressed it as his opinion that Mr. HOLYOAKE was as bigotted in his disbelief as his opponents were in their belief. To this Mr. H., in a letter to the editor, objects; and the above is extracted from the *Gazette*, of July 16, under the head of "Persecutions for opinions."

The editor of the *Gazette*, it would appear, formed his opinions of Mr. H. from certain writings in the *Oracle*, about, I should presume, the time of the latter's arrest (see O. 25, p 201); were it so, I am the bigot, and not G. J. H. Should I be correct in my surmise, one of two reasons would appear to have led to the charge upon Mr. H. instead of upon the writer whose initials were attached; either the supposition that the editor of the *Oracle* writes under different initials, which is saying but little for his honesty; or that he inserts only such opinions as square with his own, which is saying no more for his liberality. Neither supposition, however, would be correct. I do not for a moment expect the editor of the *Gazette* reads or sees the *Oracle* weekly, or he would have perceived the notice inserted more than once, that the initials to all the articles are the genuine ones of the writers, as far as the editor has any means of ascertaining. Whether the cap belongs to me or not, I care but little, it fits as though 'twere made purposely, and I am content to wear it for the present.

The *Oracle* is charged with being "conducted in the most scurrilous and one-sided spirit!" What a *liberal* charge for a *partizan* paper! Is not the *Gazette* the avowed and determined enemy of whig and tory; whilst the *Oracle* is the enemy of every species of villany, whether political or religious? Will the *Gazette* fill its columns with *equal* arguments for tory, whig, suffrage, and chartism? No! But the editor might say, our columns are open to the discussion of these questions with our opponents. And who informed the editor of the *Gazette* that ours were not equally open to fair disputants on the side of religion or godd.sm? The individuals connected with this paper are disbelievers in divinity under any form; either as Jehovah, Christ, Brahma, Veeshnu, or Mohammed, and are earnestly labouring to destroy the belief in others, from a conviction of its baneful effects upon society. How do they do this? By combating the *strongest* arguments used by believers, in a candid spirit, devoid of shuffling; and this they can challenge any one to disprove. To say the *Oracle* is *one-sided* is no good objection to it,

since every paper is one-sided that takes the side of truth against error.

To the charge of "scurrility," I would simply remark (so much has already appeared in these pages upon the subject of "style") that men generally write *their own* thoughts, and not other people's. The language I used expressed *my feelings*, and was not intended to represent those of the editor of the *Gazette*.

The editor says, "were we to listen to the opinions of this *Oracle*, we should believe that christianity had existed in vain, and that it was from its origin a system of the grossest falsehood, trickery, and deceit." My opinion of christianity is, that it is the *greatest curse* ever inflicted upon the world; and that it has retarded civilisation in Europe, where it has had the most extended rule, and degraded and brutalised humanity.

With fee-faw-fum and mummy beguiled,  
The Yahoo's brains are addled when a child;  
And when adult, he learns from godly books,  
The lord's best pleased when he has dismal looks.  
The Christian's *blessed* book has *curst* the earth,  
And brought them strife and war, instead of mirth.\*

If any good can be pointed to as legitimately resulting from the *doctrines* of Christ—let the editor of the *Gazette* show it. He has, in common with others, assumed that christianity has been beneficial, that it has *not* "existed in vain," let us have the proof, that we may no longer remain in error.

I would give the editor of the *Gazette* one or two reasons why I believe christianity cannot be other than a curse wherever *acted* upon, a destroyer of social happiness in whatever community it exists. The basis of christianity is the *belief* that man has fallen, degenerated; that he was once happy and virtuous, but that, disobeying the commands of his creator, he sinned, and blotched his fair escutcheon. Philosophy discards the opinion that man has fallen, contending that he has never risen. Man comes into existence in ignorance of his own nature, and of the elements by which he is surrounded, and this ignorance daily and hourly places him in opposition to those modes of nature's operations which militate against his happiness and the welfare of his organisation; and it is only by dearly bought experience he acquires wisdom, practises virtue, and enjoys comparative happiness. Religion says, man is born in sin; philosophy says, in ignorance; but ignorance leads to sin or immorality, and the terms sin and ignorance, with this explanation, are convertible. Man, then, in his infancy or ignorant state, is continually led to sin against, or act in opposition to, his true interests.

In accordance with the opinions of most savage, or semi-savage people (which shows the benighted state of those in whom the idea originated), man could

\* The Yahoo, a Satirical Rhapsody.

not be reconciled to his offended maker but by an offering of blood, and to this end Christ is said to have offered himself a willing sacrifice; not only to ransom man from the effects of the sins already committed, but, by his *conduct* to set an example to those who might follow, that they might be induced to "go and sin no more." Now then, whether we consider him as a part of the godhead, or merely as a man, specially ordained for the mission, we have a right to assume that his conduct, to be consistent with his object, should be such as to offer no *inducement* to men to do aught but good. For if a part of the godhead, he should have been intimately acquainted with the nature of the being he had himself created; or if only an ambassador, he should have been furnished with such knowledge, to insure his success.

What should be the example or precepts of one intimately acquainted with man's nature, to induce men to do no evil thing? Should not his conduct and his teachings be *entirely* devoid of sin or evil; should there be the slightest inducement offered to man to do other than good? Should not sin, in every shape and form, be held in the deadliest hate; and virtue, pure and undefiled, alone be presented to his anxious and longing gaze? Certainly! Was Christ's conduct and teaching in accordance with such a principle? No! There may be virtues discoverable in the conduct attributed to him, but his vices of act and precept far out number them; and men, as shown, ignorant or vicious, followed, as a consequence, the evil in preference to the good. So many critics have commented upon the history of Jesus, and have so ably exposed the absurdity of considering him as a "great moral reformer," that the following sayings and doings charged upon him, are merely given as illustrations of my opinion, numbers more remaining behind.

First, then, I would mention the cursing of the fig-tree (Mark xi. 12, &c.) for not bearing fruit *out of season*. What crimes would such an example not induce and sanction. The pet lamb was evidently in a *pet*—

Hungry, perchance for want of food!

Such a fellow now a-days would play Old Harry with a cook shop, if he happened to arrive an hour before the meat was up.

The sending the devils into the pigs, likewise (Mark v. 11, 12), was anything but creditable to him; did this reforming Jew partake of his countrymen's prejudice against them? Why not have sent them to hell, and not have caused the destruction of two thousand porkers? We are not told what remuneration their owners obtained from this *just* man for the wanton outrage upon their property. Doubtless the former concluded, from the singularity of the movement, that the

## THE ORACLE OF REASON

"devil was in them," and that damages from such a quarter were hopeless.

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he who believeth not SHALL BE DAMNED" (Mark xvi. 16). Thus making man accountable for his belief. A most infernal doctrine, propounded by an ignorant impostor, or he would have known that belief and disbelief is entirely independent of an individual, and to damn him for it hellish tyranny, which no man or just god could inflict. Have not bigots and fanatics, ever since its promulgation acted upon it, to the wholesale destruction of their fellows? And who shall say, provided they believed in it, that they did wrong? Does it not warrant the use of every means, even to the taking of life to induce men to believe, rather than they shall suffer damnation? The few years they would have passed here will not be noticed in eternity. Christ has nowhere more clearly defined his mission than in Luke xii. 49, 51, "I am come to send fire upon the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled? Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather division." Who can look into the world and say—Christianity has failed?  
W. C.

### PUBLIC INTEGRITY.

"It has been said of the celebrated Andrew Fletcher that he would have sacrificed his life to serve his country, but would not do a base act to save her."—Sir JAMES MACKINTOSH.

AN apologue of Herodotus relates that a young man who entered the great Egyptian temple, and rashly tore the veil from the statue of truth, was struck with amazement and horror, at the hideousness of its features. The moral of this apologue, or fable, seems to be that truth, which has been aptly defined, as the image of things, should not be examined too closely, it being, except seen through a veil, one mass of horrible deformity. This doctrine was, doubtless, picked up by Herodotus, from the priests of Judea and Egypt. The frightfulness of unveiled truth has been the practical principle of priests and statesmen in all ages; it is now the practical principle of those who govern mankind in all the nations of the earth. A hazy idea—an idea not clearly perceived—cannot be true. To call such an idea, or assemblage of ideas, truth, is an abuse of language, a misnomer; falsehood it should be called. Those, therefore, who cover truth with a veil, in effect, destroy it, or at all events, hinder that its features should be seen. The troops of deluders who, under various names, have fattened upon human credulity, and abused, that they might freely use the human animal, were not themselves startled or terrified by truth in native naked-

ness, but they were startled, they were terrified lest the mob, the rabble, the swinish multitude, the unwashed slaves, should enjoy the same sight, should revel in the moral voluptuousness, which seeing things as they are, never fails to give birth to. The fable, therefore, was cunningly devised, an admirable stroke of crooked wisdom; as it would be in a man who having secreted immense treasures in a cave, should cause it to be believed, the cave was guarded by sphinxes and fiery dragons. The American Emerson rightly says, that the world is their's who can see through its pretensions; the madness, the stone-blind custom, we everywhere behold, exists only by sufferance; once seen to be a lie, it has received the death blow. Philosophers do, and have long since seen the lie, but they are the few; simpletons are blind as bats, stone-blinded by custom, maddened by fanaticism—and they are the many. Is it then wonderful that the many should be willing slaves to the few? Is it at all marvellous that the few should find it more to their taste—far more convenient to delude, mistify, and plunder, rather than enlighten or do justice to the many? Is it surprising that politics should be reduced to a science of villainies, morals be everlastingly talked about only, and religion be an instrument of disgusting oppression? The secret spring of all this complicated machinery of villany is not at all remote, it is seen in the obvious surface, every-day-fact, so well stated by Miss Frances Wright, that society is divided into foxes and geese, but as the geese are as nine hundred and ninety-nine to one of the foxes, the foxes have a glorious time of it. To perpetuate the fox-and-geese system, men have been systematically taught to hate the truth; to hate all those who dared to teach it; to persecute even unto death the noble and enlightened, who, like the rash Egyptian youth, penetrated delusion's temple, and rent the veil with which artful priests had covered the statue of truth. Why did Plato teach, that "he may lie who knows how to do it in a suitable time?" Why did Meander, that "a lie is better than a hurtful truth?" Why Proclus, that "good is better than truth?" Why did Maximus Tyrius say, "there is nothing decorous in truth but when it is profitable?" Yes—that sometimes truth is hurtful, and lying profitable to men. Why did Darius teach, that "when telling a lie will be profitable, let it be told?" And why did the Platonists, the Stoics, nay, almost all the Greek philosophers, allow as part of their morality, that "a wise man may embrace a lie craftily, and for gain, but he must not embrace a falsehood, through ignorance, or assent to an untruth?" The because for all these whys, has been already given. They all admit of one very brief and

simple answer, *the wise few must live, to live safely, comfortably, and honourably—they must lie.* A folio would not throw a single ray of light more upon the matter. Where are the philosophers who will tell an important truth at the expense of station, liberty, perhaps life? Where are the sages who will purchase the gratification of attacking error or exposing falsehood at such a price? Small blame to them if they refuse so expensive, so unthrifty a bargain. If one in an age, pearl the swine, let us not complain of human virtue; let us not conclude that men love lies, but rather that they fear to speak the truth. Diogenes could not, in broad day-light, even by the aid of his lantern, find one honest man. And shall we be mad enough to look for honest men *now*, when not to lie is a crime in law; when wretched pettifogging attorneys and bumpkin nincompoopish justices send thief-catchers to protect morals, and put down free debate, in Mechanics' Institutions; when, as in the case of Mr. HOLYOAKE, by a conspiracy of such thick-skulled scoundrels, a man is to be dragged through the streets, catechised, insulted, and fettered like a felon; when I say all this is done, and the foul outrages on liberty applauded by an overwhelming majority of society—is it not absurd to look for integrity in public men? Is it not marvellous that *any* should be found who abhor hypocrisy and rascality more than they fear physical torture, and the yell of public indignation? When Francis Maria, second Duke of Rovero, proposed to Sperone Speroni, the question, which was preferable, the republic or the principality, the perfect and not durable, or the less perfect and not so liable to change, he replied, that our happiness is to be measured by its quality, not by its duration; and that he preferred to live for one day like a man, than for a hundred years like a brute, a stock, or a stone. "This was thought," says Lord Byron, "and called a magnificent answer, down to the last days of Italian servitude," and I doubt whether in this cowardly slavish age, the most cowardly and the most slavish would fail to *admire*, though only a few rash enthusiasts have consistency and courage enough to act like men, but are quite content to eke out life as brutes, stocks, and stones. Society has no right to expect integrity in public men, if it throw not over them the broad shield of its protection. As long as men are men they will count the cost of telling truth, and the profit of lying. Let those who love nobility of soul, give substantial support to those who display it; let the lovers of truth rally round those who dare proclaim it, and falsehood with the hellish train of vice to which it gives birth, will speedily be annihilated. Poland was ever-

lastingly disgraced during the last century by an act of persecution the most cruel and atrocious it is possible to conceive. A Lithuanian nobleman, said to be religious and benevolent, but sufficiently intelligent to ridicule the prevailing superstitions, had incautiously written some marginal notes of an atheistical tendency in the book of some stupid German priest, "he was tried (says Mr. Stephens, in his *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland*) for atheism, by a council of bigotted Catholic bishops, and found guilty, not only of having denied the existence of a god, but the doctrine of the trinity, and the divine maternity of the virgin Mary." Zaluski, one of the villains concerned in the torments writes, "the convict was led to the scaffold, where the executioner, with a red-hot iron tore his tongue and his mouth, *with which he had been cruel towards god*; then they burned his hands, *instruments of the abominable production*, at a slow fire. The sacrilegious paper was thrown into the flame; *himself last*, that monster of the age, that *dei-cuide* was cast into the flames of expiation, if such a crime could be atoned."

Such was the spirit of priestcraft—such the fate of those who denied a god—such the fiendlike malignity with which the savage Christian butchers pursued all but fools or hypocrites to the stake. Poland is fallen, aye, and deserved to fall; I say advisedly, deserved to fall. The people so utterly beastialized by fanaticism, as to suffer such a cruel bloody act, or not to raise *en masse* and hurl down the brutal priestly thieves who perpetrated it, are fit to be slaves; fit to lick the dust on which tyrants tread, and deserve to wear the heaviest chains forged in the furnace of despotism! Talk not to me of Polish nationality, Polish patriotism, and struggles with their brutal oppressor! Why, all the collected crimes of the Russian Nicholas would not outweigh this one outrage against *the very principle of liberty*. I lay claim to be an ardent lover of liberty, but would not wag my finger for the nationality and glory of a people, who stood by and saw a fellow-creature's tongue torn from its root by red hot iron, his hands burnt before his face, and his body's remnant cast into flame. Nothing can ever wipe off this foul stain from Poland's annals, nothing obliterate the memory of the most villainous transaction that has for many centuries past disgraced the character of humanity. If the fallen glories of Poland were resuscitated, if her children had a nationality, and Warsaw again become the proud capital of a great and powerful kingdom, is it likely her people would enjoy the blessings of liberty, would they enjoy that liberty of liberties—the liberty of the mind? Is it probable, nay is it pos-

sible, that a nation of priest-ridden serfs would be other than cheated and mocked by the name, the merest shadow of freedom? Any despotism is better than the despotism of priests, any tyranny far better than sacerdotal tyranny; and the worst cruelties of the monster Nicholas, fall far short of the abominable wickedness daily and hourly practised by those fiends in human shape who call themselves god's vice-gerents upon earth. But the question returns upon us how honesty and the practice of truth can be expected in such a state of things—who that saw the horrible sacrifice above described, would not studiously keep whatever forbidden truth be had to himself? Who in such a country would hesitate to adopt the hint of Fontenelle—and if his hand were full of truths, would not keep it clenched fast, lest a dangerous one should escape to the vulgar? What man of sense and caution will say there is no god at the expence of life and limb— or deny the immortality of the soul with gallows or stake in the distance? The fable-fed multitude, must be fable-fed still, and he who would change the character of their diet, must look for martyrdom as his reward. Some people wonder that such a glorious genius as my Lord Bacon should not have seen quite through theological delusions, and the evil influence of religion. But it would, I think, be difficult to say what Bacon did or did not see; none are so blind as those who won't see, according to the proverb, and Bacon had too many reasons of state to see an inch farther or one whit clearer than it was expedient or safe in those times. Atheism would hardly have been tolerated in Elizabeth's time, therefore, like a prudent philosopher, Bacon contented himself with apologising for atheism; he did not directly teach it. Bacon craved not martyrdom, and Pope was not very wrong when he called him the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind. Supposing Bacon to have been an Atheist, which I think it would be far from difficult to prove by a careful review of his writings, what possible inducement could he have had to proclaim the truth? It was much more convenient for him to say, whatever he may have thought, that a little knowledge inclineth a man to atheism, but a great deal bringeth him back to religion again, rather than that a little knowledge maketh a man religious, but a great deal turneth him into an Atheist. The first opinion was safe, and opened the road to wealth, honours, and distinction; the second was dangerous, and would infallibly have blocked up every road save that which led to a prison and to death. So far from wondering that Bacon did not declare for atheism, my astonishment is great that he should have had the hardihood to publish or breathe anything in its favour. James the First always recommended Atheists to the flames; his predecessor, Elizabeth, was no less rigid and wise a Protestant than the Solomon of the west. She most heartily detested heresy, and it may reasonably be concluded that an atheistical heresy would have had few charms in her eyes. Good queen Bess was by no means so fond of fire as her pious sister of red-hot memory, in the work of extirpating heretics. She liked hanging better than burning: ropes better than fagots. She only burned two Dutch Anabaptists, who, according to Hollingshead, "roared most piteously." She hung heretics by the score; but burning evidently shocked

her Protestant nerves. I think, therefore, it will be allowed by those who reflect deeply upon human motives and tendencies, that what we find in the works of Lord Bacon favourable to atheism, may be treasured as so much of solid gold; while what he wrote against it should be looked upon as suspicious, a kind of intellectual dross, which he suffered to hang about and disfigure his philosophy, lest it should shine injuriously, at all events offensively to the weak optics of his generation. He doubtless felt that in his position *left-handed* was better than *right-handed* wisdom; that a lie *was* better than a hurtful truth; that good *was* better than truth; that when telling a lie *was* profitable it might be told; that he *might* lie, who knew how to do it, in a *suitable time*; that there *was* nothing decorous in truth but when it *was* profitable, and that the wise *might* legitimately tell lies or abet liars for gain or craft, *though not themselves be the dupes of either the one or the other.*

### HISSING AN ATHEIST!

"A true Christian, that is, a being regulating all his thoughts and action upon the principle of 'do as you would be done by,' is scarcely to be met with."—*Monthly Repository.*

IN accordance with an intimation in last week's number, I shall proceed to offer a few remarks upon the criticisms of the writer, under the above head, which appeared in No.'s 30 and 31. The injustice and grossly indecent proceedings which took place in the court of law, as described, having been severely descanted upon by the critic in the *Repository*, and the character of the counsellor Phillips, very properly exposed and contrasted with the despised but amiable HIBBERT, it is unnecessary that I should occupy further space with the matter. Merely observing, as I pass, that the C. Phillips spoken of, and who was publicly thanked for the help he lent the lord, by a guttling beast of an alderman, is the same with him who defended Cuvoursier, for the murder of Lord William Russell, and who, after the murderer (from necessity) had divulged his criminality to him, endeavoured to prove his innocence from the insufficiency of the evidence, *intending to fix the crime upon the fellow-servants of the prisoner.* As a paid advocate, acknowledged by the law, he had a *legal* right to contend against the insufficiency of the evidence, although he *knew* from the prisoner's own lips he was guilty; for unless his guilt was *proved* in court by the witnesses for the prosecution, he was entitled to an acquittal. But to endeavour to shield the real assassin at the expense of the life or lives of innocent individuals, was worthy of the most deliberately cruel, bloody-minded demon that ever existed. And yet this man professes Christianity, and is, moreover, an expounder of it as it is to be found in the laws of England. Where is the holy fire—which is said to have descended from heaven—to devour such wretches? Jehovah would appear to be gone to sleep, or that his notions of right and wrong are changed.

So long as the objections to be taken to the treatment of Julian Hibbert and M'PHERSON partook of a moral character—so long as they affected, though perhaps indirectly, the social happiness of the critic, against whose peculiar views, most probably, there were some illiberal laws and unjust institutions existing—so far as the defence of an Atheist from injustice would tend to ameliorate the critic's condition by showing the absurdity of such conduct and by bringing contempt upon the law (a sure way of obtaining its repeal), by which he would most certainly be benefited; for if the Atheist be tolerated any thing short of atheism is sure to be—so long and so far, I say, as these considerations went, so far I find the critic in the *Repository* fair and manly. But it is when he enters upon the question of belief and disbelief—atheism and christianity—that we find all the hateful, stupid, and contemptible qualities and ingredients of religion developo them-

selves. It is then that the writer takes the character of a fool or a rogue, a puppy or a scoundrel; one excessively ignorant of what he is writing about, or who wilfully prostitutes his knowledge to serve some selfish purpose, and who, like Phillips, endeavours to murder the Atheist by palming his own or others actions upon him. What mental moles—what earth-grubbers must the religious of all classes be, to permit such ignorance or wilful perversion to pass unscourged—nay, even to love it and hug it to their bosom. The author who should gravely bring me his book in support of atheism, written in the spirit of the remarks of which I speak, should see me burn it before his face—such a proceeding appearing to me the most forcible manner in which I could express my disgust.

To commence my remarks, the critic deprecates the declaration by Julian Hibbert, that he did not believe in the bible, as “A kind of seeking after martyrdom, a sort of testifying for conscience sake, which was quite uncalled for by the circumstances, and therefore it became a ridiculous bravado.” Now mark this Christian’s consistency, and the difference between his morality and the Atheist’s. The Atheist knew that the impression upon the mind of the court would be, if they saw him kiss the book, that he believed in the sacredness of its contents, &c., whereas he did not; and that to go through the ceremony of oath-taking, without stating his unbelief, would be to create a false impression, and, as respected himself, be telling a lie. For similar conduct to that which this Christian critic would advise, and the opposite of which he abuses—the testament declares Ananias was struck dead. But the man is an expediency-monger, and could find an apology for any crime which suited his purpose; or deprecate any adherence to principle which occasioned a sacrifice. The testament says, “Lie not at all;” the Christian says, “Lie when it suits you,” and conduct based upon this parody has been the only “practical christianity” we have had since its reputed founder returned to glory.

“Now, touching (says the critic) this matter of belief in a god, it is clear that Julian Hibbert spoke without due reflection. He probably had been somewhat annoyed in his youth with the cant of religion while he saw through the hypocrisy of its professors, and that gave him so much distaste for the whole thing that the hatred of the one became synonymous with the hatred of the other;” and he (the critic) remembers having become disgusted with christianity through being driven to church, being bored with dull sermons, &c., and so sapiently concludes no one could become an Atheist unless he had gone through the same drilling. This reminds me of the curate of St. Paul’s, Bristol (the only parson who did his duty in the city), waiting upon SOUTHWELL and me, with a view to show us the error of our ways. After some conversation, he paid me the compliment to say he was once like me—“an unbeliever, a drunkard, swearer, and given to lewdness, but that it was from not examining the holy scriptures,” &c. I thanked him for his good opinion of me, but assured him my unbelief neither resulted from nor led me to such errors, and that I had not become an Atheist until after calm and continued reflection upon circumstances both internal and external to me, and that the mere assertion in the Jew-Book, that there was a god, would not convince me nor any man who used his reason, if there were no other evidence—and that I had not found any. Now I should presume J. H.’s scepticism resulted from the same process. I would not give the snap of my finger for a man who professed atheism simply because he was disgusted with religious villainies. What Atheist attempts to show reason for disbelief in a god from the follies and knaveries of religions—except it be the god connected with any particular religion? What has the hideous and anomalous monsters belonging to most religious systems to do with the governing principle, power, or being, contended for by philosophers? This latter is what the Atheist loves to battle with. I was never religious, and have seen but little of the holy cheat, but that

little is sufficient to enable me to judge of the remainder; I have never read an atheistical work in my life, and until I met Southwell, never knew a man who thought as I did—how, then, became I an Atheist, but by reflection? I saw, or imagined I saw no necessity for a god, and ceased to believe in one. But it is the old twaddle, and so I leave it.

W. C.

(To be continued.)

FROM THE “YAHOO!”

*Ye pious missionaries, let us know  
How many are converted where ye go:  
And whether, while ye in your lingo prate,  
The holy ghost stands by ye to translate.  
In your next kind communication tell us,  
Whether the lord of savages is jealous.  
And whether, when ye treat them with rum-grog,  
They’re not for holy gospel more agog;  
And oft come after baptism rather mellow,  
Roaring out, “Gor-a-mity, damn’d good fellow.  
More grog, good massa parson, more baptise.”  
Then aren’t ye struck with horror and surprise  
To hear them, when they’re told the lamb is god,  
And that their sins are wash’d out by his blood,  
Cry out, “Oh, Benamuckee, massa parson, fie,  
Dat wat you preach be one big god-dam lie;  
For if young litel gor-a-mity lamb,  
Den great old gor-a-mity be de ram.”*

NOTICE.—Copies of this work sent by post to any parts where they cannot be otherwise obtained, at the rate of THREE for FOURPENCE. Post-office stamps for one month or three, with directions, addressed to the Editor, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, will receive attention.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. P. L., “A Young Atheist, near Leeds,” and reader of the Oracle, professes conversion from methodism to atheism. It would be difficult to conceive a more mentally delightful change. His future progress will depend more upon thinking than reading. Nos. of the Oracles to 8 inclusive out of print. G.J.H.

J. P. has not been forgotten—shall be attended to as soon as possible.—J. C. F. ditto.

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Saturday, August 6, 1842.



## ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 34.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.  
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

## SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL POLICY.

“Every now and then we should examine ourselves: self-amendment is the offspring of self-knowledge. But foreigners do not *examine* our condition; they only glance at its surface. Why should we print volumes upon other countries, and be silent upon our own? Why traverse the world, and neglect the phenomena around us? Why should the spirit of our researches be a lynx in Africa and a mole in England? Why, in one word, should a nation never be criticised by a native?”

MONTAGUE.

AND why in another word should Socialists always be criticised by others and never by themselves? Why should we assume on our parts the possession of all virtue? I never could see why, and this is the reason I have more freely than any other member of the Social body criticised the sayings, doings, professions, and pretensions of my friends. Not as some have erroneously thought, because I wished to quarrel with them, but because of anxiety to render them and myself as perfect as possible. I have always seen much to amend. As Hazlitt said of his country, so I say of Socialists, “If we are the paragons that some people would make us out, what must the rest of the world be? If we monopolise all sense and virtue on the face of the globe, we leave others ‘poor indeed’ without having a very great superabundance falling to our share.” In those opinions and motives I believe all persons who have written on Social policy in the *Oracle* have partaken.

But it is seldom we are credited with this. —A few weeks ago, a Mr. Jonah John’s, of Branch, A. 1, sent me a letter with the following polite and confiding introductory sentence: “I send you a few *close* questions, which I trust there will be no attempt to *stifle* or *evade*.”

After this flattering and fascinating exordium he proposes three questions. The first is so close, that unravell it I cannot. It has been shown to several friends of Mr. John’s way of thinking, with the hope of an explanation, but in vain, so it must be passed by. His second question is, “whether you imagine with W. C. that abusive statements of Mr. Owen and his friends likely to increase your circulation?” It is moved and seconded that the thanks of myself and W. C. be pre-

sent to Mr. John’s for his *complimentary* inquiry. If we *abuse* Mr. Owen in the hope of increasing our circulation, we shall never abuse Mr. John’s with such an expectation. He may rest perfectly easy, and write again, without any alarm, on that point. The third question, briefly is, “will the changes made by the last congress meet your views and enable Mr. SOUTHWELL to resume his situation as a missionary?” Answering this scripturally, that is, the last first, I can say that Mr. Southwell expressed to me extravagant joy at the changes made, and the near approximation to those principles which he has so strenuously advocated when it was deemed *speculative* to dream of them, and “*abuse*” to urge them. As to whether Mr. Southwell can resume his duties as a missionary, christianity can best answer, in whose keeping he is.

For my part, I partook in the general joy at the higher and nobler position taken by the central board. It was glorious to hear Mr. Owen declare, “the day has at length arrived when the *whole* truth respecting man may be declared to the world.” Therefore we need no longer hesitate in calculating (before speaking) whether the public “mind is prepared.” It was refreshing for the president to say, “we deem it unjust, impolitic, and erroneous for us to show a contrary example to that we teach.” Therefore, we shall take no more *oaths*—professing a respect for that religious nonsense in a court, which we explode on a rostrum. It was noble in congress to eschew the name of religionists and to cast away from our association even the name of that trumpery and horrible depravity which has so pestered the wise and oppressed the ignorant. It was cheering to read in their *Manifesto* that they claim “as a right, that man shall not any longer be prevented from *freely expressing* his thoughts and feelings.” This means, that when any future Southwell shall arise, no northern blasts of expediency shall chill his efforts, that no cold calculating eye shall see “faults on *both* sides;” when on one side a solemn duty has been bravely performed in the very teeth of danger, and on the other is rampant religion and hellish cruelty. When one side demanded the warmest sympathy, and merited the firm-

est support, and the other the loudest and deepest execration. It was a healthful sign for the *Manifesto* further to say, that "Socialists would endeavour to make evident by their lives and conduct, the *incalculable value of truth and undeviating consistency in principle.*" With the knowledge, means, and appliances Socialists can command, if they live up to this declaration, they may become the foremost party in the state for usefulness and public virtue. Finally, it was a pleasing omen that Lloyd Jones should ingenuously, and with an honourable frankness confess his dissatisfaction at having taken an oath as a minister of religion. So many ingenious defences of this act have been presented both for Mr. Jones and Mr. Buchanan that one fancied their consciences were made of caoutchouc. It was a dangerous thing to say that if policy did not recommend the course taken integrity never would. Mr. Jones did himself great honour by his expression of regret, that the affair took place, and will find his reward by being as highly esteemed for his honour as he is for his talents.

It is true the same objection remains to the title of *rational society*, as has been urged to *Oracle of Reason*, some have a very socratical dislike to the assumption of either *rationality* or *reason*, at present, and verily I have not much to say in favour of it. But this trifle in relation to socialism is of little importance compared with the glorious advances made.

With me it is a duty as sacred to applaud where I can, as to condemn where I should. And hence will say, that if any strictures of mine are supposed to imply that I entertain contempt for Socialists, and censure them in unqualified terms—they imply more than I feel or intend.

It is true in my lecture on the "Spirit of Bonner," &c., I spoke in severe terms—but my only sin was that I assumed that Socialists always acted on the high principles laid down by the last congress, and if I erred it was in giving them credit for too much, and placing them on higher ground than that on which they seemed content to stand. If, like Aristarchus, my critiques were free, it was because I thought with Pythagoras, "that they who reprove us are greater than they who flatter us!" I reasoned for my friend as I do for myself, "He that reviles me, it may be, calls me a fool; but he that flatters me, if I take not heed, will make me one." Though my freedoms were ill received by some individuals in the branch where I was stationed, yet to the honour of the central board I willingly bear testimony their conduct was free from that censorship which sectarians would quickly have manifested. For editing the *Oracle* not one word of censure has reached me from them, and since my incarceration in Gloucester, they have

freely offered to use their influence in procuring me an engagement, should I feel desirous of one, under the new arrangements. This conduct, contrasted with that I should have received from any other body in the kingdom, speaks much in favour of the liberality of socialism. I expected dismissal long ago—did not wish it—but should have had it from any other party—except perhaps the *original* Chartists.

I do not think the board free from squeamishness, but they are before many of the branches; a little wholesome agitation will soon cure them all.

My original faith in socialism is still unshaken. When in Cheltenham and Gloucester gaols, the most contemptuous and scornful remarks made to me, were, "You are a Socialist—you are an Owenite." They understood not the formidable position I stood in as an Atheist. I could, and it would have been prudence to have shrunk from the profession of socialism. But though I had reason to expect that but few Socialists regarded with sympathy my situation, I triumphantly and proudly owned the name and defended all who did. I shall do so again upon my trial, and shall rejoice in the opportunity of giving increased currency to their views. Socialists are the only men who, by their principles, can agree to differ. The elements of intellectual and moral greatness are among them. They are below their fellows in many things, but they have germs which, when honestly developed, will render them a model for all.

Some charge me with all the sentiments that appear in this paper. But I do not approve of all. This article will show I do not. But with the right of all to say just what they like, and how they like, allowing others the same privilege. I do approve and hope to defend the right with the same earnestness, whether it should be exercised for my own destruction or exerted in my defence.

Believing as a Socialist, that "*truth only can regenerate the world*" with me it is a first duty to break down all the dams that obstruct its progress, whether put up by friends or foes; to clear out all channels in which it runs—whoever may call it inexpedient to do so—and now and then to practise what I teach.

G. J. H.

## IS THERE A GOD?

### XIX.

"The great object of Berkley, in maintaining his system of idealism, was to cut up by the roots the scheme of materialism. 'Matter (he tells us himself) being once expelled out of nature, drags with it so many sceptical and impious notions. . . . Without it your Epicureans, Hobbists, and the like, have not even the shadow of a pretence, but become the most cheap and easy triumph in the world.'"—DUGALD STEWART, *Diss. First, En. B.*

IT is a startling fact that Berkley has not

been answered. It is a fact, yet more startling, that he *cannot be answered*. The existence of matter cannot be proved. Reason is inadequate to prove, either our own existence, or the existence of an external world. Everything *MAY* be imaginary; at all events, *reason* cannot prove the existence of anything. There is no such thing as *absolute* knowledge. We don't *know* that we exist, we *believe* it. We don't know there is anything, not ourselves, we merely believe it. Descartes thought he proved his own existence when he said, *cogito, ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am, or I exist. But how did he know that he thought; how did he prove it? Not surely by mere assertion, for assertion is neither reason nor proof. *Vivere cogitare est*, says the Italian proverb, and it will be agreed on all sides, that to think is to live, but it must also be agreed that it is impossible, or at least impracticable, to show by any process of reasoning, either that we ourselves think, or that any body else does. Those, therefore, who defy Materialists to prove the existence of matter, may also, in their turn, be defied to prove their own existence. Extravagant scepticism not only destroys materialism but spiritualism; and calling for reason to prove the existence of matter gives birth to the query—by what process of reasoning can you prove the existence of mind? An appeal to consciousness won't serve the Spiritualist; for it must be allowed that a man is no whit more conscious of the existence of what he calls his mind, than of his body; and no better satisfied as to the existence of his own body, than he is of all other bodies. No man, living or dead ever seriously doubted the existence of matter. I will venture to affirm, that Bishop Berkley, with all his anxiety to “expel matter out of nature,” and thereby obtain a “cheap and easy triumph over Materialists,” never for one moment thought his diocess imaginary, or the profits thereof purely ideal. Whatever may have been his closet speculations, it is probable, nay, it is certain, that when he stepped out into this ideal world, and came in contact with its material interests, he was speedily brushed clean of every vestige of doubt as to the reality and materiality of things. Hume says of Berkley, that “all his arguments, tho' otherwise intended, are in reality merely sceptical, which evidently appears from this, that *they admit of no answer, and produce no conviction*. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement, and irresolution, and confusion, which is the result of scepticism.” The same writer has also observed, that “there is a more *mitigated* scepticism, or academical philosophy, which may be both durable and useful, and which may, in part, be the result of this Pyrrhonism, or *excessive* scepticism, when its undistinguished doubts are in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection.” However

this may be, whether our scepticism be excessive or mitigated, whether we believe everything, nothing, or with weight and measure, still it must be allowed that the man who seriously denies the existence of matter must have brains sadly addled, so sadly addled that every one of the five senses must have given up the ghost. Professor Porson declared of one of Southey's epics, that it would be remembered when Homer and Virgil were forgotten—but not till then. What Porson thought of Southey's epic, has suggested to me an idea, that spiritualism and idealism will obtain a cheap and easy triumph over realism and materialism when men cease to believe in the existence of matter—but not till then. Of course *then* all disputes, all reasonings will be at an end, for where nothing *is*, there can be nothing to reason about. If we only think that we exist, if we only imagine there is an external world, if matter be purely ideal—there can be neither premises nor conclusions, principles nor practice.

A great deal has been said about the wild opinions of Atheists, but my experience has not furnished me with either advice or opinion of so “stark staring mad” a complexion as this of Berkley, to get rid of matter, to thrust, or as he expresses it, “expel it out of nature.” To *think* nature inside out, would be fine thinking. Sir James Mackintosh was of opinion that, “to reason without assenting to the principles on which reasoning is founded, is not unlike an effort to feel without nerves, or to move without muscles.” No man can be allowed to be an opponent in reasoning, who does not set out with admitting all the principles, *without* the admission of which it is impossible to reason. Now, I have already allowed that human reason is so far at fault, that it cannot prove the existence of matter; it cannot prove consciousness; it literally and truly cannot *prove* anything, then it is clear, there is an end to all reasoning. or rather, it can have no commencement, unless the existence of something be taken for granted, or assumed as indisputably true, and from that something deducing all the principles without the admission of which it is impossible to reason. All this Berkley was, doubtless, well acquainted with, but it is likely, his desire to “cut up by the roots the scheme of materialism,” was a temptation for sophistry and nonsense, not to be resisted. I can appreciate and make due allowance for the feelings of a subtle Christian disputant, who would willingly write to get rid of sceptical and impious notions; notions without which, he truly says, “your Epicureans, Hobbists, and the like, would not have the shadow of a pretence, but become the most cheap and easy triumph in the world.” By expelling matter out of nature, he of course would not be annoyed, nor Christians led astray, by the

assertion of materialists, *that matter is every thing and everything is matter*. Instead of assertion, I should rather call it *fundamental truth* of Materialists, but modesty is now the order of the day; and as Theists are growing particularly anti-dogmatic and sceptical, I shall take a leaf out of their new book, and content myself with calling assumptive assertion, the grand truth that matter is everything and everything is matter. Of course 'tis assumptive assertion, till shown to be an unshakeable everlasting truth by facts and reasonings. Now, whether matter does or does not actually exist, it is certain that all people, wise or simple, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, have agreed in acting as though it did. This is because nature is more than principles, and common sense will ooze through all the slime of sophistry. Action, according to Hume, is the most formidable enemy to excessive scepticism, and I agree with him. How a man can doubt the wall he bruises his skull against, or the bullet lodged in his bowels, or the creditor who taps him on the shoulder, it is difficult to conceive. One would like to be outrageously doubtful upon such matters, but a piece of steel driven in just under the fifth rib, would have cured even Berkley himself of his idealism; if not effectually, at least till the steel was removed, the wound well healed, and the philosopher got back to his closet to amuse and bewilder his brains with arguments to expel matter out of nature, and prove distinctly that there is nothing *but* nothing in the universe. Dr. Arnott says, in his "Elements of Physics," "it has been argued, that there is so exceedingly little of really solid matter, even in the densest mass, that the whole, if the atoms could be brought into absolute contact, might be received into a nutshell." The doctor coolly adds, "We have as yet no means of determining exactly what relation this idea has to truth." The fact is, nothing is more easy than to make random assertions of that kind, and nothing more difficult than to prove them. Those who indulge in them are always quite safe, they being so utterly preposterous that no parties do more than stare, gape, laugh, and wonder when their ears are tickled by them.

As to the remark that there is so exceedingly little of really solid matter, &c., it is of no consequence to the argument of the materialist, whether matter be solid or hollow; the hollowest or the thinnest matter imaginable is still matter. Ether, which is said to be inconceivably thin, is just as much matter as lead or mercury. Dr. Arnott tells us that "the inconceivable minuteness of ultimate atoms, has led some inquirers to doubt whether there really be matter; that is to say, whether what we call substance, or matter, have existence or not." I confess this

kind of reasoning is to me quite inexplicable. A man talks about what he chooses to call ultimate atoms, atoms or pieces of matter so small, that it is impossible to conceive their smallness. After having made the wonderful discovery that matter is inconceivably small, he most unaccountably begins to think a *small* thing is *nothing* at all, and pieces of matter of which we see the highest mountains are compounded, when separated from their companions, cease to exist. What can be more preposterous than to suppose, because matter escapes the sense it can by any possibility be annihilated? We know that a single grain of musk will scent a room for twenty years, and at the end of that period, will have lost but little of its weight. Dr. Arnott himself states the fact, a fact pregnant with instruction, for it is certain that even the little the grain had lost, must have acted upon every particle of air of the chamber, for more than half an average life time. Dr. Arnott, however, though not quite certain if "there really be matter," asserts its *indestructibility*, which is very odd, for the indestructibility of matter implies the existence of matter; and Baron D'Holbach has well observed, "It is easy to perceive, that that which *cannot cease to exist, must have always been*." When, therefore, Dr. Arnott declares that "besides the proofs of matter's *indestructibility*, which *seem conclusive*," the fact is established, that every kind or portion of matter obstinately occupies some space, to the exclusion of all other matter from that particular space, I do not really see how in the face of such facts, we can reasonably expel matter out of nature, and furnish the Berkely partizans with the "most cheap and easy triumph in the world." The truth is, that belief in a god is quite irreconcilable with the existence of matter—matter or god must give way; and our surprise at the learned bishop's theory must be greatly moderated, when we reflect upon the occasion of it. Nothing could be more proper or more natural than for a churchman to defend his god, even though in so doing he should be driven not merely to expel matter out of nature, but kick nature out of itself. But I think all sober minded readers will agree with Baron D'Holbach, author of the "System of Nature," that "the existence of matter is a *fact*; the existence of motion is another fact. Our visual organs point out to us matter with different essences, forming a variety of combinations endowed with various properties that discriminate them; that matter always existed; that it moves by virtue of its own essence; that all the phenomena of nature is ascribable to the diversified motion of the variety of matter she contains; and which, like the phoenix is continually regenerating out of its own ashes."

## THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XXI.

HAVING concluded my analysis of the three subdivisions of the invertebrata, the mollusca, articulata, and radiata—in which there were but few characteristics to determine their most remote relationship to man, the great division I am now about to examine will be found, even in its lowest class, to bear strongly marked analogies to his peculiar structure.

The lowest class in this division (vertebrata) is *pisces*, or fishes. The bones of fishes closely resemble those of animals, higher in the organic scale in their embryotic state, both in the isolated condition of their several centres of ossification, and in their soft, cartilaginous character. The human embryo originally consists almost exclusively of the vertebral column, so also in fishes the spine and the head, which is only an increased development of it, constitute the most important parts of the skeleton. The vertebræ in this class are very numerous, and varies greatly: in the carp we find 41, turbot 57, eel 115, and in the shark 207. The vertebral column is constructed in such a manner as to give considerable length to the trunk, and thus favour their horizontal mode of progression. To the researches of Oken, Nechel, Carus, Blainville, &c., we are indebted for the important fact that the cranium is nothing more than a highly developed portion of the vertebral column. The head in the cartilaginous fishes is very simple; in many, as the skate, for example, being composed of one single piece; in the osseous or bony tribes, on the contrary, the parts are very numerous, numbering eighty in the head of the perch. The os hyoides (situated in man at the root of the larynx) reaches a high degree of development, as in all water breathing vertebrata. In fishes, fins supply the place of extremities; the anterior corresponding to arms, and the posterior to legs; the anterior, or pectoral, are larger and more uniform than the posterior, and commence their development at an earlier period; in which they resemble the embryo of the higher classes. The anterior fins are generally joined, by means of an osseous belt to the back of the skull, formed behind by the scapula (shoulder blade), and in the front by the coracoid bones; a humerus (bone of the upper arm), generally long and angular, is attached to these above, and to the radius and ulna (bones of the fore or lower arm) below; to these succeed the carpal bones (bones of the wrist), and the member is terminated by long and numerous phalanges, or fingers; the metacarpal bones (the intermediate bones between the wrist and fingers) being absent; the long phalanges of the feet are directly attached to the pelvic

bones, there being rarely a trace of intermediate bones developed.

In the soft, flexible skeletons of the cartilaginous fishes, the ligaments are few, and confined to the organs for mastication and progressive motion. In the osseous fishes the ligaments of the spine are white, fibrous, dense, and highly elastic; and for the first time we meet the contiguous ends of bone incrustated with cartilage. In the vertebrata the muscles are generally of a red colour, and connected to the bone by at least one extremity, through the means of a tendinous or fibrous structure. In fishes the muscular fibres are soft, gelatinous, and colourless, as in the invertebrata, and the embryos of the higher vertebrated classes; in the salmon, however, they are of a higher red, especially about the head; and in the lamprey they are blackish grey. The active movements of fishes are not subject to much variety; their ascent or descent is effected by the compression or expansion of the air-bladder, and by their pectoral fins, whilst they are impelled forward by the lateral motion of the tail opposed by the resistance of the water. When the swimming bladder is absent, as in the sole genus, or very small, as in the *cobitis fossilis*, the animal either remains at the bottom, or swims on one side by the vertical motions of the tail. The remora, lump-sucker, and others are provided with a muscular disk in the form of a sucker, by which they adhere to other fish or bodies moving through the water; so powerful is the muscular tail of the salmon, that aided by the great elasticity of its spine, it is able to mount over cataracts fifteen feet high. The shark is especially remarkable for speed, so much so, that according to a calculation of Sir E. Home, it would, if not compelled to rest, swim over the circumference of the globe in thirty weeks."

We no longer find the nervous system perforated by the alimentary tract. On the contrary, it occupies a dorsal situation, and is protected by an osseous sheath. In the lowest orders of fishes, as the lamprey, and the gastrobranchus, we perceive a repetition of the two nervous columns extending along the back, as in the worm. This simple condition resembles the embryo-state of this system in the highest grades of the vertebrata, previous to the development of their extremities. With few exceptions the spinal chord extends the whole length of the vertebral column; whence, from the great number of vertebræ, it attains a very remarkable length. In some, however, it is stated to be very short, forming a kind of cauda equina (from the resemblance it has to the tail of a horse, the under part of the spinal marrow), as in man. It usually terminates in a single thread; presenting several enlargements throughout its

tract, which corresponded very accurately with the number, magnitude, and situation of the extremities. For instance, when the anterior members are very large, as in rays and flying-fishes, the anterior enlargements are proportionally developed; and where a large caudal fin is to be supplied, the chord presents a sensible enlargement posteriorly where the nerves join it. The spinal marrow here, as in the human foetus, usually contains a canal of considerable size. The brain in fishes does not fill the cavity of the cranium, a considerable portion of it being occupied by the soft cellular tissue of the arachnoid (spider-likeness, a cobweb-like membrane, one of the coats of the brain and eye). The medulla oblongata (continuation of the substance of the brain) is of great length, lobed, and deeply grooved above by the calamus scriptorius (from its resemblance to a writing pen).

Since vegetable food cannot be procured in the unfathomable depths of the ocean, we meet with a short and simple form of alimentary canal in fishes. Vegetable substances might endanger their lives, by causing an evolution of gas, which would render them lighter than the water, and cause them to float upon the surface with the belly upwards, by which means they would be drowned.

The gills, which are the only respiratory organs of fishes, are placed in the course of the arterial circulation. The venous blood from all parts of the body is conducted to a single auricle which propels it into the ventricle, from which it is brought by the arterial bulb to the gills, where it is arterialised, and from which it is distributed by the branches of the aorta to all parts of the body. The caudal vein of the eel presents a contractile dilatation, to which Dr. Hall has applied the name of caudal heart; this doubtless assists in promoting the circulation in the caudal branches of the vena cava. Many look upon the heart of fishes and the artery issuing from it as analogous to the right heart and pulmonary artery of higher animals; but it is much more just to consider the heart as corresponding to the whole heart of the warm-blooded vertebrata, seeing that in some of the reptiles possessing gills, the blood is sent to these organs through the great systemic trunk. In fact, the heart, in these animals, acts at once the part of a pulmonary and a systemic heart in propelling the blood not only to the gills, but through all parts of the aortic system. (Evers.) W. C.

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#### HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL.

On Saturday, August 20, in conjunction with the *Oracle*, but so as to be separated and bound up by itself, will be published the First Number of G. J. HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL, at Gloucester, for BLASPHEMY. Specially Reported. Price 1d.

#### CHRISTIAN IGNORANCE OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE.

To the Editor of the *Oracle of Reason*.

DEAR SIR.—I am induced to write a few remarks on the above subject, because I think I can prove that Christians have not read the bible with attention; or that if they have done so, that they have read it with a predetermination to believe all its contents, whether good, bad, or indifferent. I take it there is but little of the first, a great deal of the second, and quite a surfeit of the third. I select as a basis for my remarks the following extracts from a tract lately issued by the Halifax town mission, entitled "Testimonies Respecting the Bible."

1. *Lord Bacon*.—"There never was found in any age of the world, either philosophers, or sect, or law, or discipline, which did so highly exalt the public good, as the Christian faith."

2. *John Selden*.—"There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment, but the bible."

3. *John Milton*.—"There are no songs like those of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, no politics like those the scriptures teach."

4. *Sir Mathew Hale*.—"There is no book like the bible, for excellent wisdom, learning, and use."

5. *The Honourable Robert Boyle*.—"It is a matchless volume, it is impossible that we can study it to much or prize it to highly."

6. *John Locke*.—"It has god for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without mixture of error for its matter. \* \* It is all pure, all science, nothing to much, nothing wanting."

7. *Sir William Jones*.—"I am of opinion that the volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written."—Reader, oppose these, the deliberate and disinterested opinions of some of the greatest men that ever lived, to the flippant sarcasm of the Infidel. Clasp the bible to your heart, and believe its holy truths."

This is certainly a tolerable dose, as a doctor would say, at any rate. And what, after all, do these authorities amount to, simply this: others have believed in the bible, and so should you; an argument which if good in one case is good in another, and if it serve the purpose of one sect of religionists it will also serve the purpose of all. It frequently happens that great men step from the sublime to the ridiculous almost without an effort, and this is the case with the great men whose opinions are quoted in the above paragraphs. That Lord Bacon, a scientific man, should express such opinions would be well calculated to excite our surprise, did we not know that man has been made to believe almost anything called by the name of religion. If "the Christian faith exalts the public good" so much as stated by Bacon, how is it that the Pagans, Greeks, and Romans of ancient times threw Christian *public spirit* into the shade; that their history does so, every student of history must be aware; in fact, no nations have been so deficient of public spirit, as those professing the Christian religion; in no case is the public good so neglected as by Christians, except it be among the lowest hordes of savages. Christian sympathies are confined within the frozen circle of their own immediate interests, "Do others, and take care you are not done," is the all-prevailing principle amongst them. The heathen conversion societies do not disprove the truth of these remarks, for even in these cases Christian conduct has an eye to number one, in the world to come. If Christians were not better than their creeds, the public good would be more neglected than it is; in support of this statement I refer the reader to the doctrine of "trusting to providence," as taught by our divines—by the self-styled servants of the most-high god; nor is this doctrine a priestly invention of modern times, it is taught in the bible, more especially in the last ten verses of the sixth chapter of Matthew. Did not Matthew know that providence takes care of those

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that take care of themselves, and that those who neglect themselves are neglected by providence too. Divine providence in our day is usually represented with *one eye*, no wonder that we get on the blind side of it sometimes. Had Christ intended that his followers should have become the reformers of human society, the conservators of its best interests, he would not have paid an unjust tax without complaint, as he is reported to have done; no, he would have seized the opportunity of teaching the true principles of government, had he been acquainted with them, and would have proved that government of conquest was not entitled to obedience; that taxation without representation was tyranny. It cannot be denied that Christ did *not* instruct his disciples in the *public* duties of life, nor have Christians ever been ready in performing them; he is said to have worked a miracle to pay the tax, and I admit that if people could pay taxes in the same easy way, they would perhaps complain as little as he did; but taxes are not paid from the mouths of fishes in 1842. Can a system "exalt the public good," which teaches that the evils existing in the world cannot be removed? yet this is the case with the orthodox Christian system. While the doctrine of original sin forms a part and parcel of the Christian system, it cannot promote the public good, for this doctrine alone paralyzes all our efforts to reform the world; it not only perpetuates existing evils, but adds to their number and their force.

Number 2 is easily disposed of; for if Selden did not know in his day that Pagans and Mohamedans died with confidence in the truth of their systems, it is now known that they do; the Mohamedan rests with as much confidence on the Koran in a dying moment as the Christian on the bible, and the Pagan has more confidence, perhaps, than both together in the contents of his sacred books. Such paltry dying-bed arguments can prove the truth of no religion whatever: if it can, it establishes the truth of all, and therefore proves too much for the Christian. Besides, an individual at the point of death is not a proper judge of right and wrong; strength of mind is requisite for this judgment, and dying people have not this strength at command.

In authority no. 3 we have Milton stating that "there are no songs like those of Zion," and in truth we require none, we should have been better without those we have already. Take, as a specimen, the 109th psalm, supposed to be written by the man after god's own heart, and we shall find that that song contains more malignity and evil wishes than all other songs put together. David, is not content with desiring the destruction of his enemies, his hate extends even to their innocent children: "Let his children be vagabonds and beg; let them seek their bread in the desolate places," says he, that is to say, let them seek it where they will not find it. Again he says, "Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children;" the common feelings of humanity are outraged in this "song of Zion," yet, according to bible history, it was a faithful reflex of David's mind. Burns when he wrote "Holy Willie's Prayer," must surely have had David and this psalm in his mind's eye, for a more faithful picture of David could not be drawn than is contained in that poem—

At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust, &c.

Lord, in the day of vengeance try him  
Lord, visit them wha did employ him,  
An' pass not in thy mercy by 'em  
Nor hear their pray'r;  
BUT, FOR THY PEOPLE'S SAKE, destroy 'em,  
And dinna spare.

The "songs of Zion" contain a few good things, a great many bad ones, and a tremendous quantity of nonsense. Milton, as quoted by the tractarians, says "there are no orations like those of the prophets," this is quite true. SOUTHWELL has written that these orations are "sublime balderdash;" in that sense (which, by the way, is the true one) there is none like them, for they are not of the slightest use to any human being, actuated by intellectual honesty; they

are of service to none but those who live on the credulity of mankind. "No politics like those the scriptures teach," says the author of "Paradise Lost and Regained." Paradise (happiness) has indeed been lost by the politics of the bible, in Christian countries, nor will it ever be gained or regained while bible politics are respected, for they sanction every form of government, despotic or otherwise, that happens to exist at the time, for Christ, Peter, and Paul advise submission to the powers that be, without qualification of any kind. J. C. F.

(To be continued.)

## HISSING AN ATHEIST!

(Concluded.)

THE critic says, that christianity was an unfortunate religion for ernel men to live under, and that they perverted its beautiful morality to vice. What were the holy firm about? The lamb hadn't recovered from the effects of his recent uphill journey, the ghost was asleep, and the old boy didn't care a dump, I presume.

When great Jehovah, struck with wonder,

From lounging on his sofa roused,  
Cried, zounds, who's coming here to thump us?  
Where's Mike, with all his angel host?  
And where's our son? and where's the ghost?  
Why don't they draw up their battalions,  
And come and pummel these rascallions?  
We'd march ourselves in style to lick 'em,  
But 'twould degrade us—so we'll trick 'em!—

that is—damn 'em! Out upon such trash! A god, all powerful, murdering himself—committing suicide—from a pretence that he could not make some wretched "organisations" of his own manufacture happy without; sealing by his blood a law for their guidance—and then permitting a few of them to wrest his decrees and injunctions to their own damnation and to the misery of the rest—the latter squad being his beloved! Ah, ah! By my beard, I can never think of the Christian mythology, but it makes me merry or mad!

The critic proceeds, "When JULIAN HIBBERT professed his disbelief in a god, he was illogical." This is peculiarly Christian—a man may logically affirm his belief in witches, &c. but not his disbelief—because it is opposed to the Jew-Book. But how does this critic prove J. H. to be illogical? Hear him, "The e who logicize in favour of belief, state their articles very briefly: 'Does the general system of the universe give internal evidence of plan or no plan?' If the answer be in the affirmative, then the existence of the plan must premise also the existence of a planner." "If the answer be in the affirmative," says the critic, it would be illogical for the party giving such an answer to state his disbelief in a planner. Granted; but did Julian Hibbert admit the existence of order or plan in the universe?—it is not so written! But what if the reply be in the negative? our critic has not furnished us with the argument "those who logicize in favour of belief" would use then. The world has been looking for reason and logic upon that point from theologians, until it has grown weary, and no interval between this and its dissolution is likely to witness their production. All that we get is shuffling, quibbling, lying, and unfair statements of the question, like unto this one.

What follows, fully justifies, in my opinion, the language I used at the beginning—that either a puppy or a scoundrel penned it, for its impudence is almost unparalleled: "Most probably Julian Hibbert, stung by the illiberality and oppressive nature of those who wield religion as an implement for keeping down the poor, has been driven into the not very mathematical conclusion, that two wrongs make one right. The religious traders say to him, 'You shall believe, or we will bait you;' and he replies, 'I am bent therefore upon disbelieving, AND WILL DISBELIEVE in spite of you all.'" And, take notice, he is

\* "The Great Dragon Cast Out."

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speaking of a learned and intelligent man, "a skilful Greek critic"—putting into his mouth language never used excepting by the most ignorant and depraved; and into his brain errors of the most ridiculous character.

But the shallowness or viciousness of the critic's mind is strikingly shown by the circumstance of the following immediately succeeding the last quotation, "The fact is, belief or disbelief does not seem in any way to depend on the will of the individual, but on the peculiarity of his mental organisation, and it is possible for a believer to be a much worse member of society than an unbeliever." What apology can be offered for a man who endeavours to injure an opponent, by attributing to him conduct which he himself declares no man can be guilty of? For belief and disbelief being entirely independent of an individual, and not subject to control, how can a man believe or disbelieve from determination or obstinacy, which the critic would have his readers believe Julian Hibbert the Atheist did? W.C.

PROCLAMATION!

To the Inhabitants of Cheltenham.

PROCLAIMETH first—That GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE hath been wrongfully imprisoned upon a charge of denying god; for no one until now hath clearly known of the nature of god, and that therefore he hath but denied the shadows of men.

Proclaimeth second—That the nature of god is love, that god is love, that god is no other than love, for without we love thought we cannot think, and without we love life we cannot live.

Proclaimeth third—That the denial of love, as the true god, is the only blasphemy: that George Jacob Holyoake hath not committed that crime, and that those who have committed him to prison wrongfully, are anathematised with the curse of pity, as infidels and as blasphemers against god.

Proclaimeth fourth—That the refusal of Henry Fry to take an oath after the manner of the old world, in the case of George Jacob Holyoake, is worthy of all imitation, as it declareth of the wish for simple truth in man of the communist church of god.

Proclaimeth fifth—That the requiring of an oath instead of an affirmation from a man, is a libel against his character, as it covertly charges him with being a liar, and that is a blasphemy, through the divine image, against god, and is therefore anathematised with the curse of pity.

That the doctrines of communion are being revealed to the nations, that division will cease, that unity will arise, and the millennium commence upon the earth.

(Signed) GOODWYN BARMBY,

Pontifarch of the Communist Church.  
Quarter 1, year 2.

On the idea of a god writing in his book of life the works of mankind.

What delectable employment for a deity, to be eternally watching such contemptible grubs in all their silly and wicked actions

night and day! And what heavenly gratification to behold forty or fifty thousand animals upon two stumps (to say nothing of the horses, they poor things are not blest with immortal souls), who are cutting one another to atoms in his holy name, with his ambassadors, the priests, for bottle-holders. —Yahoo.

In all civil societies men are taught insensibly to be hypocrites from their cradle; nobody dares to own that he gets by public calamities, or even by the loss of private persons. The sexton would be stoned should he wish openly for the death of parishioners, though everybody knew he had nothing else to live upon. (Search into Society, 402.) May not the same be said of doctors and physicians, who profess to be very glad when they meet their friends and acquaintance in good health?—*Ibid.*

NOTICE.—Copies of this work sent by post to any parts where they cannot be otherwise obtained, at the rate of THREE for FOURPENCE-Post-office stamps for one month or three, with directions, addressed to the Editor, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, will receive attention.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. H., PAINSWICK. It is quite true there is no publication extant in which such persons as he can be heard. It is wrong. All men should be afforded an opportunity of expounding their views, whatever they may be. I have reason to think the world will improve in this respect shortly. G. J. H.

W. C., LIVERPOOL, writes with regard to his statement on p. 224 of the Oracle, and offers to forward the short-hand notes taken, when the words he speaks of were delivered. He is thanked for his kind offer of assistance, but want of his address renders it of no avail. G. J. H.

Lines by a Young Atheist, declined.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c. In consideration of the kindness shown by the Charitists of Cheltenham to Mr. Holyoake, a few friends of the Rational Society, Newcastle, have subscribed and sent to Mr. H. 12s. for the widow of the murdered HOLBERRY. It has been forwarded to G. Julian Harney for that lady, by Mr. Holyoake.

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# THE ORACLE OF REASON;

## Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

No. 35.] EDITED FOR CHARLES SOUTHWELL, DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT, [PRICE 1D.  
BY G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

### THE BETTER TO BE SAFE SYSTEM.

“G.—Oh, dear! Did you leave off flesh altogether? But, then, I suppose you diminished the quantity little by little. You must have been very cautious, so as not to give the body a violent shock.

“A.—That, sir, is a sort of mental and physical tantalism, which may suit some minds, as, moreover, it enables them to persuade themselves, as well as others, that they are progressing, while at the same time they can, on any pressing occasion, go quite back again, and so have the pleasure of again working forward on the bit-by-bit reform plan; but I assure you, I gave up flesh altogether at once, without experiencing any other than the most pleasant results from the alteration.”

*Healthian.*

Is it better to insult truth by going tardily to her lovely arms than to shock error by leaving the old wretch abruptly? We will hear what a correspondent says. Mr. E. Search, from I do not know where, writes ingeniously thus—

Allow one who thinks you wrong in your notions, and your opponents wrong in the treatment of your “priests,” to point out why he thinks you unwise in the style you adopt to expose what you think wrong in their opinions and practices.

He then advances a military objection: our “error consists (says he) in storming instead of sapping. Were we miners and sappers we should escape; but as stormers, the attorney-general comes down upon us.” I can’t help it if he does. I dare say, as Pope says, whatever is, is right, and if it isn’t I can’t turn “sapper.”

Moral mining and mental sapping I object to. Do not care about mining a coal-bed or sapping a sugar-tree, but to mine and sap my fellow-men I detest. Policy may recommend it, but candour rejects and modesty shuns it. I like an open foe and hate a secret enemy. I could scarcely endure the man who should trepan me even into good. I should think he doubted its being good if he feared to show it me openly; and are not the men unworthy of good who cannot appreciate it unless they get it by deception? If bigotry could not permit me to tell my thoughts openly I would keep them back, not prejudice and render them suspicious by attempts to teach them secretly. Men always shun the secret enemy, and if a man be not an enemy why assume the conduct of one?

Besides, what would Socrates say to the

plan? Does it not imply the assumption on the part of the miner and sapper of men’s principles that *he is right*? Who does not hate the silent and insidious advances of the priest, as he instils the poison of religion into our social and political institutions unseen and unsuspected? Why should the lover of truth act the part of a pious man? The miner and sapper evades discussion by his secrecy, and for all he knows he may be mining and sapping error into men’s thoughts. The arena of free discussion is the only just place in which to put opinions forth, because there only can the wheat of truth be separated from the chaff of error. OPEN combat is the only kind of warfare a lover of truth can honourably engage in, as there only is truth in its proper sphere and place—before the eyes of all men, to win their admiration and command their respect. Even friend Christ objected to lights being put under bushels.

Next, says our belligerent logician—

You really say but little, if anything, that Hume, Gibbon, Shaftsbury, Sir Wm. Drummond, in his “*Cædipus Judaicus*,” Buckland, Lawrence, Owen, and others have not said before you, without giving their enemies the great advantage of putting them into their vice.

I do not wonder to hear we say “little or nothing new;” the same has been said of all the persons Mr. Search mentions, and perhaps will of all who follow them. And Mr. Search exemplifies his own remark so far, since he says nothing “new” of us.

But I can point out one difference. Most of these men wrote *dear* blasphemy, and we write *cheap*. They wrote for the *few*, and we write for the *many*. But did not Lawrence get into the “vice,” when he published his ignominious recantation to get out of it? and if Mr. Owen had acted on his own precepts he would have been there long ago. Besides, none of these men ever openly taught atheism, and certainly from what Mr. Owen has written upon the subject he does not understand it.

But one need not go further; Mr. Search puts out of the pale of probabilities all individuality of thought and opinion. All men cannot walk the world as *Cædipus Judaicus*, and it would be sorry work if they could. So of the other persons named. *We* have to *practice* what they taught; no little under-

taking. Hence our acquaintance with Mr. Attorney-General—god-almighty's blessed defender!

Egotism aside, it is a compliment to be supposed walking in the footsteps of the great and glorious men Mr. Search names—more than he is doing, I guess. But these worthies did not purchase for us the right of free discussion. They began the business. We are going on with it. Will Mr. Search deny it to be a desirable boon? Would just say, "miners and sappers" will never get it before the arch-angel blows the last trumpet.

Mr. S. further says, "Mr. Owen debates and opposes systems and things without legal annoyance." Very well; Mr. Owen writes and debates as he thinks fit; so do I. In this we both agree. The difference is, he is more lucky than I, and I hope he ever will be.

Finally, Mr. Search says—

If Southwell and Holyoake have done good by depriving their cause of their own advocacy and putting their poor friends under the necessity of assisting to support them, instead of buying, reading, and circulating what they thought true in their doctrine—show it.

Mr. S. seems to fancy the world at a standstill, and that nothing need be done but read old authors. I beg to tell him the present generation have their work to do as well as their ancestors.

I and SOUTHWELL have not deprived our cause of our advocacy; christianity has done that. We merely did our duty, and spoke as we thought; the consequences to be regretted, came, we did not go to them. Our cause may make much better use of our sufferings than it could of our service, should it be disposed. Our cases do more to show the religious villany and oppression under which men live than all that Hume ever wrote. Buckland taught, or Owen said. But hear Mr. S. *we* "put our poor friends under the necessity of supporting us." We have asked no man's sympathy—begged no man's pence. Walking in the plain path of duty was our only ambition, and the satisfaction of having done so our only expected reward.

Beg leave to add, if Mr. Search estimates mental freedom by pounds, shillings, and pence, the privation of his approval is not hard to be borne.

G. J. H.

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### THE LAST PUSH FOR GOD;

OR, THE ASSIZE TRIAL AT GLOUCESTER.

"Farewell hope, and with hope  
Farewell fear."—MILTON.

I SHOULD reproach myself had I entertained the shadow of hope in Christian justice—kindness is out of the question. In equity I have indulged no faith—it *might*

certainly have been its appearance now is gone.

On Monday, True Bills were promptly found against me and ADAMS. The lord is good to all, and his *tender* mercies are over *all* his works. We are in a fair way to depart in peace as our eyes are seeing his salvation.

A friend earnestly entreats me never to forget for a moment that twelve blockheads are to try us. Which of course is a very pleasing assurance.

Conviction and imprisonment I now regard as much more certain than the coming of Christ, unless he may be supposed to come in the verdict, where at least his influence is pretty sure to be seen.

The hon. Thomas Erskine is the judge in our case. His bearing seems urbane, but I am told his temper is irritable. His charge to the jury was the most curious specimen of the silly and the sensible it has been my lot to hear. There is little doubt, but that christianity will exalt the cruel above both in his sentences upon us.

I applied to the judge for a copy of my indictment, and after some discussion it was ordered. I thanked him for the kindness, but found out, ultimately, that I had been thanking him for ordering me to pay 8s. 6d. (that sum being demanded when I applied for the copy). The *favor*, however, I declined, having received so many of them at the sessions. The result was I had no copy of my indictment after all.

The hon. Grantley Berkeley was foreman of the grand jury, which, when I saw, saved me much speculation as to the nature of the bills to be returned against me, he being brother to Craven Berkeley, who endeavoured in the House of Commons to justify the Cheltenham magistrates from the charge of "*serious irregularities*" in their proceedings against me; and as Sir James Graham, in the case of Mr. MASON, contended that however illegal was the conduct of Beman, the constable, in his treatment of him, all was justified, right, proper, and fair, since the jury had returned a verdict of guilty against Mr. Mason. So I expect it is only necessary for a jury to find me guilty in order to justify every illegality the magistrates have committed in my case. It opens a fine prospect for me, and is a doctrine which much elevates my estimation of the daily *improving* liberties of Englishmen.

The judge assured me my trial *could* not come on this week—but has just sent me a notice that it will take place to-morrow morning (Saturday), the reasons for which he has not informed me.

G. J. H.

Gloucester, Aug. 12, 1842.

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

### IS THERE A GOD?

XX.

AN article of mine on the god question, that appeared in your paper of the 23rd ult., has drawn forth a sharp rebuke from Mr. Mackintosh. I am glad of this; I am really delighted that any act of mine, wise or foolish, should have induced that gentleman to abandon the silent, *sulky* system, and once more enter the field of oracular controversy. I shall pass over all that is unnecessarily harsh, or merely abusive in Mr. Mackintosh's strictures, not having either leisure or inclination to notice it; but if space be granted me I will endeavour to meet all that is really *solid* and *argumentative* therein.

I will begin with the "*philosophic idea of power*," so much insisted upon by Mr. Mackintosh. His words are these: "The idea of an unknown cause or causes, which, taken in a collective sense, may signify a number of causes co-operating or working together conjointly, and which may be and are expressed by the collective terms "the unknown power." Now I dispute the philosophy of this idea, or more properly this notion, and am quite willing to rest the whole question of atheism upon the *fact* that no human being has *any idea whatever of power*. Thus much I can say with certainty, that if Mr. Mackintosh has an *idea* of power, philosophic or unphilosophic, it is more than I have. I speak not (it should be carefully remembered) of the popular sense attached to the word power, but the "*philosophic idea*" of Mr. Mackintosh and others. It is usual, for example, to say a horse has such and such power, or of a man, that he has more or less power, which mode of expression, though perhaps open to objection, is correct enough for all practical purposes, but when I am gravely told, not that a man or a horse has power, but that there is a power *in* the man, a power *in* the horse. I can scarce forbear laughing outright. Were a man to say, that snow has *power* to be melted, a stone in the air *power* to fall, a cannon-ball under certain circumstances *power* to be driven a mile or two, he would be thought silly; and yet it is not one whit more absurd to say that snow has the power to be melted, stones to fall, or cannon-balls to be propelled, than to affirm that there is a power *in* heat to melt snow, a power *in* stones to make them kill, or a power *in* gunpowder to force along a cannon-shot. The fact is, no human being can have philosophic or unphilosophic ideas of any existence but matter, or any phenomena but that which matter exhibits. It has been over and over again clearly proved by Hume and other, that what is called the idea of power is a gross fallacy. Every atom has its peculiar properties and modes of action, in other words, acts in a certain definite manner upon human

sense. All must admit so palpable a truth, but it is manifestly *impossible* that our senses can be acted upon by immaterial existences, or rather it is clearly and manifestly impossible there can be such existences. To human sense there are none such, and it is the height of folly to waste breath about imaginary notions. Chimeras only breed chimeras and mischiefs. We know that *feeling* precedes *thinking*, or in other words, that things must first act upon the senses, before they become food for reflection. *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuit in sensu*, is a very ancient, and I think indisputable maxim. Now as Mr. Mackintosh pretends that a philosophical idea of *power*, or god, is in his intellect, perhaps he will inform us how it got there; through what sense slipped the idea of his intangible, immaterial, omnipresent god? If he has such a "*philosophic idea*," surely he can make others acquainted therewith, unless we can suppose that he is blessed with a sixth sense, and by this extra door in his pericranium lets in sensations other men dream not of. If so, his philosophic idea, like Mr. D'Israeli's "*fixed*" one, will be of no use to people with only five senses. I candidly and sorrowfully avow, that I have not the most distant conception of an omnipresent immaterial substance, whether called power, god, or any other fine name. That matter exists, that it moves, that it is the cause, and the only cause of all effects, are to me facts, no less clear and certain than the fact of my own existence. If Mr. Mackintosh's science embraces a larger circle of facts; if he not only knows there is matter, that it is incessantly in motion, that it is unceasingly producing effects, which effects are in turn parents or causes of other effects, if, I say, his science embraces more than this, I am of a teachable spirit, and will gladly be made wiser. If, however, we only know matter and its phenomena, will Mr. Mackintosh please to tell me in plain language how he knows anything else? I am inclined to suspect that he will try to *evade*, for he cannot *answer* this question; he cannot point to the original or model of his philosophic idea; he cannot tell me or any body else *what he means by the idea of power*. It is really amusing for a writer who, like Mr. Mackintosh, scribbles about "*philosophic ideas of impenetrable causes, and unknown powers*," to set about lecturing me for not clearly and precisely defining my terms. Allowing myself as guilty in this particular as he could wish, still when Satan solemnly reproves sin one cannot but smile at his devilish inconsistency. I have always been accustomed to think that the inventor or constant user of a word, like the inventor or day-by-day regulator of a steam carriage, would best explain the meaning or economy of the thing. I do not *invent* the word god, I never use it but

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

to show the absurdity of its use. I pretend not to explain what it means, for the *sufficient reason* that, in reality, it has no meaning whatever. It is an unintelligible word, a sound without sense, which was invented by the cunning and is perpetuated by the ignorant.

When for the sake of meeting superstitious, upon something like tangible ground, I said there *is* or *is not* a god, I meant there *is* or *is not* something *not* itself matter, which nevertheless moves (to use simpleton's language), controls, and governs all matter. I say there *is* matter, and cannot even imagine anything else; but if other people say they can, and call that imaginary nonentity power, or god, where is the inconsistency, where the absurdity, in my declaration that there *is* or *is not* good sufficient reason to believe therein? Let those who use the terms *unknown power* explain, if they can, what they mean by them; or how it is possible to *know* the *unknown*; how it is possible to have a "philosophic idea" of what, by their own confession, no man is competent to understand or explain. I hope Mr. Mackintosh will not in future attempt to slide over these difficulties, in that dashing off-hand manner he sometimes assumes. Instead of demanding what *I* mean by the term god, he should rather explain what *he* means by it; for I never pretend to have "any definite idea under the term." The term god is utterly nonsensical; and "unknown power" is, if possible, even more so. As to the idea contained in the motto from D'Holbach, I am astonished that Mr. Mackintosh should not have been more wary than to quote it with such an air of triumph. A boy praising and kissing the rod which soundly flogged his own breech, would be nothing to this. Why, so far from D'Holbach himself considering it "a philosophic idea of the unknown god," that writer has distinctly declared in the "System of Nature," that no man ever had or ever will have a philosophic idea of what he can't comprehend. "The word god is, for the most part, used to denote the *impenetrable cause of those effects* which astonish mankind, which man is *not competent to explain*." Now, what philosophic idea of god is there here? I cannot discover any. To call an impenetrable cause god, surely does not explain the impenetrable cause, it cannot surely make it penetrable. D'Holbach does not say that the impenetrable cause is *god*, but merely that *the word god is used to denote that cause*, and if he had, I do not see how our ignorance would have been helped thereby. To call causes or supposed causes, of which we are ignorant, god, is just to deify our own ignorance. It proves nothing, explains nothing, and effects nothing but mischief.

I could quote fifty passages from D'Holbach, to show that Mr. Mackintosh entirely misconceives the sense of that author. One, however, will be sufficient for my purpose. "Philosophers (says he) explain all the phenomena that occur by the properties of matter, and though they feel the want of a more intimate acquaintance with natural causes, they do not therefore the less believe them deducible from these properties or these causes." Such is the language of atheism, and such is, I think, the language of plain sense.

The space I have devoted to this fanciful notion of power, leaves me but room, barely to notice some other objections urged by Mr. Mackintosh. One is, that "no philosopher ever asserted that god existed '*before the world,*'" but as I never said that a *philosopher* ever did, Mr. Mackintosh beats the air; my own opinion is, that no *philosopher* ever asserted with perfect sincerity, that god existed, or exists at all, either *before* or *behind* the worlds. Only people with damaged intellects spout such nonsense. As to the string of *is* and *is not*s of which complaint is made, let those who have curiosity judge of it; it won't hang them, I promise. It is plain that Mr. Mackintosh holds me in great contempt, as a first-rate blockhead. Not a line of my unfortunate article does he agree with, but stigmatises *the whole* as "an awfully absurd jumble of conflicting ideas, beginning from no recognised principle, and winding up without any tangible conclusion." I, as already said, do not mind all this. It is *honor* for me. But, though so good-tempered as not to mind a severe handling, I cannot allow Mr. Mackintosh to brag about the question of demonstration being "given up," for the quite sufficient reason that neither Mr. SOUTHWELL nor those who think with him on the god subject ever had it to give up; they never pretended to demonstrate a non-existence, and have always, *in effect*, referred the discussion to the *principle of the sufficient reason*. It will be time enough for Theists to boast about our "frankly and very properly giving up the question of demonstration," after they have proved we ever possessed it. Of course the principle of the sufficient reason is the only principle to which an appeal can be made, with a view to the settlement of disputable or controverted questions. The Jew *is* justified in appealing to it; and neither Jew nor Turk, Christian, Theist, or Atheist, can justify their beliefs in any other manner. They all *should* have reasons—good, sufficient reason for the hope or faith that is in them. Mr. Mackintosh is right when he declares "that every superstitious man from Indus to the pole, has a sufficient reason (to him) for believing in the *kind* of god or *unknown power*, in which he does be-

lieve; and by the same rule we shall find, where we meet with an isolated case of an Atheist here and there, he likewise will declare that he perceives (what is to him) a sufficient reason, for believing that there is no god at all." So far we agree, but when he goes on to say, that "if we ask for demonstration on either side, we shall be told that the world is governed by an impenetrable cause, which man is not competent to explain," he states what is absolutely false. The Atheist does not, when asked for negative demonstration, make such a silly speech by way of reply; the Atheist doesn't admit that the world is governed at all. The Atheist thinks *all is matter and matter all*, and what outrageous nonsense it would be to talk about the whole being governed. A governed universe implies an agent that governs it; the governor must be distinct from the thing governed; and if it be not madness to prate about the whole being moved, directed, kept in order, in a word, governed by something else, I am at a loss to know in what madness consists. Mr. Mackintosh seems to be possessed with the notion that the existence of a governing power is matter of fact, a something so clear as to be past dispute. All he is anxious to do is simply to determine "what are the qualities or attributes of this power or powers." How great then will be his consternation when his eyes are opened to the matter of fact, that Atheists, so far from "cudgelling their brains" about attributes and qualities, do not acknowledge the *existence* of power or powers. I was much struck with a forcible passage in the *Oracle* some time since, to this effect, "We war not with the church, but the altar; not with the forms of worship, but worship itself; not with the attributes, but with the existence of deity." If Mr. Mackintosh had read that passage, he would not so industriously have dug a hole for his own philosophical reputation, or escaped an atheistical difficulty, by breaking his shins against it.

As to what he has said about "the same rule of logic" which calls upon the Theist to prove his assertion, "there is a god, also calls upon the Atheist to prove *his* position that there is *no* god," surely it cannot be meant by this that Atheists are to carry Theists upon their shoulders through the realms of infinite space to see that there is nobody there who winds up the worlds, sets them going, and *keeps* them going, like a journeyman clockmaker in full employment. If Atheists are not expected to do this, what, in the name of sense, are they expected to do? If an appeal to the sufficient reason is allowed to be decisive upon all other controverted points, why not upon the question, is there or is there not a god?

Perhaps Mr. Mackintosh will tell me whether

he is not as much called upon to prove that there is not a *witch*, or that there is not a *devil*, as I am that there is not a *god*. If I have no right to say there is not a god, without proving my position, he has no right to say there is not a devil, without proving his position. Anti-devilism and anti-theism are equally dogmatic, or rather I should say, they are equally sound in principle and useful in practice. Nor can anything be more fallacious than the idea that philosophers are called upon to disprove the multitudinous conceits of every crack-brained idiot. Human imagination is very prolific, and he who should never *deny* what he cannot *demonstrate to be false* would give error full swing, and practically ally himself with priests and all other scoundrels; who will affirm any lie that strengthens their authority. To allow all sorts of assertions to pass unchallenged, because it may be impossible logically to demonstrate their falsehood, would be to give free and undisputed passage to every wild conceit, every crude and undigested notion of vagrant imaginations. D'Holbach says, in his reply to Clark, that "in the schools it is never considered requisite to *prove a negative*, indeed, this is ranked by logicians amongst those things *impossible to be*, but it is considered of the highest importance to soundness of argument, to *establish the affirmative by the most conclusive reasoning*." This is precisely the view taken by Mr. Southwell, and that my article "beginning from no recognisable principle, and winding up without any tangible conclusion," was intended to illustrate. If we are determined to be sophistical and nasty nice, it is easy logically to argue that nothing whatever can be proved or disproved. I am not sure that I exist, I cannot prove my own existence. In one sense all are sceptics, yet all deem some opinions *reasonable*, and others *unreasonable*, nevertheless. By making all men excessively sceptical nothing is either gained or lost by reason. The Theist, the Pantheist, the anti-Theist, and the Atheist, still wend their several ways. Though it may easily be proved that there is nothing certain in human knowledge, in practice men will always scout that theory. In strictness no man can be charged as an Atheist till what god is, is accurately defined; but such logical niceties speedily and properly vanish in practical discussions.

The reasoning that makes the Atheist a sceptic, makes all other men sceptics. Theists, Polytheists, are all but sceptics. So that nothing is either gained or lost by any party. Mr. Mackintosh allows there can no more be an absolute Theist than an absolute Atheist; then theism can gain nothing by such useless refinements and wordy cavillings.

M.

## IS THERE NO GOD?

"I would not give the snap of my finger for a map who professed atheism simply because he was disgusted with religious villanies. What Atheist attempts to show reason for disbelief in a god from the follies and knaveries of religions—except it be the god connected with any particular religion? What has the hideous and anomalous monsters belonging to most religious systems to do with the governing principle, power, or being contended for by philosophers? This latter is what the Atheist loves to battle with."—*Oracle*, No. 33, p. 272.

THERE is an old saying, rather clumsy to be sure, but very expressive, which says, when your opponent has got hold of the wrong end of the argument, "give him rope enough he will hang himself." Now, I cannot help but think that this is the case with some of our modern Atheists. They have commenced a very strong attack—upon what? Upon god, to be sure. Well, but god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man. *The idea of god is a moral and not a physical idea.* Suppose the Atheist could prove (which he cannot) that there is no such *physical* existence in the universe as the being called god: what then? Has he proved his case? no; because, as has been said, the idea of god is a *moral* and not a *physical* idea.

"No man has seen god at any time." This is true; not because the Jew-Book says so; it is true in itself: no man has had a *perfect* conception of god at any time. But all men, at all times, have had *some* conception of god, however inadequate. All men of reflecting minds have conceived the existence of a "*governing principle, power, or being,*" who, or which, rules the universe. This, according to the *Oracle*, is the idea with which Atheists wish to contend. This latter is what *the* Atheist loves to battle with. Well, as they have chosen the higher ground, let us see how they maintain their position. Before I proceed, it is incumbent upon me to say, that under the present circumstances of persecution, it is very disagreeable to me, I might, indeed, say painful, to attack the opinions advanced in the *Oracle*. No man can deprecate prosecution for *mere opinion* more severely than I do (although I am very well aware that opinions lead to action), and I am fully convinced that the legal prosecution of atheism is nothing more or less than *persecution*; and further, I am convinced that the ignorant and bigotted persecutors of atheism are (although ignorantly) the best friends of the doctrine. Atheism is a negative doctrine; it is too cold to live without persecution.

W. C. who writes so elaborately in defence of atheism, says he would not give the snap of his finger for a man who professed atheism simply because he was disgusted with religious villanies. I am afraid if this class be given up there will be very few left. Does not W. C. know that atheism always flourishes

best amidst religious villanies and impostures? "It is a fact, that there are more Atheists, and Infidels of all kinds, in Roman Catholic states, where religion is so well guarded, than in England."\* Yes, it is a fact, a well known fact, that even in papal Rome, the seat and centre of the grand superstition, there are more Atheists, especially amongst the priesthood, than in any other city in Europe. How is this? Simply because the priests, being behind the scenes are better acquainted with "the villanies" of superstition than other men, they are therefore disgusted with these villanies, and consequently become Atheists in respect to the *god* which they hold up to the people, although they wink at the imposture because it brings "grist to the mill." It by no means follows, however, because they are Atheists to the Jehovah of the Jews, that, therefore, they deny the existence of "*the governing principle, power, or being contended for by philosophers.*" The idea of god with which, we are told, *the* Atheist loves to battle.

Let us try to understand each other; what idea does W. C. and other writers in the *Oracle* intend to convey to the mind of the reader by the term *Atheist*? Does he desire to designate by that term a man who rejects the notion of the existence of a local or national god, called Jupiter, Jehovah, Budh, Brahma, Allah, or any other merely local or national title? If the man who rejects any one or all of these gods be an Atheist, we shall find in all countries Atheists as plentiful as blackberries. But if by the term Atheist, it is intended to designate a man who denies the existence of "*the governing principle, power, or being contended for by philosophers,*" we shall find, I think, that the Atheists are few and far between.

If the Atheist loves to battle with the idea of a governing principle, power, or being—or, as it is expressed by Robert Owen, "a power, or powers which directs the atom and controls the aggregate of nature," then let him keep the philosophic idea of god before his mind's eye, and battle away with it as long as he will; he will find plenty of honest opponents, amongst whom I myself profess to be one; but, if the philosophic idea of god is to be continually *mixed up* with the superstitious notions of Jews, Christians, Mohamedans, Hindoos, and other local or national notions, until the whole has become so confused and jumbled together that there are no means of knowing distinctly what object or idea the Atheist is attacking, I must say that I, for one, have no desire to enter into the rambling sort of controversy that must necessarily arise from such a vague and indefinite mode of attack. I am ready to defend the idea of a *governing principle, power, or being,* which I would call god, be-

cause that name is as good as any other, but I have no desire to take up the cause of the strange character described in the bible under the name of Jehovah. I leave that task to those who worship him. There are plenty of them, both Jews and Christians, as wild as Mohamedans. I should be willing to enter into a friendly controversy with any Atheist who loves to battle with the idea of "the governing principle, power or being contended for by philosophers," and who will keep strictly to that idea without mixing it up with extraneous ideas derived from other sources; but if all the extravagant notions of superstitionists, ancient and modern, foreign and domestic, are to be jumbled together and mixed with the philosophic idea of a governing principle called god, then I would beg to decline entering upon the question, inasmuch, as from the nature of the case, the controversy must end in a mere wrangle, leading to no profitable result.

T. S. MACKINTOSH.

\* Priestly.

### CHRISTIAN IGNORANCE OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

(Concluded.)

IT is time for Christians to abandon the "witch burner" as an authority in matters of religion, if they wish their system to be respected in the nineteenth century. Certainly no one with a grain of sense will place confidence in Sir Matthew Hale's statement, "That there is no book like the bible for wisdom, learning, and use." This statement is positively absurd; what portion of modern knowledge has been drawn from the bible? None, absolutely none; on the other hand, it has been the greatest obstacle to the diffusion of knowledge, and is so at the present moment; in the hands of the priests it has ever been the means of keeping the people in a state of ignorance. They well know that as the empire of knowledge extends the empire of faith will decline, and therefore oppose the diffusion of the one to preserve the existence of the other.

The fifth author quoted is that of Boyle; his statement as to the value of the bible may pass for what it is worth; none but a mind *religiously* insane could have uttered or penned such a sentence, and those who have quoted it in the tract could be but little better, for if they knew anything about the matter they must know that it is absurdly false.

The respectable authority of Locke is next on the list, who informs us that, it "has god for its author, salvation for its end," &c. The law has said in the case of SOUTHWELL that we must not consider it the "outpourings of some devil;" it is fortunate for the gospel that the law has said so, or truth might tell a different tale. Had Locke said it had *damnation* for its end, he would have been much nearer the truth, for the doctrine of damnation for the majority of the human race, is one of the leading features of the system. If the bible is "truth without any mixture of error," it is somewhat strange that its doctrines have had to struggle with science for so many hundred years; and it is somewhat strange too that Christians have not yet decided what is truth among themselves; after several hundred years of controversy, they have not yet decided what the bible teaches. The understanding of the author of the "Essay on the human understanding," must have been in a very sorry state when he could say of the Jew-Book "it is all pure, all sincere, nothing too much, nothing wanting." Christians themselves can-

not believe this, if they have thought upon its contents. Oh yes, the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Lot, Onan, David, Solomon, and a host of others, are "all pure, all sincere!" what dolts Infidels must be not to have discovered the purity of these things before now! "Nothing too much, nothing wanting," forsooth! and everyone who understands the subject admitting that the translation is disfigured by blunders from beginning to end, and whilst a new edition of the bible is advertised as containing *two thousand emendations*, yes, two thousand emendations. This is what ROBERT TAYLOR would call the god-help-me-plaint of divine revelation. Locke was a Unitarian, and according to the orthodox creeds is at this moment in hell for his rejection of the trinity; how then can the orthodox quote him as an authority in religious matters? the idea is absurd.

I entirely dissent from the opinion of Sir W. Jones, his language should run thus: I am of opinion that the volume, independent of its *doubtful* origin, contains *less* sublimity, *less* pure morality, and more *unimportant* history, and *fewer strains* of eloquence, than can be found in any book of the same size in whatever language it may have been written. Well might Dr. Watt's write that the major part of the Christian world can scarce give any reason why they believe the bible to be the word of god, except that they always did believe it, and had been taught so from their infancy; well might the poet exclaim:

Many a one owes to his country his religion,  
And in another would as strongly grow,  
Had but his nurse or mother taught him so.  
The priest continues what the nurse began,  
And thus the child imposes on the man.

The three authors above quoted are in the right and will be so till human beings dare to think for themselves.

Now, Mr. Editor, if such men as Bacon, Selden, Milton, Hale, Boyle, Locke, and Jones could believe the Christian religion on such slender grounds I have shown they did, what must be the case with the vast majority of that 180,000,000 who are said to believe in the Christian system? The fact is, they know little more of the *real* origin, history, and evidences of christianity, than the African savages; they know little more of their own system than young children; and not half so much as Infidels generally do, and yet they have the effrontery to talk of the ignorance of the Infidel portion of society of the contents of the bible. Infidels reject the Jew-Book because they have thought on its contents; the Christians believe in it with an *unthinking* belief. It is impossible for any one to read the old book with a philosophic mind, and not discover its gross defects, both in principle and detail, and yet it is taught as containing a system capable of removing all our evils in the present, and protecting us against others in the future; those who oppose it are considered the worst enemies of society, as individuals worthy of any amount of slander and persecution in this world, and in the world which is always to come damnation everlasting. If Christians could prove the truth of their system by argument, they would not resort to the devil to help them out of the dilemma; they ought to know that suggesting motives to the will can never carry conviction to the understanding; that the fear of hell may succeed in crushing the activity of timid minds, but never make them efficient defenders of their system. There is one great consolation for those who oppose Christian theology — that its progress in this country has ceased; nay more, that it is in a declining state, Christians themselves being the judges. Let us then, one and all, continue our exertions, and our efforts will be crowned with success; truth is mighty and will prevail. Yours, in the cause, J. C. F.

NOW READY.

A Plain Answer to the Query, "Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?" By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence. — This work should be universally read.

# THE ORACLE OF REASON.

## ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

8, Holywell-street, Strand.

THE SUBSCRIPTIONS now proceed with much greater vigour, but have not sufficed to meet the recent heavy expenses; a very slight contribution from each of the friends of the cause, with a little increased exertion from our active supporters will secure an amount adequate to the occasion. It will be recollected that assistance, in order to be effectual, must be permanent, or continued as long as the occasion shall subsist, or the unjust laws shall continue to operate. We must be fortified against future assaults, by preconceived measures, not remain unprepared till the moment of attack. With this view the periodical subscriptions were determined on; the collectors organised; and the books, &c. arranged accordingly.

THE LONDON COLLECTORS may now have copies of the address of the Union for distribution.

Those Collectors who are willing to employ themselves actively in other circles than those of their immediate friends, may, by applying at the office, receive the addresses of *New Subscribers*. If they write, let them send name, address, and district in which they collect, or which best suits their convenience.

Those DESIROUS of ASSISTING by periodical subscriptions, to whom application has not been made, will please to transmit name (or initial) and address to the secretary. They can be called on annually, quarterly, monthly, or weekly, as most convenient, and for any sum as small as a penny a week.

COUNTRY COLLECTORS are requested to remit immediately all sums by post-office order, amounting to 10s. or upwards.

An urgent request is made to the Collectors and all friends of the cause, to remit, without delay all the funds they can command. *Now is the time* when assistance is most needed. The poor friends of liberty have come forward with alacrity to the extent of their means. The Committee, and indeed the most active working friends have greatly drained their purses. The comfortable advocates of free-discussion, those who approve of us from their easy chairs, are expected to "put themselves about" to the extent of a few remittances. It is too bad for the bold and free both to fight and pay.

London. M. RYALL, Gen. Sec.

**NOTICE.**—The Collectors are requested to attend at the Rotunda Coffee-room, Blackfriars-road, on Sunday evening next, the 21st inst.; after the Lecture, to pay in what sums they may have collected. The Secretary and one of the Committee will be in attendance from 8 till 10 o'clock.

Those who cannot conveniently attend on Sunday, the 21st, will take notice the same parties will be in attendance at the same time and place on the following Sunday, the 28th inst.

### NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Author of the "YAHOO" is thanked for his kindness, his wishes shall be complied with. He is also informed that the "additions" to his work have been placed in the hands of the publisher, who will pay every attention to them. Would there be any objection to the "Squib" being published at the end of the "Yahoo?"

THETA.—The last few months have witnessed changes of so much importance in the society complained of, and the eyes of the blind therein having been opened to the fallibility of parties hitherto considered otherwise, that to attack it as formerly when its disease was at its height, would savour more of malice than love, which latter has hitherto been the ruling principle with us. I have reasons for believing that the heads of the body give us every credit for our efforts—we never expected to convince the multitude, that must be the work of after ages; we shall plough, our children will reap. "Theta," in the following extract, having placed the question of

the disproof of the affirmative in a clear light, I quote it:—"There is or is not a being in the moon formed of cheese, who sometimes doth carry his head under his arm, and at another with it doth play at foot-ball. Mr. Goddite do you believe in the existence of such a being merely because I have said that he exists; and do you, according to the rules of logic, feel bound to prove there is no such being; do you intend taking the first opportunity of a trip to the moon, and placing yourself still further under its influence, to prove the negation? If you do, you are the most wonderful logician, I ever heard of, and quite, I grant you, beyond my comprehension; and if you do not mean to attempt the proof of this negation, what effrontery you must have to request me to prove the negation to an affirmative of yours. You can revel amid your syllogisms and sophisms, but pure induction, the only idol an Atheist logician has, is neither with you nor of you." W. C.

T. P. in type, shall appear in our next.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c.

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THE JUSTLY CELEBRATED  
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### HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL.

On Saturday, Sept. 3, in conjunction with the Oracle, but so as to be separated and bound up by itself, will be published the First Number of G. J. HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL, at Gloucester, for BLASPHEMY. Specially Reported. Price 1d.

Printed and Published by G. J. HOLYOAKE, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, and Sold by all Liberal Booksellers. Agent for Bristol, J. Chappel, News Agent, Narrow Wine-street; Macclesfield, Mr. Roche, Hall of Science; Barnsley, Mr. Thos. Lingard, New-street; Preston, Jas. Drummond, 112, Friar-gate.

Saturday, August 20, 1842.



THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“ FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, DBLE. NO.  
for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
No. 36.] Now Edited by G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 13, 1842, to Six Months’ [PRICE 2D.  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Bla-phemy, at Cheltenham.

THE “ JEW BOOK.”

II.

“ What inspiration glows in every line ;  
Aby ’gat Iky ! isn’t that divine ?  
Then Iky begat Jacob ; Jacob Joe ;  
And Joe begat—read scripture and you’ll  
know.”—YAHOO.

SUCH is a fair summary of no inconsiderable portion of that sacred fustian, which because called divine, inspired, &c. is gulphed down by the unthinking and priestridden multitude as the most sublime and wonderful truth that eye can see, ear hear, or mind conceive.

A doctor has been defined as a man who writes prescriptions until the patient either dies or is cured by nature. So of the bible, it supplies rules of thought and conduct until reason sinks, utterly sinks under its influence or rises in rebellion against it.

If without common-place hyperbole one circumstance may be called more extravagant than another in these godly times, it is that all sorts of men join in eulogising this book as a paragon of, truly, “ god knows what,” for unless he does no one else can tell.

Is it from policy, to hold the vulgar in priestly chains? Is it from expediency, to curry favor with *respectables*? Is it from cant, to cover guilt? Can it be from the intrinsic excellence of this ever-blessed Jew-Book? Take the following, as a small minute fractional, doubly diluted, diminished, refined, and distilled specimen of the intellectual and invaluable *facts* evolved from it by that sagacious genius the Bishop of Alexandria :

God is always, and the son is always; the same time the father, the same time the son. The son co-exists with god unbegottenly, being ever begotten, being *unbegottenly begotten*.

For which piece of *practical* information, the lord in his mercy be praised.

Please to remember that Arius was guilty of blasphemy for denying this, as likely enough I am for doubting it.

Is the book loved for its morality? Its moral teaching? Its salutary advice to the young? I venture to say, and hope the attorney-general will not dispute it with me, that “ Jolly Nose ” was a saint to Solomon, and “ Nix my dolly pals fake away,” a moral composition compared with his songs.

I can understand why bishops call this holy; can comprehend why lawyers affect a sacred reverence for its contents; and why Socialists sometimes talk of the *true christianity* it contains; but why such a man as W. J. Fox, who reasons so peerlessly on human sentiments and character, who profoundly analyses the springs of the loftiest morality, and stands alone the “ Socrates of his age,” how such a man can call the bible a “ glorious book,” I never could comprehend. Such ways to me, like the almighty’s, are past finding out.

But has not the time arrived when the matter touching this said book may be duly investigated, and its heavenly beauties fairly revelled in? The ancient Gnostics were, history records, as free in their strictures on

the bible as the modern Infidels. I believe we are much inferior to the Gnostics in our comments on the koran of the Christians.

The bible is said to be incorporated into our common-law—the law can be discussed, ergo, the bible can.

Mr. SOUTHWELL called the bible a revoltingly odious Jew production—the idol of all sorts of blockheads, the glory of knaves, the disgust of wise men, and some other things equally just and equally true. Priests cried out this is all *mere assertion*, and next took care to lodge him in gaol to prevent him adducing the proof.

I hope to remedy this *necessary* deficiency, and proceed with an inquiry into the grounds on which Mr. S. asserted what we have seen. In the mean time, for the consolation of the godly, for whom I own a daily increasing affection, I admit that the bible is “a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths,” but as Cowper says—

'Tis such a light as putrefaction breeds  
In fly-blown flesh, whereon the magot feeds ;  
Shines in the dark, but ushered into day,  
The stench remains, the lustre dies away.

G. J. H.

#### TRIAL FOR BLASPHEMY.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

Gloucester, Aug. 16, 1842.

SIR.—I was present in the court, yesterday, to witness what I shall describe as the *mock trial* of GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE. He was heard to the full in his truly Christian defence; both judge and jury would, if they could, have suppressed every word of it. They listened with evident pain to the beautiful strain and flow of his noble and ennobling sentiments, through nine hours. It was a proud day in the record of my life. I heard WOOLER and HONE defend themselves successfully, in 1817; but I would prefer to be declared guilty with Holyoake to being ac-

quitted on the ground of Wooler and Hone. To the judge and jury I do not impute any other vice than that of their religion. In that their vice was strong. They were precisely such men as the evangelist described exclaiming to the saviour, “*He hath spoken blasphemy! he is worthy of death—away with him, crucify him!*” In Holyoake I saw the saviour before the judgment seat of Pilate the Archer: Bartram, the witness, was Judas Iscariot; Erskine, the judge, Pilate, more bigoted, less reasoning, and less humane than the Roman governor; the jury, with the wiggled counsellor at their head, were the Jews, infuriately crying in ignorance of the truth and virtue of the saviour, *Away with such a pestilent fellow, crucify him!*

I am proud of calling Holyoake my friend, and of ranking among his friends. His imprisonment for six months will be his honour, and the queen's disgrace. Willingly would I have his imprisonment, to carry out the good he has done. Agitate I will this neighbourhood for some time to come, and proclaim and prove Holyoake the Christian and his persecutors the Infidels. This is my gain in knowledge of the principles of truth as laid down in the bible. I have discovered in the understanding of those truths that such men as Holyoake and myself have been the Christians, and our persecutors vile Infidels of the most vicious and worst description of character—idolators without reason; Atheists without the true god; politicians without righteous principle; professing moralists without morals!

I every day feel that I have made myself a tower of strength against the enemy of man in adopting this course. I sacrifice no principles of my past life; I carry them out only with the truer nomenclature of my ignorant enemies; I giving a reason for so doing in history and the ety-

mology of language; they *worshiping they know not what!*

As far as my pen can be of service to the *Oracle*, I will support it during Mr. Holyoake's imprisonment. Much of its style I think not the best, but its principles I proclaim *Christian*, and of the best kind. Excuse me in this description of things by names, and I can and will help you. To carry on this warfare in the best manner my ground must be taken. Let the enemy attempt to renew a prosecution against me, with my present command of the language of the subject; I should be glad to catch them doing it. Yours, in the service of truth,  
RICHARD CARLILE.

[As far as our limited space will permit, the pages of the *Oracle* are at the service of Mr. CARLILE. It would be discreditable in us to offer any obstruction to one who has been of such eminent service to the cause in which we are both engaged—viz., the destruction of superstition.—W. C.]

### IS THERE A GOD?

#### XXI.

THEOLOGIANs as well as philosophers of all ages and nations, have allowed that *SOMETHING must have been from all eternity*; in other words, that something must have been self-existent, therefore uncreated and everlasting. They all agreed upon this point, and I believe upon no other. They all agreed upon the *something*, and all quarrelled like drunkards or wild-beasts, about the *nature* of that something. Dr. Clarke not only agrees that something must have existed from all eternity, but confidently asserts that there has existed from all eternity some unchangeable and independent being; but it is much to be regretted that the learned doctor did not tell us how he got his knowledge of this unchangeable and independent being. That something has existed from all eternity, the Materialist readily admits. Indeed, there is no escape from such a conclusion. It

forces itself upon the mind with all the weight of a self-evident truism. When however Dr. Clarke says that eternal something is an unchangeable and independent being, he takes a huge stride, without leave or licence from philosophy. There is, in fact, neither rhyme nor reason in such language as applied to the universe. Whatever is part of the universe, and what is part of the universe it is obvious cannot be either unchangeable or independent of it, as shown by the very learned Ocellus Lucanus, who reasons thus:—

“The universe admitteth neither generation nor corruption, for it ever was and ever shall be; inasmuch as if it were subject to time it would not yet continue. For if any man should conceive it to have been made he would not be able to find into what it should be corrupted and dissolved; since that out of which it is made is before the universe, as that into which it shall be corrupted will be after the universe. Besides, the universe being made, is made together with all things, and being corrupted is corrupted together with all things, which is impossible, so that the universe is without beginning and ending. Now whatsoever had a beginning of its production and ought to partake of dissolution, admitteth two alterations; the one from that which is less to that which is greater; and from that which is worse to that which is better; and that term from whence it beginneth to be bettered, is called production; as that to which it arriveth is called the state; the other alteration is from that which is greater to that which is less; and from that which is better to that which is worse; but the period of this alteration is called corruption and dissolution. If, therefore, the whole be producible and corruptible, when it was produced, it was altered from that which was less to that which was

greater; and from that which was worse to that which was better; and consequently will afterwards be altered from the greater to the less, and from better to worse. So that the world being produced admitted growth and state; and shall again receive diminution and corruption. For every nature that admitteth progress, hath three terms, and two intervals. The three terms are production, state, and dissolution; but the two intervals are from the production to the state, and from the state to the dissolution. Now the universe doth of itself afford us no such evidence, since no one ever saw it produced nor altered either in *ascensu* or *descensu*, but it always remained in the same condition it is now in, equal and like itself. The evident signs whereof are the orders, fit proportions, figures, situations, intervals, faculties, mutual swiftness and slowness of motions, numbers, and periods of time; for all such things admit alteration and diminution, according to the progress of a producible nature; for that which is greater and better, accompanieth the state by reason of its vigour; and that which is less or worse, accompanieth the dissolution by reason of its weakness. Now I call the world by the name of universe, which appellation it obtaineth in that it is framed out of all things, being an absolute and perfect collection of all natures; *for besides the universe there is nothing, and if there be anything it is contained in the universe, either as a part or excrescence thereof.* As for those things that are contained in the world, they have communion with the world, but the world hath communion with nothing else besides itself; for all other things have not such a nature as is sufficient of itself, but stand in need of the communion with other things; as living creatures need respiration, the eye light, and the other senses their several objects; and plants need the juice of the earth for their

growth; nay, the sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, stand in need of a certain portion of the universe; only the universe stands in need of no other thing besides itself. Now as fire, which is able to give heat to other things is of itself hot, so that which is the cause of perfection to other things is of itself perfect, and that which is the cause of safety to others, must of itself be safe and permanent. Also, that which is the cause of compactedness to others, must needs of itself be compacted; but the world is to all other things the cause of being, safety, and perfection; wherefore of itself it must needs be eternal, perfect, and permanent for ever. Again, if the universe be dissolved, it must of necessity be dissolved into something or into nothing; not into something, inasmuch as there will not be a total corruption of the universe, if it be dissolved into something: for something must be either the universe or at least a part of it; nor will it be annihilated, for it is impossible that something should either be made of nothing or dissolved into nothing; wherefore the universe can admit neither production nor corruption. Now if any one should conceive it is corrupted, either it must be corrupted from something that is without the universe, or from something that is within; it cannot be from something without it, for there is nothing without the universe which comprehends all things, and is the world. Nor can it be from things that are within the universe, for then they must of necessity be greater and more prevalent than the universe, which cannot be; for all things are hurried by the universe, and endowed with life and soul. So that if it comes, neither by anything without the world, nor within it, then it cannot be subject to corruption and dissolution. Moreover, all nature if it be well considered, seemeth to take away continuity from the first

and most honorable parts in a certain proportion, lessening it by degrees, and applying it to all mortal things, as also admitting a progress of its own constitution (for the first bodies being moved, do in a uniform manner perform their periods), I say, a progress not continued and local, but consisting in alteration: viz., condensation and rarefaction. Thus fire being pressed together, produceth air; air, water; and water, earth. Also, from earth there is the same period of alterations, till you come to fire again, whence the alteration at first began. Likewise fruits and plants received their beginning from seeds, which being come to maturity and perfection, are again resolved into seeds, *nature making her progress from the same unto the same*. But men and other animals do in a more inferior manner finish the progress of *their* nature (since they do not return to their first age), neither have they a reciprocal change into one another, as it is in fire, air, water, and earth; but after they have run through their aforesaid parts of their race, and passed their several ages, they are dissolved and dye, becoming in the same state as they were. These, therefore, are arguments sufficient to prove that the universe remaineth perfect and uncorrupted; as also that the excrescence and results thereof suffer only a mutation, and not an annihilation, there being no such thing as *quies in natura*, all things being in a perpetual circular motion. Nay, that the figure, motion, time, and substance thereof are without beginning and end; thereby it plainly appears that the world admitteth neither production nor dissolution; for the figure is spherical, and consequently on every side equal, and therefore without beginning or ending. Also the motion is circular, and consequently stable, never shifting its former place. The time, likewise, is infinite, wherein the motion

is performed, as that which is moved had neither beginning nor shall have an end; from all which it is evident, that the universe admitteth neither production nor corruption.

“Again, as the frame of the world has been always, so it is necessary that its parts should likewise always have existed: by parts I mean the heaven, earth, and that which lieth betwixt, viz. the sky; for not without these, but with these and of these the world consists. Also, if the parts exist, it is necessary that the things which are in them should also co-exist; as with the heaven, the sun, moon, fixed stars, and planets; with the earth, animals, plants, minerals, gold and silver; with the air, exhalations, winds, and alterations of weather, sometimes heat and sometimes cold; for with the world all those things do and ever have existed as parts thereof. Nor hath man had any original production from the earth or elsewhere, as some believe, but hath always been as now he is, co-existent with the world, whereof he is a part. Now corruptions and violent alterations are made according to the parts of the earth; sometimes by the overflowing of the sea, sometimes with the dilating and parting of the earth by winds and waters imprisoned in the bowels thereof; but a universal corruption of the earth never hath been nor ever shall be. Yet these alterations have given occasion for the invention of many lies, and thus are we to understand them that derive the original of the Greek history from Inachus the Argive; not that he was really the original thereof, as some make him, but because a most memorable alteration did then happen, some were so unskilful as to make that construction thereof; and if any way we may believe Adam to be the first man, we must expound it after this manner, viz.: That he was the first of the whole race. But for

the universe and all the parts whereof it subsists, as it is at present so it ever was, and ever shall be; one nature perpetually moving and another perpetually suffering; one always governing, and the other always being governed."

Thus Ocellus Lucanus on the universe, an atheistical author so ancient that by some he is held to have been contemporary with Moses; by others that he was before him. The noted Charles Blount thought it very strange that so ancient and learned an author should have so different a sentiment of the world's beginning from that of Moses, for (says he) methinks if Moses's history of the creation and of Adam's being the first man, had been a generally received opinion at that time, Ocellus Lucanus who was so eminent a philosopher, should not have been ignorant thereof. I agree with Mr. Blount, that if the Mosaic cock-and-a-bull story about the creation, Adam's being the first man, &c. was extant at the time Ocellus Lucanus wrote, it would have been very strange indeed had he been ignorant of it. It is far more likely that he was well acquainted therewith, but thought it too contemptible for notice.

#### THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XXII.

NEXT in the series to fishes come the *amphibia*, or those animals who are able to live both in the water and on the land.

The bones composing the head, of this class are remarkable for remaining permanently disunited, as in the higher orders, during the development of these parts, a fact which every one acquainted with the infancy of children must be aware of. The shoulder of a frog consists of scapula, clavicle, or collar (from *clavis*, a key), and coracoid bone; the bones of the fore arm consist of radius and ulna, so united that a faint line indicates their

former separation. "In the early part of their existence, and while they enjoy an aquatic mode of life, their organisation is in due accordance; at first their members are scarcely perceptible, whilst their tail is of great length, and continues so in those destined to continue their watery habitation; but in the frog, &c., which are to breathe by lungs, the tail is gradually removed by absorption, and the extremities, particularly the posterior, undergo a rapid evolution."

The proteus, siren, and the tadpoles of the higher anurous species, are moved through the water by the same kind of lateral motion of the spine and tail as in fishes. The great lateral muscles that accomplish these motions are still pale, bloodless, and feeble, and their connecting cellular tissue is soft, scanty, and colourless; the muscles are slightly connected to the skin, and present but little appearance of tendinous structure. So far the muscular system closely resembles that of fishes, but in the adult state of the anurous species, it presents characters very remote from them, arising from their great extent of respiration, and their inhabiting a rarer medium. The oblique caudal muscles in the tadpole of the tailless tribe, become absorbed with the vertebræ to which they are attached, as the animal assumes its permanent form; but its change of habits is still provided for by the great development of the muscles of the posterior extremity, in fact, they closely resemble those of the human leg; and hence the act of swimming in man is an accurate imitation of that of the frog. In this animal, the extensors are much stronger than the flexors of the leg, and those of the arm are but feebly developed.

The nervous system in *amphibia* exhibits a degree of perfection not much above that noticed in fishes. So rapid are the changes in the ner-

vous system of the frog from the fish form to the reptile state, that they can be detected from day to day. In the lower orders of the amphibia we perceive an approach to the digestive organs of fishes; but in many we discovered an approximation to the higher vertebrata. The metamorphosis which this class of animals undergoes in passing from the pisciform to the reptilian state, is strikingly illustrated in their circulatory system: beginning life with the single heart of a fish, and ending it with the double heart of a reptile. As the animal changes from an aquatic to an atmospheric respiration, the branchiæ, or gills, become absorbed, and the lungs proportionally developed. Their arteries experience corresponding changes, those of the former organs diminishing, while those of the latter increase with the growth of the lung. The two veins which return the blood from the rudimental lung also enlarge, and as they arrive at the heart, they undergo a remarkable dilatation, which constitutes the left auricle.

Frogs and salamanders, in their tadpole state, breathe by gills, which during the earliest periods of their existence are situated externally; they also possess rudimentary lungs, which are developed as the animals change from the aquatic to the aerial respiration.

The reader will not fail to observe that this class, in their first state of existence have an organisation enabling them to live in the element peculiar to fishes, and consequently of no use to them when they have undergone the change approximating them to land animals, and that when this takes place those organs fall into disuse and consequently perish, being absorbed into the system; just as the original bone in the higher orders, when fractured, is first of all surrounded by the depositions of new bone, and

subsequently absorbed, all nutrition, by which alone it could continue to exist, being withdrawn from it, and conveyed only to the living or new bone.

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### IS THERE NO GOD?

“There is an old saying, rather clumsy to be sure, but very expressive, which says, when your opponent has got hold of the wrong end of the argument, ‘give him rope enough he will hang himself.’”—P. S. MACKINTOSH.

“Come, let us reason together.”—JEW BOOK.

THE above ominous passage is the introductory sentence to an article of Mr. Mackintosh's, in last number, suggested, the reader would at first sight suppose, by some remarks of mine in No. 33. When I first read it, I confess I felt some anxiety for the cause which I had been advocating, thinking I must have given it a mortal stab, through my ignorance of what I was writing upon. I breathed more freely, however, before I arrived at the end, having discovered my fears were groundless, and that it was merely meant as a scarecrow, or a warning of what I *should* come to, if I did not take heed; for I failed entirely in perceiving any connexion between the introduction and the subsequent remarks. So far, in fact, from Mr. M. imagining that either me or my party had hung ourselves, he challenges us to a discussion of the grounds of atheism, upon the principles I had laid down, which is proof he conceives there to be some Atheists unhung, and the question still a disputable one.

Before proceeding to notice other passages in the article I speak of, I would make a few observations (no opportunity having offered before) in explanation of what appeared with my initials in No. 24, respecting Mr. Mackintosh's “Dissertation upon the being and attributes of god.” It has been objected by some, that not satisfied with commenting upon Mr. Mackintosh's book, I attacked himself, in which I was not justified, for that personalities could never be excused. In reply, I would say, that my remarks related to Mr. M.'s public, not his private, conduct; and that from what I had heard I conceived myself justified in imputing to him certain motives. Whilst I looked only to the end I sought to accomplish (i.e. as far as the good or bad opinion of others would affect myself), I was still scrupulous of the means I employed. If more good can be done by questioning, where there are grounds for it, the *motives* of a public man why should we hesitate to do it; I would rather sacrifice the good opinion of men generally, than stop short in the execution of a duty to conserve it. If I have wronged Mr. Mackintosh I am sorry for it—I did it ignorantly not wilfully.

To return, Mr. Mackintosh's remarks in the last *Oracle* are based upon an assertion of mine, that "I would not give the snap of my finger for a man who professed atheism simply because he was disgusted with religious villainies," &c. When I said this, I meant that such a man was not, in my opinion, competent to defend atheism. That if certain anomalies, villainies, &c. in some religions induced him to think there could not be a god—and such conduct be permitted; some other religions, less corrupt (if any) would have retained him a firm believer; that such a man would not be an Atheist from *principle* but from *feeling*; that his quarrel would be with the attributes rather than the existence of deity; and that, if a difficulty presented itself, which his ignorance of the basis of atheism would prevent his surmounting, he would most probably lapse into deism, from which perhaps he had never been quite clear, or, what is not uncommon, "return like a dog to his vomit," and embrace the old Jew-Book.

Supernaturalism springs from man's ignorance of naturalism, and can never be effectually driven from the world unless man in his infancy is carefully guarded from errors, which he is ever ready to imbibe when presented to him, unless his mind he previously occupied by truth. The man who thinks himself an Atheist because he is disgusted with religion, is like the teetotaller who fancies intoxication the *cause* of all the misery in the world, whereas it is only an effect, and who thinks to produce the millenium by inducing the men of *his* generation to drink water. Both parties are forgetful that human institutions change daily, but that the operations of nature, or the whole, are always the same. The children of such an Atheist as I spoke of may not see the same reasons for disgust upon looking into society in their day, as their father did, and become goddites accordingly; but this could not have been had their father been an Atheist from principle, and they capable of receiving the same impressions, or nearly so, as he did, for nature's modes are always the same; and the facts, if any, which were before man, in favour of a god existence, are now, and *vice versa*.

Mr. Mackintosh says—

God is AN IDEA dwelling in the mind of man. The idea of god is a moral not a physical idea. Suppose the Atheist could PROVE (which he cannot) that there is no such PHYSICAL existence in the universe as the being called god: what then? HAS HE PROVED HIS CASE? NO! Because, as has been said, the idea of god is a moral and not a physical idea.

What is here meant, I know not, it is far beyond my comprehension. An *idea* derived from *without* the universe! How very far-fetched! and of questionable utility when obtained. But what are ideas; are they not *effects* derived from *physical* causes? Can there be an *idea*, without something exists to

generate it? Can we have an idea of nothing? If not, our ideas must be ideas of something; and if of something, that something must be in the universe; and if in the universe it must be matter, or physical substance, or a *condition* of matter or physical substance; and if a condition, dependent upon the thing conditioned—and not to be separated from it even in thought. Ideas are the result of sensation, and may be called the images or reflections of things. There are ideas of physical substance, and of moral conduct based upon a knowledge of physics. There can be no ideas independent of or not traceable to physical causes. But Mr. M. says, "god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man," and that were the Atheist to "prove that there is no such *physical* existence in the universe" as a god—the idea would still exist, which is tantamount to contending for an UNCAUSED effect! Mr. M. says, "ALL men of reflecting minds have conceived the existence of a 'governing principle, power, or being,' who or which rules the universe," and yet contends that this "governing principle, power, or being," is an *idea merely*, "dwelling in the mind of man," which, granting it to be a god, makes it a local one (an idea Mr. M. himself repudiates), confined, moreover, to a miserably restricted locality—the skull of a man! What an absurdity is here—the atom governing the aggregate—a part controlling the whole! But not even that, but a condition or mode of an atom or part, controlling and directing the whole!! Well might the Egyptian sages say, "Man, know thyself;" what man who knew himself would have advanced such an argument?

But again, Mr. Mackintosh affirms that "god is an idea," and yet says also, that "no man has had a *perfect* conception [or idea] of god [or of the idea dwelling in him] at any time. But *all* men, at all times, have had some conception of god, however inadequate." Here we have an idea, which is not an idea; a god, who is not a god—an imperfect idea, and of course an imperfect god. Also, an *inadequate* conception, resident in the mind of a man, doing what?—mind, the inadequate conception only, not the man, even—why, *governing the universe!*

When Mr. Mackintosh says, "god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man," and that "ALL men" have had this idea, he would seem to infer that the god idea, the idea of a god, or rather, god itself or himself, belongs inseparably to man, and is an inherent consequence of his existence, and that it would be impossible for a man to be without it; if such be the case, the idea must be what is called innate, or born with him, a vulgar error now exploded; and this it would seem Mr. M. thinks, when he says that were there no "such physical existence in the universe, as the being called god," still would the idea



remain. Besides, if the idea be innate, or born with man, there never was nor ever can be, an Atheist, for it is folly to suppose a man can disbelieve that which he believes. He cannot have an idea of a "governing principle, power, or being," who governs the universe, at the same moment that he has no such idea.

It will be remembered that Mr. Mackintosh has declared that there cannot be an absolute Atheist, until it is *proved* that there is no god, and that SOUTHWELL, HOLYOAKE, and Co. were only sceptics; and yet, whilst complaining of the incorrect use of terms on the part of others, continually uses this term when speaking of the class calling themselves Atheists, and also designates as Atheists the very men whom he is himself endeavouring to show; and whom an Atheist would declare to be, not even sceptics, but goddists. He says,

"It is a fact (quoting from Priestly), that there are more Atheists, and Infidels of all kinds, in Roman Catholic states, where religion is so well guarded than in England." Yes, it is a fact, a well known fact, that even in papal Rome, the seat and centre of the grand superstition, *there are more Atheists*, especially amongst the priesthood, than in any other city in Europe. How is this? Simply because the priests, being behind the scenes are better acquainted with "the villanies" of superstition than other men, they are therefore disgusted with these villanies, and consequently become Atheists in respect to the god which they hold up to the people, although they wink at the imposture because it brings "grist to the mill." It by no means follows, however, because they are Atheists to the Jehovah of the Jews, that, therefore, they deny the existence of "the governing principle, power, or being contended for by philosophers."

Let us examine this a moment, Mr. M. contends that there are more Atheists, *bona fide* Atheists, of course, in Rome, men who disbelieve the existence of *any* governing principle, than in any other country; and yet that they are only Atheists or disbelievers in the god they themselves have manufactured. Mr. M. has himself declared that he is an Atheist to the Jew-Book god, and yet that he is not an Atheist, but a firm believer in the existence of a god. The argument in the extract I have given above is equal to saying, the swindler who knowingly swore a brass watch was gold, *didn't himself believe it*; and that notwithstanding he did not believe the lie he told was truth, yet he did believe that there were gold watches in existence! And, lest "a stupid Atheist" should imagine that such men were Atheists (i.e. disbelievers in a governing principle), we are told, "It by no means follows, however, because they are Atheists to the Jehovah of the Jews, that therefore they deny the existence of 'the governing principle,'" &c., or, in other words—it by no means follows *because* they are Atheists, *that therefore* they are Atheists.

Mr. Mackintosh proceeds—

If by the term Atheist, it is intended to designate a man who denies the existence of "the governing principle, power, or being contended for by phi-

losophers," we shall find, I think that the Atheists are few and far between.

Of what consequence is it to the argument whether there be few or many? Truth does not depend upon numbers; I never said Atheists were numerous—because I do not believe they are; but they may be more numerous than Mr. M. imagines, which would be no proof of the correctness of their opinions.

In conclusion, I cannot, for my own part, understand the object of Mr. Mackintosh's article; if it was simply to state that he was willing to discuss atheism upon the grounds laid down by me, why not have commenced at once? Where was the necessity of using a great number of words simply to say, that he "should be willing to enter into a friendly controversy with any Atheist who loves to battle with the idea of 'the governing principle, power, or being contended for by philosophers,' and who will keep strictly to that idea"—where, I say, was the necessity for so long a preamble, when I had stated such a man to be the Atheist I recognised; unless he thought me dishonest, or that I did not know what I meant when I wrote such words? If I or any other ran from the argument, the loss would be ours, the gain our opponent's. The columns of the *Oracle* are open to Mr. Mackintosh or any competent disputant on the side of goddism, and I think I may affirm that they will find plenty of work in what has already been advanced in its pages. They may, if they prefer it, choose their own ground, we only ask for fair play, having proved ourselves ever ready to grant it.

W. C.

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THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

V.

*Why* have the givers of *sound* knowledge been stigmatized as vile and damnable?

*Because* hitherto the human mind has, indeed, been as an uncertain mirror to the rays of things, which mixing with them its own nature, perverts and distorts them, which perversion and distortion have rendered men vain and panic-struck by the idea of death, which is the condition of all priest-ridden people, who are priest-ridden because they are full of panic terrors; so that the words of the wise and sober among mankind, which should be as goads and nails driven far in, are unheard or unheeded amid the howling tempest of fanaticism.

*Why* has the doctrine of the immortality of the soul held such amazing influence over the minds of men?

*Because* the love of life is instinctive, but then experience taught mankind that death was inevitable; and the crafty who ever profit by the delusions of the simple, seeing that the majority of their fellow-creatures had a secret dread and inward horror of shrinking into nought, set about the invention of doctrines which at once flattered the pride, excited the hopes, and stifled the reason of their dupes. This doctrine which has had more influence over the destinies of the human race than any other, is like all others, speculative, and therefore matter of belief, of which philosophy knows nothing; and nothing is more important, or more necessary to be understood by the people at large than this—that all doctrine is founded on belief, whilst all science is founded on knowledge; so that they may, in future, separate matters of belief from matters of knowledge; as it is clear that when we have traced the chain of causes and effects up to its last link, it may be understood that there philosophy ends, and belief or faith begins; so that these two empires of philosophy and faith, may be likened to the empire of light and the empire of darkness; in which latter, all being equally in the dark, all are equally blind, and when the blind lead the blind, both, we are told, will tumble into the ditch. The wise Solomon declared, that god had made everything beautiful in its season, and had given over the world to our disputes and inquiries, but that man cannot find out the work which god has made from its beginning up to its end; but the wise men of the west act and speak as though they had penetrated into the innermost recesses of nature, and plucked out the heart of its mystery; so boldly

and unscrupulously do they declaim and anathematize.

*Why* is dead matter said to become living?

*Because* the term dead and living are applied to certain states, or conditions of matter, when viewed in certain relations, which conditions and relations continually altering, the substance which is said to be dead to-day, is with equal correctness, called vital or living to-morrow, so that life may, and doubtless does exist in every particle of matter; as the difference between a blade of grass, and the sheep that feeds upon it, is rather in the number, form, and situation of the particles of which it is composed, than in the nature of the particles themselves. The ancients seem to have been fully aware, that all forms are produced by the natural motion of the corpuscles or atoms, whatever those atoms might be. Bacon, in his explanation of the Greek fable of Cupid, says “that love seems to be the appetite, or incentive of primitive matter;” this appetite for change, or motion in matter, he speaks of as being the most ancient and only power that made and wrought all things, and is itself uncaused. This opinion of his, that motion was the cause of all effects, and is itself without a cause, led him to blame the Greeks, that they should busy themselves in discovering the material principles of things, and be weak and languid in discovering the principles of motion, in which the energy and efficacy of every operation consisted. It is sometimes difficult to get at the precise meaning of many remarks of that extraordinary man, which seem to have been written as though a priest were at his elbow, and the inquiry in perspective; and it would be difficult to reconcile the following with the passage above quoted: “And they who refer the energy and efficacy of matter to god, though they do well

therein, yet they do it by a start, and not by proper degrees of assent; for doubtless, there is one summary, or capital law, in which nature meets subordinate to god.' How, unless by a start, he could first write of a power that made and wrought all things, and is itself uncaused, and then immediately after to tell us that this power that made and wrought all things is subordinate to god, it would be difficult to conceive. We shall do well then, to put to flight the ill-omened bird of superstition, which, like the vulture devouring the liver of Prometheus, preys on the vitals of humanity, corrupting their morals, and destroying their peace, by making them the slaves of saucy doubts and fears; as it must be evident, that to do good and love our fellow-creatures is the fulfilling of the end proposed by human laws, and cannot but harmonise with other laws (if any) of which we know nothing. In fine, we may observe that the marrow of the preceding remarks are enclosed, and, as it were, collected into a heap in the next few sentences. We can conceive of matter without life or motion, although few will be so hardy as to assert that such a phenomenon exists; but we cannot conceive of motion or life without matter. The steam-engine with its opening and shutting valves, its piston rising and falling with such wonderful regularity, is a splendid monument of the industry and genius of man; but the motions of a steamer are results of the play of its parts, which is the result of heat or fiery action, and cannot be separated, even in thought, from the steam-engine; so the play of human organisation is the result of heat or fiery action, which is but proved by the fact, that if a certain degree of heat be abstracted, life ceases, we are no longer said to live, and the atoms of the body no longer cling together, but fly off, and decomposition is said

to take place. The motion of a man on the earth, or the flight of a bird, aver nothing; and the word motion, simply means the change of position of one substance relatively to another substance. In the case of the bird, we do not hesitate to affirm, that the power to move and think is a property of its organisation, and yet we hesitate to say, that sensation, intelligence, and reflection, are likewise, properties of organisation.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Conductor of the Oracle of Reason.*

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword."  
 "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth god service."—JEW-BOOK.

SIR.—Although I am not fully aware who you are, or what your name is, yet, the fact of your coming forward so promptly to perform the sacerdotal functions of the *Oracle*, since the arrest of HOLYOAKE, compels me to consider you as a friend to the human race. I cannot refrain, sir, from addressing a few lines to you, expressive of my feelings at the cruel crusade which has lately been instituted against the freedom of expression and liberty of the press, in the persons of S. UTHERWELL, HOLYOAKE, ADAMS, &c. But, not only does it appear cruel and unjust, it is highly impolitic; for if their purpose be to stem the mighty torrent of truth—to close the floodgates of reason and philosophy—which are now bursting forth throughout the length and breadth of the land, watering the plains, and fertilizing the hills and valleys of this lovely island, which has for centuries been steeped in ignorance and brutish superstition; if they purpose *this*, through the means of an obsolete and barbarous law which was created in the infatuated brain of superstitious judges who lived in the age of witchcraft—a law which Jefferson proves to have its origin in a legal forgery—and by which these "followers of the meek and lowly Jesus" have instituted this fiendish prosecution; I say, if this be their object, they could not take a more effectual step to frustrate their own design; they will create an extensive independence of thought, and this is at once to apply the axe to the root of their own system. Permit me to illustrate my argument by a fact from real life. At a very early age, my infant lips were taught to lip the prayer of piety, and the prayer of a god; I was cradled and brought up in the bosom of one of the most strictly religious and popular churches of the present day; I rested

not in "forms of godliness" alone, but sought and found the power of holiness within; and though it may appear to smell of egotism, when I say (and I think my Socialist and Christian friends who know me in the towns of Manchester, Huddersfield, Birmingham, and London, will testify to this) that I was, or *strove* to be, and upright and consistent Jew-Booker. But at that time I had not contemplated the spirit of those passages which I have cited at the head of my epistle, nor had I learnt the fact that sincere and upright social dispositions—that honest toleration for the notions of my fellow man were had at *other schools* than those of true religion. I mean *domestic and paternal associations*, as connected with sectarian's discipline. My burning zeal for the conversion of others led me to read Paine, Volney, Mirabeau, and Owen, in order to show up their fallacies to the world, and to fulfil that injunction of the Jew-Book, "prove all things." I was "instant in season and out of season," in my opposition to the Social system, individually and in their public institutions have I battled with its votaries on their daring doctrine of "circumstances" and "responsibility," their "marriage systems," too, did not escape my observation; in short, I was (divested of his *blackguardism*) another Brindley in a smaller circle; nor did I, like a true soldier of the cross, cease fighting until I had conquered—yea, I had conquered—*myself*; for during the war which I had carried on against what I conceived to be gross error, I had exercised an *independence of thought*, which the priests are now trying to create through the means of persecution. I had read Combe on the constitution of man, and Owen on the formation of the human character; these had made powerful impressions, and the bread which had been cast upon the waters I now began to see, the well known couplet "man know thyself, then others learn to know," caused my investigations to turn round and see how my own character was formed—to trace my religious feelings to those various sympathies peculiar to the human breast, and which have their origin in those social associations to which I have alluded above; then did religion cunningly inquire, "But don't you still believe?" "Yes," stammered out freely; the "still small voice" of reason announced "No." I began to think on the capabilities which man had for insuring his happiness; I read the history of the church; and now I who would have went to Smithfield for my religion, ineffably detest all religions; nor can the enticing and pretty little epithet of "rational" being annexed to it ever make me like it. And think you, Mr. Editor, must not every individual who boldly *thinks* for himself, as I did, share

the same fate? And if so, does not this sketch tend to illustrate or support the position I have taken above, namely, that the present prosecutions are impolitic, inasmuch as they will cause inquiry, and make working men like me, think for themselves. If my present opinions are *wrong*, the bishops, who are paid immense salaries for "*curing souls*," are in duty bound to come to me and try to convince me, not by police bludgeons and handcuffs, not by fine and imprisonment, but by reason and fair argument; let them come in this manner to convince me of my error and I am fully prepared for them; the days are gone by when men were to be convinced by the thumb-screw and the rack, the priests must now descend the rostrum and answer questions to working men; will they do so? or are the present barbarous and inhuman persecutions to continue? We shall see, if so, then do I heartily concur with the sentiment of a Mr. Watts, as put forth by the brave Holyoake, in No. 27 of the *Oracle*, namely, that if it be the lives of their countrymen which the priests of religion are ankering after, let them meet and decide what is the amount or number of the sacrifice required to satiate their blood-sucking lord, and give their decision to the country; and then, I doubt not individuals are prepared—I, for one—to go forward with the halters round their necks, to rid their fellowmen from the cruelty of these Christian butchers. Persecution appears to have been coeval with priestcraft; Socrates was killed for blasphemy, though he taught what Christians now believe. Jesus Christ was crucified for the same crime, although his religion he now established with our state; 'twas blasphemy that Galileo was tried for, when he said the earth was round and *moved*, yet every school boy now is made acquainted with the fact. The Christians in their turn became the persecutors; and at the present time the blood-stained monster persecution seems not dead; 'tis true his horrid claws are clipped by *Penny Magazines*, and *Oracles of Reason*, but to those who are within his reach his hug is certain death. I have trespassed too much on your patience; through you I tell the noble Southwell, Holyoake, and others who may be pursuing the same course to be constant and go on, the country's eyes are fixed upon you; no truce to error, no compromise with superstition, and the battle cannot hold out long.

Yours, on behalf of a few friends,  
 July 5, 1842. J. McCULLOUGH.  
 20, Cheltenham Place, Brighton.

NOW READY.

A Plain Answer to the Query, 'Ought there to be a Law against Blasphemy?' By C. SOUTHWELL, now in Bristol Gaol. Price Threepence. — This work should be universally read.

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR.—In number 32, page 263, I find under the title of "Review," an extract from a Mr. Larkin's speech on the "Sabbath question." A more able and clever reply to the cant of the pharisees of Newcastle could not have been given; why the muffin-faced hypocrites must have been astounded at his bold and logical denoucement of their selfishness; which showed he possessed a mind free from bigotry or intolerance. I wish I could say as much for the remarks attached to it by you; but, alas! you appear to me in some such light as an Irishman at a fair, determined to fight some one, foe if possible, if not, a friend.

Instead of welcoming him as a fellow-labourer in the cause of progression, and encouraging him on, after he has made himself a target for the arrows of bigotry; after having leaped the wall of *standstillism*, till now he is in the centre of the field of liberty of thought and action, waving the sword of moral truth, and calling on the multitude to approach and breathe the pure air of mental liberty! lo, he is in danger of being shot down by a party whose aim is ultraism in its utmost stretch, and whose proposed intentions are to expose the *errors* of bigotry, and to encourage and *foster* the honest and open of all opinions.

What then must be the opinion or astonishment of the new and still trembling convert, who having just walked from under the cloak of priestcraft, beholds the advanced party, whom he is hastening to join, coolly resting on their atheistical rifles, waiting for a pop at him?

Surely such opinions as those given utterance to at Newcastle are not common-place yet, that they are not a perfect sore to you now? No! I am rather afraid, that having reached, or thought you had, the pinnacle of human thought, you have become dazzled at the height, and from your eminence cannot discern the really liberal by their conduct, from the illiberal by their profession.

What moral right has any party or parties to compel by sarcasm, or unjust critique, an individual from doing what is useful to society?

The Atheist claims the utmost extent of liberality for himself, therefore he ought to grant the utmost assistance in his power to every one else who claims the same, instead of travelling out of his way to attack them; only when he does this, will the Atheist be deserving of encouragement, and all his boasted professions only throw discredit on the name without the practice.

I hope these few remarks will be inserted in your *Oracle*, and that your readers may always keep in mind that principles are

either good or bad, according to their application.

T. P.

[I have again read the remarks by the editor of which T. P. complains, and am decidedly of opinion that if there be illiberality or unnecessary severity any where it is, in T. P.'s strictures, and not in those of G.J.H.'s. The editor, whilst he gave Mr. Larkin every credit for his noble denunciation of the tyranny of religion, simply declared that he (Mr. L.) *knew* no more of god than any other man.—W. C.]

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR.—Allow me to make my appearance in one of your penn'orths of "blasphemy," as another avowed CONVERT TO ATHEISM.

I was, not long since, a sapient Deist; and although secretly applauding all atheistical publications, I conceived the design of writing an article to prove at least that deism was as reasonable as atheism.

I even went so far as to scribble out several notes upon the subject; but alack! alack! I soon found all my prepossessions in favor of goddism fast oozing away. I confess that after long-continued and severe thought upon the subject, I have come to the conclusion that nought is reasonable short of atheism. I have not renounced christianity for much more than two years; hence, as you may imagine, I found it somewhat difficult to rid myself of the absurd and ridiculous prejudices engendered by education and "damned custom" for,

"Faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast

To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last."

Henceforth, however, I take my stand beneath the glorious banner of ATHEISM; firmly resolved to oppose, with all my might, that curse of curses upon the human race, RELIGION!

The recent tyrannical prosecutions and punishments for what bigots call "blasphemy," impart to this resolution fresh energy, redoubled zeal.

I will not occupy much more of your valuable space, but proceed to exhibit an argument that occurred to my mind, and which, in an extended and amplified shape, completely put to flight any lingering notions in favour of deism.

My argument is drawn from the Deist's and Demonist's definition of their supreme being. He is said to be infinite in all his qualities, one of which is omnipresence or ubiquity. He pervades all space even to infinitude, and whether matter extends throughout all space or not, he must be matter itself, or where is the infinity? We are portions of the deity—so is a jackass or a monkey—an earth-worm or a magot; nay, the very pebble which comes in contact with one's foot must be a part of god; in fine, the universe is god.

I might evolve much that would be interesting from this theme, showing for instance that a heap of dung, even as we have it in one of the Jewish prophets (Ezekiel chapter iv.; ver. 12, in the Jew-Book) a part of the deity; is but having given the hint I leave the rest to the ingenuity of your readers, some of whom, however, may possibly be inclined to exclaim, "Twere to consider too curiously to consider so;" to which I would reply with *Hamlet*. "No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus, &c.

W. B. C.

### NOTICE.

All parties having Subscription Cards, issued by the Birmingham Committee for the support of Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake, are requested to bring or send them in *immediately*, that the Committee may make up their accounts, preparatory to becoming a branch of the London Anti-Persecution Union.

Birmingham.

E. NICHOLLS, Sec.

THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOD OF A SOCIALIST.

"Incomprehensibles amalgamate,  
With all the rubbish in your choked up p<sup>ate</sup>."  
YAHOO.

"From these quotations it will be seen that the Socialists, so far from being Atheists, are devout believers in the existence of god. Believing themselves to be the creatures of the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and that these circumstances took their rise from deity, they constantly endeavour to ascertain his will as expounded in the laws of nature, and to these laws they constantly shape their actions, knowing that happiness is only to be found in such a line of conduct. This is the basis of the 'Communal System.' Whether it is consistent with facts, I leave my readers to judge, and if it is, be assured no name or *odium* will drive the Rational from his truthful position."—JOS. B. LEAR, in reply to "PHILOGATHOS."

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Cheltenham Free Press* has made the important discovery, just as the "Rational Religionists" that were, had decided that they had no religion, and of course no god peculiar to the body, that the Socialists, or Rationalists, really are profound admirers, "devout believers" in the existence of a god, and, moreover, an *incomprehensible* god; not a god unknown, merely, with whom we might at some future time make acquaintance, but one not to be comprehended, understood, or known *when* known.

The above extracts are copied from the *Cheltenham Free Press*, of July 23rd, and are portions of a letter to the editor, in reply to a correspondent of the *Chronicle*, respecting the prosecutions for blasphemy in that town.

In all societies men are to be met with holding crude or crotchety notions, distinct from the principles of the body to which they belong, but which, nevertheless, they are continually labouring to make it appear as an integral part of, or linked with—either before or behind, those principles. These men, too, are usually very zealous, far more so than their fellows who have none of these supernumary ideas, sparing no pains to get a convert; usually making the attack by a feeler from their private stock of opinions (upon the sapping and mining principle of E. Search), introducing the general views afterwards, and covertly, using the former as pioneers for the latter, as though they were ashamed of them, or afraid for them, never failing, however, to demand payment in the shape of approbation, for the unrequested protection they have afforded the principles they have taken under their care. On the other hand, those who understand and have confidence in the principles they have adopted are never satisfied by obtaining the assent of others to their truth except they have been submitted to every test which could be applied to them; instead of shielding them, they expose them to the roughest blasts; instead of gilding them with some foreign substance to enable squeamish parties to swallow them, they wait patiently for the time when the former will be glad to take the medicine in preference to more bitter and violent; earnestly persevering in the interval in the dissemination of their views, without compromise or concealment, or unnatural alliance.

But another misfortune attaches to the company of these crotchety blades, namely, that in the ratio of their own opinion of the importance of their notions is their anxiety to associate them with the general principles of the society to which they belong, and they never lose an opportunity of *intruding* their prejudices upon the public, to the great annoyance of their better informed and more rational brethren. An ambiguously worded, incongruous jumble from the *authorised* works of the body—if it can be met with—is invaluable to those parties, they look upon it with veneration, it is the bulwarks of their faith, the stronghold of their defence in the day of trial. If any objection be urged, which their acquaintance with the principles does not help them

to get over—out comes the book and open it flies mechanically, exhibiting a well-thumbed leaf, marked by the side, with lines underscored, to indicate their value. "Read it," the crotchety man will say, "and then see if you have any objections." You do so, and lest an *explanation* should be offered you withdraw your opposition, and he becomes confirmed in the infallibility of his opinions for effectually silencing all cavillers.

To this class belongs the correspondent of the *Cheltenham Free Press*, Rational Religionist (still), and devout believer in "that incomprehensible power which the nations of the earth have called god, Jehovah," &c., and who, not content with the usual *truthful* defence of socialists against religionists—that the former neither denied nor affirmed a god, as a society, leaving every individual to his own opinion—declares that Socialists "a devout believers in the existence of god." And what god, pray? Why Jehovah, the god of the Jews, whom Mr. Mackintosh, a Socialist lecturer, declares he would rather be considered an Atheist than believe in, or in such "grovelling, degrading, and debasing notions of deity taught by vulgar superstition!" Every well-wisher of socialism endeavours to clearly demonstrate that socialism is the *science* of society, or the arrangement and employment of "all known facts" for the happiness of all men, and that it has nought to do with aught but facts; consequently *religion* can form no part of it, nor theological speculation of any kind. This too the executive endeavour to keep in view, even when calling themselves *religionists*. What a nuisance then it is for members of the body to be stupidly contending for the very thing which their government are exerting themselves to disprove—and this too, in many cases, I am strongly of opinion, *merely as a blind*—attacking the enemy on their weak side—their *prejudices*. This is looked upon as killing two birds with one stone—gaining friends and silencing foes. Why are not these parties content with showing, or endeavouring to show, that certain passages in the authorised works sanction god belief, and would countenance such opinions, and not insist that a purely economical society is a *decently religious* one?

Let us however examine this authority, taken from the "Outline" which is so confidently put forth as "consistent with facts," and asserted to be the "basis of the communal system," which basis is generally understood to be that "the whole character of man, physical, intellectual, and moral, is formed for him."—(See Constitution and Laws, "Deductions," p. 18.) Here it is—

"That all facts yet known to man indicate that there is an external or internal cause of all existences, by the fact of their existence; that this all-pervading cause of motion and change in the universe is that incomprehensible power which the nations of the world have called god, Jehovah, lord, &c. :—but that the facts are yet unknown to man which define what that incomprehensible power is."

Facts prove only their own existence. If "all facts yet known to man indicate that there is an internal cause of all existences," that cause must be the *first* cause, and the Socialists have solved the problem. In the next sentence the "cause of all existences" is transformed into the cause of *motion and change* only; that is, the cause of the *modes* or *forms* of all existences *only*, and is denominated the "Incomprehensible power;" that is, a somebody or something distinct from matter, which models and directs it; and is stated to be identical with god, Jehovah, &c., whom it is well known were considered as personalities. If there be aught distinct from matter which governs and directs it, then must the directing principle be *finite*, inasmuch as we know that what we have agreed to call matter occupies some space; also, that it must have some form and be a personality, for "all facts yet known to man indicate" that intelligence is inseparable from organisation or form. Robert Owen too, the practical, whose theories are all based upon facts, has "from all facts yet known to man" arrived at an "incomprehensible" conclusion. The object of the

ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

8, Holywell-street, Strand.

THOSE Collectors who are willing to employ themselves actively in other circles than those of their immediate friends, may, by applying at the office, receive the addresses of *New Subscribers*. If they write, let them send name, address and district in which they collect, or which best suits their convenience.

Persons in the country; who are interested in the cause, are requested to apply for sheets or books to the liberal publishers, secretaries of Social branches, &c., and if not promptly supplied, to write direct to the secretary.

On Sunday, Sept. 4, one of the committee will be in attendance, after the evening lecture, at each of the London Social branches, viz.: at A 1, John-street, Tottenham-court-road; 53rd branch, Blackfriars-road; 63rd, High-street, Whitechapel; 16th, Frederick-place, Goswell-road. The collectors and persons desirous of assisting are requested to be present.

M. RYALL, Sec.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c.  
London, Mrs. Johnson, Collector .. £0 9 3  
London. M. RYALL, Gen. Sec.

PROSECUTIONS FOR BLASPHEMY.

The following bill has been issued in Cheltenham:—"He hath spoken blasphemy." (Mat. xxvi. 65.) Public Meetings will be held on Bay's Hill, during the week, to commence on the 17th inst. at seven o'clock in the evening, to hear from Mr. CARLILE, an exposition of the proceedings against GEORGE J. HOLYOAKE and GEORGE ADAMS, and to make collections for the support of the families of these victims of religious persecution, now lying in Gloucester gaol.

"Fear not that the tyrants shall rule for ever,  
Or the priests of the bloody faith;  
They stand on the brink of that mighty river  
Whose waves they have tainted with death.  
It is led from the depths of a thousand dells,  
Around them it foams and rages and swells,  
And their swords and their mitres I floating see  
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity."

It was expected the authorities would interfere with the meetings, but we have not heard that such has been the case; Mr. A. Parker, who issued the above, was cautioned that he would be arrested if he attended the lectures. This gentleman has a piece of ground in a convenient situation, which will stand about three thousand persons, and this he converts into a lecture-room whenever required, by placing a platform upon it. The lecturer, when standing on the rostrum, overlooks the sitting-room of one of the magistrates who was on the bench at the committal for blasphemy, and it may readily be supposed how he appreciates the advantages of his situation.

paragraph is evidently to convey the idea that the Socialists were believers in a directing or moving power in the universe, that is, a god; and a most absurd jumble it is. In the first place, how can our finite knowledge enable us to judge and determine the infinite; how can our local information prove to us universals? "All facts yet known to man," &c., what are they in number or amount compared with what we do not know in respect of this planet alone? All the facts yet known to man are only a portion, an indescribable fraction, of the unknown; and only prove that there must have been cause for their existence; which cause would appear to be the inherent principle of motion or change of place pertaining to every particle of matter yet observed. But a principle or property of a thing is not distinct from the thing; were it so, it would be another thing—which accommodators have endeavoured to show motion or power to be, and have called it a philosopher's god: Why do they contend for a god alone, why not for a devil, angels, witches, dragons, centaurs, &c. &c.? They all belong to the same school, born of the same parent—ignorance, and have a claim for the same protection.

That confusion may be worse confounded; Mr. Lear has attached the following, without any remarks to the previous one:—

"That the practice of the Rational Religion will therefore consist in promoting, to the utmost of our power, the well being and happiness of every man, woman, and child, without regard to their class, sect, party, country, or colour; and its worship, in those inexpressible feelings of wonder, admiration, and delight, which, when man is surrounded by superior circumstances only, will naturally arise from the contemplation of the infinity of space, of the eternity of duration, of the order of the universe, and of that incomprehensible power, by which the atom is moved, and the aggregate of nature is governed."

Why the practice of the R. R. should therefore consist, &c., because all facts indicate the existence of an incomprehensible power, is left to the ingenuity of the reader to discover.

The practice of the rational religion or the mode of worship, as stated in the extract, is simply the practice of the science of society or morality, and has nothing whatever to do with faith or religion. You are wrong there, will say a "devout believer," "its worship" is said to consist "in those inexpressible feelings of wonder, admiration, and delight," &c., which will naturally arise from the contemplation of the infinity of space, of the eternity of duration, of the order of the universe, and of that incomprehensible power, &c. In the name of common sense, who would think of quoting such language as a proof of rationality or even of sanity? Worship, which implies action, stated to consist in "inexpressible feelings" only; and of what feelings? Wonder—that is an ingredient of religion; admiration—that is not, for we must comprehend to admire; delight, the same, for there is no real pleasure where there are doubts—the three cannot proceed from the same source, and yet it is said they "will naturally arise from the contemplation" (and of course comprehension) of infinity! ETERNITY!! and INCOMPREHENSIBILITY!!! "This (says the correspondent) is the basis of the 'Communal System.' Whether it is consistent with facts, I leave my readers to judge"—and so do I mine.

Observe, too, how profitably employed will be the members of this purely economical and industrial scheme, our friend observes that they will constantly endeavour to ascertain the will of this "incomprehensible power," stirring out a fire with a Whitechapel needle will be child's play to it. The italic "his" in the extract at the head, marking the writer's idea of the personality of his god, is a literal copy of the original, in the Cheltenham paper. Had the writer looked to the "laws," he would have found the "Rational Religion," a little more rationally described—but still, without a particle of religion in it.

W. C.

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

*A Report from the Lords Committees for Religion, appointed to examine into the causes of the present notorious Immorality and Profaneness; made by the Earl of Granard, on Friday, the 10th of March, 1737.*

MY LORDS.—The lords committees for religion, appointed to examine into the causes of the present notorious immorality and profaneness, beg leave before they report to your lordships what progress they have made in that inquiry, to observe, that an uncommon scene of impiety and blasphemy appeared before them, wherein several persons must have been concerned: but by reason of their meeting late in the session, they have not been able to prepare a full and satisfactory account thereof for your lordships; however, they think it their duty to lay it before your lordships as it hath appeared to them; that before the conclusion, some measures may be taken to put a stop to the spreading of these impieties, which it is to be hoped in the next session of parliament, your lordships will be able, by proper laws and remedies, wholly to extinguish and prevent for the future.

The lords committees have sufficient grounds to believe (though no direct proof thereof upon oath hath yet been laid before them) that several loose and disorderly persons have of late erected themselves into a society or club, under the name of *Blasters*, and have used means to draw into this impious society several of the youth of this kingdom.

What the practices of this society are (besides the general fame spread through the whole kingdom) appears by the examination of several persons taken upon oath, before the Lord Mayor of this city, in relation to PETER LENS, painter, lately come into this kingdom, who professes himself a *Blaster*.

By these examinations it appears, that the said Peter Lens, professes himself to be a votary of the devil, that he hath offered up prayers to him, and publicly drank to the devil's health; that he hath at several times uttered the most daring and execrable blasphemies against the sacred name and majesty of god; and often made use of such obscene, blasphemous, and before unheard-of expressions, as the lords committees think they cannot even mention to your lordships, and therefore chuse to pass over in silence.

As impieties and blasphemies of this kind were utterly unknown to our ancestors, the lords committees observe, that the laws framed by them must be unequal to such enormous crimes; and that a new law is wanting more effectually to restrain and punish blasphemies of this kind.

The lords committees cannot take upon them to assign the immediate causes of such monstrous impieties, but they beg leave to observe, that of late years there hath appeared a greater neglect of religion, and all things sacred, than was ever before in this

kingdom, a great neglect of divine worship, both public and private, and of the due observance of the lord's day; a want of reverence to the laws and magistrate, and of a due subordination in the several ranks and degrees in the community; and an abuse of liberty, under our mild and happy constitution; a great neglect in education; and a want of care in parents and masters of families in training up their children in reverence and awe; and keeping their servants in discipline and good order, and instructing them in moral and religious duties; a great increase of idleness, luxury, and excessive gaming, and an excess in the use of spirituous and intoxicating liquors.

Wherefore the lords committees are come to the following resolutions, viz.:

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this committee, that his majesty's attorney general be ordered to prosecute Peter Lens with the utmost severity of the law.

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this committee, that an humble address be presented to his grace the lord lieutenant, that he would be pleased to order that a proclamation may issue, with a reward for apprehending the said Peter Lens, and that he would be further pleased to give it in direction to the Judges in their several circuits, to charge the magistrates to put the laws in execution against immorality, and profane cursing and swearing, and gaming, and to inquire into atheistical and blasphemous clubs.

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the bishops be desired at their visitations, to give it in particular charge to their clergy, to exhort their people to a more frequent and constant attendance on divine service.

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the visitors of the University, and of all schools, do exhort and require the fellows and masters, carefully to instruct the youth, committed to their care, in the principles of religion and morality, and to inculcate a due reverence to the laws and religion of their country.—To which report and resolutions, the question being severally put, the house did agree. EN. STERN, *Cler. Par.*

### NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Received—"William Birch," "W.," and "W. Baker."

### HOLYOAKE'S TRIAL NEXT WEEK.

*Additions to the Subscriptions in page 303.*

|                                                                  |        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| London, Mr. Side, Collector No. 25 .. ..                         | £0 7 1 |
| Mr. Totherby, Collector 74 .. ..                                 | 0 2 10 |
| Rationalists, Ashton Branch, per J. Meadowcroft, Secretary .. .. | 0 12 3 |
| Mr. Pickford, subscription .. ..                                 | 0 5 0  |
| A Friend .. ..                                                   | 0 0 6  |

Printed and Published for G. J. HOLYOAKE, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London.

Saturday, August 27, 1842.



THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, [PRICE 2D.  
No. 37.] for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 13, 1842, to Six Months'  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

THE "JEW BOOK."

III.

"That revoltingly odious Jew production, called BIBLE."—CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

THE above is part of an opinion of the bible, purchased for the nation by Mr. SOUTHWELL, at an expence of twelve months' imprisonment and a hundred pounds. It is, therefore, public property, and *perhaps may be* presented to the British Museum. Whether it is or not, it deserves to take its place among the objects of valuable public instruction. Might not the bible be called, not only an odious Jew production, but also an odious logical production? Pascal has archly said—

To understand the scriptures it is necessary to have a sense in which all the contrary passages agree. It is not sufficient to have one which suits many according passages, but there must be one which reconciles even *contradictory* passages.

To which, good Christians, there is nothing to be said, unless it is, "Don't you wish you may get it?"

Reasoners from the bible, whether well-meaning men or ill-meaning men, all agree in this particular, they are slippery as eels, or perhaps they more properly resemble shaven and soaped pigs at a wake, they can be caught neither by head or tail.

The thoughtful author of the "New Ecce Homo" objected to me that the term "Jew-Book" was an individualism which should be avoided. It is not intended that the book *cannot* be good because a Jew production, but it must never be for a moment forgotten that it is a Jew-book—for the presumptive evidence against its being a good book is greater in consequence than it would be if any other nation of people ever known had been the authors of it.

In the trial of poor Williams, for publishing Paine's "Age of Reason," in 1797, Garron (afterwards Baron of the Exchequer) said to the judge, "My lord, I really think we might spare the court and jury the *pain* of hearing Paine's comments on the Jew-book read."

Lord Kenyon replied, "To me who *am* a Christian to be sure it is *shocking, perfectly shocking.*"

No one doubts that a Christian who could pass the brutal sentence of twelve months' imprisonment to hard labour, and to give se-

curity in a £1000 for good behaviour during life, on a broken-hearted wretch whose miseries had touched even the heart of Erskine who had convicted him, must be duly shocked indeed.

Garron answered Lord Kenyon, thus—  
"We certainly will not read the passage, for it is impossible to *look* at it in private without HORROR."

I take it for granted then that the *original* of Mr. Paine's remarks must be *horrible* indeed, and "revoltingly odious" beyond doubt.

Who can read the injunction of Moses to the Jews to hide their own excrements, which it appears they left even in the way of the lord, without feeling what filthy, beastly wretches they were.

The people who produced an abandoned miscreant like David, and a disgusting coarse-minded debauchee like Solomon, and sang their effusions as holiness, must be loathsome reptiles indeed.

If Ezekiel could only reprove the court and people called Jews, by the filthy similies of horrible lewdness and revolting whoredoms, what must be their abandoned odious imagination?

What would be said of the bishop in our days, who should dare to employ such figures of speech to reprove the people of Britain and court of the queen? And what would be said and thought of the court and people who would tolerate such disgusting language.

Is it wrong then to say the Jewish production of such obscenity "is revoltingly odious."

Christians speak out as honest men—what think you candidly of it—what would your attorney-general say of the man who should assert by the remotest innuendo anything approaching to this in his book of instructions published to be preached to Englishmen, to be instilled into the minds of our wives and daughters?

Some people, whose obtusity of moral perception now and then seems to be on a par with

The witty, wise, and venerable elf,  
Whose only parallel can be himself—

think that the bible will do all sorts of things, burn up priestcraft, and tyranny, and work wonders. But *when* will it do so? These

ends have lived upon the bible from the fabled day of Christ; and as it was with the old woman who had drank thirteen cups of tea for ninety years, and thought tea would kill her at last, so is it with the evils the Jew-book is to annihilate. When intelligence and morality have banished them from among man—when some other cause has taken them off, the Jew-book will effect their removal, but *not till then.*

G. J. H.

### THE SPIDER GOD OF HINDOSTAN.

THE very learned and ingenious Dr. Burnet, in an appendix to his *Archilogiæ Philosophicæ*, tells a very pleasant story concerning the modern Brachmins, to this effect: They (the Brachmins or priests of Hindostan) not only write and conceal their divinity, but also their opinions in philosophy of all kinds. They philosophise after the manner of the ancients upon the creation of the universe, together with its end and destruction; for they explain these things by the efflux or emanation of all things from god, and by their reflux or restoration into him again; but this they propound in a cabalistical mythological way. For they feign a certain *immense spider* to be the *first cause* of all things, and that she, with the matter she exhausted out of her own bowels, spun the web of this whole universe; and then disposed it with most wonderful art; whilst she herself, in the mean time, sitting on the top of the work, feels, rules, and governs the motion of each part. At last, when she has sufficiently pleased and diverted herself in adorning and contemplating her own web, she retracts the threads she has unfolded, and swallows them up again into herself; whereby the whole nature of things created vanishes into nothing.

Now I freely confess, though it may be to my shame, that the brachminical account of creation pleased me mightily, as being upon the whole by far the most satisfactory I had met with. The idea of a huge spider-god letting, or rather spinning the universe out of its own bowels, and in some mysterious manner sucking it all in again, or, as the doctor writes, swallowing it up into herself—is certainly novel and startling. I may also say of this *omnipotent spider* that it is decidedly the best sort of god, the most KNOWABLE kind of deity that I have either read or heard of. The noted Charles Blount held a like opinion, for he says, in a letter to his friend Mr. Gildon, “I must confess his (Dr. Burnet’s) notion of their (the Brachmins) omnipotent spider, was no less grateful to me (though what I have read many years since) than the return of a friend after a long voyage. That thought of resolving all things into himself, an estate for life that falls into the landlord’s hands; sure no good tenant need fear a good new lease; the state of man, if rightly

well considered, is only wearing out our threads of life, in order to our deaths;” with more to the same purpose, that I have all the will but not room to quote. Enough has been given to show that others far more learned and more competent to judge than I can ever hope to be, have much admired this wonderful, all-creating, and all-swallowing spider. As to the *impossibility* of a spider performing such marvellous facts, that is an objection which though it may have weight with people in this part of the world, would be indignantly scouted by the pious spider-worshippers of India, who might perhaps retort upon us Jew-god worshippers, that it is no less impossible for an omnipotent nothing, called spirit to produce by his will all that we call something, than for a very big spider to let out from its extraordinary bowels the unmeasurable, and therefore to us boundless universe. It cannot but be allowed, I think, that the spider worshippers would be fully justified in thus retorting upon the spirit worshippers, for a big creating spider is no more an impossibility than a big creating spirit. Besides, there are impossibles to be believed in all countries, and this very impossibility gives full play to faith, for it is incontestable that if religious dogmas were plain and reasonable there could be no merit in believing or receiving them. Those who can believe utter impossibilities, and by dint of faith defy the evidence of their own senses, are the lucky folks who lay up the richest stock of religious merit. A Christian who can easily credit that the whale swallowed Jonah will do well, but he who could take in that the whale not only swallowed Jonah but himself afterwards, would do better. I think therefore that no good Christian at all events can laugh at the credulity of spider worshippers, on the impossible score. I think, that in general it is good for all folks, Christian or Turk, Jew or Gento to look at home and see if nothing can be patched up there, before they set out on the fool’s errand of mending other fools abroad. The poor Hindoos are perhaps no less happy nor less wise, in the worship of an omnipotent spider, than were the ferociously cruel Jews, with their bloody sacrifices to an omnipotent Jehovah. The worst spider that ever crawled was certainly quite as respectable a character as the Greek Jupiter, or Jehovah the Jew. A good big, merciful kind of spider might, I think, safely challenge competition with all the other gods that ever did or ever were supposed to exist. All other gods either formed men after their own image, or men formed the gods after *their* own image—the effect is precisely the same either way. It has often occurred to me that had gods given an account of themselves, or so to speak, painted their own portraits, they (the portraits) would have been less frightful and odious than we now find them. Some writer, whose name I have

forgotten, said, when he heard a rigid Predestinarian affirming that god delighted in the death of mankind, "Speak worse of the devil, if you can." Now it is not improbable that the Predestinarian, in giving his god so bad a character, was (without himself knowing it) giving a faithful sketch of his own, or such as it would be were he a god.

The heathens (according to Arnobius) did with *their* gods, as an ass would do by Cato, whom if he were to commend to his fellow asses, he would say he had delicate long ears, could bray very loud, and carry great burthens, which being the most eminent qualities in asses, they would attribute them to Cato—and just so did they judge of their gods. Some relate that an ingenious physician observing this to be the case, never would give one of their priests physic, till he was informed what opinion his patient had of divine vengeance. If he magnified god's mercy, then he gave him something to purge phlegm, whereas if he extolled god's judgments, then he gave him something to purge choler. This kind of physicing doubtless did his patients much good. It is indeed beyond all question that men's notions of deity depend very much on the state of their bowels. If the stomach, upper or lower, is foul or unhealthy, the owner thereof is apt to be ill-tempered and cruelly imaginative. Every one knows how very many patient people will curse and swear under a smart infliction of gout. Now a gouty man, imagining a god, would be likely to deck him out far less amiably than one in full health and spirits. Those divines who protest against the practice, too common even among Christians of making a god after an image of themselves, show sound judgments, for it is evident that each individual will conjure up a deity that best pleases his own fancy, and if they all had their way as many gods would be worshipped as there are human brains to conceit them. And this consideration, more perhaps than any other, reconciles me to the spider-god of Hindostan, which it is but just to remember was only *feigned* by the Brachmins, who themselves no more believed in it than I do. I say it is but just that we should credit the Brachmins so far, for as before observed, the whole story about creation from nothing by an enormous spider was propounded in a cabalistical mythological way. Nor do I see how god, supposing there really is one, can be any more dishonored by being likened to an omnipotent, omnipresent, all intelligent, uncreated spider, than to an omnipotent, omnipresent, all intelligent, uncreated man. Spiders are very respectable insects, and vulgar prejudice against them is very ignorant. They catch flies to be sure, and suck their blood, but do not human beings catch creatures equally defenceless and equally innocent, to drink their

blood. Universally the stronger prey upon the weaker, and nothing lives but by the death of something else. Surely a fly in the spider's web is not a more odious sight than a lamb with its innocent, bleeding throat in a slaughter house. Spiders are less cruel, less destructive, and therefore less hateful than man. I think, as I said before, upon the whole, that god is far less degraded by his spider than he is by his human character. However, let each one be convinced in his own mind, as the apostle saith, and worship either man, spider, serpent, cat, rat, flea, or any other thing to which fancy inclines him.

By education most have been misled,  
So they believe because they have been so bred,  
The priest continues what the nurse began,  
And thus the child imposes on the man.

If people will be gulled, and must worship something, why a cat may be as good as a flea, a flea as a man, a man as a spider, or a spider as anything else. For myself, I beg to be excused, not caring particularly for any of these things.

#### NOTES UPON THE GLOUCESTER PROSECUTIONS.

##### *The Indictment—Christian Consistency.*

"Lying lips are an abomination to the lord."—JEW-BOOK.

JUSTICE ERSKINE, like all other justices, as an excuse or reason for such proceedings as those over which he was presiding, repeated the old unmeaning stuff respecting christianity being part and parcel of the law of the land. There is no doubt that the *spirit* of christianity does pervade all our laws, not excepting the one sanctioning flogging in the army and navy.\* Was it not so, and that veneration for the above odious religious system had by the in-breeding of some hundred years become a part of Englishmen's nature, humanity would turn with horror from its contemplation, and the disgrace would be blotted out by the universal destruction of our absurd judicial code. More especially that portion called the common or unwritten law, manufactured by those venerable old women—those saturations of ancient prejudices and ridiculous and cruel customs—the judges!

Christians loudly proclaim their god to be a god of *truth*, of *love*, of *mercy*, and of *justice*—the absolute perfection of all *good* qualities, but more particularly of the first, which rightly understood embraces the whole of the others. This their "lying lips" declare daily and hourly, whilst it is easy of proof that the institutions of all Christian countries train the inhabitants to lying and cheating from their infancy; and that a really honest man could not live in them. Christians feed upon lying and slandering, and slake their thirst with evil speaking, and yet with satanic

\* See "Jew-book Promptings," p. 311.

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

impudence they affirm *their* god is TRUTH! Do they not institute vexatious criminal proceedings against a fellow-man for insulting their god, for blaspheming his holy name, for saying that which was not true of and concerning him? And what can be a greater crime against the majesty of truth than lying?

Christianity is a part and parcel of the law of the land, say the "twelve," and the law, like the Jew-book, is valuable for its antiquity, or the circumstance of its having been written to suit by-gone ages. It is valuable from its being incongruous, contradictory, and worse than useless for the present day, and for the ease with which, by its aid, black may be shown to be white and white to be black—at one and the same time. The law is valuable for providing in one place for the punishment and prevention of murder, and in another place for making it legal and laudable, aye, and grateful to *the* god of *mercy*, to take life—by thousands too, if it suits law makers. Upon the occasion of a grand sacrifice of foreign Christian or other lives, by British Christian *trained* murderers, British Christian archbishops, bishops, and ministers return the *omnipresent* god of *truth, justice*, and *MERCY* thanks for the assistance he has lent them to overcome *their* enemies, although the latter were believers in the same book, in the same salvation, in the same god, though not perhaps worshippers at the same shrine.

The bible and the English law are alike in *all* the particulars I have mentioned, the former having evidently been studied with great assiduity by the framers of the latter. The third commandment, for instance, declares "thou shalt do no murder," whilst a little further on it is ordered to do it.

The English law, of which Christianity is part and parcel, provides that certain forms of words shall be used upon criminal and civil cases, to prevent the escape of an offender on the one hand or of cheating on the other. To make assurance doubly sure, in addition to those words necessary to explain the case, a multitude of others are used, frequently have no bearing upon it, and which declare in such cases the grossest falsehoods, but are of course right and proper, because Christianity is a part and parcel of the law—the *lying* part, I presume.

I shall now proceed to show reasons for my opinions, by some extracts from the indictment of GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, charged at Gloucester with blaspheming the Christian's god—the god of truth. Upon the truly Christian proceeding referred to, a wilfully lying indictment was preferred against him, which was supported by an equally lying advocate—*paid with truth-loving Christians' gold!* The indictment is not lengthy, and I give it entire. It is as follows:—

*Gloucester to wit.*—The jurors for our lady the queen upon their oath, present that George Jacob Holyoake, late of the parish of Cheltenham, in the county of Gloucester, labourer, being a *wicked, malicious, and evil-disposed person*, and disregarding the laws and religion of the realm, and wickedly and profanely devising and intending to bring almighty god, the holy scriptures, and the Christian religion into disbelief and contempt among the people of this kingdom, on the 24th day of May, in the fifth year of the reign of our lady the queen, with FORCE and ARMS, at the parish aforesaid, in the county aforesaid, in the presence and hearing of divers liege subjects of our said lady the queen, *maliciously*, unlawfully, and wickedly did compose, speak, utter, pronounce, and publish with a loud voice, of and concerning almighty god, the holy scriptures, and the Christian religion, these words following, that is to say, "I (meaning the said George Jacob Holyoake) do not believe there is such a thing as a god, I (meaning the said George Jacob Holyoake) would have the deity served as they (meaning the government of this kingdom) serve the subalterns, place him (meaning almighty god) on half-pay"—to the *high displeasure of almighty god*, to the great scandal and reproach of the Christian religion, in open violation of the laws of this kingdom, to the evil example of all others in like case offending, and against the *peace* of our lady the queen her crown and dignity.

The first falsehood it contains charges Mr. Holyoake with "being a wicked, malicious, and evil-disposed person," to prove which no evidence was offered, for neither the prosecutors nor other persons possessed any by which it could be substantiated.

The second falsehood is a barefaced and palpable, as well as an absurd lie, stating that Mr. H. did "with FORCE and ARMS" *maliciously pronounce* certain words, "to the high displeasure of almighty god"—who is a god without passions! An untutored savage would, upon hearing this, imagine the Christians' god was made of clay, and that the prisoner had with "force and arms,"—say a policeman's bludgeon—broken his nose or cracked his skull, whereat the said *almighty* god was greatly enraged, as we might suppose a *man* would be who should be subject to such treatment. What a logical as well as sublime notion, that an *all-mighty* being could be injured by a creature of *finite* power, which power, moreover, is delegated or imparted to him by said *all-mighty*.

The third falsehood is, that what he did was "against the peace," or that he committed a breach of the peace. Its refutation is in the fact, that the lecturer and his hearers retired peaceably to their homes at the conclusion of the lecture. The only breach of the peace and infraction of the law, was perpetrated by the authorities, the self-constituted god-defenders. They *illegally* seized the defendant several days afterwards, *without a warrant*, at near midnight, and subjected him to "unnecessary harsh treatment." This illegality they subsequently made legal by taking especial care a verdict of *guilty* should be recorded against him. The judicial legerdemain which converts the illegal conduct of magistrates and blue-coated ruffians into legal acts was recently discovered by Sir James

Graham. He should lose no time in taking out a patent; backing it by an act of parliament, making it imperative upon all magistrates and police inspectors to act upon it, by which means society would be morally and the patentee pecuniarily benefited.

The brazen-faced advocate, *paid* to defend his god—the god of *truth*, declared himself horrified at the blasphemies of the prisoner, and spoke of “the *consequences* of *insulting* that deity,” whilst knowingly defending the lies in the indictment. How much *he* cared for the consequences must be very evident to all. Well done christianity! Should I be one of the jury to sit upon your “mortal remains,” I shall insist upon a verdict of *felo de se*, with a verdict of a parson and a lawyer upon the Jew-book. W. C.

### ON POWER.

IN a review of “a dissertation on the being and attributes of god,” no notice was taken, at least I think, no *satisfactory* reply was offered to Mr. Mackintosh’s grand argument in proof of a god; decidedly the *best*, or as some may consider, the *worst*, in his book. I allude to the argument drawn from an hypothesis that there is *POWER* in matter. In page 26 of the “Dissertation,” it is affirmed that *power* is the fundamental idea of a belief in god; “All other ideas (it is there said) of wisdom, goodness &c., rest upon this: and if we take away the idea of power all the rest vanish.” It is therefore obvious that this idea of *power* is worth searching into, and the Atheist is bound to show, either that we have *no* idea whatever of power, or that though we *have* an idea of power, the idea is not “fundamental of a belief in god.” If he can succeed in showing that we have no idea of power, further trouble will be unnecessary; for no idea can be fundamental of anything. Now, as I conceive that this, by far the best part of Mr. Mackintosh’s work, has not yet been grappled with, I will, by your leave, attempt to show in this and succeeding papers, that this fundamental idea of power, is a fundamental mistake; in short, that *we have no idea of power at all*. Here I may remark that Mr. M. was rather hasty in his declaration; that “about the question of power there is no dispute, for even the Atheist admits, and is compelled to admit the existence of power; nay, although the Atheist may deny intelligence, he is compelled to admit that power is manifested in the operations of nature. Here then (he continues) is a point where all men are agreed; so long as we live in a universe where everything is in motion men must continue agreed upon this point; and therefore this is the point from which all our reasonings upon this subject should begin to develop themselves.” This, I repeat,

is a rather harsh declaration, which I am really astonished any author should have made, for it is well known that David Hume was an Atheist, and, in his celebrated essays, more especially that one treating of the idea of power, endeavoured to prove that we have no idea whatever of power. I shall quote from Hume presently, when it will be seen that he, at all events, was not compelled to admit that power is manifested in the operations of nature; and as I also am an Atheist, who admits that power is the fundamental idea of a belief in god, but do not admit that we have an idea of power; it is quite clear *all* men are not agreed upon the point. I am not a little pleased, that in venturing to be sceptical about the existence of power, I am kept in countenance by so great a philosopher as David Hume, for Mr. Mackintosh thinks if it were possible any one could be found silly enough to deny the existence of power, no reasoning on earth could cure him. His words are “If there should be any Atheist so absurd as to maintain that matter and motion are enough, without any *power* to sustain that motion, we have only to say, that it would be waste of time to argue with such a person. He is too far gone, His care is hopeless.” I, though as already said, being such a person, very far gone, and case perfectly hopeless, will nevertheless attempt a thorough sifting of the question, for I am not in love with error, and certainly no answer has yet been given to Mr. Mackintosh upon this really fundamental point, and I think he should be answered fully and clearly, or the post of atheism be at once abandoned as untenable. It has been frankly acknowledged that power is the fundamental idea of a belief in a god; now let us see by what kind of argument this idea is supported. To guard against mistakes, I will give the very words of Mr. Mackintosh “Now the question is (says he), what is that which sustains this everlasting and unwearyed motion of an infinite number of worlds distributed throughout infinite space. The answer is obvious. It is power. By whatever name or names we may designate this power, still we cannot divest ourselves of the idea that this eternal motion is referable to an eternal power; for the existence of motion demonstrates the existence of power.” Such is the sum and substance of Mr. M.’s argument in proof of power. I hardly know whether I am justified in calling it argument, for it is literally assertion; and a thousand assertions don’t reach one argument. But let us be thankful for what we can catch, and do all possible good with it, such as it is. Well then, in the first place I deny that the existence of motion, demonstrates either more or less than the existence of motion. If the word power

have any meaning at all it must signify something that exists, something too that exists of itself. Our senses inform us that there is matter, they also place beyond all reasonable doubt, that matter moves. The existence of matter then is a fact; that matter moves is a fact; and that matter, in motion, produces or causes all the forms, combination, and modes of existence we behold is another fact. Now, within the circle of these clear facts is included the sum total of human knowledge. We can easily understand all this, a child will readily conceive of matter in motion, and the change thereby produced; but who, I should like to be informed, has any idea of power, neither matter nor motion, yet, if we may believe Mr. Mackintosh, "sustains this everlasting and unwearied motion of an infinite number of worlds distributed throughout infinite space." I must confess, my inability to conceive what is really meant by such language. It is in truth mere hyperbolical rant, for passing over the nonsensical expression, "unwearied motion," what I ask again can be understood by an infinite number of worlds distributed throughout infinite space, all sustained by this "fundamental idea" called power, which no one on earth has any idea of. The word power thus used has no rational meaning; in fact, no meaning of any kind. Like the word god, it conveys nothing, but the negative of everything, and if Mr. Mackintosh were called upon to explain what he means by power, he could not answer the question, for this plain reason—that he does not know what he means by it. David Hume says in the essay before-mentioned. "*It must be allowed, that when we know a power, we know that very circumstance in the cause by which it is enabled to produce the effect;*" now I put it to those who think they have an idea of power that sustains and moves all matter; whether they know that very circumstance in the cause (power) by which it is enabled to produce the effect (matter) and its motions. If they do not know all this, they cannot have an idea of power. This ludicrous notion of power, neither matter nor motion, yet sustaining all matter and all motion, is very old, old as error, but I don't remember to have ever seen it placed in so ridiculous a point of view as in Mr. M.'s book. The idea too, of everlasting and unwearied motion being sustained by power, as though motion, like a sack of coals, could be shouldered up and shoved about, is passing rich: we shall hear of people, by and bye, carrying sounds, putting heat into a bottle, and propping up the rainbow. But to be very serious, if power is neither matter nor motion, how can we be assured of its existence. I don't mean *told* that it exists, for some people have assurance

enough to tell us anything. Nothing is more easy than to say, as Mr. Owen did, in his thirteenth address to the disciples of the rational system, "there must be power to perform that which occurs throughout the universe; but what that power is man has not yet discovered." All this is quite easy, but not quite satisfactory. I have already stated the important principle, that we have no logical right to assert the existence of anything of which we have no idea. What we cannot conceive it is madness to assert the existence of. There must be power to perform that which occurs throughout the universe, says Mr. Owen, which is just taking for granted the long contested question as to the existence of god or power distinct from and independent of matter. Had Mr. Owen been content to say "that which has occurred throughout the universe, must have occurred, but how it occurred, why it occurred, or why it should not have occurred, I am quite unable to say;" no harm would have been done. By such a confession, he and others would appear less knowing, and undoubtedly display more wisdom than they now do. I am inclined to think it was from Mr. Owen that Mr. M. received his astonishing certainty and great contempt for all hopeless persons, who would not bow the knee to power—the newest philosophical Baal, who "moves the atom and controls the aggregate of nature." I do not think, if master and disciple were about to be weighed in the dogmatic balance it would be possible to determine *a priori*, who should kick the beam. Mr. M. declares that it would be waste of time to argue with any person who thinks that matter necessarily exists and moves of itself; and yet it is certain that something exists of itself; even this very power, supposing it not purely chimerical, must exist of itself, and not only move of itself, but *performs* the extra duty of sustaining and moving the universe. After imagining a power capable of doing such almighty work, Mr. Owen coolly tells his disciples, "that power I call god, and there the whole matter ends," which, it must be allowed, was a very appropriate *finale* to his grand opera of logic. What effect it had upon the disciples and the harmonies of their reason I am not informed, but it is very doubtful whether those who are accustomed to think upon these subjects will accept mere hypothesis as irrefragable argument, or call a matter ended, which, in reality, never commenced. Neither Mr. Owen nor Mr. Mackintosh have reasoned to conclusion as to the existence of power; they jumped to it. The former gent. uses the word power indifferently with god. With him god is power and power is god, while the latter calls power the fundamental idea of the belief in a god.

MR. CARLILE

TO THE HON. MR. JUST. ERSKINE.

Gloucester, August 23, 1842.

MY LORD JUDGE.—I have allowed a week to elapse since you presided at the mock trial of GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, to ensure calm feelings and careful consideration before I address your lordship on the subject. I say "mock trial," not in insult to your lordship's presidency, nor to that of the jury who responded "guilty" to your lordship's request; but to that array of circumstances which brought such a case before your lordship as a law officer of the crown, and before that most stupid and unreasonable jury of blockheads as one of the Gloucester county. I am in hope that it will be the last case of the kind to disgrace the records of English courts of law. I am sure I do not distort your lordship's feelings when I say that through every minute of Holyoake's admirable, Christian, unwearied nine hours' defence, you must have regretted the circumstances which had brought such a case into court before you. You saw a gentleman, at least in mind, brought before you, charged with having spoken blasphemy; and if you are but half as pious as credited to be, your lordship would find no closer parallel to the case of Holyoake than that of your saviour before the judgment-seat of Pilate, Herod, and the High-priest of the Jews; the latter exclaiming, in answer to the truths of the saviour: "He hath spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witness? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands."

All this was, in spirit, done to the amiable Holyoake. It was the same everlasting gospel mystery, or drama of divine principle played over again. As judge on the occasion, your lordship personified the religion, the vice, not the virtue of Herod, Pilate, and the high-priest. You did not, like Pilate, reason with the accusers and and jury; saying, as you ought to have said, that you found no fault in the man, but you unlike Pilate, and like the high priest, pleaded against the accused, whom, your office, in constitutional administration of law, was, in duty to have saved from the evident malice of his accusers submitted for prejudiced judgment to the evident ignorance of the appointed jurors. Your lordship viciously and maliciously pleaded against him in saying that no evidence was brought before the court to show that Holyoake had not hired the questioner to draw out his religious opinions! Was such an accusation made before the judge made it in aggravation of the accusation? I then blushed for the maliciously degraded name of Erskine. Your father had no vice but his religion. That was in him a vice; it is so in you his son. Holyoake must have caused the educated man in you to struggle dreadfully with the religious judge. By your proceedings in that case the queen was disgraced—by you, her judicial representative! It is the disgrace of the queen that such a man as Holyoake should be in gaol; her majesty's honour is thereby tainted, her crown tarnished, her character defamed, her glory defaced, her peaceably disposed reign disturbed, her fame made infamous. She is handed down to posterity by this act in her name as a tyrant, revengeful persecutress in matters of conscience and religion.

In the mechanics institution of this city, this day, I have seen the charred stake exhibited at which Bishop Hooper was burnt. In the gaol I have seen the talented, the amiable and good Holyoake through an iron gate, with a turnkey listener, denied the privilege of reading a newspaper filled with a report of his trial, wishing and hurrying his friends away from the pain of so conversing with them. It was such a man as you, Mr. Justice Erskine, who caused Bishop Hooper to be burnt. It was such a man as you, Mr. Justice Erskine, who has caused Holyoake to be so imprisoned. Holyoake has no more blasphemed than you. He is as incapable of blasphemy as you. You do it in the name of religion; he

cannot do it under any name. He loves truth and science; you love idolatry and superstition. He a martyr to honesty and love of truth; you a pensioned defender of error, of the faith that is false, and will bear no defence—no discussion. Holyoake is a better Christian than his judge who sentenced him to six months' imprisonment. Every word of his defence was Christian; for that he was punished; even the language for which he was prosecuted was Christian. He was but combatting an ignorant man's error, which every man should do, in season and out of season. The question which he was asked *about duty to god* was an unchristian question. Man has no duties to be performed toward god as an external being other than to make it a spirit internal to himself. This is a duty which society as a church owes to the man and the man to himself. Immanuel, or god in man, is the theory and the revelation of the mystery of the godhead in the bible. The godhead is man's heart made divine by an incarnation of the spirit of god in man. It is purely a work of education in science, morals, and love. To change the heart the head must be first changed; changed from the natural, sinful, or ignorant man, into the spiritual, intellectual, or enlightened moral man.

It is wholly monstrous that such a man as Holyoake should be imprisoned. It is the queen and country's disgrace and your judicial infamy. He offended no law, no moral, no propriety. The god he rejected, was an inferior man's idol. The religion he disclaimed was that man's superstition. He merely said, the country is too heavily taxed for its idols and its superstition. He said, in fact and effect, he would put the idols on half-pay. I would altogether cashier them; not a sixpence would I have wasted on them. I have no such religion; I renounce, reject, and scorn it altogether. Yet, I respect the bible; not as you profess to respect it. I revere christianity; not as you profess, but as the science of human wisdom, morals, and love. Holyoake is better—I am a better Christian than you.

In the theatre of Gloucester and in the public ways of Cheltenham I have declared that a bad man was never prosecuted for blasphemy; and that the best, most virtuous, and most philosophical of men are they who are prosecuted. My evidence is in your gospel; in the lives of the Grecian philosophers, from Pythagoras to Aristotle; in the history of our own country, in my case, in Holyoake's, in that of my wife, sister, shopmen, and shopwomen.

Not a shade of compliment did you offer Holyoake for his truly Christian defence. It was all blasphemy to you and the jury, as the language of the saviour was all blasphemy to the high-priest.

My duty and office as a Christian minister is to tell you, Mr. Justice Erskine, that you are not and that Holyoake is a Christian. I will undertake to prove this, if opposed by all the law and learning of the country. I call upon you to repent of that which you have done to Holyoake. Take shame by time; retrieve the character of your queen, and save her from such disgraceful associations! Get Holyoake's prison gate opened. Do him justice; and ask pardon of god and man for the injustice you have done him. I am, my lord, your lordship's humble servant,

RICHARD CARLILE.

#### JEW-BOOK PROMPTINGS.

On Monday, the 8th inst., I visited Croydon, with my son of twenty-two years of age, and repaired to the ancient archiepiscopal palace, which is now converted into a public school-room, and exhibited to any one for a shilling. I visited it as an object of antiquity, with its historical associations. An infamous clerical job is connected with this sacred building. In 1780 the Archbishop of Canterbury obtained an act of parliament, by which he got rid of his mouldy, tottering, and uninhabitable palace, built in 1278; and erected in its place a beautiful dwelling about three miles from the town. The chapel of the ancient edifice, with Queen Elizabeth's open pew, is turned into a school-room, and the clergyman, or

somebody for him, exhibits it for a shilling, a sum I have often paid. On my last visit I had not a shilling, but the exhibitor changed me half-a-crown, and gave me back my eighteen pence, keeping her parsonic fee. On asking this clerical deputy representative, or clergyman's show female, whether corporal punishment was inflicted on the pupils, the answer was, that the girls were flogged and beaten. The exhibitor added that there were no boys in the school, but one hundred and sixty girls, and that it was called the School of Industry. Many of these flogged or floggable girls are above the age of legal puberty. On my saying to my companion, "What a shame!" a middle-aged woman, the mistress of the school, rushed down the long, narrow, steep staircase of Queen Elizabeth, with clenched fist and screaming violently. A short description of the scene will best answer the ends of public justice and utility. The Bedlamite frantic woman screamed out the following sentences:—"Do you say it is a shame to flog children? Get out of this building—it is not a public place. The public have no right to enter. I have a right to flog the children, and I will flog them. The BIBLE tells me to flog the children (of the age of puberty). The vicar says to me, 'Beat the children, Mrs. Davis, and I will beat them. You are no gentleman. You are a disgrace to the name of gentleman, if you say I ought not to beat the children. I was flogged very much when I was young, and I deserved it. Were you not flogged when you were young, for you must have deserved it? If you brought up your son without flogging you are not fit to be entrusted with the education of children. The BIBLE tells me to beat the children, and the vicar says, 'Beat the children.'"—Correspondent of the "Weekly Dispatch."

HOW TO DO THE DEVIL! or a hint for Sir R. Inglis to propose the erection of some BARREL churches.—Mr. Edward Brooks, of Huddersfield, gave a sermon in a Methodist chapel at Oakham, in which he said, "I had a glorious salvation of souls in a place I preached in last year; the men sweated so for salvation that they were obliged to pull off their coats and waistcoats, and the women their gowns!" "He had," he said, "effected the salvation of the squire's wife, but the devil would not let her have her soul at liberty. She prayed in her room, but the devil entered there. She prayed in the barn with the door closed, but the enemy got in there; and at last she *did* him by praying in a barrel, the joints of which were too close for him."

ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

8, Holywell-street, Strand.

THOSE Collectors who are willing to employ themselves actively in other circles than those of their immediate friends, may, by applying at the office, receive the addresses of *New Subscribers*. If they write, let them send name, address, and district in which they collect, or which best suits their convenience.

Persons in the country, who are interested in the cause, are requested to apply for sheets or books to the liberal publishers, secretaries of Social branches, &c., and if not promptly supplied, to write direct to the secretary.

On Sunday, Sept. 11, one of the committee will be in attendance, after the evening lecture, at each of the London Social branches, viz.: at A. 1, John-street, Tottenham-court-road; 53rd branch, Blackfriars-road; 63rd, High-street, Whitechapel; 16th, Frederick-place, Goswell-road. The collectors and persons desirous of assisting are requested to be present.

M. RYALL, Sec.

The following is the reply of Mr. Joseph Hume, M.P., to an inquiry from M. Ryall, secretary of the "Anti-Persecution Union," requesting information of the presentation of a petition on behalf of Mr. SOUTHWELL:—  
 Ryde, 18th August, 1842.

Sir.—I presented the petition in favour of Charles Southwell; and, as there was not time to take any notice of it separately, I spoke to Sir James Graham, who promised to look into the case if anything can be done: and I expect, when he is a little at leisure, to hear from him on the subject.

The present undefined offence of *blasphemy*, leaves every man, who differs from the established church in his opinion on questions of faith, at the mercy of every judge like Sir Charles Wetherall; and such a state of the law is much to be regretted.

I remain, your obedient servant,  
 Mr. M. Ryall. JOSEPH HUME.

Also the following from Lord Brougham: Lord Brougham's compliments to Mr. Ryall. He has no doubt that he presented the petition from Bristol with others, as he presented all the petitions which came from any bodies of persons, before the end of the sessions. Lord Brougham made no motion upon the subject. BROUGHAM.  
 August 22, 1842.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. FREDRIC HOLLICK, now of New York, America, writing to Mr. Holyoake on the condition of New York, desires him to make as public as possible the fact that *there is no employment for mechanics in New York*—hundreds are walking about who cannot get work, and numbers are daily arriving *only to join them*. He says "the only parties who should come are *farm labourers*, who are much wanted, or *parties with a little money who intend buying land*, and settling on it." Mr. Hollick is very anxious this should be made known as it may prevent many friends from making an unfortunate trip.

The articles of "Wm. Birch," "W." and "W. Baker," shall appear as early as possible. Mr. Mackintosh's article partly in type, omitted for want of room.—Charles Dent, received.

ERRATA.—In the article of W.B.C., No. 36, p. 301, transpose the "is," eighth line from the bottom of last paragraph, to immediately after the parenthesis.

In p. 287, No. 35, article "Christian Ignorance," &c. for "two thousand emendations," read "twenty thousand."

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

|                                                                             |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| <i>For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &amp;c.</i>              |        |
| A Friend .. .. .                                                            | 0 1 0  |
| Collector, 26 .. .. .                                                       | 0 6 10 |
| Subscription, E. Jones .. .. .                                              | 0 10 0 |
| Collector, 45 .. .. .                                                       | 0 1 9  |
| PER THOMAS LINGARD, BURNSLEY:                                               |        |
| Thomas Mayson .. .. .                                                       | 0 1 0  |
| Mutual Instruction Class, in connection with the Odd Fellows, Sunday School | 0 2 6  |
| A few Friends .. .. .                                                       | 0 1 6  |
| PER WILLIAM MALLALIEU, ROCHDALE.                                            |        |
| Malcolm Kilneaid .. .. .                                                    | 0 2 6  |
| Allan Pollock .. .. .                                                       | 0 2 0  |
| Joseph Etherington .. .. .                                                  | 0 1 0  |
| Richard Thomas .. .. .                                                      | 0 0 6  |
| A few friends to Free Inquiry at Stansfield                                 |        |
| Print Works .. .. .                                                         | 0 1 6  |
| Ditto at Rochdale .. .. .                                                   | 0 9 1  |
| Ditto at Heywood .. .. .                                                    | 0 4 5  |



THE  
**ORACLE OF REASON;**  
Or, *Philosophy Vindicated.*

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

*Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100,  
for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 13, 1842, to Six Months'  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.*

No. 38.]

[PRICE 2D.

**PHRENOLOGY AND MATERIALISM.**

**PHRENOLOGISTS** boast that their science is making rapid strides, moving with giant steps towards universal acception. Perhaps they are quite right, but whatever may be the merit or demerit of their science, it is certain that the reasonings by which it is commonly supported are very funny. In respect of reasoning, however, there is hardly a pin to choose between phrenologists and anti-phrenologists, those who attack or those who defend. A fine example of this duplex drollery has lately been furnished by the Rev. Robt. Wilson, A.M., author of "The Pleasures of Piety," and a Mr. Barber, who styles himself "Late Professor of Elocution at Harvard University, United States, and Member of the Royal College of Surgeons." The rev. gent. has just published two lectures *against* phrenology, Mr. Barber is now engaged in the delivery of a course of lectures at Manchester *for* phrenology.

When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of war, and it may amuse as well as instruct my readers to observe how these two Grecians championise their respective opinions.

The rev. opponent of phrenology, as rev. opponents of anything are wont to do, draws his leading arguments against that real or supposed science from the Jew-book. I can only find room for one, which is passing rich, and will serve as a fair sample of the rest. "Granting (says he) that a man with an organisation developed in the very best possible manner, might find a wife with an equally excellent development, this would be no certain warrant that their children would all have naturally noble dispositions of mind. Of the most perfect pair that ever lived, the first-born was a murderer. Cain murdered his brother Abel. The circumstance of Cain and Abel being so very different in disposition, though sprung from the same parents, is sufficient to show the folly of the phrenological system in reference to marriage. And what I ask even phrenologists themselves, on their own principles, is more likely to injure the succeeding generation than for itinerant lecturers on their science to carry about a host of ideots' skulls,

publicly exhibiting them to the females' wondering eye?"

Here we have a fine example of argument against science drawn from fiction, and a ludicrous yet forcible illustration of *l'esprit de metier*, the nothing-like-leather animus of clerical philosophers. These fellows get their living by the Jew-book, and consistently enough say there is nothing like it. The currier in the besieged city recommended a fortification of leather, and parsons when besieged in their citadel of folly and corruption, have no idea, nor indeed necessity for any other than a Jew-book fortification. Is it not absurd to attempt a disproof or an answer to skull or any other philosophy, by an appeal to the fabulous trash of Genesis? However, phrenologists themselves can hardly complain of this, for they are inveterate canters about god and the scripture. They appeal to that detestable Jew-book, and cannot complain with good grace if their opponents equally avail themselves of its superlative humbug. Nor do I see how they can deny the rev. gent.'s conclusions, if they admit his premises. If they admit that Adam and Eve were a perfect pair, it will be difficult for phrenologists to account for the circumstance of Cain and Abel being so very different, it will indeed be difficult for them to account by an appeal to phrenological principles for the Jew-book *fact* that Abel was the best and Cain the worst possible specimen of humanity. My conviction is that science never can flourish while mixed up with superstition, and that he who takes upon trust and adopts as the basis of his reasonings the *truth* either of Jew-book or Jew-god, is totally precluded from arriving at sound conclusions. Daniel Hoffman, a disciple of Luther, said that whate is *true* in theology is *false* in philosophy, and what is *true* in philosophy is *false* in theology. From which opinion I dissent. My own is, that that there is no true theology, or truth *in* theology. That it begins with a lie, goes on with a lie, and finishes with the same—in short, that it is a lie altogether. Theology is hermaphroditic in its character, being at once father and mother of at least nine-tenths of all the lies, crime, and wickedness in the world. I am curious to see what answer

phrenologists will make to the Rev. Mr. Wilson, for though they may not share my disgust and contempt for the idle stories about Cain, Abel, Adam, Eve, the serpent, &c., they cannot, I think allow that the difference of disposition of Cain and Abel, though sprung from the same parents, "is sufficient to show the folly of the phrenological system in reference to marriage."

I leave them to settle this matter as best they may with their rev. opponent, whose arguments have not shaken my faith in phrenology, but they will undoubtedly tell well upon the soft heads of all real good Jew-book Christians. I do nevertheless agree with the rev. gent. that it is not fitting idiots' skulls should be publicly exhibited to the females' wondering eye, and therefore sincerely hope that his own may be carefully looked after.

I will now pass from this rev. attacker to a no less sage and able defender of phrenology, viz., Mr. Barber, who in a lecture introductory to the course above mentioned, displays much anxiety to shield phrenologists from the charge of being Materialists. Such a charge certainly is a proof of considerable ignorance in those who make it, for materialism leads no sanction to phrenology as it is called, or craniology as it ought to be called.

But let us hear Mr. Barber. I call, says he, on inquiring minds to go to nature and see what she has said as to the truth or falsehood of phrenology. After which very rational call, comes the following slap at Materialists. "Such is the intimate connection between mind and body that the métaphysicians made a great mistake in paying no attention to organisation, and physiologists sometimes made as great a mistake in assigning all operations to the body. And in this way many persons were led into the fatal and indefensible doctrines and theory of materialism. Phrenologists assert that the brain is the organ or instrument of the mind, not the mind itself. This is the first proposition to be established." Now after all this prate about materialism, one might have expected that Mr. Barber would have taken some pains to establish "this the first proposition," and utterly annihilate materialism by clearly manifesting that brains are incapable of thought, and that the thinking principle or mind is a something not matter, yet capable of making use of matter as its organ or instrument. A course of this kind might, I say, have been looked for from so boastful a goer-to-nature as Mr. Barker, but no, like all the bouncing spouters about mind, he so far from attempting to establish his proposition, runs on with a string of nonsense about the mode of the mind's action being a matter placed altogether beyond the reach of the human faculties, for over this, he continues, the author of nature has spread an impenetrable veil. That is over the modes of the mind's

action, I presume. Now all this looks very like nonsense, as "Publicola" would say, for what can be known about the mode of mind's action, when in point of fact, mind is neither more nor less than a *mode of body's action*. Mind is not a subject or existence, like body, but an attribute of certain kinds of subjects or existences. Is it less conceivable that the fine, active, highly sensitive matter called brain, should think, than that an intangible, immaterial, no-one-knows-what called mind, should slide into and make use of the brain, as I do of my breeches? Mr. Barber wishes it to be borne in mind that there is nothing in phrenology that is not perfectly compatible with the soundest theology. Now this is saying very little indeed for phrenology, for the soundest theology is remarkably rotten. He allows that the brain is necessary to all mental operations, if so, the legitimate inference is that without brain there cannot be mental operations. Now it is precisely this that the indefensible doctrine and theory of materialism teacheth. What is necessary cannot be dispensed with, so that according to this sound theologian, mind perishes with its organ. But, inquires Mr. Barker, are not all the operations of the senses mental operations? Does not the mind hear, see, taste, touch, and smell? To both which queries I say most decidedly, *no!* There can be no other than physical operations. D'Holbach has well said that "the distinction which has been so often made between the physical and the moral (or mental) man is evidently an abuse of terms. Man is a being *purely physical*. The moral (or mental) man is nothing more than this physical being considered under a certain point of view, that is to say, with relation to some of his modes of action, arising out of his particular organisation." Again, "The physical man is he who acts by causes our senses make us understand. The moral (or mental) man is he who acts by physical causes with which our prejudices preclude us from becoming acquainted." As to mind hearing, seeing, tasting, &c. I cannot but deem it gratuitous and most unwarrantable impertinence to talk about mind doing this, that, or the other, before it is known there is such a *thing* in existence.

I must return to this subject, not having yet relieved my conscience of one-half its load, and this article is already too long. Messrs. Wilson and Barber may therefore reckon upon a few more castigations, aye and sound ones too, for my determination is to have no manner of mercy upon canting sophists, be they reverend or irreverend, craniologic or anti-craniologic. With craniology or phrenology itself I am not now meddling, my object being simply to show up the fallacies of those who pretend to expound it, and above all to strip the latter of the sanctified garb in which they love to array themselves.

A FEW WORDS

*From one willing to have officiated as the*

THIRD PRIEST OF THE ORACLE.

THE spirit of the *Oracle*, i.e. the first spirit, though residing now in another world, is yet present with us, yet communicating to us, and if properly taken advantage of, his communications will be of value, for they contain truth, valuable truth, not to say all truth. According to the Jew-book there was a god in the early ages who had used to step down a ladder occasionally to visit the inhabitants of this nether world. He talked with our fathers face to face, walked with the first man in the garden, and even condescended to show him how to make breeches. It would appear however, that like family connexions from intermarriage, this intimacy was broken off, not altogether, but gradually. For many years after the garden tête-à-têtes he walked a highway to meet a gentleman, and stopped to refresh himself at a way-side inn. His visits however became less frequent, perhaps because he grew old and unable to undergo the fatigue. We don't assert this as a fact, but as revelation says nothing upon the matter, we are left free to speculate. We had thought it was from a growing sense of modesty, but this would scarcely accord with the show made of the hinder parts to Moses. However, be this as it may, he at last disappeared altogether, but that we might not be left without hope, to show that though far away he loved us still, he sent his son. But when he came he was not known, and though his father shouted a time or two to tell us that this was his well-beloved son, our fathers could not put up with his criticisms, and finding him determined not to desist from teaching new doctrines and pulling down and plucking up the old, they at last murdered him.

Provision had, however, been made; his fate had been anticipated, and his love was so strong, that he appointed a successor before his demise; and seeing that it would not do to send the folks a mark to shoot at, he resolved to do the good without giving them a chance to return evil for it; and being absent in person, he sent a spirit, even the spirit of truth, a comforter to show the people all things.

The creator of the *Oracle* has disappeared, not because of age or for modesty's sake (for he had nothing to be ashamed of), but because the world was not fit for him, but he so loved the world that he sent his son, that whoso believed on him should be brought out of darkness into marvellous light; that son has been murdered, that lamb is slain, but he has provided a comforter, a spirit of truth, and the *Oracle* through him shall show you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, yes, though he be dead, yet

shall he speak, "shake orthodoxy's rotten bones, and make priests tremble."

These things, as Paul says, are an allegory; which the initiated will understand, the saviour is entombed, but ere we shall have time to canonize his bones he will burst the sepulchre, he will rise again; he whose voice has called forth many Lazaruses from their sleep of superstitious bigotry will come again to judgment, the condemned will occupy the seat of justice, and the proud will bow before him.

Meanwhile, we trust our readers and disciples will keep their lamps trimmed ready for his coming; all who have talents must use not bury them. We must work as they who have to give an account, so that in accordance with the ability possessed, interest may be made, usury obtained, and our work fulfilled.

W.

WHAT IS GOD?

WHAT is all this splutter and clatter about god, in your publication? None of you seem to know what you are writing about. God is as much the subject of science as any other thing. If not comprehensible it would be nonsense to talk about it. The god of the bible is purely *substantial*. The father-god is what man knows of the physical or natural world, the Elhoim in Hebrew. The son-god is what man knows of the mental or spiritual world, the Jehovah Elohim, or Jesus Christ. The holy ghost-god is the educated state of man in wisdom, virtue, and love. These gods are incarnateable in man by education in all science. This is the worship of god as a spirit in spirit and in truth. All mental images of god in the clouds, or in the physical or natural world, are idols, mere false human imaginations. The truth of god can only be manifested as a spirit incarnated in man by education. If you could read the Hebrew books, there are no Jew-books, as I thus read them, you would not display so much ignorance in abuse of what you evidently do not understand. The fault is in your past and present teachers, not in the books. In the ministers who read them by the letter as nursery tale histories, not in reading them as a treatise or doctrine of the spiritual world, whose latitude, longitude, and degrees are the head and mind of man. Get more knowledge on the subject, drop your abuse, and aspire to measures more suitable to teach by example and precept the general defective state of mind.

RICHARD CARLILE.

QUALIFICATION FOR THE SUFFRAGE.—Mr. T. S. Mackintosh, when addressing a Chartist meeting at Westbromwich a few days ago, said—He rejoiced to find that one of the qualifications for the suffrage was one which promised fair to place fanaticism at its proper discount. Every man claiming a vote must be of *sound mind*. He contended that no man who believed that a whale swallowed Jonah could ever be considered of *sound mind*, and could not be entitled to a vote when the charter was passed.

## IS THERE NO GOD?

THERE are four words, which, like the four strings of a fiddle, have served metaphysical disputants to play upon for centuries, nay, from time immemorial, and it is truly astonishing to observe the wonderful variety of sounds which they have been able to produce from them. These four words are—TRUTH—JUSTICE—HONOUR—GOD.

What is truth? Is it a thing—a material substantial thing? No, certainly not. Truth is an *abstract idea*, having its seat in the mind of man and its origin in his perception of the congruities and incongruities of external things; and also in his perception of his own relation to the external world. In short, truth is a perception of the relation of the infinite variety of phenomena manifested throughout the universe, whether internal or external to man; whether mental or material. Who, then, is capable of telling us definitely what is truth, and what is not truth? Who is competent to lay down a universal standard (a kind of foot-rule) of truth by which every question shall be determined? That man who has observed *all* the phenomena, and distinctly discerned *all* their relations—where is that man? *Non est inventus*; and yet every dabbler in metaphysical lore, from Jesus Christ before Pontius Pilate—aye, and long prior to that time—through the whole chain of Catholics, Protestants, Protestant Dissenters of all grades and shades, Hindoos, Hottentots, &c. &c. &c., down to the last writer in defence of atheism in the *Oracle of Reason*, prates about truth! truth! truth! as if each were the happy discoverer of the grand desideratum by which every question should be henceforth settled and determined! What then, is there no such thing as a universal standard of truth? Assuredly there must be; yet “no man has had a *perfect* conception of truth at any time; but all men at all times have had *some* conception of truth, however inadequate.” When I hear a poor ignorant Ranter roaring out in defence of *his* very inadequate conception of truth, and denouncing all who differ from him, I am not surprised; I think, however, that professed Atheists, holding pretensions to philosophy and common sense, should act somewhat differently. Now, there is or there is not such a thing—a something or a nothing called *truth*. I hope, therefore, that those professed Atheists who parade the term so confidently and pompously, that one is led to suppose that they alone have discovered the essence of truth, and know all about it, I hope, I say, that they will condescend to tell us what idea they intend to convey by the term *truth*, for the number of notes drawn from the first string of the metaphysical fiddle are so numerous that it is difficult or impossible to tell which of the old notes they mean, or whether they have found a new one.

Now for the second string of the metaphysical fiddle—*justice*. What is it? There is or is not such a thing—a something or a nothing called justice. “Aye,” says the Materialist, “but what is it? where does it dwell—above the clouds or beneath, anywhere, everywhere, or nowhere? If it be not matter it is nothing.” Well, friend, I answer, it is not matter; and yet I should be very sorry to say that justice has no existence. Justice is an abstract idea existing in the mind of man, and yet it would be about as difficult to give a definition of a universal standard of justice as to give one of truth. “No man has had a *perfect* conception of justice at any time; but all men at all times have had *some* conception of justice, however inadequate.” Justice has been worshipped too under the form of a female figure with a bandage over her eyes and a pair of scales evenly balanced in her hand. Justice was a goddess (she has few votaries now-a-days—the golden calf has usurped her place and thrown down her altar), and I am of opinion that if we had a correct idea of justice, and mankind were to worship this idea under the form of a female figure with a pair of scales, or under any other form, or as an all-pervading spirit, “principle, power, or being,” without any form at all, there would be much more jus-

tice in this world than there is at present—and this opinion I should still hold if all the materialists in the world were to *prove* a thousand times over that there is no such *physical* existence in nature as the goddess justice. I am very sensible that the principle here advanced, like any other, may be abused; that a false goddess, that is, a false *idea* of justice, which is, in fact, injustice, might be set up and worshipped, thereby strengthening or promoting injustice; but this only serves to prove my case; for if the worship of a false idea will promote injustice, the worship of the true idea must, if like causes produce like effects, promote justice amongst men.

The third string—*honour*. What a moral power is here! Its influence is *felt* everywhere—from the plighted troth of two individuals to the pledged treaties of nations and empires. The vow of Hannibal of eternal hatred to the Romans, and of Penelope of unchanging love to Ulysses, had their bond in honour. The hatred of Hannibal might cool towards the brave and generous Romans, the love of Penelope might cool towards Ulysses, but each of them had plighted their honour, and felt bound to carry out their originally declared intentions, for the eyes of the world were upon them. I could write a volume upon the subject of this moral power and give many “modern instances” even among professed Atheists. Indeed, honour is conceived by some parties to be the last hold which the Atheist has upon society. If he give *this* up he becomes, they consider, an outcast. But what is honour? “It is a something or a nothing.” Where is it? Is it anywhere, everywhere, or nowhere? It is, like the preceding, an abstract idea existing in the mind of man. But who shall give us a true and correct standard of honour? The man who has traced all the intricate windings of the human feelings and dived into the deep recesses of the human heart—where is he? *Non est inventus*.

The fourth string is *god*; and perhaps there have been as many different notes drawn out of this string as out of any of the others. Now what is the moral idea of god? It is, as I conceive, a *compound* idea made up of all the moral perfections, as wisdom, goodness, justice, or whatever other virtue may be conceived to confer worth upon and give dignity to the human character. These are *attributed* to god—are called god’s *moral attributes*, and, taken collectively constitute the *moral idea* which we form in our minds concerning god. The *moral* attributes of god, like truth, honour, &c., are mere abstractions, they are not *physical* existences, and let it be remembered that it is not the physical existence of god of which we are now treating. We will come to that another time. At present I take my stand upon this position—that a man who worships a *moral idea*, or god, whose attributes are justice, wisdom, and goodness will become more just, more wise, and more good than if he did not so worship, and that therefore a reverence for this moral idea is beneficial to man as an individual and to the species in general. I beg it may be distinctly understood that I do not hold myself bound to defend the character of the god of the Jews, or any other national god of antiquity. I would also observe that I have no intention of going into the question of the *physical* existence of god at present. If it can be shown that the reverence or worship of a *moral idea*, or god, whose attributes include all the moral perfections, or, as perfect an idea as can be perceived, has no beneficial influence upon the character and condition of man, then the question of his *physical* existence will become one of very trifling importance—so trifling in my opinion that it would not be worth the trouble of disputing about.

T. S. MACKINTOSH.

P.S.—If I could conscientiously, that is, looking at the *moral* issue, take the atheistical side of the question: I could, I think, furnish a few arguments against the *physical* existence of god, quite as forcible as any I have yet seen in the *Oracle*. In the meantime I give you a squib, the production of a very worthy man, Mr. A. D., author of a small

volume of poems, published by Watson, City Road, London. I have the honour of Mr. A. D.'s personal acquaintance, and received the following lines from his own lips, which I quote from memory. They were produced on the occasion of a person asking him emphatically—what is god?

“You ask me what is god, and I  
Am no wise puzzled to reply;  
For I, though but a finite creature,  
Can tell what's god and what is nature.  
Whatever can be seen or felt,  
Whatever can be heard or smelt,  
Whatever can be tasted, and  
All that the mind can understand,  
All that the memory can receive,  
All that the reason can believe,  
All o'er which fancy ever trod  
Is nature—*ALL the rest is god.*”

Now I can laugh at this as heartily as any Atheist, and yet my belief in the existence of god, and in the utility of that belief, remains unshaken.

T. S. M.

## THE NEW ARGUMENT

“A POSTERIORI”

### FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

I.

“I make peace, and I create evil, saith the lord.”  
JEW-BOOK.

It is usual for writers upon this subject to refer to the adaptation of the whole universe, as far as it is known to us, to prove the power and wisdom, and goodness of god; they tell us that each animal is exactly fitted to its station; that every bone, and muscle, and nerve, is useful; they know what it was given for, and the reason in the mind of deity for giving it; and this line of argument has led them into gross absurdity; indeed we are inclined to lay the blame for the promulgation and spread of atheism, almost solely upon the advocates for god's cause; they have been trying in direct contradiction to scripture authority, to search out the mind of the lord, and they have been, if we are to believe their own tales, his councillors. This plan is foolish, and can only bring them and their fancied client into contempt. We have observed that the definition of blasphemy is anything which tends to bring god or the holy scriptures into contempt, and we certainly think that such men as Dr. Buckland, and the writers for deity might be indicted for it, instead of the professing Atheist. The Atheist has hitherto been only the servant of the Bridgewater Treatise authors, and who would think of punishing the cat's-paw? This is dealing with effects, and like all other attempts with this system will prove unavailing to effect its object. If deity and the holy scriptures are not to be brought into contempt, the Bridgewater Treatises should be burned, and the writers mouths stopped, and their pens destroyed. We charge them with the mischief; we think rightly so. What should we say of a man who should bridle a horse and cramp him in every possible way so as to confine him to a certain path, and

when the horse has done his work, praise his power, and wisdom, and goodness?

Yet this is what these gentry have done with deity. From a system found out by experience, they will take a single bone of a single animal, and by a process of reasoning, and reasoning the most philosophical too, because it is in accordance with all experience, because from the nature of existences around the facts could not possibly be otherwise: they will tell to what kind of animal this bone belonged, the nature of its organisation and its capabilities, how and where it *must* have lived, what kind of food *must* have been furnished it, in what way it *must* have gathered it; they will tell if it was a land or a water animal, if it was supplied with wings to soar aloft, or if it was confined to *terra firma*; and they reason upon, and with this very forcible word *must*, because they cannot conceive how it could have been otherwise: for instance, if it chanced to be an animal suited to the water, we know well enough that it could not possibly live upon land, and therefore, unless it lived in the water it could not live at all, and *vice versa*; all this these gentlemen know, and yet they have no sooner finished their process of reasoning, than they immediately with the most delightful consistency imaginable, give the wing to fancy, and instead of resting satisfied with their knowledge of natural phenomena, or continuing the search to dispel their ignorance; they having made god a necessary agent, immediately sing psalms and hymns, chaunt *te deums*, and write large volumes in praise of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of god, as manifested in doing what he could not help doing.

Whence have our present class of Atheists derived their opinions? Many of them from hence, and they feel a contempt for such trash? But who are the guilty parties? Who have done the evil? “Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou formed me thus? If one reads a religious book, and its foolishness causes us to laugh, shall we be charged with sacrilege? Or if we get a work from one of the heads of the church; from one divinely inspired, and who is therefore in strict communion with god, and the contemptible reasoning adduced excites similar feelings within us, shall we be charged with blasphemy? Is it in the power of man when he sits down to read, to say what will be his opinions when he rises? Certainly not. Where then ought the charge of blasphemy to rest? Where but on the writers of the bungling works advocating religion? And who ought to be prosecuted? Who but they whose folly has generated the conviction? We protest against the prosecution of Atheists on the ground that if it be criminal, the criminal have become so, not for the sake of honour or applause but from

conviction; that if he be wrong the writers on religion are the cause of the wrong, and if there be any punishment due, it is due to the originators of the evil. W.

WHY ARE WE ATHEISTS?

"I would not give the snap of my finger for the man who professed atheism, simply because he was disgusted with religious villainies."—W. C., *Oracle of Reason*.

MR. EDITOR.—Will you permit a plain man to endeavour to answer the above question? You must excuse simplicity. I hate the abstruse as I do the priests, and dislike formality as much as religion. If I understand you rightly, you would rather the mistakes of your friends were corrected than those of your enemies. Nor is the motive a strange one since it is natural to wish our friends perfect. We can endure to see our enemies in error.

I copy from memory, and if it fail me not, the motto chosen is correctly transcribed from your pages. I am not Sterne's recording angel and do not therefore register every man's illogical idiosyncracies, but the one quoted reminded me of Job's sarcastic remark, that "great men are not *always* wise."

This brings me to the consideration of the question, "Why are we Atheists?" And I take it, the grounds of atheism are many, and different with different persons, and probably quite proper with all.

It may be laid down as a premise that every goddist has certain notions of a deity peculiar to himself; when these notions are disproved to his satisfaction he henceforth becomes an Atheist, unless we suppose his intellect to be on a par with the Rational Religionists, who, when they had thrown off one superstition took up another. Such a supposition with regard to a converted goddist not only carries with it little that is complimentary, but, to borrow a phrase from the church, is a work of supererogation. Certainly, I hope to show it to be so.

The *Oracle's* early pages contained some clever refutations of the ideas that *motion*, *space*, or *matter*, can be god.

If a man who holds that motion is god, should read Mr. SOUTHWELL's acute refutation of that same fantasy, become convinced of its absurdity and give it up, would not such a man be an Atheist?

Am I wrong in thinking that he who should believe motion to be god, and become converted from such an *unsteady* error is an Atheist and properly so too?

Would he who held that matter was god, which we are told crumbles before the faintest blow of reason, and relinquished belief in such an unpugilistic deity, would not such a person be an Atheist on logical grounds?

Has not Mr. Mackintosh gravely told you in his curious "*mutilation* of the being and attributes of god," that he is an Atheist to the god of the Jews, and you have not disputed the propriety of the assertion.

But I think I hear you rejoin, Mr. Mackintosh, though an Atheist to the god of the Jews has now a *power* god, and therefore, although he is an Atheist, yet is not an Atheist.

But, Mr. Editor, you do not surely intend to insinuate that all your readers are as fond of gods as Mr. Mackintosh, and that when by great good luck they are ridded of one will rake over all the lumber and rubbish of philosophy until they find another.

Permit me to tell you that I am a man without a god, and at the risk of being estimated by you at a very low price, I add—without a god in consequence of the "*villainies* of the priests" as exhibited in the arrest of Charles Southwell.

With St. John I believed that god *was love*. I did not *fear* god, I had too much confidence in his goodness. I was one of those Christians who, like the Unitarians, *dare trust* him. I should have shrunk in horror from the man who should have told me god could behold iniquity unmoved, and smile on cruelty purchased in his name. But when I saw the cold-blooded barbarity with which Southwell was treated, and the fiendish malice employed for his destruction—the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw the disciples of Jesus, not like men, but devils walking. I had read "*Fox's Book of Martyrs*," and cursed catholicism from my cradle, I now cursed christianity with the same heartiness. I no longer saw through a priestly "*glass darkly*," but beheld the naked and stern realities of the world. I saw cruelty thrive and grow under the sanction of my god, and he who swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, put forth no hand to save my friend from the clutches of brutal priestly thieves. A god of *love* allow all this. No! no! Don't tell me. From this hour my god vanished into thin air, or like a November asteroid shot for ever from my sight.

Now on what ground do you object to this? Am I to become a goddist again because I happened to be converted by a chain of reasoning you perhaps never investigated? Suppose you believed there was a man in some great house over the way, who always stood at the window watching his servants at work, and who had sworn to protect them while they did well—and if, when in the discharge of their full duty, some wretches came up and took these servants one by one; and thrust them in dungeons, dark and deep, and no master came out to their help—would you believe he saw what had been done? Not you, I know! So with me. I was taught

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

my god was in heaven, all-powerful, and could protect the oppressed; all-willing and would; all-seeing and should, and yet did just neither one nor 'tother. Seeing these inconsistencies I lost all belief in him. It is a maxim in law that "contradictions cannot be brought into being," and little wonder that contadictions lawyers could not bring into being, I could not keep there, and became an Atheist in consequence.

You may talk about Symbol Worship, Theory of Regular Gradation, and indulge in learned articles upon "Is there a god?"—and many may profit thereby, but the business has been done for me by "priestly villanies." What care I for your matter, notion and space gods—my god was love. No fear, like Mr. Mackintosh, I shall take up with another. It is with me with the word, as it is with the ladies, my first love is the strongest, and no bastard, cold, philosophically-bred deity shall ever supplant it. My religion and worship was feeling—not calculating, nicely-balanced, Chesterfieldian sentiment.

The position I wish to establish is this: that persons may logically be Atheists in consequence of the villanies of the priests, as well as from other causes, let you estimate them as you may.

I think this needs little further illustration, or I might refer you to a passage you quote in your last number from Mr. Mackintosh, in which it is said the priests of Rome are Atheists, because of the villainies they practice and no god punishes, naturally enough they become Atheists.

In the number just issued of the Report of the Trial of Mr. HOLYOAKE at Gloucester, you find (to use a happy phrase of Mr. Carlyle's) that you asked Mr. Judas Iscariot Bartram, the witness, why he (Mr. H.) stated at Cheltenham that "he was of no religion," and the answer was, "because of the treatment of our friend Southwell." The coincidence seems curious, but I do not doubt that Mr. Holyoake has, like myself, gathered atheism from the iniquities of the Christians.

On page 296 of the *Oracle*, you say, a man who fancies himself an Atheist because he is disgusted with religion, like a tetotaller, mistakes effects for causes. Perhaps you think you see with the lynx's eye, while I pore through the mole's dim vision, but I do not. The application of atheism founded on the disgust of religion is a question of consistency, not of effects and causes. Does not your paper proclaim religion to be the world's curse? Who can believe there is a father of mercies permitting this? The two taken together are flat contradictions, and these only are the true grounds of the atheism in question. If it is a good ground show it.

You next say, "the children of such an Atheist may not see the same reasons for disgust upon looking into society in their day, and become goddites accordingly." Now, soberly, what is this to do with you? Is it not enough that there is good reason now to be an Atheist? Is it any argument against the solidity or justness of my opinion to day, that somebody next generation may, for a different reason, entertain a different one. Let my children believe in god if they see reason to do so. I shall when I find evidence sufficient for the purpose. If our children do not see the reason for "disgust" with religion we do, so much the better. I hope the *Oracle* will more effectually fulfil its mission, than to leave in the world all the evil it found.

You follow up your reasoning on the page I have mentioned, by saying, "had the father been an Atheist from principle, his children would be so too." Pray what do you mean by a principle? What is the principle of Atheism, that will infallibly keep us Atheists in spite of all the reasons for becoming goddites that unknown time and thought may produce? Verily, I am curious about it. With me a principle is an axiomatic rule, and the rule that operated in my conversion was the rule of consistency. I became an Atheist because I could not reconcile contradictions. Did you become an Atheist by special ability in amalgamating contrarieties? Try to believe that other people may be good sound Atheists although they may not have your reasons for being so.

If there was a god of love—cant, hypocrisy, and religious villainy could not thrive in the world. Why not take advantage of this? The sense of misery and injustice will do more than cold logic to awaken men to reason and throw them on their own resources. By both reason is addressed, but to borrow from Pope, one plays round the head while the other comes to the heart. It was said of the just Aristides, he reposed on his own proper wisdom, and heeded no man's praise. So if you would teach the people to repose on their own proper and well understood powers, and give up their false and fancied dependence on superior beings, you must not despise human feelings but turn their mighty current into the channels of philosophy.

I do not underrate your philosophical labours. Just as "feelings," in the words of Pemberton, "are the stays of intellect," so is intellect, in its turn, the guide of feeling. But he who shall exclude feeling from his philosophy will become more callous than a Stoic, colder than a Unitarian, and his heart harder than a stone.

In conclusion, let me entreat you not to suppose I write from chagrin, because I be-

long to a class of Atheists whom you rate very low. Having no wish to be bought, I do not murmur at your price. But I must make the circumstance a pretext for withholding my name; and like a young lady when she affects to be offended, shall pleasantly tell you I won't give even my initials, since if I gave you my person, you would not deem me worth the "snap of your finger."

A VOICE FROM GLOUCESTER GAOL.

DEAR CRONY.—If I may borrow one of SOUTHWELL'S queer paragraphs: Thou unswerving friend of blasphemers, this comes—as certain epistles of old did to Timothy, greeting. I have heard you are curious as a young lady to know all about me, and what I could not deny to the fair I can hardly refuse to the just.

You remember I lectured in Cheltenham on the 24th of May, and how I was honoured with a notice by the sage authorities of that godly town. It was afterwards determined I should receive further attention by the county, and I have the gratification of informing you that the shire-hall of Gloucester was taken, and a public meeting convened on the 15th of August for my especial accommodation, and a more respectable audience it has never been my lot to address. Common courtesy requires I should acknowledge that the expenses of the hall, door-keepers included, were politely discharged by the gentlemen who patronised me.

At the commencement of proceedings a very respectable gentleman took the chair (I think his name was *Erskine*); an excellent chairman he made, and nice order he kept all day. I was called upon to move the second resolution,\* namely that I be acquitted and not committed. This will seem strange language to you, but it is the peculiar phraseology of this county. It took me *nine hours* to properly move this resolution; and here again I must in justice observe that so politely were matters managed, that in case the interest of the audience should flag during that long address, *twelve gentlemen* were provided to pay particular attention to me throughout. At the conclusion these gentlemen and the chairman kindly requested my further company, and so charmed was I with such courtesy that I made up my mind to stay for "*six months*" among this delightful and interesting people.

The place I reside in is a fortress used for the defence of the lord in these parts. I have been told that his weapons are *spiritual*; I confess that to me they seem *tangible* enough; but then one Paul, a famous optician, says we see only through a "glass darkly," which perhaps accounts for it.

During the day I walk in a *spacious* area of several square yards. I believe the poets of your country sing of "nature's green carpet," but in these parts they are *stone* ones. The carpet I walk on is of this material, and one particular deserves mention which proves its production to have been the work of a "*superior power*." If it was of mere earth it would soon absorb the rain, but being of stone, absorption is benevolently slow, and is ultimately effected by the feet of those who walk upon it. This is unquestionably a "*wise contrivance*," and if known to the ghost of Paley, to Lord Brougham, or the "Chambers' Information," it would be held an invaluable "*evidence of design*," and if properly paraded in some "*Natural Theology*," would work wonders.

Opposite my door is erected a row of bars or pikes. These form an *impassable* illustration of consistency in "divine things," since they enable our holy missionaries to propagate the gospel in foreign parts, and protect it at home.

Through these fascinating monuments of *protecting*

\* Mr. George Adams moved the first.

love I enjoy a clear, uninterrupted view of a fine dead wall. This I take it is remarkable, if intended to represent him who is the "same to day, yesterday, and for ever," for certainly the illustration is most perfect, since a pack of lynxes could not discover a difference in it in an age.

The chronology and ancient history of the singular people in this district is very obscure—but it is probable they were originally a colony of teetotal Irishmen as they are observed to drink nothing stronger than water, and frequently to live upon potatoes, a fine esculent root, deemed a great luxury with a little salt.

Any anxiety about my spiritual welfare is needless, as the habits of the people exhibit a striking conformity to the divine nature—for they are daily "without variation, or the shadow of a turn."

Promising you another epistle at my earliest convenience. I remain yours, very truly,  
Gloucester Gaol, Sept. 1, 1842. G. J. H.

JEW-BOOKIANA. — "Bible-dictionary class, come up," said the Sunday-school teacher. "Who was Lot's wife?" "The pillow of salt what Moses laid his head on when he went up to Mount Sin-eye to offer his son Isick up coz he had no sheep but hisself to do no ways else."

"What is said concerning Jonah?" "Jonah swallowed a big fish and was found the third day asleep with a bit of St. Peter's net in his mouth, which he gave to queen She-bah for mendin his breeches which he busted in straining to get out of the lions den where Daniel had gone in by mistake to eat his passover cake coz Benjamun wouldn't let him have any porridge."

ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

8, Holywell-street, Strand.

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On Sunday, Sept. 18, one of the committee will be in attendance, after the evening lecture, at each of the London Social branches, viz: at A. 1, John-street, Tottenham-court-road; 53rd branch, Blackfriars-road; 63rd, High-street, Whitechapel; 16th, Frederick-place, Goswell-road. The collectors and persons desirous of assisting are requested to be present.

All persons, collectors or subscribers, are requested to make some additional effort in consequence of the increased claims on their support, from not only the victims themselves, but the families of Mr. HOLYOAKE, and Mr. ADAMS.

Let it be borne in mind that it is for those in comfort and at liberty *outside* that those sacrifices are made; the fullest support is *claimed*, not *solicited* from all friends of liberty. M. RYALL, Sec.

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For the Defence of Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c

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M. RYALL, Sec.

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THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
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for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.

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No. 39.]

[PRICE 2D.

IS THERE A GOD?

XXII.

"Even gods must yield, religions take their turn;  
'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomets, 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."—CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE.

THE word *god* conveys no *precise* idea, it has no definite meaning. It is not the sign of anything *known* to exist, it is an arbitrary term without model or prototype in nature, it is a word composed of three letters, the notions suggested by which are vague and entirely contingent upon individual conceits or imaginings. The word *god* does not stand for a *fact* but a *fiction*, not for anything tangible to sense or grasped by experience, but is the pure invention of ignorance. Destroy belief in that indiscoverable somebody or something called *god*, and away go churches and altars, away goes worship in form and substance, away go scoundrel kings and their faithful allies the scoundrel priests. With the belief in a *god* away goes tithes, first fruits, and all other fruits of political and sacerdotal rascality. Without *god* in the world there could be no religion in the world. The *hope* of heaven and the *fear* of hell, would no longer degrade and bewilder the intellects of men. With the *fear* of hell will end the power of the priest, with delusive hopes of heaven hereafter will end the true and only cause of slavish misery here. "Fear *god*," means—pay and dread the priest. "Honour the king," may be interpreted—disgrace thyself. Campbell truly says,

'Tis man's own grov'ling nature makes the priest,  
He always rides a superstitious beast.

and Shelley with no less truth,

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man,  
The subject, not the citizen.

We may rely upon it, there would be neither kings, nor priests, nor aristocracies of any kind, if the people, if the now "swinish multitude" had but an inkling of common-sense principles. Superstition stands in the way of progress, it teaches men to hug, to glory in their chains. And what is the root of all su-

perstition, what its source and spring? What but belief in a *god*, belief in an imaginary being from whom much is to be hoped, more to be feared, who in some other world will glut his savage nature, satisfy his justice, as it is called, by tossing some into an imaginary hell, and exalting others to an equally imaginary heaven. While men continue to believe in a *god*, until they have sense enough to spurn the vile trash taught by priests, they never can act morally right or be politically free. Belief in a *god* is the fallacy of fallacies, the most preposterous, the most impudent, and the most mischievous of all fallacies. That fallacy once fully exposed, religion's death-warrant is signed and sealed.

To strike at that fallacy the *Oracle of Reason* was first set on foot. To show it a lie has been the great aim of those who write for this paper. To do that would be to dislocate the bones, pierce to the marrow, and finally annihilate the very essence, the active vital principle of all the crafts. Mr. Law very properly says, in his third letter to Bishop Hoadley, that "The whole end and design of religion is to recommend us to the favour of *god*." It cannot be denied that such is the end and design of religion. Neither to fear nor hope anything from a *god* or gods is practical atheism. It is to obtain the favour of *god* men make such consummate asses of themselves. It is to *get something* that people crowd to churches and other legalised receptacles of lunacy. It is with the laudable object of providing for the future and getting a snug place in kingdom-come that these wretched imbeciles display so much pious enthusiasm. They would pretend to love the devil, with all their hearts, souls, and strength if they thought that imaginary gentleman had the tenanting of heaven. Temples are raised to hypocrisy and fear, *not* love. The religious fanatic, who is always brutally selfish, would not offer up a prayer or pay a single sou, if he did not think he should be *repaid* with interest. It is indeed abundantly evident, that to disturb the belief in a *god* is to disturb the foundations of all religion. The favour of *god* presupposes the existence of *god*, and certainly no one in his senses would seek the favour of an imaginary personage. Those,

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

therefore, who snarl at atheism, and find fault with us for publishing it, are bound to show that it is wiser, that it is more expedient to shake the pillars rather than at once set to the work of ploughing at the foundation of superstition's temple. This ploughing work has however given great and never to be forgiven offence. The *Oracle of Reason* is beyond all question the very best abused paper in existence. No quarter is given to it either by liberal or illiberal bigots. The Christian priests don't like its *bravado*, its *ribaldry*, and *noisy scoffing*. The Infidel priests hate it as heartily as their Christian namesakes. It inquires too freely, it meddles with subjects it ought not to meddle with, it is not content to deal with *legitimate* but fastens on *illegitimate* questions, in short, the *Oracle of Reason* DOES what others TALK about but dare not do—*freely inquire* and as freely speak.

Mr. Buchanan, one of the Infidel priests, said not long since in a public lecture-room that the existence of a deity was not a legitimate subject for discussion, because neither the affirmative nor the negative could be proved. Mr. Buchanan is a Social missionary, a talented, and doubtless well-intentioned young man, but remarkably *prudent*. His prudence is excessive. Some two years since he swore in a public court that he was a Christian and a Protestant, and that he believed that the Jew-book was the revealed will of god, *because it was prudent*. There is nothing more convenient than this sort of prudence, it covers a multitude of dishonest poltrooneries. Mr. Buchanan is a lover and teacher of truth when the task is not dangerous, has no sort of objection to travel the road of free and full inquiry when it is macadamised. He hates being jolted, and rather than risk his bones or suffer inconvenience by going too fast or too far, would stop the coach, at all events clap a drag on the wheel. The spirit of a martyr is not in him, and he can't understand how it can be in anybody else, or why any man or woman should be silly enough to utter a truth at the expence of the breeches pocket. Can we wonder then that Mr. B. should pronounce atheism an illegitimate question, or place those who teach it beyond the pale of his charities? Can we feel surprised that a man who publicly took an oath that he believed what he did not believe, who is not ashamed to preach infidelity very little short of atheism, under cover of christianity, should have the unblushing effrontery to assert that any question could not be legitimately discussed? Legitimate, forsooth, how long have Mr. Buchanan's opinions been legitimate? How long has "socialism abominations" been considered a fair subject for investigation? My own opinion is, that bastard subjects like bastard children are, in the average of cases, not only the best begotten but the healthiest and best in all respects. In

the present rotten state of society an illegitimate subject or question commonly means a question knaves and dupes don't like agitated. Your legal, legitimate questions are not worth mootng, it is what is illegal what is illegitimate people should get at.

But Mr. Buchanan thinks that the existence of god can neither be affirmed nor denied with propriety, seeing that no satisfactory proofs can be furnished on either side. Now, without stopping here to examine this fine discovery, I should like to understand what difference there is as regards proof or disproof between the question—Is there a god? and the other question equally knotty—Is there a devil? Can Mr. Buchanan disprove the existence of a devil? Can he clearly show by any process of reasoning that there are no such creatures as cherubims and seraphims? Mr. B. goes from town to town, from city to city to laugh and argue people out of all belief in a devil. I challenge him or anybody else to adduce a single argument against the existence of a devil, that will not tell with equal force, or equal weakness, if he please, against the existence of a god. If I cannot by reason disprove the existence of a god, I cannot by reason disprove the existence of devils, fairies, angels, or any other imaginary beings of the supernatural tribe. Mr. Buchanan delivers lectures against witchcraft, but I am curious to know by what kind of arguments he can show the impossibility of witchcraft, or the non-existence of witches. Origen Bachelier in his discussion with R. D. Owen, demanded "What branch of modern science *proves* the impossibility of witchcraft?" R. D. Owen at first took no notice of the question, probably conceiving it too contemptible, too self-evidently ridiculous to call for a reply. Origen Bachelier pressed the question, and his opponent replied by another. "What branch of modern science, Mr. Bachelier, *proves* the impossibility of men walking about in the moon with their heads under their arms?" Still the question was unanswered. Why, because it cannot be answered. Why then is it urged against atheism, that it cannot disprove the existence of a god, that it cannot show the impossibility of such a being? Why, I ask, is all this urged against Atheists in particular, when those who reason against the existence of fairies, witches, angels, and devils are in the like predicament? 'Tis true the common-sense of all who have a grain of that commodity, scouts the antique notion about fairies, witches, &c. nay even belief in a devil is fast going the way of all beliefs. But what does this prove, not that the impossibility of such imaginary monster has been demonstrated? No, reason has only proved the improbable, the nonsensical, the mischievous nature of such beliefs.

The *Oracle* has only gone one step beyond Mr. Buchanan and the thinkers of his height.

and depth. The *Oracle* adds gods to the list of *improbable existences*, and pronounces the belief in such beings *unsustained by arguments that can satisfy a man of sense*. It not only denounces the existence of one or more gods as an improbability, but the belief in such an existence as the most pernicious and degrading that ever subdued and bewildered the human intellect. This truth, however, was not hatched within the narrow fences of Mr. B.'s conceits, so he thinks that to utter it is illegitimate, not *comme il faut!* We have Mr. B.'s gracious permission to write against devils, fairies, witches, or witchery to our hearts content, but not against god, who is too mysterious and uncertain a personage either to deny or affirm anything about.

Rational religion is also another of Mr. B.'s pet subjects, that it is likely, had he the power, he would prohibit the discussion of. He would doubtless allow freedom of debate if quite legitimate. Suffer others to cut, and cut himself right and left at all religions under the broad canopy of heaven, except the rational one, which is of course the only *true* religion. But, as already shown, without god in the world there could be no religion in the world, not even the rational religion of Mr. Buchanan. Considering therefore, and making due allowance for the weaknesses and varieties of human nature, it is by no means surprising that he should have denounced free opinions of so dangerous a character, which are not only quite illegitimate but fatal to that system and those opinions which he supports and which supports him.

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

"Prove all things."—PAUL.

SIR.—Presuming that you will allow me the same privilege that you have allowed others, I will, by your permission, make a few comments on the article in the *Oracle of Reason*, No. 34, headed "Is there a god?" With all due deference to the writer of the article, although I am not what the writer of the article would wish me to be, e. i. "a sober-minded reader," I am there is no doubt *non compos*, "one whose brains are sadly addled, so sadly addled that every one of my five senses must have given up the ghost." It is certainly very singular that any person writing an article so short as the one in question, should before he concludes forget what he says at the commencement. The writer begins by saying, "*It is a startling fact that Berkely has not been answered. It is a fact yet more startling that he cannot be answered,*" and at the end of the article he says, "but I think all sober-minded readers will agree with Baron D. Holbach, author of the 'System of Nature,' that the existence of matter is a fact, the existence of motion another fact." Now does it not seem as if it was

coming from one of the most dogmatical presumptuous fanatics that ever put a pen to paper, rather than from one who, I have no doubt, admires the motto that heads this letter? For a man to first, freely, frankly, and candidly acknowledge the impossibility of proof, and then to sum up without any ceremony whatever, by hoping that all sober-minded readers will admit a certain dogma as a fact, when he had declared it cannot be proved, is indeed a great deal too much. I would ask, what religionist or backer of the celebrated Jew-book ever dogmatized more than this?

I leave that part of the subject, and turn my attention to the objections raised. I do not think that many persons approve of fair argument more than I do. And I must say that the mode adopted by the writer is very unfair, and nothing short of begging the question, for the existence of the thing disputed is the very evidence to which he appeals, to prove his case. And those selected are of the most unfair character; for instance, the writer says that "a piece of steel driven in just under the fifth rib would have cured Berkeley himself of his ideality." But at the same moment, he doubts the permanency of this most forcible argument. Inasmuch as he supposes when the wound became well the philosopher in his closet may reason himself out of it. At once clearly admitting that even this illustration will not bear the test of a close examination. The illustration is perfectly analagous with the death-bed scenes of Infidels, so much trumpeted forth to the world by the pious men of god. In these instances I have heard Atheists say, how unfair is the position. An individual about to make his departure for "kingdom-come" is not in a fit state to reason on theology or any other ology correctly. And I am quite satisfied if the writer of the article had a piece of steel driven in just under the fifth rib, he would not be in a very fit state for reasoning very correctly on any subject, more particularly one that has engaged the attention of some of the greatest men that ever graced the human race. On the other hand, it must be very clear that the closet is the most proper place to reason correctly. So I think the case adduced goes for nothing. The argument applies to and will answer in the same manner the wall and the bullet illustration.

Again, he says, "if we only think we exist, if we only imagine there is an external world, if matter be purely ideal, there can be neither premises nor conclusions, principles nor practice." Indeed, how happens this, have you forgot yourself all at once, or the argument for attacking the existence of a god? If he will be kind enough to look into No. 4 of the *Oracle*, he will see how differently Mr.

**SOUTHWELL** argues the point to what he does. In the article "Is there a god?" he says, "We do not say we believe in the existence of matter, we know it exists; either this must be granted or all reasoning is at an end." But why is all reasoning at an end if the existence of matter is not granted? I will tell you in your own words: "There is no such thing as absolute knowledge, we don't know that we exist, we believe it; we don't know there is anything, not ourselves, we merely believe it," i. e. we imagine it. The writer here evidently and flatly contradicts what I have just quoted about "premises, conclusions, principles and practice." But stay, a little farther on he has found out his mistake, for he uses nearly the same expression in words, at any rate in meaning, as Mr. Southwell. So that at first he says, "if it is all ideal, we can have neither premises nor conclusions, principles nor practice;" and a little farther on he says, "we must take something for granted, i. e. imagine the existence of something to base all our reasoning on, thereby denying what he says further back. Having, I presume, trespassed enough on your space, I will not detain you much longer.

Although we are told that "no man, living or dead, ever seriously doubted the existence of matter," I will offer a few remarks I think calculated to make some one doubt the existence. If not, I hope to show that, at least, the writer is very seriously mistaken as to the effect of spirituality or immaterialism upon people's minds.

There is one thing I am inclined to think, that is, that although "no man ever seriously doubted the existence of matter," that every body who reads the article and reflect for themselves, must (if they admit its existence can't be proved), of necessity, doubt its existence, inasmuch as they have admitted it can't be proved. So that, to overthrow his statement, it only becomes a question as to whether the writer is serious or no. If he is serious, I can at once say from the admissions he has made that he gives the lie to his own statement.

Now for a few serious questions on the subject. In the first place, I should say to the materialist, what is matter? The answer in all cases I have met with is the same as a scientific man would give, that it is anything having length, breadth, and thickness. Now, length, breadth, and thickness, is not matter itself. Then, I say, remove the length, breadth, and thickness. Suppose even for a moment their absence, and what have you left? Where, I ask, is your pretended matter gone to by this time? It must be evident to every body that the properties of a something cannot be that something itself. This is the fact, there is not a scientific book that

I know of in existence, that even pretends to tell you what matter is—*only its properties*. If you question the mathematician about matter, he will very soon tell you that all "solids," so called in common cadence, are made up or composed of surfaces, surfaces of lines, and lines of points. Euclid tells you a line is extension without breadth or thickness. That is not a tangible thing at all, only an operation of the mind, perfectly ideal, imagination to the fullest extent. A point has neither length, breadth, or thickness, and consequently cannot have any real existence but in the mind of man. In fact, the science of geometry is admitted to be imagination from beginning to end. There are not really such forms as a *circle, square, sphere*, or any of the forms mentioned in geometrical books. The existence of such things being nothing more than an imagination; if I were to carry out the argument fully, just now, I think I should occupy too much of your valuable space. I will leave it, therefore, for the present; should it not be clearly understood, I will explain it at a future time. However, I have no doubt but that it will be the cause of some people's "brain" getting sadly addled—"addled" enough to doubt the existence of matter. As respects "the belief in the existence of god being quite irreconcilable with the existence of matter, matter or god must give way." I must beg leave to differ very much. How this can be shown I am quite at a loss to know, because, if the world can be clearly made to understand (and I have no doubt of it) that the existence of matter can't be proved, that "no knowledge is certain or absolute, that reason is inadequate to prove either our own existence, or the existence of an external world," a doubt is thrown over the whole affair, at once, and it is put in such a position as no theologian would condescend to touch it, not even with a pitchfork. Further, if you deny the existence of matter, and clearly show it cannot be proved, it is quite clear that no admirer of the blood-stained banners of the cross will ever have any thing to do with such an argument, because, at one fell swoop you reject the Jew-book, and all that therein is, which is the very thing he does not wish you to do.

W. BAKER.

## THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

### VI.

*Why* are some things called natural and others artificial?

*Because*, although strictly speaking nature is the source of all things, and contains within itself the seeds or causes of all effects, it has been useful and convenient to distinguish between the operations of nature and

A NOTE FROM THE THIRD PRIEST

THE NEXT VICTIM IS READY!

THE priests of the rampant faith, with humility, lowliness, and charity upon their lips, and bigotry, pride, and malice in their hearts, have immured three victims within stone walls because they have promulgated truth as opposed to priestcraft.

First C. SOUTHWELL, next G. J. HOLYOAKE, and lastly G. ADAMS have been seized by the priests of christianity, "as by law established," and imprisoned for asserting opinions which their opponents could not refute—for adducing arguments which the well paid band of archbishops, bishops, deans, prebends, vicars, and curates, with all their universities and schools to boot, could not answer or prove to be erroneous. Aware of the power of truth, they fear its publication, and the old tragedy of religious persecution is again to be played.

The spirit which immolated Christ, because he was an infidel to the religion of the majority, lived again at Bristol and at Gloucester, and in those places the cross of the Jews or the rack of the inquisition, yea, the fires of Smithfield would again be employed were it not that the age has outgrown the grosser superstitions which enabled the priests to invoke torture and death for those who exposed their frauds. The policeman and the gaoler are the only instruments left to a falling faith, and with these an infatuated clergy yet hope to stay the spirit which was not checked by the rack or the *auto da fe*. The thought is as weak as it is foolish, as base as it is cruel.

Persecution makes proselytes! Hear that, ye priests. Yes, I repeat, PERSECUTION MAKES PROSELYTES, and for every victim cruelly torn from his home to pay the penalty of free inquiry in loss of liberty, for every one a hundred proselytes are made. Think not, therefore, that imprisoning its editors will stop the progress of the *Oracle*. For each one immured a score will be ready to take his place. Like the fabled monster, each attempt to crush it only multiplies and strengthens its power of resistance. Christianity had its army of martyrs. shall not truth have its legion? Verily it shall! Persecution raised victims then, and they shall now be found, each ready to fill the gap made by the immolation of his predecessor. Southwell and Holyoake being in prison, I stand next—openly and avowedly, by every means in my power, and at any sacrifice, to uphold the *Oracle*, and with it the liberty of Free Inquiry and Free Expression of Opinion. Come when they will, I am ready, convinced that by personal sacrifices alone can the final triumph of truth be achieved, and the mind of man have a fair chance of grappling unlettered with the demon of error. At each fresh sacrifice a stride onward is made, and

the works of human hands; for, as human beings are, when uncivilised, naked and defenceless, fearful and slow to defend themselves against innumerable evils to which they are necessarily exposed, they are long in acquiring experience from the mother (of the arts) which teaches them to fell forest trees, turn the course of rivers, and dig into the bowels of the earth in search of hidden treasures, in a word, to acquire dominion over natural things; hence, some have speculated upon the possibility of indefinitely extending the period of human life, of bringing the winds and waves under control, as it were keeping them in bondage, and so enlarging the sphere of human operations that the triumph of art over nature may be complete. The pathless forests of Africa, and the Andes are natural, whilst the labyrinths and pyramids of Egypt, having been constructed by the hands of men, are artificial; the distinction between man and nature is merely to help the understanding, man himself being as much a natural production as a tree, or an eagle; as observed by somebody, man himself is but the tool with which nature works. The element of fire is so necessary to the arts of life, that without a knowledge of its properties, man would have been a weak and wretched animal, burrowing in holes like brutes, and like them the mere creature of his appetites. This did not escape the observation of the ancients, who relate that man was the work of Prometheus, or nature, and formed of clay, only the artificer mixed in with nicety, particles taken from different animals, and being desirous to improve his workmanship, and adorn as well as create the human race, he stole up to heaven with a bundle of birch rods, and kindling them at the chariot of the sun, thence brought down fire to the earth for the service of man. In the fable of Enchthonis, art is represented by Vulcan, or the god of fire, while Minerva, whose chastity he is said to have attempted, represents nature, by reason of the wisdom employed in her works.

Why is the word science used in contradistinction to art?

Because knowledge is science, to know is to be scientific, while the application of knowledge constitutes art. Science is theory art is practice, and the best artist is he who can apply in the most skilful manner the largest amount of science, or as it is generally termed, knowledge. We speak of chemistry as a science; but bleaching, which is the application of chemical knowledge, is an art; in like manner, we say the science of anatomy and the art of dissection, the former being theory, the latter practice.

With's the grand nostrum for the parson's jobs, and moves all "stumbling-blocks" from Yahoos' noses.—Yahoo.

as another and another victim hears the prison door clang behind him—his ear recognises in the sound of the chains, the oft-repeated and prophetic shout of the martyr-poet Shelley —

*Fear not that the tyrants shall rule for ever,  
Or the priests of the bloody faith;  
They stand on the brink of that mighty river  
Whose waves they have lained with death.  
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,  
Around them it foams and rages and swells,  
And their swords and their mitres I floating see  
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.*

T. P.

#### ON THE IMPOLICY AND INJUSTICE OF PROSECUTIONS FOR ALLEGED BLASPHEMY.

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

SIR.—The enclosed letter was written for the *Cheltenham Free Press* during the assize week at Gloucester, but stood out at the necessary time through the pressure of assize intelligence. It is at your service if you think it worth type.

RICHARD CARLILE.

SIR.—The good and great example which you set before the proprietors and editors of the provincial news press, in the principle of free and fair discussion, encourages my present appeal to your proved liberality, for an insertion on the headed topic. Gloucestershire, aye, through it, all England, is disgraced, in renewed prosecutions for alleged blasphemy! At the present assizes, the grand jury has returned bills, and the form of trial is expected in two cases. It is reported of Mr. Justice Erskine, that, in his charge to the grand jury, he has taken the high ground of declaring, *that education, not punishment, is the remedy for those defects in society.* HOLYOAKE reports the conduct of this judge as most dignified and urbane, in all applications made to his authority. There is, so far, then, hope that the inevitable disgrace attending such cases will be reduced as low as possible.

My experience is not light in similar cases. I have sustained nine years of imprisonment to my own account, my wife two years, my sister two years, and twenty shopmen have divided among them about forty years of imprisonment. My house was twice stripped of everything in it valuable, and the house itself at last sold, on pretence of meeting fines. My wife was disturbed in her bed-room, on the third day after child-birth, and the rude sheriff's officers, turned down the bed clothes with the new-born infant on it, to take their inventory of the articles, even to the baby-linen basket. After all this, after two thousand pounds worth of books had been removed, and fifty-five pounds taken in cash, for redeemed furniture, not a sixpence was applied to the credit of my fifteen hundred pounds fines. I paid them by three extra years of imprisonment. On the first seizure of my stock-in-trade, I had a business destroyed that had averaged a profit of fifty pounds per week for many months. On the second seizure, a business had been renewed worth ten pounds per week. I was confined to one room in Dorchester Gaol through six years, from November 18th, 1819, to that day in 1825. Through two years and a half of that time, at various periods, I was never in the

open air; to which, for upwards of four years, I was denied admission, at my own choice of time, and was made to be led out and returned as an animal from a cage, for exhibition, at the pleasure of others.

Now, what was the issue of all this outrage on my individual liberty and property? That at the end of the six years' imprisonment, on my part, and the forty-four on the part of my assistants, the government of that day, Sir Robert Peel, then at the home department, conceded to me the whole principle of free discussion, for which I had struggled and suffered so many years; and unopposed I was allowed to move the Courts of King's Bench and Exchequer, to have returned as much of my seized property as had not been sold or wasted, and on my bringing an action against the only surviving sheriff, Parkins, for the unlawful detention of the property for six years, he fled to America, and there remained to his death, shutting me out of all redress or remedy at law.

From 1825 to 1830 that Sir Robert Peel remained in office, I openly and unmolestedly sold at 62, Fleet-street, London, every book and pamphlet, not only of those for which self and assistants had been prosecuted, but all those in addition, which had been prosecuted in the case of any other individual in former times.

In 1825 free discussion was completed, as far as the government was disposed; the people only were short of its principle and practice.

I regret, that there should be a renewal of such cases in Gloucestershire, and I have come down earnestly disposed to mediate between the prosecutors and prosecuted.

The Court of King's Bench, by its Lord Chief Justices, has often enunciated, that the law of England allows every subject to be discussed in proper and temperate language. This has been specially said of christianity, which embraces the mystery or attributes of the godhead. I recommend submission to this declaration of law: it is all that we have a moral right to demand. Let the magistrate concede to me the principle of free discussion, I will concede to him all propriety of manner and language in carrying it out.

So, while I do not undertake to defend the language that has been selected, I openly condemn the principle of the prosecution. Holyoake has not even blasphemed any attribute of deity or principle of religion. Negation of attribute is not blasphemy; but blasphemy is on the side of the affirmation of wrong attributes. Mr. Justice Erskine has said his case is all but harmless. Sir James Graham has in the House of Commons reprobed the treatment he has received from the magistrates of Cheltenham.

I have seen the depositions; on the heading of which Holyoake is charged with felony! The charge as a head is written felony! The old administration of law taught us that the hands were necessary to the committal of felony; but, in Cheltenham, we are now told by its worshipful magistrates that a man may commit felony with his tongue! The tongue may be seditious, but cannot commit treason; no language makes felony.

Holyoake was seized as a felon without a warrant. This was illegal and false imprisonment. He was handcuffed for words mildly and philosophi-

ally spoken; for a provoked answer to a simpleton's intruded question. In your paper of the 25th of June I prescribed a better answer for Holyoake: but the whole magisterial treatment of the man has been an outrage on all law and all morals. And what is the consequence? The man is roused to resistance of wrong. He will not on such treatment concede any thing. He is, as I was in his case, ambitious of making his defence, not so much to the judge or jury as to the public, *in print*, and of hazarding all consequences on his person as revenge.

Here we are, then, going over again that career which I had hoped was so well finished in 1823; and I predict that if it be magisterially persisted in Gloucester gaol will be speedily filled with such prisoners, and the character or current history of the country outraged:

The anomaly or analogy of this case in history is that the bad men—the really criminal men of society—are never prosecuted for blasphemy. The first cases of the kind we have on record are those of Eschylus, Protagoras, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Even Demosthenes did not escape an accusation of blasphemy. But do the magistrates of Cheltenham read the gospel? Is there a church or bible society here? Is the bible sold in Cheltenham? I have brought one in my pocket, and if they please I will allow the magistrates to take the law from it and to improve their administration of law.

I read at Matthew xxvi. ver 65, of Jesus, the saviour of universal man, that the Jews charged him with blasphemy precisely as Holyoake is charged, because he, Jesus, did not approve of the Jewish mode of worshipping god, which is all that Holyoake has said of modern Jews and Canaanites. Jesus offered them physical violence. He made a scourge of small cords, upset their money tables, and drove them out of the temple! Holyoake has not so done. Holyoake is mild, humble, reasoning, and inoffensive in his zeal for truth compared with the divine record of Jesus. Jesus declared his second coming in power, and immediately the priests and Jews bellowed—blasphemy! "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now, ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands." Thus saith the gospel. Iron hand-cuffs for blasphemy do not seem then to have been in magisterial fashion! That is an improvement upon the Jewish administration of law, made by the magistrates of Cheltenham. The iron has been made to enter *my* soul. It steeled my heart; but it brought no submission! I conquered, and in a similar case would again conquer by true moral force. I avoid further reference to the language prosecuted. It was not such language as I would now approve, but that is mere taste in relation to the principle of free discussion. As my letter grows long I will conclude with an anecdote:—

A distinguished foreign phrenologist lately entered Bristol gaol to put his scientific discernment to the test. After accurately describing several prisoners by their cranial configurations, he started at the observation of one, and exclaimed—"That man

no thief! no rogue! no fraud! no criminal!—that one good man!—what is that man here for?" THAT MAN WAS CHARLES SOUTHWELL, THE BLASPHEMER!!!

RICHARD CARLILE.

Cheltenham, August 11th, 1842.

[The following is an extract from a letter of Mr. SOUTHWELL to a friend.]

IT seems, that Mr. CARLILE has thought fit to publish HOLYOAKE as a sound Christian. Now this I think is a little too bad. Mr. Carlile has a perfect right to call *himself* what he pleases, but he is not justified in deceiving the public by striving to make it appear that Holyoake is what he is not. The thing is done with excellent intention, I doubt not, but I do most heartily despise, and therefore will not lend myself to so shallow a cheat. You know very well that I have in my published works done ample justice to Mr. Carlile's merits, but he is grossly deceived if he imagine that I or the party with whom I act will turn Jesuits in order to accomplish our ends. I wonder, from my soul; that he has not trumpeted *me* forth as a sound Christian, and my defence a truly Christian defence. Should he do so, I hope such gratuitous impertinence will not be allowed to pass unchallenged. He says (so a friend informed me), that "every word of Holyoake's defence was Christian, and that he (Holyoake) is a better Christian than his judge who sentenced him to six months' imprisonment." Faugh! Oh for an ounce of civet, or something else to sweeten my imagination. After this, of course, I may expect to be ranked a Christian, my defence a most Christian defence, and find to my utter astonishment, that I am published by Mr. Carlile as a better Christian than Sir C. Wetherall.

#### IMMORALITY OF THE HOLY-GHOST.

"Every clergyman of the established church is at his ordination said to have received the holy-ghost."—R. CARLILE.

The most popular or vulgar objection to atheism is that it must tend to immorality, because men will not do their duty towards themselves unless compelled by fear of a superior power, or induced by hope from the same. And this fallacious cant the whining Deist will use, when every thing else fails him, saying "Atheism is *too cold* to live." This would be very well, *if true*. But how does this self-same fear and hope operate upon its believers in inducing moral conduct? Facts like the following, which appear *weekly* in the broad-sheets, will best answer:—

The Rev. Stephen Aldhouse, late lecturer at All Hallow's Church, Lombard-street, has been sentenced to seven years' transportation for *bigamy*.

DISGUSTING CHARGE AGAINST A PARSON.—The Clerkenwell Court was occupied the greater portion of Monday and Tuesday in hearing a case in which the Rev. Thomas Boddington, late chaplain of Gilt-

spur-street Compter, No. 1, York-street, City-road, and Mrs. Matilda Tippet, were prisoners, and Mr. Frederick Penn Tippet, commercial traveller, complainant. The former were charged with having violently assaulted the latter. The female defendant is aged twenty-three, of very prepossessing appearance, but of much levity of manners, and seeming recklessness of disposition; the complainant is a mild, genteel looking young man. It appeared in evidence that the plaintiff met the reverend prisoner for the first time in a coffee-house, and was invited by him to his house, where he saw Miss Miller, whom he afterwards made Mrs. Tippet. This he did upon the recommendation of Boddington, who promised to obtain him a situation under government. Upon the evening of the marriage day, which they spent at Mr. Boddington's, and during the festivities, the latter slipped into the bed prepared for the bride and bridegroom, from which he was forcibly ejected by the husband's friends. The nature of the husband's employment only allowing him to come home once per week Mr. Boddington was in the constant habit of holding private intercourse and of walking out with Mrs. T. The landlady once saw Mr. B. and Mrs. T. come out of the latter's bedroom, the lady's hair and dress being much disordered. Mrs. Tippet subsequently left her lodgings, during her husband's absence in the country, and when at last he discovered her abode, and visited her, the assault in question was committed, without any provocation. One of the witnesses said, "Mr. Boddington took the lodgings for the female prisoner, whom he represented to be a single young woman. She was visited constantly by him, sometimes four times a day. He took all his meals there. Heard Mr. B. fell in love with the lady whilst she was in Giltspur-street Compter, for robbing furnished lodgings. The prisoner and Mr. B. lived sumptuously, in Spencer street, whilst he was informed Mr. B.'s wife and two children were starving at home on bread and water." The rev. defendant was dressed in clerical costume, he had a black eye, and a patch on his forehead, he is about fifty, and of displeasing aspect. A witness was about being produced, who could depose to some most disgusting conduct of the Rev. Mr. B.'s, but Mr. Combe, on learning its nature, said he thought the infamous system was now at an end, and there was no use in shocking persons with the recital. Committed for trial. The conduct of the female prisoner was marked by the most indecent levity throughout. The rev. gent., during the examination, handed in a printed circular of a public dinner in aid of the funds of the Hospital Accident Relief Society, at which the prisoner was vice-president. Mr. Combe said the public ought to be very cautious how they subscribed to such things. —Condensed from London Paper.

ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

8, Holywell-street, Strand.

It is requested that all collectors who hold Subscription Books will send in the amount of money received as early as possible, to enable the Committee to complete their report to lay before a public meeting in October, agreeable to former resolutions, of which due notice will be given.

M. RYALL, Sec.

A DISINTERESTED PRAYER, a la "HOLY WILLIE."—O lord, thou knowest that I have nine houses in the city of London, and likewise that I have lately purchased an estate in fee simple in the county of Essex. Lord, I beseech thee to preserve the two counties of Essex and Middlesex from fires and earthquakes, and as I have a mortgage in Hertfordshire. I beg thee likewise to have an eye of compassion on that county. And lord, for the rest of the counties, thou mayst deal with them as thou art pleased. O lord, enable the bank to answer all their bills, and make all my debtors good men. Give a prosperous voyage and return to the Mermaid sloop, which I have insured. And lo d, thou hast said "The days of the wicked are short," and I trust thou wilt not forget thy promises, having purchased an estate in reversion of Sir I P—, a profligate young man. Lord, keep our funds from sinking, and, if it be thy will, let there be no sinking fund. Keep my son Caleb out of evil company, and from gaming-houses, and sanctify, O lord, this night to me, by preserving me from thieves and fire, and making my servants honest and careful. Whilst I, thy servant, lie down in thee, O lord.—Amen.

NOTICE.

CAN the author of the "Yahoo" inform us where we are likely to obtain a copy of the "Analysis of Natural Religion," and the price? W. C.

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THE  
**ORACLE OF REASON;**  
Or, *Philosophy Vindicated.*

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

No. 40.] Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842, to Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, for Blasphemy contained in No. A. [PRICE 1D.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months' Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

**WHY ARE WE ATHEISTS?**

"With St. John I believed god *was love*. I did not fear god, I had too much confidence in his goodness....If there was a god of love—cant, hypocrisy, and religious villainy could not thrive in the world....My religion and worship was *feeling*."—ANONYMOUS WRITER, in No. 38.

AMONGST the numerous disagreeable duties attaching to literary labours may be classed the one I am now about to perform, namely, reply to the objections of a *man of feeling*. I have a great horror of dealing with such an individual. Whilst honestly and earnestly defending my opinions, I may wound his sensibility. He may consider warmth as violence, and construe a joke into an insult. Should I be so unfortunate as to give him offence, he may as cordially *hate* atheism, because he conceives there is a want of feeling in some of its professors as he now does goddism for a like reason. And herein I shall be doubly cursed—I shall be despised by the man of feeling on the one hand, and my friends will complain on the other—for of course I might have used other language, had I so chosen, at least they could. However, like disagreeable physic which must be taken, so must I attempt a reply, and screw my courage to the sticking place as best I may.

There are a great many points in our anonymous friend's letter, to which I should like to revert, but whether I shall be able to notice them all remains to be seen. Before investigating them it may not be amiss to observe, that the remarks I am about to reply to were in answer to the following assertion of mine, that "I would not give the snap of my finger for the man who professed atheism simply because he was disgusted with religious villainies."

To this our friend objects—that I am illogical, for that *he* is a man without a god in consequence of the villainies of the priests in the case of C. SOUTHWELL, in which he claims coincidence of feeling with the late editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE—that his god *was love*, but that the cold-blooded barbarity with which Southwell was treated caused him to renounce such an idea—that persons may logically be Atheists in consequence of the villainies of the priests—that it is of no con-

sequence to me whether men relapse into goddism or not, or in other words, whether our children believe in a god, although we do not.

I purpose dealing with the above in the order in which they occur. To the first I would say, I think our friend misunderstands my position, and the intention of the assertion of which he complains. I did not say there were no such Atheists as our friend describes himself to be, in fact the inference to be drawn from my reply to Mr. Mackintosh, in No. 36, is that I believed such Atheists might be, but that I had no faith in the stability or utility of their opinions. I look upon them as I would upon railway carriages, as very well to run upon smooth, straight, and level tracks, but not to be trusted upon rough, crooked, and uneven roads. It cannot be illogical to doubt the *value* of a man's opinions, when it has been said that a man may logically doubt or question even the existence of matter, without which we could have no opinions. Had I questioned the truth of a man's statement who declared that he was an Atheist in consequence of his disgust with religion, it might have been illogical, and I might likewise have found some difficulty in showing a reason for such suspicion.

Logic is defined by Watts to be "the right use of reason," and as we proceed it will be seen that our friend has himself only recently made its acquaintance, and that like a child with a new whip he is trying its lash upon the first object which presents itself. My harmless hadinage will, I hope, be excused, there is no malice in it.

The aim of our anonymous friend is thus stated by himself—

The position I wish to establish is this: that persons may logically be Atheists in consequence of the villainies of the priests, as well as from other causes, let you estimate them as you may.

And in support of this position he gives his own case and that of Mr. Holyoake as illustrations. He says,

Permit me to tell you that I am a man without a god, and at the risk of being estimated by you at a very low price, I add—without a god in consequence of the "villanies of the priests," as exhibited in the arrest of Charles Southwell. And—

In the number just issued of the Report of the

Trial of Mr. Holyoake at Gloucester, I find (to use a happy phrase of Mr. Carlyle's) he asked Mr. Judas Iscariot Bartram, the witness, why he (Mr. H.) stated at Cheltenham that "he was of no religion," and the answer was, "because of the treatment of your friend Southwell." The coincidence seems curious, but I do not doubt that Mr. Holyoake has, like myself, gathered atheism from the iniquities of the Christians.

From this it would appear that our friend never doubted the existence of a god until Charles Southwell was arrested, and that he then went from belief to disbelief at one stride. Well; I do not feel inclined to doubt his veracity or dispute his convictions, more especially as my friend Holyoake has more than once stated to me as well as to the public the same circumstance in connection with himself; and for his love of truth I entertain the highest regard. But I do dispute in both cases a claim upon my confidence, supposing the conversions to have literally occurred as described. I would rather stand alone than be surrounded by an army of followers in whom I had no confidence; and this idea I intended to convey by my assertion in No. 33; devoid of any disparagement or disrespect to any one.

Let us investigate the subject more fully; let us look at the common-sense of the matter, and see whether I am justified in withholding my confidence from assistants or advocates of such a stamp, I being one of a party labouring to establish certain opinions; to which opinions the former profess to be converts. As I have no notion of deprecating in a stranger that which I wink at in a friend, I can do no less than associate Mr. Holyoake with our anonymous friend. This I shall do openly and undisguisedly; for my remarks upon the article in No. 38 will equally apply to Mr. H. whether or not I name him. His being in prison is of no consequence; he used the language when at liberty, and can defend the idea it conveys when again at liberty. If I can show him that he is wrong to place the standard of atheism upon such an unstable and, in my opinion, illogical basis, he will not blame me for doing it while he was fettered, but will cheerfully declare that an error cannot be too speedily removed, and that the good of mankind must be sought rather than the feelings of an individual.

Mr. H. being well known to me, I shall use his case as far as it serves me, in preference to that of our anonymous friend. Mr. Holyoake is about two and twenty years of age, and Southwell has been imprisoned nearly twelve months, so that we have some twelve or fourteen years at least for the term of Mr. H.'s belief in a god. Now I have as much confidence in the stability of his atheistical opinions and in the clearness of his perceptions as I have in Southwell's. This confidence is the result of my intercourse with him; and inclines me to believe that he

mistook the tendency of his real feelings before Southwell was arrested, and that while he still wished to believe in a god he was fast verging into a disbelief of one. I am the more persuaded of this from the fact that Mr. H. had been a Social missionary for some time previous to S.'s arrest, and like his brethren, intimately acquainted with the villainies of the priests.

On the contrary, supposing he did firmly believe in a god, at the time he states, and that that god was love, let us see what reasons he had for such belief, or rather, for disbelief, and this will apply equally to our anonymous friend, who doubtless must have witnessed or heard of similar enormities to the one I am about to cite, long before his conversion. In the third number of Mr. Holyoake's trial I find the following touching scene from his own lips:—

During one of those commercial panics, which a few years ago passed over this country like a destroying angel or a desolating plague, my own parents were suddenly reduced from a state of comparative affluence to one of privation. At one of these seasons my little sister became ill. While she was so the Rev. Mr. Moseley, M.A., Rector of St. Martin's, Birmingham, sent an order to us for his Easter due of four-pence. On previous occasions this demand had been cheerfully and promptly paid; but now, small as the sum was, it was sufficient materially to diminish the few comforts our house of illness unfortunately afforded; and it was therefore discussed whether the demand of the clergyman should be paid, or whether it should be expended in the purchase of some little comforts for my sick sister. Humanity decided; and we all agreed that it should be devoted to this latter purpose. It was—but, I think, the very next week, a summons came for the Easter due, and two shillings and sixpence were added, because of the non-payment of the four-pence. The payment of this could now, no longer be evaded, for in a few days a warrant of *distrain* would have rudely torn the bed from under her, as had been the case with a near neighbour. Dreading this—and trembling at the apprehension—we gathered together all the money we had, and which was being saved to purchase a little wine to moisten the parched lips of my dying sister, for at this time her end seemed approaching. My mother, with a heavy heart, left home to go to the public office. The aisles there were cold and cheerless like the outside this court, and there, all broken in health and spirits, worn out with watching, and distracted by that anxiety for her child a parent under such circumstances only could feel, she was kept from five to six hours waiting to pay the two shillings and tenpence. When she returned all was over—my sister was dead.

Why this was enough to move a Stoic, much less a man of feeling! Had it occurred to me, I should have been glad to have taken the advice of Job's wife, "cursed god and died." It will be perceived that Mr. H. was not so firm a believer in a god, and in his duties to that god, as he imagined he was, for we find him hesitating to give him his due, and ultimately determining not to do it. Now a firm, consistent believer never wavers, and if he does, the *more urgent* necessities of the lord is sure to preponderate, and poor humanity kicks the beam. Contrast the conduct of the enlightened Christian with that of a poor benighted negress. The following is

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

related in a church missionary magazine:—“A poor field negro had a heart overflowing with a love of god and man. She might have been exempted, by pleading poverty, from paying her contributions to her society; but she thought it an *honour* to be allowed to contribute her mite to the support of religion. On one of the occasions when she had to pay her contribution, she had but two ‘dogs’ (of the value of three halfpence), in the world, and her children must be fed. She could not bear to withhold her trifle, nor could she leave her children unfed. Recollecting that she had a little corn, she set one of her boys to grind it, and sent the other to pick a weed which the negroes boil for food. Having prepared their suppers for them, she left with a light heart, and proceeded to the estate where she was to meet her friends. When she put down her two ‘dogs,’ she raised her eyes to heaven, with these emphatic words, ‘Take it, my massa! it is to you I give it!’” Here we have a poor ignorant woman robbing her children to assist gor-a-mity—what Christian will condemn her?

Our anonymous friend says he was a Christian, and of course a believer in the Jew-book, which valuable record of god’s *love* Mr. H. deplors having spent his money to distribute. Both individuals were believers in the Jehovah of the Jews, who was so “full of mercy and loving kindness” to those who did not worship him. They believed in the god who hardened a king’s heart, and then made it an excuse for an ostentatious and unnecessary display of his power and bloody-minded cowardice, by murdering some thousands of the latter’s innocent subjects—believed in the god who compelled Pharaoh to a certain line of conduct, for which he afterwards murdered him likewise—believed in the god who despoiled a comparatively virtuous people to aggrandise an ignorant and beastly parcel of ruffians. They believed that David was a man after god’s own heart, and that he put his enemies under harrows and axes of iron, and made them pass through brick kilns. The god of the Jew-book was their god and the acts therein recorded his acts, and they thought him a *god of love*, and looked upon the atrocities I have mentioned as evidences of it.

What would an unbiassed mind think of men who could read the Jew-book and believe in a god of love—read Fox, and the counter-statements of the Catholics, and believe on—hear of Peterloo, Bartholomew, Rathcormac, the Tonga islands, and other horrors, and never waver—and at last become Atheists through the imprisonment for twelve months of an Atheist, a denier and villifier of the god they loved? Would it not warrant the suspicion that they had never reasoned upon their belief, and that their conversion was the result of fellow-feeling both

for the victim and for his principles, though perhaps unknown to themselves?

Why Carlile was imprisoned for nine years for blasphemy, his wife and sister for four years, and his twenty shopmen divided about forty years between them. Had our friends never heard of Hetherington’s recent imprisonment for merely selling a book which he had never read? They could never have felt *pain* before S.’s arrest—never could have experienced any acts of oppression, nor saw any before then—they lived, and moved, and had their being in love—were pure unadulterated love-spirits—they saw nothing to hate, nor knew the word—everything they came in contact with was pleasant to the sight, grateful to the smell, delicious to the taste, and beneficial to the system—they rose in the morning invigorated and refreshed, and every moment until they lay down again, was fraught with pleasure, with love for every one and every thing: but this latter could scarcely be, for lassitude is pain if vigour is pleasure. Happy men! How I should envy their feelings, could I believe such had been the case.

Our anonymous friend says, “I had read ‘Fox’s Book of Martyrs,’ and cursed catholicism from my cradle,” and upon Southwell’s arrest he cursed christianity. The spirit of protestantism is written in blood as well as catholicism, and other superstitions have had their victims besides the Christian. But why curse either the one or the other? Was not god the cause? Again he says, “Does not your paper proclaim religion to be the world’s curse, who can believe there is a father of mercies permitting this?” Oh, accursed 27th Nov., 1841! on that inauspicious day Pandora’s box was first opened before the astonished gaze of our anonymous friend—he lost *his* happiness and *I* my friend! The howl of religion had never rung in his ears until then.

I said I would take a common-sense view of the matter, I think I have done so. Where, I now ask, is the evidence that either party had *reasoned* upon the probability or *consistency* of their belief? Why our anonymous friend was not even deserving of the title to which he so earnestly lays claim, that of a *man of feeling*, or he must have been daily and hourly shocked at the sight of the misery and wretchedness which abounds in society. Had he no sympathy with aught but Atheists, or did he really think the lord loved those the most whom he chastened the most?

I again repeat, that I do not question the correctness of our anonymous friend’s present convictions, although there is no evidence to be drawn from his communication that such is the fact. He might be equally capable with Mr. Holyoake to defend and define his new doctrine. I sincerely hope he may be, it will be a set off against Southwell’s sufferings, if two souls are, through them, “snatched like brands from the burning.” In the above

remarks, I have treated the subject upon the principle or rule laid down by the writer of the anonymous article, viz., that there cannot be a god of love, because *man* is not perfectly happy, and because some men oppress others. As respects the latter, I consider it equally inconsistent with divine love for some thousands of men, women, and children to be swallowed up by an earthquake, as for a tithe of that number to be burnt at the stake, or torn piecemeal by their brethren. Both are equally anomalous to me as actions of a god such as the Christians would assume theirs to be. But herein is an error, as I conceive, I myself consider there are no arguments to be drawn from nature *against* the existence of a god of love, if there be any god at all. I will return to the subject next week.

W. C.

IS THERE NO GOD?

In No. 38 of the *Oracle of Reason*, page 316, there is an article upon the question is there or is there not a god? In that article I have placed the question upon what I conceive to be moral grounds. With me god is a *principle*, not a *thing*, or still plainer, god is a *moral principle*, not a *physical thing*—like *virtue*, which is not a thing but a principle. I have always upheld the moral principle called god, but I have never upheld the physical thing which is called god by brutal vulgar minds, who are unable to understand or appreciate an abstract principle.

The idea of god is altogether a moral and not a physical idea. If the idea or belief in god produces evil and not good amongst men, then the Atheist is a good man who seeks to destroy an idea which produces evil. If the idea or belief in god produces good and not evil, then the Theist is a good man for the same reasons. According to my notion of the matter, the good or evil influence of the belief depends entirely upon the character or *attributes* of the god believed in. If the moral attributes be good, they will necessarily influence the believer towards good; if evil, towards evil. If it be contended that a belief in god does not influence man either for good or evil, then both theism and atheism are the veriest hoaxes that ever were played off on an unreflecting world.

I have said, with me god is a principle, not a thing. Here is the principle upon which I rest.

Whatever we love and admire, we naturally reverence and adore, or worship; whatever we reverence, adore, or worship, we naturally follow and imitate; therefore the character of a man will always be assimilated to the character of the "principle, power, or being" which he loves, admires, and adores: whatever the character of that "principle,

power, or being" may be, whether good or evil.

The Thugs of India are a very cruel people, who, like some Christians, murder their fellow-creatures upon religious principles, and therefore I infer that they worship a cruel god. There are other tribes in India who shrink at taking the life of the meanest creature; and on the same principle I infer that these latter worship a benign and merciful deity.

T. S. MACKINTOSH.

A SHOT AT A SHUTTER!

Or, *The Jew-bookers again.*

"THAT boy will be the death of me," as our ancient friend the *Examiner* used to say, when he was the friend of advancing principles. "That old lady will be the death of me," say I. How I have laughed at her rag of Tuesday last! See what she says, through the mouth of a correspondent:—

To the Editor of the *Morning Herald*.

Sir.—I have been long shocked at the existence of a shop on the north side of Holywell-street, which has been opened apparently with no other view than that of vending publications of the most blasphemous nature; but I was wholly unprepared for the exhibition it made yesterday. In the middle of the day, about two o'clock, it was most undisguisedly open, without even the decency of a single shutter, and in the centre of the window was a placard, on which was written in large characters, "The Existence of CHRIST, *alias* the Baby God disproved." I occasionally see bills signed by the churchwardens of the various parishes stuck about, declaring Sunday trading to be illegal, and observe that parties are fined at the police offices for selling vegetables and necessaries to the lower orders on the Sabbath. I notice, also, that the Society for the Suppression of Vice lately caused the seizure of a large quantity of type in this identical street. I would wish to know how it is that this horrible scene is allowed to exist in any neighbourhood, but especially in one which is so populous with young persons.—Your obedient servant, J. B.

"Well," as Samivel would say, "she bangs all for the amusing old baggage as ever spread barnacles over nose!" Verily it stinks of Genesis too! Only think of the *decency*-shutter! of the *piety*-shutter!! of the *gospel*-shutter!!! of the *Sunday*-shutter!!!! of the *church-and-king*-shutter!!!!!! In this shutter idea do we see the history and mystery of the various sorts and shades of humbug. Napoleon said we were "a nation of shopkeepers," he would have been nearer the mark had he said a nation of humbugs. Not only do we humbug others, but we are humbugged ourselves in turn. The shutter idea is a key to the grand leading one, called trade or trickery. The shutter is the representation of gentility and respectability, and with those added to impudence, cringing, and hypocrisy a trade can be driven at all times.

Who would have thought granny cared a snuff about a bit of a fig-leaf on one's frontispiece? Ah, she is a genuine Yahoo! Some there are who would say that she and "J.B." had conned over the riddle-me-ree sublimities

## THE ORACLE OF REASON.

of Jehovah's serio-comic album until their coddle-heads could see nothing but the rubbish contained in that blessed book. But such is not the case, for she has laid it down as plain as the buncle on her nose, that there is no harm in breaking in a little on Jehovah's day, provided due regard be had to decency. So say I, and how destitute must an individual be of the moral feelings who would sacrifice his respectability for the sake of a single shutter. I shudder at the idea. The scripture says, "Put not your light under a bushel." "Yea, verily, and so be it, but may we not put it behind a shutter?" inquires our venerable parent. Bacon said atheism leaves a man to reason, but the *Herald* says religion leaves a man a "decent single shutter!" Now, ye "shabby-genteelers," there is a subterfuge for you, there is an example for the hypocritical, dishonest, and cowardly pietist. Just drop your canting maws behind your shutters, and your names will be registered in the lamb's book, as plainly as a three and sixpenny advertisement in grand-mama's rag.

The symbol of the respectable man used to be a horse and gig. "Is he a respectable man?" said lawyer Sharpshins. "Yes," said the witness, "he keeps a horse and gig." Henceforward it will be "Is he a respectable man?" "No, he does not put his shutters up on Sunday." There might be a sliding-scale of respectability or piety—respectability and piety being convertible terms. He that hath no decency at all, does not put up a solitary shutter on the l-o-r-d's day. He that hath some pretension to decency would put up one or two. He that is a very decent and regular church and chapel-going sneak would darken all his daylight after the manner of his favourite god-a'-mighty, who loved to be carried about in his sedan-chair, with the *shutters up*, by David and his brigands. None but a very indecent god would allow an indecent people like the Jews to carry him about like a dwarf in a wooden castle.

The origin of this single *decency*-shutter is more ancient than would readily be imagined, and I trace it so far back as the fall of man, the first *decency*-shutter having been raised by great grand-mama Eve, and this circumstance explains the veneration of "our grand-mama," of the *Herald*, for the *decency*-shutter. It is related in the Jew-book, that when Adam's woman saw her nakedness, she made her a single *decency*-shutter of fig-leaves, and prevailed upon Adam to mount another. The following beautiful lines describe Eve making Adam acquainted with her discovery:—

*I say, my dear,  
I've news you'll be surpris'd to hear:  
Since you've been out I've had a beau,  
Drest like a snake, quite comme il faut;  
But not that sort that looks so frightful,*

*This, tho' a snake, was quite delightful;  
From head to tail rigg'd out so nutty,  
And then so complaisant and chatty.  
But as to that 'tis no great matter,  
I shouldn't prize him for his pouter;  
The thing is, he has made me wiser,  
And opened both my gunn'd-up eyes.  
What we've been told is all a cheat;  
These crabs are very good to eat:  
From eating one, I plainly see  
That you're a buzzard, and that we  
Are in stark "naked majesty,"  
Without a rag upon our crupper,  
And that you must say is improper.\**

Since that time the number of the *decency*-shutters have increased amazingly, not unfrequently occupying the ladies of our time half a day to put them up. And the *decency* of the parties who erected the naked statue of Achilles, at Hyde Park-corner, was very properly rebuked by the females, who never looked at it excepting through their fingers, until a *decency*-shutter, similar to the one worn by Adam, had been put before it.

We had almost forgotten the *baby-god*! Hear it ye canting old ladies—the *Herald* denies the existence of Christ, for if she, or her correspondent, is shocked at Christ being called a baby, which he was, if he ever existed, it must be because they disbelieve it altogether—so do I, and I welcome them as co-partners in the spread of infidelity. I am heartily sorry that the *Herald* has such a confoundedly limited circulation, for now, that it is shocked at any person admitting the existence of Christ, no doubt we may expect a large increase of Atheists. In the meantime we leave her, with the promise that ere long we will support her with some remarks on the non-existence of the *baby-god*.

T. P.

[The blasphemy people in Holywell-street, no dullards it seems in taking a hint, have adopted the soul-saving expedient of putting up a *single* shutter in the middle of the window, with the *Herald's* letter posted thereon, and a large notice purporting, that the shutter is "THE HERALD'S DECENCY-SHUTTER."]

### ABUSE AND RIDICULE.

WHEN superstition has been hard pressed by common-sense, and has been in danger of losing its empire over reason, it has ever turned round, and deprecatingly exclaimed against the bigotry, tyranny, and persecution of its opponents. It has been wittily remarked by some one, that the enemies to toleration called that persecution which forbid their persecuting those of a different creed to themselves. Lord Denman, upon the trial of Mr. Hetherington, declared that fair argument was allowed on controversial topics, but not abuse and ridicule. The fact is that they are well aware of the efficacy of abuse and ridicule; they use it in their pulpits when they hold up to scorn and abhorrence the Atheist—itself a word conveying the worst impression to a vulgar audience. They are aware that abuse and ridicule is used with the greatest effect upon political and all other subjects, and therefore they are determined to limit the freedom of the press when it affects their religious interests. They are aware that abuse and

• "Paradise Lost, or the Great Dragon Cast Out."

ridicule founded their religion, that it has destroyed and raised up, and they employ all their efforts to avert the application of those powerful weapons to the demolition of their superstition. Jesus Christ has shown them what can be done by abuse; therefore it belongs to their sacred armoury, only to be employed on religious occasions, and only to be sanctioned by success. Scurrility and abuse were the distinguishing characteristics of Christ's mission, compared with the calm disquisitions of moral philosophy among the heathens. Thus is proved the divine origin of the formér, its essential difference from paganism; and we are enabled to trace true inspiration in the followers of Jesus Christ, and the gifts of the holy spirit, by the employment of every kind of scurrility and abuse.

Let us turn to the rich vocabulary which graces the pages of the four gospels and gather the pearls which fell from the mouth of Jesus, and which, in their application by his disciples, have not been thrown to the swine. It was not from want of will that he would have made his adversaries grovel on their bellies, like Satan, who seduced our parents, or walk on all fours, like the change that came over Nebuchadnezzar. The most favourite appellation he gives to his enemies are—*serpents, vipers, foxes, wolves*. After this animal classification he proceeds to the moral, and calls them *fools*, though he had himself forbidden the term, and denounced against such abuse the punishment of hell-fire. It is supposed, because they had called him an empty fellow and a fool, as we should speak of any fanatic we met creating a disturbance in the streets of London, but which excited to a terrible degree the gall of the meek and lowly Jesus. *Hypocrites*; in more figurative speech, *whited sepulchres, children of hell*, are among other names; and the epithets he uses are the following:—*evil, adulterous, perverse, faithless, hearts gross, hearing dull, eyes closed, blind, ravenous, ravening, &c.* He pronounces them *damned, the damnation of hell* upon them, *all blood upon their, hell and its tortures*. Sometimes he begins every sentence—*woe unto you*, which means a *curse upon you*; and half of his sermon on the mount is composed of curses. By readers of the Jew-book it has scarcely been noticed with sufficient attention that some of those ebullitions of abuse have taken place when the meek and lowly Jesus was the invited guest of some hospitable entertainer. The habit of reading the bible does not imply great knowledge of its words and facts, and probably the above has escaped observation; yet you would find good Christians not slow to resent in unmeasured terms any difference of opinion on the subject of religion expressed by a host who had given them a champagne repast; while I dare say SOUTHWELL, if he were invited, and accepted the invitation of the Bishop of Exeter, would not indulge in abuse of the Tories, bishops, and priests during the whole of dinner, nor resent the shock put upon his feelings by a grace said before and after meat, to god and Jesus Christ, nor the occasional religious belief in the conversation of a Christian which sounds like blasphemy to the ears of an Infidel. Nor did fellow guests sitting at table escape the treatment of the host, as a lawyer, who ventured to make an objection to the wholesale vituperation of the divine guest, drew upon himself and profession the whole weight of these scurrilous and defamatory libels. Equally curious and instructive to all good Christians is the way the meek and lowly Jesus found a peg to hang abuse upon. A thing undone or the same thing done was sure to be found fault with, and to afford a theme for invective. The first party, in Luke chap. viii., the host did not give him to wash and kiss his toes like the popes, the meek and lowly Jesus let him know, therefore, that he preferred to him a woman of the town, who being steeped in degradation was fit for anything. The next party water was at his service, and because the Pharisees marvelled that he had at first washed before dinner, the abuse of them fills several pages, and more than a chapter of this gospel. Ridicule was not much used by

Jesus, as he was deficient in the wit and humour necessary to the handling of this much more delicate weapon, attended with more humane results, and did not suit the divine purpose, which was better served by the habitual employment of brutal abuse. Painting the manners of the Scribes and Pharisees, and contrasting them with a better standard, was holding up the authorities of the country to contempt and ridicule, and consequent detestation of the people. It has been said of those who use strong language, that blows would follow words, were they able to use the former, they are the expression of impotent passion and revenge, so waxed hot Jesus at the latter end of his history, when he found that they were not going to make a great man of him. In his lifetime, therefore, we meet with no violence as the necessary accompaniment of his language except in the ejection of the dealers out of the temple, when, suiting the action to the word, he punished those he styled thieves with the rope's ends, and in the cutting off the officer's ear by Pétér, instigated by his master, whose heart, however, soon failed in this appeal to arms. The Christian religion however, established by abuse, it was quickly seen how the action would be suited to the word, when the latter could be explained by power, and the denunciations of the meek and lowly have been fully put into execution by all his followers since christianity has reigned upon the earth. Roman catholicism in the ascendancy, Luther established protestantism by the most successful application of his master's example of the exercise of abuse and scurrilous language; since the meek and lowly Jesus there was not such a master in the art, and he deserved to be the second founder of christianity. The workings of the holy spirit, attested that true inspiration and gift from heaven, which was as wonderfully shown forth in Knox, the apostle of Scotland, who aimed in his abuse, not so much at Herods, scribes, pharisees, lawyers, popes, monks and friars, as at a poor, unfortunate, and beautiful woman, his queen, not so bad a ruler, as times went, and always gracious to him. He cared not for her tears, and god rewarded him, as he rewarded Christ with the destruction of Jerusalem—the abuse of Knox ended in the decapitation of Mary Queen of Scot's by another woman and a queen.

Hume's remarks on the reformation are very much to the point on the subject of abuse and ridicule. In chapter 29 of his History of England he says of the people:—

“Argument and reasoning could not give conviction. But in order to bestow on this topic (the question of the reformation) the greater influence Luther and his followers, not satisfied with opposing the pretended *divinity of the Romish church*, and displaying the temporal inconveniences of that establishment, carried matters much farther, and treated the religion of their ancestors as abominable, detestable, damnable. They denominated the pope antichrist; called his communion the scarlet whore, and gave to Rome the appellation of Babylon; expressions which, however applied, were to be found in *scripture*, and which were better calculated to operate on the multitude than the most solid arguments.”

Luther therefore, it seems, introduced all the abuse which has been ever since the coin of all Protestants, and still flourishes in Exeter Hall. The abuse which was uttered by Christ was a prelude to the early barbarities of Christianity, and gave occasion to the civil and religious wars which succeeded the reformation. “Luther (says Hume, chapter 31) treated in a very *indecent* manner his royal antagonist; though he afterwards made the most humble submission to Henry, and apologised for the vehemence of his former expressions.” In a case of abuse, where the tyrant Henry the eighth was personally concerned, how much more liberally and fairly he behaved than our law and the doctrine of our judges, who would monopolise abuse to themselves and deny its employment to others. Says Hume in the above chapter, “Peyto, the friar, preaching before the king, had the assurance to tell

him that 'many lying prophets had deceived him; but he, as a true Micaiah, warned him that the dogs would lick his blood as they had done Ahab's.' The king took no notice of the insult, but allowed the preacher to depart in peace. Next Sunday he employed Dr. Corren to preach before him, who justified the king's proceedings, and gave Peyto the appellation of a *rebel, a slanderer, a dog, and a traitor.*" Except ordering him and another who interrupted the preacher in the royal chapel to be rebuked by the council, Henry showed no other mark of resentment. "The better (says Hume, chapter 31) to reconcile the people to this great innovation (the suppression of the monasteries) care was taken to *defame* those whom the court had determined to ruin." Was not this abuse? "The relics also, and the superstitions which had so long been the object of the people's veneration, were exposed to their *ridicule.*" Here we have Christ copied, who defamed the pharisees, *et hoc genus omne*, and held up their practices to ridicule.

W. B.

SUPPORT THE VICTIMS OF  
BLASPHEMY.  
THE MARTYRS TO TRUTH.

1, Castle Green, Bristol,  
Sept. 15th, 1842.

SIR.—I would not write on this subject, did I not feel acutely what I am about to say:—Neither SOUTHWELL, HOLYOAKE, nor ADAMS has been sufficiently supported. I learnt, with pain, in Cheltenham, that in the third week of their imprisonment, Holyoake and Adams in the gaol, and their wives and children out, were penniless. In coming to Bristol, I find the support of Southwell resting on one humane individual, trusting to his London friends for remuneration.

I have no money wherewith to help, for I am too near like them in that condition; but I have a pen, and with it I make my appeal to my old and near friends throughout England and Scotland, to send their subscriptions by post-office order, addressed to me at Castle Green, Bristol, until further notice.

I purpose to give two-thirds to Holyoake, who has a wife and two children, and one third to Southwell, who has no dependents of that kind. All particulars to be printed in the *Oracle*.

If any equivalent comes in, I wish to relieve Adams from some debts which his prosecution has caused him: the discretion or judgment to be mine.

Faithful to the cause of free discussion, I am your humble servant,

RICHARD CARLILE.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

"O thou, who in the heav'ns dost well,  
Who, as it pleases best thyself,  
Sends aye to heav'n and ten to hell,  
A' for thy glory,  
And no for any guid or ill  
They've done afore thee."

es, Burns had, in his day, a correct idea of the disposition of the Christian's deity. What would he have said had he lived now, and seen one of the best of his species drag-

ged to a dungeon "a' for the glory of god?" Even in the nineteenth century, we find the blood-stained car of a revengeful god crushing the noble advocates of man's equality beneath its gory wheels. Again are the fanatic priests waving the red banner of Christ, which has filled the world with widows and orphans, and deluged the earth with blood! Yes, backed with their hireling press, they are calling on their faithful slaves to unsheath their swords and plunge them in the hearts of the Infidels, as was done of old in the Crusades.

Some of the orthodox journals unblushingly declare, that it is pleasing to see the spirit displayed by the public authorities in incarcerating men, women, and children, who dare to say or sell anything disrespectful or irreverent of his godship! Aye, or of his inimitable production called bible.

Is the bible an odious production? This question can be best answered by ascertaining what moral influence it has exercised, and now exercises upon its exponents and readers.

It is generally admitted that works or discourses upon facts or probabilities are moral in their tendency, and highly profitable to all; but that works or discourses of an opposite character are *vice versa*. In no part of the old bible is there a moral law or sentiment which the nature of man and his reciprocal relations with his fellows would not dictate, without special revelation from deity. Its unphilosophical description of the earth's creation, its accounts of the chosen people fuddling, whoring, robbing, cheating, lying, and commission of incest—its cities and towns, like Sodom and Gomorrah, whose example was followed by the pious Bishop of Clogher—its minute details of most detestable cruelties and horrid murders, all presided over by an *immortal monster!*—must necessarily drive the finest sensations out of the human heart, and make it the receptacle for everything corrupt, vitiated, and depraved. This is no mere assertion, for a reference to our Christian and Jewish churches proves the fact; and it is not to be wondered at either, for whatever is worshipped, is endeavoured to be imitated. I say endeavoured, for the human being has not, cannot exist, possessed of the power and atrocious ferocity of the deity described in the Jew-book.

Come we now to glance at the Christian theology, or new-testament doctrine, which its admirers have not failed to puff off to the best advantage. Here too, their god who professes to white-wash others, has not white-washed himself, but comes in his blood-stained garments to be clothed with other specimens of cruelty and injustice, in the death and suffering of his own son! What a moral lesson is here inculcated—a deity and father sitting, if they have chairs in

heaven, with the greatest *nonchalance* looking out of heaven's windows at his son nailed on the cross, "like a dead rat on a barn door." as a wag the other day observed. We have "three gods in one," all almighties, all infinites, which puts to flight every rule of arithmetic, and laughs at proportional mathematics! Is there many *true believers* in this think you? If there is, they must have a strange notion of the word infinite. It is impossible for two infinites to exist, much less three; therefore Messrs. Holy Ghost and Son must go naked, if no other clothing can be obtained for them. In truth, it is good for the human race that their every day experience proves their practical disbelief of this dogma of christianity. It has, however, been destructive of man's moral nature, nor could we believe that superstition could so degrade the human mind, did not the fact stare us in the face.

Where we to believe what Christians say, there could have been no morality before their sect sprung into existence; that all was dark, dismal, and gloomy before Christ's appearance. But are not the precepts of Socrates, Confucius, and the Gymnosophists of India equal, aye. and superior to those of the messiah? And amongst them, too, we find numberless cases of humanity, justice, temperance, meekness, and patience, proving that virtue flourished antecedent to Christ. Christ said that "men should love one another;" Pythagoras, long before the time of Christ had said, "let men revenge themselves upon their enemies by converting them into friends." And Socrates said "that it was not lawful for a man, who had received an injury, to revenge by doing another." To love one's enemies is impossible, we may refrain from doing them an injury, but we can only love that which excites in us pleasurable feelings, and this an enemy is not likely to do, therefore we find it to our *interest* to "make friends of them."

Faith, it is said, is the pedestal on which stands the Christian religion, against which the gates of Hell will never prevail. What is faith? Religious faith consists in believing, trying, or saying you believe that which appears absurd, unlikely, and undemonstrable, therefore it exacts the total renunciation of reason, a stupid assent to things improbable, and a blind reverence for everything holy, which reduces man to a level with the beasts, and must be injurious to him. It is only beneficial to the priests who fatten upon the credulity and degradation of mankind.

Charity is another stone of the fabric, Christian charity consists in "loving god and our neighbours," but this, with Christians, must be mere pretence, because we cannot love a being whom we fear, and we must fear a being who would embroil his hands in the

blood of an innocent son, or who can condemn to all eternity nine-tenths of the human race. Fear is totally opposite to love.

But "loving our neighbours," yes, that is very good, but impracticable to a Christian, for we are commanded to love a jealous god, who like a jealous woman, wants it all to himself; besides, it would be degrading to offer a heart to deity shared by another. How can a Christian love an Infidel who worships not his god? And who, likewise, turns both him and his god into ridicule, 'tis impossible. Beings who are by their religion taught to hate themselves, can never love any one else. We do not find the Rauters or the Methodists who say they love god "very much," care a great deal about their neighbours, on the contrary, they are proverbial for being screws, beings who will have their pound of flesh. 'Tis true they are zealous, but it is the zealousness of rabid intolerance, which makes them starve themselves and their dependants at home, to send out muskets and missionaries abroad.

In a word Mr. E., the Christian religion seems invented to destroy nature, and the reason of man, it converts virtue into positive vice, it has interposed between the union of the sexes; it has invented artificial barriers to their happiness, it has converted the marriage ceremony into a pantomimic farce, commencing with debauchery, and ending with death. Those nations who profess Christianity are more immoral than any heathen nations yet discovered, and where it is said that religion most flourishes, there you find the people more ignorant of their duties, of their obligations. There you find that robbery, assassination, debauchery, and persecution reign triumphant. Witness Spain, Rome, Italy, Portugal, or Ireland. The fact is, they are too religious to be moral.

T. P.

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THE  
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Or, *Philosophy Vindicated.*

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

No. 41.] Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842, to Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, [PRICE 1D.  
for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months’ Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

**WHAT IS GOD?**

**ATHEISTS**, Sceptics, and so-called Infidels triumphantly ask, with Zophar the Naamathite, “Canst thou by searching find out god?”

And hitherto it has been conceded that “no man hath seen him and lived.”

Indeed, Moses and Richard Carlile are the only two individuals who profess to answer the question in the affirmative. Both having arrived at the same conclusion; the former by a view, *posteriorium*; the latter by an argument, *a posteriori*. The first was a conviction founded on the best evidence—that of the senses. While the second was a mere assertion, without proof, “that god was as much the subject of science as any other thing.”

This may be true, but I ask, What are the dimensions of this thing, its length, breadth, and thickness? What are its density, hue, form, with its locality and peculiar properties, and how can it be rendered subservient to the wants of man? These, and a thousand more questions all equally pertinent, demand a speedy answer.

What is the reply? All theologians declare that “its ways are past finding out.” Philosophers confess that with all their searching inquiries they have found no particle of deity, nor do they know how to transform bread and wine into the flesh and blood of our lord Jesus Christ. And geometers have not yet demonstrated a “line of faith,” or learnt to square the fallacy of reasoning in a circle, so necessary to prove the existence of a god.

After all this who would not say with Mr. Holyoake, “I do not believe there is such a thing as a god,” and what Christian should forget that

Silence is the least injurious praise.

Mr. Carlile further informs us that the thing god is threefold, father, son, and holy ghost, and of the ever-blessed trinity the following explanation is given:—

“The father-god is what man knows of the physical or natural world.

“The son-god is what man knows of the spiritual or mental world.

“The holy-ghost god is the educated state of man in wisdom, virtue, and love.”

Three very nice distinctions without a particle of difference. What can man know of the “mental or spiritual world,” but as a part of the “natural world?” And what is the difference between “the educated state of man in wisdom, virtue, and love,” and “what man knows of the natural or physical world?”

In the words of the Athanasian creed, we may say “such as the father is, such is the son, and such is the holy ghost.” Definitions of god three in number but one in meaning.

But if we must have a plurality of gods, why stop at the number three, since we have only to multiply the effects of education to have gods innumerable. Thus we should have gods of finely formed limbs, noble minds, and artistic conceptions—gods of clean wide streets, noble mansions, and commodious workshops—gods of baths, tennis courts, pleasure grounds—gods more numerous than the stars of heaven, and only to be calculated when the effects of education may be summed up and registered. In fine we may call them mother-god, sister-god, brother-god, cousin-god, niece-god, grand-daughter-god, &c. through all the variations of great, grand, and great-grand children gods, till the grand becomes perfectly ridiculous, and “numbers drowns the thought.”

This dearth of names would not be the least inconvenience the gods would have to put up with. I am afraid we could hardly find them standing room. On the lowest calculation each man would have in him three gods. Hence the world would be overrun with some two thousand four hundred millions, and this nation alone would possess eighty-one millions, a visitation of gods from which we fervently hope this nation may ever be free. Three gods are more than we can support, and more than we ought to have—surely no man would wish to have eighty-one millions.

Worse than the plagues of locusts in Egypt, their presence would be “very grievous,” covering the face of the earth so that the land would be darkened, “and eating every herb of the land.”

Yet we may lay the flattering unction to our souls that “these gods are incarnateable in man by education in all science.” How science, which says not a word of even one

god can inoculate every individual with three, and the nation with some eighty-one millions, is to me the greatest "mystery of mysteries," and completely upsets the established notion, that "from nothing nothing comes." But I presume as with god so with god-makers, "all things are possible."

Mr. Carlile commenced with a very sensible observation, which it would have been well had he adhered to, namely, "that if god is not comprehensible it would be nonsense to talk about it." With this I heartily concur, and hence easily account for the nonsense which great men sometimes talk on behalf of religion. Thus Newton, the prince of philosophers in his "Principia," sank into contempt in his "Apocalypse," and the six years' imprisonment of Richard Carlile in Dorchester will be remembered and admired when his answer to the question, What is god? has been long forgotten.

Cheltenham. JOS. B. LEAR.

IS THERE NO GOD?

"I am a believer in the being of one god, powerful, wise, and good."—Preface to a "Dissertation on the Being and Attributes of God," by T. S. MACKINTOSH.

"We (T. S. Mackintosh) have found that it may be shown by a process of reasoning, almost, or quite equal, to mathematical demonstration, that the universe is actuated, controlled, and guided in its harmonious movements, by omnipresent, omnipotent power."

"God is an idea DWELLING in the mind of man."—T. S. MACKINTOSH, in No. 35 of the Oracle.

"What is the moral idea of god? It is, as I conceive, a compound idea, made up of all the moral perfections, as wisdom, goodness, justice, or whatever other virtue may be conceived to confer worth upon and give dignity to the human character. These are attributed to god—are called god's moral attributes, and taken collectively constitute the moral idea which we form in our minds concerning god. The moral attributes of god, like truth, honour, &c. are mere abstractions."—By the same, in No. 38 of the Oracle.

"With me god is a principle, not a thing, or still plainer, god is a moral principle, not a physical thing—like virtue, which is not a thing but a principle.... The idea of god is altogether a moral and not a physical idea."—By the same, in No. 40 of the Oracle.

THE above quotations are some few opinions from the pen of Mr. Mackintosh in support of the question of the existence of a god, in opposition to the negative opinion of the Atheist, namely its non-existence—both parties being understood to take their stand upon the probability or non-probability of such an existence, and not upon the proof or dis-proof of such a being.

Mr. Mackintosh some time since published a work, intitled "A Dissertation upon the Being and Attributes of God." In this work he declares himself to be "a believer in the being of one god, powerful, wise, and good," and that this god was an "omnipotent, omnipresent power," who "actuated and governed" an "eternal and infinite universe" "in all its motions great and little."

Three reviews of this work appeared in the Oracle, but Mr. M. objecting to the spirit in which the reviews were written declined answering them, or holding any discussion with the writers upon the subject. Subsequently, Mr. Mackintosh having reconsidered his determination, declared his willingness to discuss the question of the existence of a "governing principle, power, or being," who directed the universe. This article appeared in No. 35. He then stated that his conception of a god was that of "an idea dwelling in the mind of man." In No. 36 I endeavoured to show the absurdity of the conception, that an idea of a finite being could control and direct the operations of an infinite universe. To the objections contained in this latter article Mr. M. has never replied, and whether right or wrong they still remain unanswered.

In No. 38 there appeared another article from the pen of Mr. Mackintosh, in which he elaborated his latest idea of a god, agreeing with his previous declaration in No. 35. In that number (38) he classes his idea of a god with the ideas entertained by men of truth, justice, and honour, all of which it is well-known are derived from man's observation of the result of human actions, which actions are declared to be right or wrong, beneficial or injurious, as far as they tend to promote the happiness or misery of mankind. They are thence called true or false, just or unjust, honourable or dishonourable—as the case may be. These ideas are consequently confined to the interests or economy of humanity, or the mutual relation of man to man, having no influence whatever upon the modes of nature's operations, which are invariably the same, whether men are virtuous or vicious. If the "governing principle, power, or being," which directs and controls the universe be an idea only, it will be necessary to establish the eternal existence of man and of the idea in his mind before we can imagine the existence of our system and the motions of its bodies—for unless the motion be sustained by some power it would cease, and chaos would come again, according to Mr. Mackintosh. Then, if the motion of the planets require to be sustained it must have been originated, for if self-originated it can be self-sustained.

If man murders man the earth is not convulsed in consequence. Nay, if every member of the human family was to be deprived of life, nature would go on just as now, and just as it did before he came into existence. The earth is not injured nor any of the animals upon it by man's death, excepting man himself in some cases, on the contrary, the decomposition which follows death is productive of life to numberless other animals, whose happiness is conserved by man's destruction, for if life be happiness then are they happy in the possession of it and in the means for sustaining it. The same effects follow the

death and decomposition of all animals, man's life or death forming no exception to a general rule. On the other hand, if men love one another, and labour together for one common object, the happiness of their race, if they exert themselves to increase the number and degree of pleasurable sensations, and are assiduous in their endeavours to preserve and extend their lives, still have their actions purely a local and not a general effect.

Men cannot by the practice of virtue prevent earthquakes, simooms, storms, or devastating hurricanes. They may by their knowledge take measures for the preservation of *themselves* from the consequences of such phenomena, but that would be very different to controlling or preventing such occurrences. A nation of virtuous, just, and honourable men, if forewarned of an earthquake or an hurricane, could not preserve their country from destruction by means of their virtue and practice of justice. How then could a *belief* in a being virtuous, just, and good, and of omnipotent power to boot protect them, if their own *practice* of virtue, justice, and goodness would not do it? But not only are we to imagine them capable of doing this trifle by means of this belief, but we are also to imagine them possessed of the power of performing the inconceivable task of governing the universe through its agency.

Does Mr. Mackintosh mean to affirm, because justice was worshipped at one time, and because men then had a moral idea of justice, which was their god—that such moral idea governed the universe then differently to what it is governed now that men have not this idea? Or, that if justice were worshipped throughout the whole length and breadth of the earth, that the universe, that the earth even would be affected generally by it? What influence can an abstract idea have upon the motion of the earth round the sun, or upon its own axis? Would it influence the elements—producing rain in time of drought, and fair weather in harvest? Would it prevent earthquakes, shipwrecks, plagues, accidents, disappointments, death? Would it, in fact, influence in the smallest conceivable iota the usual course of natural phenomena? If it will not do all or any of these, what does he mean by calling an abstract idea a god, understanding by that god an “omnipotent, omnipresent power,” by whom “the universe is actuated, controlled, and guided in all its harmonious movements?” (Par. 27, “Diss.”)

It would extend this article to too great a length were I to give the numerous passages I have marked, on reading Mr. Mackintosh's “Dissertation,” in which he endeavours to show the reasonableness of a belief in a being “powerful, wise, and good,” a “pure mind” god, who controls and governs the universe, and I shall therefore refer the reader to the work itself, beginning with the 24th paragraph

and ending with the 43rd. In the 43rd par., however, Mr. M. has slipped from the question of the *probability of god* EXISTENCE into that of the *moral influence of god* BELIEF! Upon the latter ground Mr. Mackintosh ought to have taken his stand in the first place, it appearing to me clear from his writings in the *Oracle*, taken in connection with portions of his “Dissertation,” that even while writing the latter work he had not the slightest suspicion of the existence of any such being as that for which he contended, namely, *a god who governed the universe*—excepting in the minds of the superstitious and bigotted.

Mr. Mackintosh, I conceive, has *proved* himself to be AN ATHEIST! but one who considers god belief beneficial or injurious to man in proportion to the moral attributes with which men endow their gods. But what has this to do with the question of probable existence?—the disbelief in which constitutes an Atheist, and the belief in which the Theist.

The real question with Mr. Mackintosh is one of *expediency*. He has not contended for the being of a god, because he imagined there was one, but simply because he fancied society would be injured by the general rejection of god belief.

Why does not Mr. M. openly declare his real feelings and convictions? and say, “I consider god belief conducive to morality in certain conditions of society, and would uphold that or any other belief producing a moral result, though convinced of its fallacy. But I do not consider god belief unconditionally necessary to morality. Morality can subsist without it. I do not myself require the fear or hope of a god to induce me to do right. I am virtuous from a knowledge of the happiness to be derived from it, and the misery that follows the contrary course. To sum up all, *I am* what the world understands by an *Atheist*, though an advocate for the continuance of god belief until convinced it can be dispensed with without danger.”

Mr. M. would readily admit that some men may be virtuous, just, and good, and yet be Atheists, wanting not the fear of a god to induce them to do good. He says in his preface, “If the actions of all men, or even of the majority of men, were the result of reasoning from abstract moral principles, the belief in a wise and good god would not be so important as it is with things as they are *at present*.” It is then, with Mr. Mackintosh, a question of what men may do without a god—what men it is necessary to *give* a god to, and what men do not require one. Just as some children require whipping and coaxing to induce them to do good, whilst others are good without.

It will be unnecessary to dispute further about the existence of a god, but confine the question to the moral influence of belief.

W. C.

## THE NEW ARGUMENT

"A POSTERIORI"

## FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

II.

"Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?"—JEW-BOOK.

WE have affirmed, and we maintain that the writers and lecturers on the part of god are the cause of atheism. Perhaps it will be useful before laying down one of our series of reasoning (which, be it remembered, is to amount to demonstration of the fact of the existence of god), if we devote a little time to explode the blunders of the blunderers, and show where and why the former advocates of deity have failed. We listened a few evenings ago to a popular lecturer on animal mechanics, an interesting subject, and calculated, if treated properly, to be rendered eminently useful, but the lecturer, Christian-like, was not satisfied with explaining to his audience the existences around us in the natural world, it was not enough to speak of the form and structure, and habits of various animals, but he set up for one of god's councillors, and being in the secret told us the why and wherefore of every particular habit, and what was god-almighty's motive in the work. The gullible audience were so pleased with the gratuitous assumption, that they were pleased to increase the annoyance of all who were not as pleased as themselves, by clapping their hands and stamping their feet, to cheer on the presumptuous teacher, who had placed the optical glass of infinity to his eye, and read the laws of the everlasting universe, written in *his own imagination!* The first evening we stepped into the lecture-room, the subject was "the whale," and the consideration for the time being "the blowing apparatus." It was explained that the whale gathers its food by swimming through the water with its mouth open, and when it has obtained a supply of food, a question is raised, must it swallow a little ocean of water with every mouthful, or if not, how dispose of the liquid? The inner portion of the nostril is in connexion with the mouth, and now we find the peculiar use of the curious apparatus connected with it. In some animals the sense of smell is very keen, but this sense is, and *must be* in accordance with the delicacy of the membrane of the olfactory nerve, just as we find a person of the nervous temperament more sensitive than the bilious or lymphatic; now it will be readily seen that, as the whale frequently descends in the water many fathoms, the existence of a very delicate membrane for smell is impossible, for the pressure of water at 30 feet, is 15 lbs. on the square inch, and increases in proportion to the depth: this sense, if possessed, would not be valuable to

the animal, and therefore, we find it dispensed with, and a spinal contrivance provided by means of which every time the creature closes its mouth, the water it encloses is driven with great force upward through the orifices of the nose to a height of from 20 to 30 feet.

At the close of this explanation we were called to praise for his "power and wisdom, and goodness," the being who was driven to such an extremity as to be obliged to give up one of the senses, to make the blowing apparatus of the whole. But we had a better instance, still, in the habits and modes of life of the salmon. It has been the practice of naturalists to tell us, that at a certain season of the year this animal leaves its usual place of habitation, and after waiting a few days at the mouth of a river; till its gills become accustomed to the fresh water; ascends its stream to spawn. But in this case we were destined to have a revelation. It was asked, why does not the salmon spawn in the sea, are there not crevices enough for the purpose? We know that some have done so, and their young have arrived at maturity, why not all? Who, with a moment's reflection, sees not the reason? Who sees not that there is a hand that guides, and a finger that points to the mouth of the river? Who sees not that there is help at hand to assist the animal to follow the course of the river to its source, to enable it to spend its last strength in leaping the cataracts which impede its progress, and with a moment's thought, who is there cannot discover the reason? Is it to spawn? Is it to leave its eggs in the most secure place? No! *It is to lay its body down an offering at the feet of man, in the interior of continents which could not otherwise have been inhabited!* This is the language of a popular lecturer, and if this be the last reasoning for design, who would not turn Atheist? We thought at the time of that part of divine revelation, which speaks of the erection of the tower of Babel, where god-almighty was offended because the children of men were trying to get to heaven by the same means as Jacob's angel came down, i.e. by a ladder, and turning to his associates he is reported to have said, as if he thought he had lost command of us sinful mortals for ever: "and now this they do; and nothing will be restrained from them now which they have imagined to do," and then, as if a new thought had struck him, "go to, let us go down and there confound their language, so that they shall not understand one another's speech." We thought of this, we say, and seeing what noble results had been brought out by our lecturer, we began to reason *design fashion* upon it, and remembering that god did scatter the people abroad from

thence over all the earth, we asked why this was done?

Now it might do well enough to say it was to prevent their breaking like thieves into heaven, as long as we are in the habit of seeing the clouds open and display Jupiter upon his marble throne; this might do when the glorious place was just above our heads; but modern astronomers will laugh at this, and as we are not inclined to charge god with ignorance, we must seek another reason; now that Jacob's ladder is so worn as not to bear an angel's tread, and Gabriel no longer pays his court either to the women or men of this lower world; this tale went down well we sought the reason and we have found it. God helps the salmon up the river, assists it to exert its last strength in a leap to lay its body at the feet of man, who must otherwise starve; and of course he scattered the people at the tower of Babel, and sent them into the interior of continents, which could otherwise have never been inhabited, in order that they might eat the salmon which could not otherwise have been eaten! Who, with a moment's reflection, sees not this? And who shall refuse to glorify his holy name? Who will not praise his power, wisdom, and goodness? Again we ask, can we be surprised at the existence of atheism? This is where and why all former writers upon this subject have erred. They have pretended to argue from analogy, and they have no sooner commenced their reasoning than their analogy breaks down; yet they go blundering on, draw just the opposite conclusion to that which their premises warrant, and call on us to bow! They first make their god, and then cut and carve all existences, like a tailor with his cloth, to make them fit. If the argument of helping the salmon up the stream was worth anything—if it prove the power, wisdom, and goodness of god—does it not prove his impotence, ignorance, and folly, to send salmon where they were not absolutely necessary, or to let a single circumstance fail in producing proper and *those* happy effects?

W.

### WHY ARE WE ATHEISTS?

"I am convinced, I say, that, from external creation, no right conclusion can be drawn, concerning the moral character of god. The authors of a multitude of books on this subject have given an inadequate and partial induction of particulars. Already aware (though perhaps scarcely recognising how or whence) that god is love, they have looked on nature for proofs of this conclusion, and taken what suited their purpose. But they have not taken nature as a whole, and collected a conclusion from impartial premises. They expatiate on the blessings and enjoyments of life, in the countless tribes of earth, air, and sea. But if life be a blessing, death is a curse. Nature presents the universal triumph of death. Is this the doing of a god of love? Or are there two gods—a kind one, giving life; and an unkind one taking

it away? and the wicked one invariably the victor. In external creation, exclusively and adequately contemplated, there is no escape from Manichæism. It is vain to say that the death of the inferior creatures is a blessing to man; for why, in the creation of a god of love, should any such necessity exist? And how would this account for the death of man himself?"—REV. H. M. NEILE.

I CONCLUDED an article under the above head last week, by saying I considered "there are no arguments to be drawn from nature against the existence of a god of love, if there be any god at all," and I shall now offer a few remarks in explanation of my views upon this matter, as well as conclude my reply to the objections of our anonymous friend in No. 38.

It is the universal belief amongst Christians, and I believe I may say among mankind generally, that this earth was created by a being called god, at the same time that he created innumerable others in the universe, but that *all* the rest were provided for the special benefit of this one globe of ours, or rather *for man*, who was to inhabit it. The Christians draw their arguments for such belief from the Jew-book, wherein it is expressly declared that the whole of the universe, with the exception of this planet, was created in *one* day, whilst the creation of the earth occupied *four* days, and the creation of man one day. After which arduous undertaking, the lord is said to have *blessed* his work, and to have declared that it was *good*, there being *then* no one to dispute the question with him, and that on the seventh day he rested from his labour, having first, I should presume, washed himself, combed his beard, and put on a clean shirt—though this latter circumstance is not mentioned by the holy phantom who chronicled the other events. That Christians should entertain such notions is a matter of no wonder, but that Atheists, although they should previously have been Christians, should continue to do so, does surprise me. Yet this is the hypothesis upon which our friend argues the question of the existence of a god of love—that the earth, "and all that therein is," is man's inheritance, and that because man alone is not perfectly happy, therefore there cannot be a god of love. Just as though every other plant or animal which inhabits the globe were not as justly entitled to an equal share of divine consideration as man and had not an equal claim upon divine love and attention.

A god of love should have an equal affection for all his creatures, and man is but an insignificant part of the whole. From what fact in man's history or economy do parties arrive at the conclusion that *his* happiness alone is the great desideratum with the deity? In what is man different to other animals? In physical characteristics he is vastly inferior to many, and in mental powers his

superiority is only one of degree, and not of exclusive possession. The god who created a tiger, if he be a god of love, is bound to satisfy the passions and desires he has given to the creature he has made; for if he did not provide for the necessities of the tiger after he had called him into existence, but left him to feel the pangs of hunger, ultimately to die in agonies, he would as justly be entitled to a charge of cruelty, as though he had caused the death of thousands.

But leaving the general view of the question, and considering man alone, the same rule will apply. There is a difference in the disposition of every human being. Some are more amiable and benevolent than others, and of a consequence some are more vicious and selfish than their fellows. The character given to each is independent of the will of the individual possessor. Then; as some are virtuous and some are vicious, and as all are the creation of one being, for his own pleasure and happiness, as well as for theirs, it is as much the duty of that creator, if he be a god of love, to gratify the malice of the malicious, as it is for him to encourage the virtue of the virtuous. If there were no objects of compassion there could be no benevolence. If there was no vice, there could be no virtue. Virtue and vice are but arbitrary terms belonging exclusively to humanity. The virtuous man merely benefits his own race, whilst the vicious man injures it. Neither of them either benefit or injure the universe. Supposing a creator of all things, the bug and flea have a special interest in the injury of man, which it would be injustice in such a creator to overlook. He could not exclusively benefit any portion of his creatures without manifest injustice to some other portion. If, therefore, we grant the probability of a god existing, there are no facts in nature to disprove the hypothesis that he is a god of love—that he has unutterable everlasting love for ALL his creatures.

What reason then have men to assume that the universe is not governed by a god of love, simply because they are miserable? It is man's arrogance and egotism which dictates such a conclusion. Man is not continually miserable, he would soon cease to exist if he were. In making an estimation of the number of pleasurable sensations we experience, allowance would have to be made for their degree of intensity, if not for their number, on account of previous misery. I know it might be said, then, in order to experience the extreme of pleasure, it is necessary to suffer the extreme of misery, but this cavil would be unworthy an honest mind. The candid reader will understand me, I have no doubt.

In continuation of my reply to our anonymous friend's objections, I would observe,

that his sneer at my "illogical idiosyncracies," was ill-timed. Our friend was evidently a man of *one* idea, he saw, or fancied he saw reasons for believing in a god of love, special love for man, but no sooner did his eyes open to the fact of man's misery, than he determined there could be *no* god at all. His mind could grasp nothing but the one idea which had possessed it, and when that was removed there was a perfect blank. To an ordinary mind the idea would have presented itself that there *might* be *two* gods, one loving and the other spiteful, as spoken of by M'Neil, and believed in by millions in our own and other countries. But no, our friend's first love was his last. Not finding her what he fondly anticipated, he discarded her in a pet, and, like Peter, subsequently denied any previous knowledge of her.

Our friend asks, what it is to me that my children may believe in a god, though I do not, and says, "Is it any argument against the solidity or justness of my opinion to day, that some one next generation may, for a different reason entertain a different one?" This is my sincere reply to the first question. Did I not hope by my labours to benefit the future generations of mankind, to destroy the sources of misery and degradation which afflict present society, and to enable men by my exertions to obtain those liberties and rights which have been so long unjustly withheld from them—I would not again move a muscle or utter a word more in defence or furtherance of the principles I advocate. I have no expectation nor ever had of gaining anything for myself by my exertions in the field of human redemption, further than the pleasure arising from doing what I conceive to be right. Born and educated in our present rotten state, I can see through its pretensions. Never having witnessed a superior state of society, I have no loss to regret. Though I should be delighted to meet candid, honest, and noble-minded men and women, and to find society solely composed of samples such as I have met, yet am I not disappointed to meet with none but the converse. Habitually used to such associations, my character has been formed accordingly. In fact, present society would do very well for me, were I disposed to live in it as some other men do. But I do not feel such disposition, because I fondly imagine my labours, however humble, will have the effect of increasing the happiness of my successors. Those good men who died before I lived did as much for me, and I feel it a duty and a pleasure to do the like for those who will live when I am dead. It is then of every consequence to me that my children and the children of the next generation should feel the same horror and disgust of the vile system which I do, or my labour will be in vain.

To the second question, I would say, a *fact* is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; so with *probabilities* based upon facts. Atheism is a question of probability, and so is theism. If it be more probable to-day, from all facts known to man, that there is *not* a god in the universe, no subsequent facts which might be discovered or revealed can destroy the probability. Our friend says, "Let my children believe in a god, if they see reason to do so." Very good, but it should be the parent's care to prevent such belief taking possession of their minds, by presenting them with facts alone, leaving them to draw their own conclusions, when there is no reason to fear they will believe in a god. "If our children do not see the reason for disgust with religion we do so much the better." So much the worse, say I, if "religion be the world's curse," which our friend admits it is. If they are not disgusted with religion, either we are grossly deceived and deceiving, or they will be blinded and besotted by superstition.

"What is the principle of atheism that will infallibly keep us Atheists in spite of all the reasons for becoming goddists that unknown time and thought can produce?" inquires our friend. The principle of the eternity and infinity of matter, upon which all reasonings for or against atheism should start — is, in my opinion, the principle "which will infallibly keep us Atheists, in spite of all the *fallacies* for becoming goddists that unknown time and thought can produce."

Permit me to say, in conclusion, that had I the power to make all men Atheists by the same process as our friend describes converted him, I would not use it, for I should dread an unreasoning Atheist *more* than an unreasoning Christian. I would rather live in a society of goddites from *conviction* than in one composed of Atheists from *feeling*.

W. C.

#### THE WORTH OF MAN.

"There is one remark which reflections of this kind are almost certain to call forth in a large and respectable class of persons among us, namely, that to assert the worth of man is an arrogant delusion, and one that puffs up man with vanity. But this objection implies the absurd mistake of supposing that the loftier the standard by which we judge ourselves, the more and more, and not the less nearly shall we seem to reach its full height; what is all that is held most holy, what all the godlike men whom religious tradition canonizes and glorifies but forms of a divine idea ever to be kept before us and approached, though in each individual most imperfectly realised; and when in other words we speak of the worth of man, which philosophy explains, history displays in action, and poetry sings of and makes visible to the soul, we but declare that there is a greatness of human nature which rebukes the littleness of each, and yet is the common blessing and support of us all."

—*Times*.

HERE then, my friends, is an admission, hardly to be expected by the high church! *Times*. I do not

know whether the larger and respectable class of persons alluded to be the Socialists or not, it seems very likely to be them, for they do assert in almost express terms that man is of no more worth than any other animal, for they do not allow him to make himself the standard by which to test the value of created beings. It is said that man is the paragon of animals, and why? But who says it? Man. Who hears it? Man. Who is flattered by it? Man. Thus do some fatten on the arrogant delusions they teach, while the many who are taught, starve. Why the dog is doubtless conscious that he is the paragon of animals, and why? Simply because he alone is able justly to appreciate the qualities of his own nature; and so of all animals possessing consciousness, each in its own estimation is the paragon of animals. What are the qualities in man which in his estimation constitute his worth? First, his being made in the image of his creator. Is the dog made in the image of his creator? Most assuredly not! Second, man possesses an immaterial and immortal soul. Does the horse possess an immaterial and immortal soul? Perish the thought! Third, man is gifted with a free-will, absolutely independent of mental or physical influences. Does the hog possess this gift? Profane conception! Fourth, for man there will be a literal resurrection from the dead, will not the echoing voice of the shrill trumpet at the judgment day awaken from their slumbers the ass, the horse, the hog? Out upon you blasphemer! would you vilify the name and attributes of our living god and traduce his sacred word? Gently, good Christians, no; have you not just told me that all that is held most holy, all the godlike men whom religious tradition glorifies are but forms of a divine idea, which philosophy explains? assuredly then I may speak of an idea as such? No Christians, no! My tongue should swell and burst ere I would say ought in disparagement of the reality of your god, your immortal soul, your free will, and final judgment. It is not with these, but with those terrible shadows of priestly conjuration, those chimeras dire which have swayed so ill the destiny of man, made this fair earth a bloody battle-field, forbade the teeming soil to yield supplies, and held sacred craft, cruelty, and crime. Did not our forefathers believe in ghosts? and how is it then that we of the present day believe them not? Simply because it is an idea only, an idea which philosophy has explained, and what philosophy has done for a plurality it will do for unity. If ordinary commonplace ghosts are discarded as real existences, the last remaining one, nicknamed the holy-ghost, will vanish at the cock-crow of science and philosophy. The day is at hand when this will be. Man will cease to be flattered by the priestly hypocrites, that he stands erect in the image of his maker, while his mind is prostrate at the shrine of ignorance and superstition.

Truth has professed to be taught by the Infidel philosopher of all ages, and although he has conducted his inquiries with the most persevering determination, with refined intellect, and the most subtle research, with the most scrupulous and scrutinising investigation, and with the accumulated knowledge of preceding ages at his hand, he has nevertheless, with all these advantages, but partly succeeded in the accomplishment of his object, and

why? From the simple fact that he has neglected to apply himself to the extermination of that fundamental conceit in the human mind—that conceit bearing upon its broad base the whole superstructure of error, I mean the superior worth of man relatively to the universe. I have before me a paper entitled "Truth," written by the editor of the *Dundee Chronicle*, in which occurs the following passage: speaking of the degraded position of the British mechanic, he proceeds, "Did the divinè author of his being contemplate such a restriction of moral law in breathing life and intellect into his frame? Was he formed by his creator only to fulfil an animal destiny, and to perform animal duties at the expense of every nobler gift with which nature has so bounteously supplied him? For what purpose has he been endowed with senses, feelings, and mental organ? Surely it is not to fulfil an animal destiny? For then certain reflective organs are unnecessary, except with the object of accumulating the means of support necessary to animal existence." Now, sir, this, to use a vulgarism, is about the size of the argument, though often differently put forth, of all that has ever been said or written by all parties on this subject. Man has always been supposed a superior sort of animal, and why? Simply because man is the supposer; and thus has man been ever placed in an anomalous position. Conceiving himself a superior being to the rest of the animal world, he is too proud to treat them as of the family, and yet he cannot, do what he will, discover who and where and what are the imagined beings with whom in his proud conceit he considers himself wholly entitled to associate. He has in his insatiable longings determined on a future abode he does not know where; yet, nevertheless, like our ship-builders, he has given his future home a name before even a plank is laid, and with great inconsistency and with the pride of an aristocrat he determines none of those shall enter therein whom he has so scrupulously shunned on earth (see Byron's epitaph on his dog). With regard to the above extract, although its flimsiness is apparent, it will serve my purpose to say a word or two upon it. Just previous to the passage quoted, the writer exclaims, "What a position for rational man!" How can it be said that man is rational? Man, an animal spurning with contempt his own kindred, the common offspring of earth's teeming womb, with his head ever lost in a maze beyond the clouds, while with the wild antics of a confirmed and desperate lunatic he roams the fell destroyer of his species! Man rational! when has he been so? Scan the history of the world—search the scriptures, Christian, Jew, or Pagan, and report its amount; look abroad in society, that is, human society—what see you? Universal lying, knavery, covetousness, whoredom, superstition, and murder, openly sanctioned and every where defended, except by precept, which goes for nothing in the practice of our famous and much belauded human society.

CHARLES DENT.

(To be continued.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the *Anti-Persecution Union*.

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THE BANNER OF FAITH.

(For the Oracle.)

HER flaunting red banner has waved o'er the world,  
And insulted humanity's feelings, too long;  
For it tauntingly tells us how reason was hurled  
From her throne, by the faggot, the dungeon, the  
thong.

Then arouse! ye dull sleepers, and let it be furled;  
'Tis the symbol of terror, and torture, and wrong;  
'Tis the standard where gather the tyrant and slave;  
'Tis the curse of the noble, the free, and the brave.

'Tis the flag of the tyrant, who revels in woe,  
Who derisively laughs at humanity's groan,  
Who, through the deep ocean of blood, made to flow  
To cement its corruption, wades on to a throne!  
And the flag of the slave, who encountered the foe,  
And now utters, unpitied, his agonized moan,  
As dying, he kisses adversity's rod;  
Contented to fall for his tyrant and god.

'Tis the flag of the bigot, who, burning with hate,  
Preaches love, while his dagger is reeking with gore,  
Faith's own fearful annals too truly relate  
The deeds that the bigot committed of yore;  
And the spirit that prompted them cannot abate,  
Till the cause that produced it is honoured no more:  
Till that flaunting red banner no longer shall wave,  
O'er the world it has rendered a desert and grave.

Turn, O! turn to past ages of sorrow and pain;  
Look back on past scenes of oppression and crime;  
Trace the rise and the progress of faith's bloody  
reign  
Till its records be lost in the thick mists of time;  
Mark how wrongs, and how sufferings, her empire  
sustain,

Then say, thus supported, can faith be sublime?  
She, whose banner has drunk the sanguiferous flood  
Of the millions who purchased their freedom with  
blood!

It is red with the blood of the sages of Greece;  
Egypt gave sweet Hypatia's to deepen the stain;  
Rome added a tinge, yet its thirst did not cease;  
And Syria's red draught was given in vain;  
Then in Palestine, raised as the symbol of peace,  
It drank to repletion—but thirsted again!  
Nay, there is not a land, or time present, or past,  
But has shuddered to see it stream forth on the blast

Shall it ever be thus—will man never be free  
To act by the dictates of nature's just laws?  
Will he ever thus bend to faith's tyrant decree?  
Smiling hope answers—No, even now see him  
pause!

He awakes from the torpor of ages to see  
His deep degradation, and banish the cause!  
Soon, soon, will his dream of delusion be o'er;  
And that flaunting red flag wave in triumph no  
more!  
M. A. L.

NOTICE.

RECEIVED.—"Christianity against Atheism," by Richard Carlile.—"A Scourge for the Godmongers," M. Q. R.—"Cerebral Physiology and Materialism," T. P.—"Persecution," from the *Cheltenham Free P.*

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# THE ORACLE OF REASON;

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

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No. 42.]

[PRICE 1D.]

## CEREBRAL PHYSIOLOGY AND MATERIALISM.\*

THAT this is in many respects a drivelling and laggard age is too frequently apparent in the trembling and apprehension with which men of science approach any subject which may be distorted by the alarmists into an attack upon their favourite dogmas. That the age has some redeeming traits, however, we are glad to acknowledge. The luminaries who, in the midst of this general thralldom and distrust calmly and inflexibly pursue their inquiries, have additional claims upon our regard and esteem.

We daily read and hear of rapid strides in all branches of educational and mechanical science. While appreciating the exertions and genius of those who have made improvements in the scientific world, we cannot but deprecate the pandering and shuffling policy of those backneyed writers who have conformed to the prejudices and to the vulgar and illiterate stupidities of theological disputation. It would be unjust to compare with the man of clear perception and consistent practice, the dreamy speculatist, the explorer of mysticisms of which his senses can take no cognizance, who bewilders his brain to force conclusions in accordance with the knavish and imbecile dogmas of worn out creeds and priestly devices.

We live in a progressive age. New discoveries in science are continually bursting upon the astonished world, delighting investigators and alarming the timid. Chemistry, geology, magnetism, phrenology, have in turn struggled against and overcome the bigot railings of wily priests and deluded multitudes. At length having gone through the customary stages of neglect, alarm, and hostility, they have had to pass the more critical period of adoption by the orthodox. Then comes the time of tribulation—then has the infant science most to fear from the embraces of its new foster-mother—the church, whose bo-constrictor like gripe nearly proves fatal to

\* “Cerebral Physiology and Materialism, with the result of the application of Animal Magnetism to the Cerebral Organs.” An Address delivered to the Phrenological Association in London, June 20th, 1842. By W. C. Engledue, M.D. Price 1s.

the tender nurseling, who is often long in recovering from the spasm. The sciences each in their turn have thus been pressed into the service of creeds and dogmas, and joyfully do we hail the advent of a more fortunate period.

We scarcely appreciate with sufficient ardour the benefits that have been conferred upon society by a Priestly, a Franklin, a Combe, and a Lawrence. Now that we have the phrenological views freed from the mysterious gabble of the pietist and hypocrite, we may expect to advance at a railroad pace. Thanks, hearty thanks to the man of sufficient moral courage and contempt of clap-trap for tearing aside the mask of duplicity and cowardice, and exhibiting the true principles of the science!

Dr. Engledue has, by his respect for truth, commanded the esteem of all true lovers of science, while by the vain and shallow pretender he will of course be paid by the usual coin current amongst the class—calumny and ridicule, it may be persecution, for the more important the truth the greater the opposition. But let the pamphlet speak for itself:—

“It appears to us, that the very first axiom of our science is erroneous—‘The brain is the *organ* of the mind.’

“Mr. Combe states, ‘We do not in this life know mind as one entity and body as another, but we are acquainted only with the compound existence of mind and body, which act constantly together, and are so intimately connected that every state of the mind involves a corresponding state of certain corporeal organs, and every state of these organs involves a certain condition of the mind.’

“A similar doctrine we shall find inculcated by almost all writers on cerebral physiology.

“This is mere assumption. We boast that our science is purely inductive, and yet in the enunciation of our axioms we assume a position which all our facts tend to disprove. To evade the charge of materialism, we content ourselves with stating that the immaterial makes use of the material to show forth its powers. What is the result of this? We have the man of theory and believer in spiritualism, quarrelling with the man of fact and supporter of materialism. We have two par-

ties: the one asserting that man possesses a *spirit* superadded to but not inherent in brain—added to it, yet having no necessary connection with it—producing material changes yet immaterial—destitute of any of the known properties of matter—in fact, an *immaterial something*, which in one word means *nothing*, producing all the cerebral functions of man, yet not localised, not susceptible of proof; the other party contending that the belief in spiritualism fetters and ties down physiological investigation—that man's intellect is prostrated by the domination of metaphysical speculation—that we have no evidence of the existence of an *essence*, and that organised matter is all that is requisite to produce the multitudinous manifestations of human and brute cerebrations.

The concluding sentiment is still more strongly enunciated, in the following expression:—

“*We contend that mind has but an imaginary existence*—that we have to consider matter only.”

A more estimable contribution to phrenological and mental science generally does not exist, and it will fully repay not only perusal but study.

T. P.

#### A SCOURGE FOR THE GOD-MONGERS.

“We'll lash the rascals naked through the world.”

LIKE produces like. By the fruits you may know the tree. From the holy biblical tree are abundantly displayed the fruits of Christian loving kindness. The upas tree of christianity has produced by its pestilential miasma hecatombs of victims. “Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land,” say its expounders. Right, it is the leaven of christianity that fouls and ferments the whole mass. SOUTHWELL, HOLYOAKE, and the ADAMSES know it full well. They are “practical men.” They know by experience what it is to slake the Christians' thirst for vengeance. They feel what it is to be the last stimulants to the palled and jaded appetites of the bigot god-believers. They have discovered what it is to be made a peace-offering on the altar of the three-headed Cerberus-god. Christians set a watch on them—Christians informed against them—Christians prejudiced the public mind against them, falsified, slandered, and defamed them—Christians instituted a mock trial, governed by mock laws—Christians surrounded them by legal fictions! By Christian pay were the hireling lawyers retained—by Christian witnessess confronted—by Christian scribes misrepresented—by Christian juries found guilty—by Christian judges condemned!

Whence is this complicated machinery of cunning, fraud, force, meanness, espionage, tyranny, ignorance, and insolence? Open

the Jew-begotten bible, peruse the Jew-rejected gospel. In that “revoltingly odious Jew production called bible,” you will find a key to these and all similar enormities. Through the mind-enslaving influence of this vile spawn of an accursed priesthood men are made the ready tools of churches, courts, and factions. God-worship, like party, is the “madness of many for the gain of the few.”

No crime in the calendar of vice has long lacked a votary among the blood-stained followers of god-priests and priest-gods. The illustrious in immorality, those who have been execrated in heathen records as prodigals in vice—the Neros, Caligulas, and Dominitans of classic page, hide their diminished heads, and crouch humiliated before the superior genius for turpitude of the favourites of god. The “Newgate Calendar” of modern times is innocence compared with the Newgate calendar of the Jew-book. A great nation should never engage in a little war, so the great rascals of holy writ would scorn to meddle with minor peccadilloes. Old sins exhausted, they imagined new. The old, worn-out, and beaten track of crime had lost its charms. They sighed for new realms of vice, as for the “flesh-pots of Egypt.” The ordinary gratification of a wholesome appetite ceased to attract. The stews and way-side harlots lost their power of pleasing. Horrid self-pollutions, a loathsome intercourse, like with like, sprang up, which makes the imagination recoil and the flesh creep to comment upon! Unsated still with their abominations these god-led miscreants traversed the bounds of all preconceived impurities. The numerous varieties of filthy commerce were even now found insufficient for the truculent goddites. By these god-governed, priest-led pietists only, in their disgusting records alone, do we learn the horrors that the most prurient imaginations of modern days would not even have conceived. This pattern people it was who descended to the region of the brute species, instigated by those monstrous lusts, to gratify which all other imaginable devices had failed. A precious example of a chosen people, *they*—a notable specimen of a glorious godship, *he*. “Sure such a pair were never seen.”

A holy ghost in the form of a pigeon, impregnating a human virgin, producing a man-god or a god-man by the intercourse, co-eternal with himself, the same as himself, sitting at his own right hand, co-equal with himself and the pigeon—yet not one god, and one man, and one pigeon, nor three gods, nor three men, nor three pigeons—but one god; inseparable yet separated; indivisible yet divided; infinite yet sitting on a cloud; eternal yet begotten, suckled, and crucified; spiritual yet sweating blood;\* incomprehensible yet

\* Let us suppose a Lord Popdoodle, or a Sir Dillberry Diddle, who had hurried to be in time at a grand dinner-party of corinthians of the highest class,

expounded every seventh day by myriads of black-coated, red-coated, blue-coated, petticoated, surpliced, breeched, and turbaned plundering, hypocritical, bloodsucking, godly impostors!

Jehovah as a pigeon with the virgin, Jupiter as a swan with Leda! Pah! What filthy incongruities the goddesses conjure up. The heathen mythology we laugh at or admire—it is no more. The Christian mythology we loath and detest—it is yet current. A stimulating, spirit-stirring fact is yet to be proclaimed. The god idea has sustained a terrific shock!

The JEW-GOD has been hurled from the clouds; pulled out of the “burning bush;” his “glory” has been stript from him; his face no more shines;” his loins no more have the “colour of amber,” the “appearance of fire” and “brightness round about;” his flaming “sword” is drawn from between his teeth; his “arm” is no more “stretched” out; his “back parts” are as mysterious and invisible as all his other parts. He is dethroned, he is a by-word, an impotent phantasm, conjured up by swindling priests to bully, amuse, or delude addle-pated gapers! The puppet destroyed, the pence will no longer jingle in the money-box.

The CHRIST-GOD has been smothered in his swaddling clothes; discomfited in the temple with the doctors; treadwheeled for stealing the wheat and the donkey; confuted in the doctrines of self-prostration and passive obedience. The Christ-god has been stript of his title and his cross; has been denied his identity, and deprived of a local habitation and a name. He has been bereft of his virgin mother, of his heavenly father, and of his ghostly begetter. The remaining chance of historical personality, by concubinage, bastardy, or the peculiar Jew crime, commerce with brutes, has been removed. The Jew-Christ has given way to the Brahminical-Christ. There remains but a name, *vox et præterea nihil*. What former doughty and matter-of-fact historians left unfinished Strauss has completed. The Christ-god is demolished, and a finishing-stroke put to his bombastical and mischievous pretences.

The HOLY-GHOST-GOD has lost his reputation, no decent saint would be seen in his company, his character is clean gone. Seducing an innocent girl is bad enough, but the licentious libertinism of corrupting the carpenter's wife, and the unbounded impudence of swearing she was a virgin after being “in the straw,” is beginning to be fully understood and appreciated. The Unitarians wont hear mention of his name. The holy-

should arrive in a state of perspiration, wiping his phiz, and exclaiming that he was in a *bloody sweat*, what a consternation and turning up of eyes it would occasion, with the stamp of downright blackguard on his character for ever after.—*Yuhoo*.

ghost god is burked by them still more unceremoniously than the Christ-god. With many Christians of the first water he is becoming quite unfashionable. In the upper regions (no matter where I got the news) such is the state of public opinion, that he has been obliged to cage with Virgil's unclean birds, and if by accident he should ever come within eye-shot of St. Agnes, he is compelled to hop off with his head under his wing. Our own dear grauny, *Herald*, would blush to her very boddice, her time-honoured visage would change from dusky yellow to brownish red were the doings of the Jew girl and holy pigeon transferred to an English ecclesiastical court, and an action for *crim. con.* were brought by Joseph, the carpenter, against “god the holy ghost.” So much for the holy ghost and his morality!

The fact is, the whole firm is becoming bankrupt, God, Christ, Ghost, and Co., and must speedily be erased from our mythological directory, as they have already been expunged from the pages of *Reason*, whose *Oracle* alone shall henceforth be consulted.

I have another rod in pickle at their service next week. M. Q. R.

## THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XXIII.

(Continued from page 295.)

THE class *reptilia*, or the next but one in which we find man, presents a tolerably perfect form of skeleton. In the anterior extremity of the chelonian (tortoises and turtles) we distinguish scapula, and clavicle, united by sutures, or seams (of these there are three called true, from having serrated or jagged edges, and two called false or squamous sutures, from the bones which form them, over-lapping each other, as in the scales of fishes). There are also carpal and metacarpal bones, and phalanges of the thumb and fingers. The femur, or thigh-bone, presents indications of trochanters, as in man (to run or roll, a process of the thigh bone, the muscles of which run a roll).

The skeleton of the ophidia (serpents) consists of little more than a vertebral column, possessing such a degree of mobility as enables them to creep with speed along the surface, to spring into the air, to climb trees, and to combat with and conquer their prey. The vertebræ are more numerous in this than in any other class of animals, being 49 in the blind worm, 201 in the rattle-snake, and 316 in the coluber natrix. The ribs extend from the atlas to the anus, and are 32 pairs in the blind worm, 175 in the rattle-snake, and 204 in the coluber natrix. They are all false, there being no rudiment of sternum, or breast bone, to which the true ribs in man are joined. In the blind worm only are faint traces of shoulder and pelvis.

In the sauria (lizards) we meet with a more perfect development of skeleton than in the last, as they possess a sternum, a scapula, and pelvic apparatus. The humerus is expanded at its extremities, the same form as in man. In the skeletons of the crocodiles of the Nile, alligators, and other reptiles that swim by lateral movements of a muscular tail and long webbed feet, their long bones are filled with a thin oily matter.

The muscles of the head are strong; and in the rattle-snake and others, a portion of the temporal extends forward to embrace the poison-gland, and force its secretion into the perforated fang. A rudiment of diaphragm (the transverse muscle which separates the thorax from the abdomen) may be perceived in the dragons and geckos; and in the prehensile tongue of the chameleon there resides a beautiful muscular apparatus which governs its stealthy movements in obtaining his food, and as Sir C. Bell aptly describes it, he lies more still than the dead leaf, his skin is like the bark of a tree, and takes the hue of surrounding objects. Whilst other animals have excitement conforming to their rapid motions, the shrivelled face of the chameleon hardly indicates life; the eyelids are scarcely parted; he protrudes his tongue with a motion so imperceptible towards the insect, that it is touched and caught more certainly than by the most lively action. In the chelonia, the muscles of the extremities together with those of the shoulders and pelvis are well marked, whilst those of the jaws, lips, and chest are almost wholly absent.

In this class of animals we perceive a still higher grade of development than was met with in the amphibia; the ventricle is partly divided by a septum (a hedge, the fleshy substance which divides the right and left ventricles of the heart) into two compartments corresponding in most particulars to the two ventricles of warm-blooded animals. In some the septum is so imperfect as to be incapable of preventing the admixture of the blood derived from both auricles. In others, however, as the crocodile, the ventricles are separated completely, or communicate by a small orifice provided with a valve which prevents the blood passing from one compartment to the other. In fact, the heart in this singular animal is double, as in the higher vertebrata, so that the venous blood returned to the right auricle, passes from the right ventricle through the pulmonary artery to the lungs, while the pure blood returned from this organ to the left auricle is directed from the left ventricular compartment through the systemic arteries. It is curious, however, that in the whole of this class the descending aorta is formed by the union of two branches, the right branch arises from

the left ventricular compartment, consequently carries pure, or nearly pure blood, which it distributes to the head, neck, chest, and upper extremities. The left branch, on the contrary, arises either from the right ventricular compartment, or what is tantamount to it, from the pulmonary artery. It is obvious, then, that the descending aorta carries a mixed quality of blood to the parts it supplies; but it is interesting to observe, that previous to the junction of the two aortic arches, the left gives off the *coelix* (the belly, the name of an artery in the abdomen) axis which supplies the entire alimentary canal and digestive organs with venous blood. In the turtle, lizard, and some serpents, where the septum ventriculorum is imperfect, the pulmonary artery and aorta at once carry mixed blood, and in some of the chelonia, as the tortoise, the existence of arterial channels ensures a more complete mixture of venous and arterial blood.

In lizards and serpents the lung is a mere cavity with cellular walls, having perforations which communicate with the neighbouring cells. Turtles have a more complicated structure approaching that of warm-blooded animals.

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## CHRISTIANITY AGAINST ATHEISM.

### *Carlile versus Southwell.*

I HAVE somewhere read that there are three conditions of man in which he should not be held too closely responsible for his words and deeds, one of them I remember is when he is in prison, the other two were, if my memory be accurate, when hungry, and when mad. CHARLES SOUTHWELL is a prisoner. My esteem for him began with that circumstance. My christianity has led me to visit him in prison, and my passion with him is to convert him from atheism. I find him with a mistaken conceit that no man has avowed atheism before himself. I have been such a fool before him, and I had before him brought hundreds, perhaps thousands, to the same folly. I am wiser and renounce it, honest, I will not say, but as honest, and I am a Christian, and HOLYOAKE is a Christian, but I will not offend Charles Southwell nor the truth by calling him a Christian. The time is not yet come for that, for it I am in hope labouring. I was to him the herald of his published unchristian private letter, and I thought I saw a blush of smitten conscience, and a complaint that it was published. But I remembered that he was not yet a Christian, and I was not angry.

Christianity is not jesuitry. Christianity is a principle and a science, atheism is not. Christianity is the principle of human morals, founded upon the sciences of the natural and

spiritual worlds. Physi-theism is no science, nor can its negation be scientific. Science and superstition are two principles of the human mind, the one of truth the other of error. Atheism belongs to neither, it is neither active science nor active superstition. When theism may be superstition its atheism may be science; but when the theism is science as in my case, any general abstract of atheism must be superstition, or a word without a meaning.

Need more be said about this "splutter and clatter" of god? If Sir Robert Peel will liberate Southwell, I will soon cure him of his atheism in public discussion. He may, if he like, knock his brains out against my head in discussion. Of the nonsense of socialism he has been cured, it is my task to cure him of the nonsense of atheism. This I have undertaken, and this I will accomplish when he ceases to be a prisoner.

RICHARD CARLILE.

Gloucester Gaol,  
September 24th, 1842.

MY DEAR C.—In my domain it is easier to take the cholera than a newspaper, for the portals of politics are more securely guarded than those of pestilence. As far as the press is concerned I am kept alike ignorant of the compliments of my friends, and the calumnies of my enemies. But having learned through a correspondent who inquires how I like my new cognomen of Christian, that my friend Mr. Carlile, has bestowed upon me that blessed sobriquet; I am anxious to show you how highly I estimate the bible.

By way of introduction, and to prevent misunderstanding, a few remarks upon Mr. Carlile are necessary. Since first becoming acquainted with the great services rendered by that gentleman to the cause of mental liberty, I have entertained the highest esteem for his character and merits, and whatever his subsequent conduct may be, my appreciation of what he *has* done will remain unaltered. His present plan of proceeding is, no doubt, founded on a deliberate conviction of its utility. Its being (as it certainly is) the antipodes of *my* taste, is no presumptive argument against its value. Mr. Carlile gives to scripture a scientific interpretation. In my opinion, the bible is unworthy the compliment, and science is polluted by its contact with religion. It is true the scriptures will bear a scientific interpretation as they have the thousand and one with which we are already cursed. But Mr. C.'s interpretation has the merit of being directly opposite to all those now current so that when he makes a convert, men cannot help seeing that the story of the *Bean Stalk* would answer the purpose of the pentateuch, and the tale of *Cinderella* that of the gospels,

without morality or intelligence being affected thereby. The good I see in Mr. C.'s philosophy is, that it makes these facts so plain that he who runs may read them.

The natural consequence of Mr. Carlile's plan is the retention of all old names under new ideas, and hence he makes me I know not what, when, according to his dictionary of terms, he styles me a Christian. Probably, he confers upon me a benefit, though one somewhat incomprehensible. But when he asserts, as I am told he has, that I am a "better Christian than Justice Erskine," he does me a positive harm and inflicts upon me public disgrace. In the opinion of some men that judge's "religion is his vice." To say, then, that I am a better Christian than he, is to say I *am more vicious*. Erskine sentenced Mr. Adams to imprisonment for a libel on christianity for the same reason that a century ago he would have punished him for a libel on witchcraft. The bible Erskine affects to reverence says, that "for every *idle* word men shall speak they must give an account in the day of judgment;" and he sentenced me to six months' imprisonment because I did not tell a *wilful* and *public lie*. The very name of Christian has become synonymous with all that is mentally imbecile and morally infamous. It is because Christians feel that their system is *false* that they imprison men on account of opinion. I own neither their religion nor their morality, and should blush to draw my principles from the polluted sources whence theirs arise. Hence I cannot quietly be stigmatised as a Christian, nor willingly receive that as a compliment from a friend, which would be the worst insult of an enemy.

With some people the name of Christian is inviting. But what can render it so in the nineteenth century? On what earthly or heavenly ground is it even tolerable? Christianity is called by some silly, or sadly mistaken people, moralising—humanising—civilising! Yet the history of the English nation shows its professors to have ever been the subtlest deceivers. Where then is its morality? Christians have manifested more barbarity and remorseless ferocity than any other men. Are these the exponents of its humanity? Christianity itself co-existed with the ignorance of the darkest ages, and laboured hard to conserve it by guarding with spiritual thunders the grossest stupidity, and continues to this day the deadly foe of truth and intelligence. Admirable proofs of its civilization! Introduced by Saint Augustine with fraud, it has been perpetuated ever since only by the dungeon and the sword!

It is recorded by a great historian, that Henry II. pleaded his *innocence* of a crime charged upon him; his total ignorance of

the fact was of no avail; he was *sufficiently guilty* if the church thought proper to esteem him such. The rampant spirit of piety is not more just in our day. It is not enough that blasphemy is an *impossible* crime, it is sufficient that the clergy assume it to be committable, and forthwith men and women are dragged from their homes and thrust into dungeons to expiate for the offence. Verily, Christians are an amiable race, and their name an acquisition devoutly to be desired.

It is an oft repeated remark of Shakspeare, that some men are born great—some achieve greatness—and some have it thrust upon them. I had the misfortune to be born a Christian—it has been my achievement to throw off that degradation—and I protest against its being thrust upon me.

I again repeat, I make not my opinions a standard for others. Any man may call himself a Christian who pleases. His conduct will neither induce my imitation, nor his *taste* excite my envy. In calling me so, Mr. Carlile may mean something very good, though I cannot make it out. I know his intention is kind, and while his motive merits my respect, the title applied to me does not suit my fancy. Yours truly,

G. JACOB HOLYOAKE.

THE WORTH OF MAN.

(Concluded.)

THE second assumption is a *divine* author of man; Did the writer of this ever imagine a divine author of a louse? Man! man! man! it seems has ever been and continues to be the burden of the song. "Did the divine author of his being contemplate such a restriction of moral law in breathing life and intellect into his frame?" What! did moral law precede the breathing of life and intellect, or is the gift of moral law included as a necessary result of the breathing of life and intellect? If the latter, then other animals have a moral law, as I shall presently show, on the authority of Cuvier, for they have life and intellect breathed into them. Human nature knows nothing of the term moral law, human society may—who ever heard of a pack of dogs or a stud of horses violating a moral law? No one—therefore the term moral law is of human invention for human purposes but equally applicable to all animals having life and intellect. "Was he formed by the creator only to fulfil an animal destiny and to perform animal duties at the expense of every nobler gift with which nature has so bountiously supplied him?" I know of no noble gift in man which is not possessed by all animals, the faculties of thinking, reflecting, remembering, judging, &c. But do not these *depend* wholly and solely upon the animal organisation? Certainly they do, without which they would be either inoperative or non-existent—why then noble? About as noble as the so-called aristocracy of the country, *depending* for sustenance and support, most parasitically, upon the toil and blood of the industrious labourer. Why, it is attaching more value to the shadow than to the

substance. The nobler gifts, I presume, alluded to are abundantly manifest in the so-called inferior animals, witness the elephant, dog, horse, bee, &c. Have not these the so-called nobler gifts of nature not only sufficient for their physical but also for their intellectual wants? Is it to supply a physical want that the song-bird warbles its pleasing notes the live long day? Does not the bird, the beaver, the bee, display intelligence suitable to their capacities in the construction of their homes—what does man do more than act according to his capacity and his wants? "For what purpose has he been endowed with senses, feelings, and mental organs?" Are not the so *mis*-called inferior animals similarly endowed, have they not senses, feelings, and mental organs? Surely they have, and apply them most rationally too.

I shall now quit this writer and give the extract from Cuvier, mentioned above. He says—"The most perfect animals are infinitely below man in respect to the degrees of their intellectual faculties, but it is, nevertheless, certain that their understandings perform operations of the same kind. They move in consequence of sensations received, they are susceptible of lasting affections, and they acquire, by experience, a certain knowledge of external things sufficient to regulate their motions, by actually foreseeing their consequences, and independent of immediate pain or pleasure. When domesticated they feel their subordination, they know that the being who punishes them may refrain from doing so if he will, and they assume before him a supplicating air when conscious of guilt or fearful of his anger. The society of man either corrupts or improves them, they are susceptible of emulation and jealousy, and though possessed among themselves of a natural language capable of expressing the sensations of the moment, they acquire from man a knowledge of the much more complicated language through which he makes known his pleasure and urges them to execute it. We perceive, in fact, a certain degree of reason in the higher animal, and consequences resulting from its use and abuse similar to those observed in man. The degree of their intelligence is not far different from that possessed by the infant mind before it has learned to speak."

Whoever yet that has taken the subject in hand, but set out with the assumption that he was perfectly qualified to judge, and what has been the standard wherewith to test the worth and importance of animal life? Why man, of course, as the paragon of animals assumes the post of honour. He has constituted himself the standard, but does he not always proceed in the inquiry with foregone conclusions, and does he not always make his inferences square with such conclusions? Invariably so, verbally or implied. You may argue learnedly and logically on the subtleties of metaphysics, and your readers may acknowledge the force of your reasonings, but they cannot shake off absolutely the idea of a real and personal deity while they retain a belief in their own superior importance in the scale of natural productions. This erroneous belief, let us hope, will ere long make its exit from the stage of controversy in company with that trinity of incomprehensibles, a personal god, a future state, and the immor-

talities of the human soul. These, like their prototypes on the pantomimic stage, have played their tricks too long at man's expense, to live in harmony with him in the new state of existence to which he is fast hastening. They have too long, like their symbol in the pantomimic, made sport of their victim, they have robbed, insulted, and abused him beyond the point of human endurance. They have decoyed him with their heavenly bait into a labyrinth of error, and have scourged him for obtaining the clue with which to extricate himself from their toils. They have dogged his every step with persevering malignancy, they have brought into play every frightful engine of terror their malice could devise to arrest his course, but despite their every effort man has held steadily on his way, and aided by the lamp of reason he is beginning to emerge from the gloomy shades of superstitious ignorance into the bright meridian day of enlightened scientific knowledge. He is fast outstripping the persecuting enemy of human progress, he will no longer be deluded by the priestly promises of prospective rewards, nor dread the threatening of priestly punishment, firm in the conviction that human means will work out human redemption he will attend to the dictates of human reason to enable him to accomplish so desirable an end.

CHARLES DENT.

PERSECUTION.

(From the Cheltenham Free Press.)

WE should have thought that when the "gentlemen" of the *Chronicle* had entrapped a poor man into selling an illegal pamphlet, and safely housed him for a month in Gloucester gaol for that offence, they would have rested satisfied. But we were mistaken in our anticipations. Such tigers are not so easily satiated. One of that respectable fraternity thus vented his spleen last Thursday against those gentlemen who stepped forward to rescue from starvation those persons who were accustomed to depend upon ADAMS for support :—

A correspondent, singing himself "J.B." wishes to be informed who the guardians were that proposed 9s. a week to Adams's wife? We have no method of ascertaining the precise fact, but if our memory be correct, we believe the *Free Press* announced that it was the act of Mr. Hollis and J. Nash Belcher, Esq. We decline inserting our correspondent's letter, because no good can result from its publicity. The time of imprisonment was but for one month, we therefore question if these liberal guardians will attempt to continue the payment after Adams's release. If they do, "fair play" must be the result. We see no reason why these guardians of the public purse should award 9s. a week to persons who deny the existence of a god, while those who believe there is an almighty ruler, are doomed to subsist upon a paltry 2s. 6d., and in some instances upon 1s. a week. Well may our correspondent exclaim, "Oh! shame, ye guardians of the public purse!"

Well may christianity blush for the deeds done in her name, when professors of her holy faith exhibit a spirit so opposed to reli-

gion and to humanity. The false-hearted writer of that notice knew full well that it was not for Mrs. Adams's sustenance alone that the sum of 9s. was granted, but for the support of herself, her *five children*, and of another boy, who, being bereft of his parents, was taken by Adams under his protection. Does this "friend of the poor" think that there was any squandering of the people's money in the allowance of TWOPENCE per day for the support of each of these? His remarks about the allowance given to others have nothing to do with the question. If he can produce any case in which the guardians have not allowed sufficient, let the matter be properly investigated, but let each case be judged on its own merits. It should be remembered that what is called full out-door relief is 2s. 6d. a week for each person. The insinuations against the gentlemen who proposed and seconded the grant are too contemptible to be noticed. That scribe should recollect that it is only a few weeks since he had to eat his own words in respect to a similar insinuation made against one of them. There is one thing we rejoice to know. This is not the effusion of a fanatic, but of an hireling. The "tender mercies" of a bigot are cruelty itself, but what are they to be compared to those of a sycophant, who thinks that persecution will be pleasing to his patron?

"We have seen slavery and ignorance blasting under the guidance of priestly hands, millions upon millions of our race, and making melancholy the fairest portions of the earth. We have listened to sighs and the dropping of tears, to the voice of despair, and the agonies of torture and death; we have entered dungeons, and found captives wasted to skeletons with the years of their solitary endurance; we have listened to their faint whispers, and have found that they uttered the cruelties of priests. We have stumbled upon midnight tribunals, and seen men stretched upon racks, torn piecemeal with fiery pincers, or plunged into endless darkness by the lancing of their eyes. And upon asking whose actions were these—we were answered 'THE PRIESTS.'"—Howitt.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

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## THE HEALTHIAN.

A SMALL periodical of this title is monthly issued, and certainly few papers extant can boast of *healthier* tones of thought. It is impossible to rise from its perusal without prospect of the accession of physical, and certain acquisition of moral strength. Its pages are quite refreshing. Seen through the glasses of the *Healthian* apples appear temptingly blooming as when they hung in Eden's fabled gardens; water, pure as the sea gem, and of a more delicious *gout* than the oft sung nectar of the gods.

The work is devoted to the advocacy of simplicity in diet, not from selfish but philosophical considerations, until the conclusion is forced upon the reader, that if the food recommended be but half as nutritious as its theory seems reasonable, henceforth none other should be eaten.

The cardinal idea dwelt upon, is the invaluable one of self-reform; which strongly recommends itself to the readers of the *Oracle*: for they who aim at pouring cleansing streams through the augean stables of religion, would wisely, if not already done, eat a few refreshing sluices in the direction of home. He would be a bold man who should essay to correct the vices of the age, but any one may take the next bold step to it, viz., that of refusing in his conduct to imitate them. He may be an enthusiast who expects to reform mankind, but he fails in his first and most important duty who neglects to reform himself. Great men are often the slaves of little vices. As that charity which is worth anything must begin at home, so must that reform which is to be potent and permanent. It is unfortunately a well-founded reproach that political reformers appear better managers of the state than of their own households. I have little faith in that love of ALL mankind which enables its possessor to neglect that portion having the strongest and holiest claims upon him. Private corruption is no argument against public reformation, but an insuperable obstacle in the way of its perfection. Individual accelerates general amendment. And as of all policy, that is most sound which secures the greatest immediate benefit without endangering the chances of future good; so is self-reform, of all others, the most valuable, since it is immediately beneficial to the individual, and forms the only secure foundation of permanent public improvement. Considerations of this useful kind are discussed in the pages of the *Healthian*, and supported on THE WHOLE with sound and healthy reasoning worthy of invigoration's self. Nor are the instances of failure uninstrucive; as the following will show.

Here and there in the work dialogues are

interspersed, in which the most dogged objections urged against vegetable, as opposed to animal eating, arise from persons who cannot but think "it strange that an infinitely wise creator should permit his creatures so universally to feed more or less on flesh, if it were unnecessary to health." One clever genius contends that vegetable eating would make us "run counter to the very first command in scripture, and as it were fly in the face of god himself." As illuck would have it, the editor has a scripture and god of his own to support, and so can never meet these objections of the goddists; and it is only by evasion, or a species of intellectual cajolery quite unworthy the cause and disgraceful to the general soundness of the reasoning employed, that the Pythagorean supports his position. When the objector cries "we must not run counter to the first command in scripture and fly in god's face," instead of finding all references to scriptures and gods boldly set aside, and the question debated on its true grounds, health and utility, the reply is, "whoever dares to disobey god or his commands, must expect to experience the painful consequences, which are as sure as the commission of the disobedient act." This answer, if honestly made, confirms the objections it was intended to refute. But the editor's god is *good* or *love*, or some other conception; and this dissembling being unremarked by the opponent, there follows a contemptible triumph of religious legerdemain. All this is utterly unworthy of the noble subject discussed, and it is gratifying to find such subterfuges nowhere employed except where religion is in the way. Disingenuousness belongs only to the gods. G. J. H.

*Dialogue between a Chartist Prisoner and the Chaplain of the Prison.*

*Chaplain*—What is your name? *Prisoner*—A.B.

*Chaplain*—How old are you? *Prisoner*—Thirty-one.

*Chaplain*—What is your religion?

*Prisoner*—None! I know it to be an abominable and disgusting imposition upon the credulity of mankind. *Chaplain*—Get away! get away! I'll not hear another word.

Next day the chaplain called on the prisoner and said he had been and asked the governor's leave for the prisoner to stay away from chapel.

*Prisoner*—Very well! I have heard plenty of your doctrines. *Exit Chaplain.*

A Few Friends at the Hall of Science, Worcester, per Mr. Allen, for the assistance of Southwell, Holyoake, &c., 9s.

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Saturday, October 8, 1842.



THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, [PRICE 1D.]  
for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.

Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months’  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

RELIGION.

ALL religions have authorised innumerable crimes. The Jews, intoxicated with the promises of their god, arrogated the right of exterminating whole nations. Relying on the oracles of their god, the Romans, like true robbers, conquered and ravaged the world. The Arabians, encouraged by their divine prophet, carried fire and sword among the Christians and the Idolators. The Christians, under pretext of extending their holy religion, have often deluged both hemispheres with blood.

True religion, as the author of “Good Sense” observes, is indeed the curse of mankind. The struggles to suppress the rising spirit of progression in this religious country at the present moment, evidence the fact that its influence is always on the side of tyranny.

Who does not see in the arrests now taking place the reliance of our tyrant oppressors on the debased intellect of the mass? That they consider themselves accountable to a god alone for the villanous attacks now making on the liberties of man? Would the most despicable of mankind be allowed to trample in the dust the aspirations of liberty, if responsible to the nation instead of the god priests delight to paint? Kings and priests are aware it is easier to deal with gods than men, they know full well that heaven is more indulgent to their crimes than a people who could see through their trickeries. Were the fanatical notions of a world beyond the clouds dispelled from the minds of men, they would in the justness of their anger appeal from the imaginary divine rights of idle vagabonds, to the natural rights of man. Were a nation so enlightened, could they look with any other feelings save those of contempt upon the late farce of a “thanksgiving” to a god for sending monopolists, bishops, and other vampyres a “plentyfull harvest.” When will men open their eyes?

The address to the jury by Judge Tindal at the opening of the special commission at Stafford, clearly shows that the whole complicated machinery of government hangs upon the bigotry of the multitude, but should the

people be trained scientifically, the whole pile of mummery falls to the ground.

“I would, in conclusion (said Judge Tindal), further suggest that the effectual, and only effectual, method of counteracting the attempts of *wicked and designing men to undermine* the principles of the lower classes and to render them *discontented* with the established institutions of the country, is the diffusion of sound religious knowledge (*in which there can be no excess!*) amongst those classes who are the *most exposed* to their attempts, and the educating their children in the *fear* of god, so that all may be taught that obedience to the law of the land and to the government of the country is due, not as a matter of compulsion, but of principle and conscience.”

The heartless, impudent villains, their saviour taught there should be no temporal distinctions. Why does not the god whom they say sanctions the “institutions of the country,” make the “lower” classes contented “in that station in which it has pleased himself to call them?” Why does he not close their eyes to the injustice, tyranny, and vice of his chosen few, the “higher” classes par excellence, in all that is disgusting and inhuman—the miscreants after his own heart—filled with his own holy spirit? Why does he not prevent the pangs of hunger which themselves, their innocent children, and unhappy partners feel? No! their agonizing cries are more sweet to his ears than the music of the spheres, than the fulsome adulations of the winged seraphims and trunkless cherubims, when they twang their jewsharps, and chant “holy, holy, holy lord, god of sabaoth!” What are the ministers of the “poor man’s church” doing, that they leave their especial charge so easy a prey to the machinations of “wicked and designing men?” Read the Newgate calendar! Instead of feeding their master’s flock, they rob and murder them! Instead of watch-dogs to guard them, they are wolves to worry them—and not content with goading them to madness and to the commission of deeds of violence alien to their natural dispositions, they follow to “the death,” and gloat over the consequences to their victims of their own

diabolical conduct! \* Instead of *practising* virtue and honesty, they are committing adultery, whoring, and swindling! Theirs a god of love, of truth, of morality! The liars! He is a "concentration of abominations"—the embodiment of pollution, of cruelty, and of vice! Fit "ministers" of such a master!

Truly has Tindal observed that they dread the "undermining of the principles of the lower classes," when that takes place their system of plunder is ended—their days of wanton rioting in the spoils of the widow and the orphan will cease. After such contemptible jargon, employed by such a person for the purpose of crushing the advocates of an oppressed people, it is obviously the duty of every one to instruct his neighbour in the laws of nature—teaching that physics and not metaphysics must henceforth be his study—that on this earth alone man must seek his true happiness—and that so long as a body of men are set apart for governing, so long will they make absurd laws, unsuited to man's nature. Blind leaders of the blind—quagmires that engulf the victims of their delusion—clogs to the progressors—abandoned and profligate squanderers of a nation's wealth, who say that a god made the world to be the sport of the basest of mankind. Ferocious as their god, they prey on the vitals of those they have duped, and are screened by the religion of Christ, who lays it down as a principle that we must renounce all *defence* of ourselves! The more we consider the detestable nature of religion, the more convinced are we that its sole object is the gratifying the depraved passions of wretches who are a disgrace to the human form, and consider the advice once given to the agricultural labourers of this country very applicable *to all at present*.

"Yours is a state of warfare, and your ground of quarrel the want of the necessaries of life in the midst of abundance. You see hoards of food, and you are starving. You see a government rioting in every sort of luxury and wasteful expenditure, and you, ever ready to labour, cannot find one of the comforts of life. Neither your silence nor your patience has obtained for you the least respectful attention from the government. The more tame you have grown, the more you have been oppressed and despised, the more you have been trampled on; and it is only now that you begin to display your physical as well as moral strength, that your cruel tyrants treat with you and offer terms of pacification. Your demands have been, so far, moderate and just, and any attempt to

stifle them by the threatened severity of the New Administration, will be so wicked as to *justify your resistance even to death, and to life for life!*"—*Carlile*.

Down, then, with kings, priests, and lords!  
T. P.

MORE STRIPES FOR GOD-MONGERY,  
BIBLEISM, AND BIGOTRY,  
AND A SPECIAL PARAGRAPH FOR FRIENDS.

I PROCEED with the castigation of those notorious offenders—the BIBLE, the BIGOT, and the GOD, and will add—A FEW WORDS FOR OUR FRIENDS. A public whipping weekly or thereabouts, will do great service, afford a "wholesome example," and "check the commission of crime." The old Jew-book itself says "spare the rod and spoil the child." It shall swallow its own physis.

The bigot is impervious to reasoning or remonstrance. Draw a parallel, institute a comparison, deduce a conclusion, furnish an illustration not drawn from or supported by his favorite god-book, and his dull eye emits a vacant stare or is lighted up with fierce malignity. I write not to enlighten but to scourge *them*. I write daggers for the sake of SOUTHWELL, HOLYOAKE, and the brave victims to religious persecution. This they can feel, and in giving them a taste of inconvenience, and showing how clever they are in multiplying satire, denunciation, and blasphemy, they may obtain a *great moral lesson*, which if thrown away upon them will influence the larger mob of lookers on, hesitators, and semi-sceptics. On these latter my arguments will have their effect, as those of the various contributors to the *Oracle* have already. It is most gratifying, parenthetically to observe, that our little penny publication is become a powerful engine, and is absolutely creating a public opinion of its own. This the position which I occupy enables me to know more fully than most others. Notwithstanding that Mr. CARLILE's atheistical agitation is over, notwithstanding that this most eminently useful man now considers that his province is to *theise* and *christianise* in his peculiar way and with his peculiar interpretations; despite of all this, I say, a growing atheistic public opinion is gaining ground. The god-notion of every sort must be examined, criticised, analysed, dissected, and exposed in its uselessness, offensiveness, or hideousness, till public scorn and detestation shall banish the cheat for ever. Oh, what a trinity of curses is comprised in the three words—god, bible, and bigot! This trinity, like the old trinity-in-unity, must be crucified. As Voltaire is reported to have said, shall we say, and so shall we act. Our motto too shall be *ecrasez l'infame*, crush the wretch.

Instead of applying it to the half-acknow-

\* The Rev. Benjamin Vale and Mrs. Mary Ann Vale, whose house had been destroyed during the late disturbances, occupied (says a London paper) a prominent position in front of the court at the Stafford Special Commission, during the trial of the unfortunate creatures charged with the offence.

ledged, half-denied, and continually disputed miserable victim and victimiser—Jesus, we will apply it to the old parent profligate, god himself, or rather the god notion. And no god-notion lies more open to the shafts of ridicule, the battery of denunciation, or the assaults of reason than the beautifully inspired ones of the Jew-books, old and new. A strong and striking instance of the pernicious and degrading influence of the Jew-book is the miserable mental vassalage in which its votaries are held. By no other than a religious discipline could an intelligent being, conversant with the elements of numbers, be persuaded that three can be one and one three. In physics, to broach such a proposition would be to call forth ridicule and contempt, in theology it wakes praise and admiration. Tell a *shop* customer that one loaf and one cheese are three loaves and three cheeses, and visions of Bedlam will flit across his brain. Tell a *church* customer that there is a god the father, and a god the son, and a god the holy ghost, and yet that these three are but one, and he will pay you for the information. So great is the difference between physics and theology. The bible slavery is the prolific parent of all other slavery. He who is slave to his bible is readily fitted for the similar degradation of intellectual and moral bondage to society. A pitiable spectacle truly is he who, under the influence of written or oral imposition, creeds, or pretences suffers himself to be severed in sympathy and brotherhood from his fellowmen. Execrable are they who convert the feeling of dislike into the act of persecution. A truly contemptible object is he, who surrounded by all the trappings and appliances of authority, mentally crouches before the superior moral power and courage of the very man who is dragged to his tribunal. This we have seen from the time of Eldon downward. But how shall we find words to express the base delinquency, the foul turpitude of those educated hypocrites who fully aware of the hollow trickeries of the god proclaimers of all kinds, from the Jews to the Mormonites, basely follow in the wake of popular delusion, and instead of stemming the torrent of religious rancour assist in yelling on the bigots to the work of incarceration or blood? Continually do we find men on the bench, at the bar, and performing high political, commercial, or professional functions sullyng their honor and morally debasing themselves by truckling to the vile prejudices that prevail around them. The few public men that stand out as examples of the moral courage so eminently adorning the objects of our special protection, are miserably few. The great and noble work of setting the example and leading the way has been performed by the self-devoted conductors of this publication. They are the true liberators and our satisfaction is intensely

heightened in the knowledge of the noble bands who are ready to advance in the same path.

A high and noble office for us who are free is to succour and protect those who are immured for truth's sake. While we have approved and admired they have energetically acted. The least we can do is to hold out a helping hand. And truly fraternal aid have we received, and generously have numbers come forward whose scanty earnings have been iniquitously abridged by state and church spoliation, social and commercial rapine, and their own public and private beneficence. Mr. Carlile's kind and earnest appeal is worthy of the noble soul that so intrepidly withstood the holy alliance, and triple-power, the foul-power, rogue-power, and robber-power. Yet kindly and sympathetic as it was, I am glad to be able to say, and authoritatively too, that numerous contributions have been received and much assistance has been rendered. The amount, though not adequate to the requirements, may be deemed considerable, if we consider whence it has been principally derived. The stigmatist should be fixed, with some admirable exceptions, on those whose purses are as plethoric as their donations have been scanty. The mammon-worshippers, like all other god worshippers, have had their "hearts hardened" by their idol. The *auri sacra fimes* (how apt the synonyme, *sacred and cursed*), the accursed lust of gold of the Romans, is no less the baulk in our iron commercial days of all human sympathies and tenderness. Whenever goddism comes in at the door, humanity flies out at the window. Whether it be a bible-god or a counting-house-god, the results take a similar direction.

Blood and plunder for the Jew-god; famine and pecculation for the mammon-god. It is a great omission in the Jew-Christian list of god-almighties, "angels and lucifers," to leave out the chiefest of all the idolatries—the mammon idolatry. Be it our task to supply the vacancy. All or none, we say. If they try to force their gods upon us we will help to a few more. We will be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. To the holy Jehovah, the holy Christ, the holy ghost, and the holy virgin, we will add the holy mammon, a much more respectable and respected god in reality in our days than any of the other lot. The lords of the earth and the fat things of the earth with the mammon-power will crush down the sons of labour, the rightful inheritors of the soil, till idolatry ceases. Down then with the god, and the cross, and the altar. Man shall not till then walk erect and stately in the might and grace and dignity and beauty of moral and intellectual and physical perfection. Our work is now being ably and bravely accomplished.

Another yet remains to take the field. An ally is wanted. The *Republican* is yet to be

added to the *Atheist*. The ATHEIST and REPUBLICAN together will emancipate mankind. Speedily may we see the accomplishment of this alliance. May the "Atheist and Republican" again appear (of the near probability of which event some intimation has been received), and may it carry on with more elevation of thought, strict adherence to principle, accuracy of reasoning, and intrepid energy the war against tyranny and folly. The *Oracle* would, I know, hail its appearance, under able and honest conduct, with delight, as a worthy and powerful coadjutor.

M. Q. R.

THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XXIV.

I AM sorry to hear it said that some of my readers find a difficulty in following me in my latter articles, in consequence of the *technical* terms used therein. This is a difficulty inseparable from the subject, as I proposed to treat it, but I have endeavoured on every occasion to make myself understood by attaching the literal signification to the scientific terms, where I conceived it necessary. By this means I hoped to serve a double purpose: show the reader the points of analogy between himself and other animals, and at the same time enlighten him as to the meaning of the words used by philosophers in describing such parts, the ignorance of which meaning has hitherto kept them from examining the facts daily before their eyes. I will however, as far as in my power, remove the cause for complaint.

In describing the class *aves*, or birds, I shall avail myself of much of the valuable matter contained in an article in the *Cyclopedia of Anatomy and Physiology*," by Mr. Owen. He divides the class into the following orders: 1. Raptores, birds of prey, or raveners; 2. Insores, perchers; 3. Scansores, climbers; 4. Rasores, scratchers; 5. Cursores, coursers; 6. Gallatores, waders; 7. Natatores, swimmers.

The bones of birds are remarkable for being permeated by atmospheric air, for their compact and laminated texture, their white colour, and their fragility, owing to a preponderance of phosphate of lime. The vertebræ are the first bones observed in the development of the osseous system of birds, and of all parts of this system they present the fewest variations. The following is a useful table of the vertebræ of birds, which are divided into cervical (vertebræ of the neck), dorsal (of the back), sacral (the false vertebræ in man, which guards the nerves issuing from the under end of the spinal marrow, defends the back part of the pelvis, and gives origin to the muscles moving the trunk and thigh), and caudal or coccygeal (from os

coccygis, the rump bone in man, which supports the oil gland, and affords a firm basis to the tail feathers.)

Table of the Vertebræ in Birds.

| ORDER RAPTORES. |           |      |       | CURSORES.      |           |      |       |
|-----------------|-----------|------|-------|----------------|-----------|------|-------|
| Species.        | C.        | D.   | S. C. | Species.       | C.        | D.   | S. C. |
| Vulture         | ..13..    | 7..  | 11..7 | Ostrich        | ..18..    | 10.. | 17..9 |
| Eagle           | ....13..  | 8..  | 11..8 | Cassowary      | 16..      | 10.. | 19..7 |
| Sparrow-hk      | 11..      | 8..  | 11..8 | Emeu           | ....19..  | 9..  | 19..9 |
| Kite            | .....12.. | 8..  | 11..8 |                |           |      |       |
| Hawk-owl        | ..11..    | 8..  | 11..8 |                |           |      |       |
| INSESORES.      |           |      |       | GRALLATORES.   |           |      |       |
| Fly-catcher     | 10..      | 8..  | 10..8 | Heron          | ....18..  | 7..  | 10..7 |
| Blackbird       | ..11..    | 8..  | 10..7 | Crane          | ....19..  | 9..  | 12..7 |
| Crow            | .....13.. | 8..  | 13..7 | Spoonbill      | ..17..    | 7..  | 14..8 |
| Magpie          | ....13..  | 8..  | 13..8 | Avoset         | ....14..  | 9..  | 10..8 |
| Jay             | .....12.. | 7..  | 11..8 | Plover         | ....15..  | 8..  | 10..7 |
| Starling        | ..10..    | 8..  | 10..9 | Woodcock       | 18..      | 7..  | 13..8 |
| Bull-finch      | 10..      | 6..  | 11..6 | Curlew         | ....13..  | 8..  | 10..8 |
| Sparrow         | .. 9..    | 9..  | 10..7 | Oyster-catcher | ..12..    | 9..  | 15..7 |
| Goldfinch       | ..11..    | 8..  | 11..8 | Coot           | .....15.. | 10.. | 13..8 |
| Lark            | .....11.. | 9..  | 10..7 | Flamingo       | ..18..    | 7..  | 12..7 |
| Redbreast       | 10..      | 8..  | 10..8 |                |           |      |       |
| Swallow         | ..11..    | 8..  | 11..9 | NATATORES.     |           |      |       |
| Hummingb4       | .. 9..    | 10.. | 8     | Pelican        | ....16..  | 7..  | 14..7 |
| SCANSORES.      |           |      |       | Cormorant      | 16..      | 9..  | 14..8 |
| Woodpeckr       | 12..      | 8..  | 10..9 | Gull           | .....12.. | 8..  | 11..8 |
| Parrot          | ....11..  | 9..  | 11..8 | Catarrhac-     |           |      |       |
| RASORES.        |           |      |       | tes            | ....13..  | 9..  | 13..8 |
| Pigeon          | ....13..  | 7..  | 13..7 | Swan           | ....23..  | 11.. | 14..8 |
| Peacock         | ..14..    | 7..  | 12..8 | Goose          | ....15..  | 10.. | 14..7 |
| Pheasant        | ..13..    | 7..  | 15..5 | Duck           | ....14..  | 8..  | 15..8 |
| Turkey          | ....15..  | 7..  | 10..5 | Sheldrake      | ..16..    | 11.. | 11..9 |
| Crested Cu-     |           |      |       | Merganser      | 15..      | 8..  | 13..7 |
| rassow          | ..15..    | 8..  | 10..7 | Grebe          | ....14..  | 10.. | 13..7 |

The bones of the face correspond in number and position to those of the mammalia, the next class above, especially the order rodentia or gnawers, the rat, &c. There is more uniformity observed in the skulls of birds than in any other class of the vertebræ department. It generally presents the form of a five-sided pyramid, the base represented by the occiput, or back of the cranium, and apex by the bill. Mr. Charles White, in his work upon gradation, has the following remarks upon the form of the skull in birds:

"It is observable that no animal, whether bird or quadruped, that approaches near to man in its faculties or energies, has a flat skull. Lavater, speaking of birds, says, 'Their distinction of character or gradation of passive and active powers, is expressed by the following physiognomical varieties—by the form of the skull: the more flat the skull, the more weak, flexible, tender, and sensible is the character of the animal. This flatness contains less, and resists less. By the length breadth, and arching or obliquity of their beaks—and here again we find, that where there is arching, there is a greater extent of docility and capacity.' The goose, which has a flat skull and a flat bill, has so little sense, that its name is proverbial; but the ostrich, which has the flattest skull and the flattest bill of all birds, is of all animals, whether birds or quadrupeds, the most foolish, having no sense that we know of in perfection. It seems neither to have the faculty of smell, nor of taste, as it makes no dis-

tinctions in food, but will eat its own excrements, or iron nails indiscriminately. None of the drawings which I have seen of this bird are correct; the head being much flatter than they represent, and the eyes much larger, and placed higher in the head. In short, it has the flattest skull of any animal we are acquainted with, the smallest head in proportion to the body, and the largest eyes in proportion to the head; so that, owing to the smallness and flatness of the head, and the size of the bony sockets which contain such large eyes, there is very little room for *cerebrum* or *cerebellum*.

“The parrot (*psittacus*) which is of the order of *picæ*, or pies (See Kerr’s Linnæus), is a genus of birds remarkable for the hookedness of their bills, for the largeness of their heads, and also of the tongue, which is blunt, rounded, and fleshy. This genus contains numerous species (according to Linnæus, one hundred and sixty-six) and seems to form a tribe peculiarly distinguished from all others. It may, however, be considered as holding the same place among birds as that of apes and monkeys does amongst the *mammalia*. The natural voice of parrots is loud, harsh, and unpleasant; but they imitate a variety of sounds, and particularly the human voice, often learning to articulate words with remarkable precision.

“It would be unnecessary to relate particular instances of the great docility of parrots in acquiring speech, as the fact is generally known. But it should not be understood that they are destitute of thought and reflection about what they speak, since many authentic instances might be adduced of having discovered much reflection and discriminative accuracy in the application of their speech to particular occasions. Amongst several well-authenticated particulars which have come to my knowledge, evincing a considerable degree of rationality in parrots, is the following: A respectable dyer in Manchester has for fourteen years been in possession of a parrot which I have seen, and heard speak, of which he gave me an account to the following purport. When hungry, she says, ‘Is there nothing for Poll? Give Poll a bit, Jacky, give Poll a bit.’ And if attention be not paid to her entreaties, she raises her voice, and cries, ‘What the devil, is there nothing for Poll?’ On hearing the voice of a Mr. M., who is in the habit of calling at the house, she immediately cries out, ‘Well, Mr. M. how are you? what news?’ and then laughs heartily. To the dogs she will call out ‘Turk, Turk—Juno, Juno—hic Turk, hic lad, hic rat, shake him there, shake him.’ If they attempt to annoy any passengers, she will cry, ‘Come here, Sirrah! come here Turk! D—n you, come here!’ To the poultry she will call, ‘Chuck

chuck;’ and when assembled about her, she will raise her voice, and say, ‘Shoo, shoo,’ and fright them away again. To the cat she will call out, ‘Puss, puss, poor pussy,’ &c. As soon as she can hear the noise of the cart, and long before she can see it, she begins to call the horses by their names. ‘Come Whitefoot, come Peacock: come lad, come — back — whoop — back — haw.’ When her master is scolding the servants in the dye-house, she runs over her whole vocabulary of words with great rapidity; jumps upon her perch and down again, shakes her head, and evincing many symptoms of extreme agitation, cries, ‘Cannot you mind your business, g—d d—n you?’ In a morning she will say, ‘Take Poll out;’ and when it rains, or the day begins to close, she will call out, ‘Take Poll in.’ This extraordinary parrot will laugh, sing, and cry.

“Dr. Monro says, ‘In one species of bird (the parrot) I long ago remarked that the pupil was affected by the passions of the mind of the animal, independent of the light upon the eye.’—*Monro on the Nervous System*, page 96. Some say, that the tongue of this bird somewhat resembles that of man, and by this conformation they pretend, it is so well qualified to imitate the human speech. But the organs by which these sounds are articulated lie farther down in the throat: and the great mobility of the *os hyoides*, which is remarkable in these birds, contributes very much to produce the effect.

“The raven and the magpie may be taught to speak like the parrot. It is asserted that the raven has been taught to sing a tune like a man. The magpie’s voice is too acute and sharp to imitate the human voice, though it should articulate distinctly.”

The anterior extremity of this class, as in the *mammalia*, consists of shoulder, arm, forearm, and hand.

#### SYMBOLIC WORSHIP.

INITIATORY chapter and re-introduction of the subject, which being of so “*strange and diverting*” a nature has suggested divers curious and fanciful conceits. The very steady and sober reader must forgive the vagaries in anticipation of the profound erudition which will be displayed in ensuing papers.

A VERY curious research, indeed, is that of god-worship and god-signs. Never have fantasies so sublimely absurd, so profoundly ridiculous, so revoltingly odious, so disgustingly filthy, so repulsive, ludicrous, contemptible, humiliating, in fine, so incongruous and chaotic, occupied the mind of men as the department of symbol worship. Invention has run riot, imagination has revelled, caprice and incongruity have seemed

exhausted in the ingenious devices of god-worship, devil-worship, beast-worship, true worship, and "stock-and-stone" worship. Yet still illimitable have been all the symbolical varieties as long as the god idea has continued to possess the mind. The present god ridden generation, in its pseudo-philosophic complacency hugs itself in the notion of superiority in this respect, fancying its refinements and super-refinements, its fine drawn distinctions and metaphysical subtleties entitle it to a much higher place in intellectual advancement than the "benighted" heathen. They sneer at the three-headed dog of the ancients and set up a three-headed god of their own. They decry the naughty tricks of Jove and laud the carnal pranks of the holy ghost. The infernal Pluto, whom they set at naught, is really a much more dignified personage than Old Nick with his horns, hoofs, and tail. A common satyr would make as good a deity. Our modern wisecracks affect to despise old Plutus, the ancient and original god of riches, while they worship Mammon, a counting-house and bill-brokering sort of god, with all their might and main. They have no business to plume themselves on their innovations in these respects, which are in sooth any thing but improvements. The fact is, we are neither more sublime nor more poetical than the goddesses of old, and for variety they beat us hollow. What a pitiful figure god the father, god the son, and god the holy ghost would cut, with the Virgin Mary thrown into the bargain, in presence of the august Juno, the imperial Jove, the incomparable Venus, and the glorious Apollo, and the rest of the radiant host. Our Beelzebub, poor devil, gets not a spoonful of the celestial syllabubs, while Pluto's presence at the festive board would be hailed with celestial acclamation. Then there are the cherubim and seraphim which continually do sing. These little objects must be satisfied with smelling these good things afar off; flapping their little disconsolate wings, while Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Peter and Paul, and the rest of the gang are enjoying themselves. They can't even take a chair at the feast, for alas, poor things! they have no convenience for sitting; what a sad condition compared with that of young loves of the realms of nectar and ambrosia, banqueting, revelling, and inhaling sweet odors—but "comparisons are odorous," as *Mrs. Malaprop* says. The new gods really haven't a chance, they must give in and acknowledge themselves beaten. It is only the mole-eyed god-mongers of this perverse generation that cry their idols up as the mightiest and grandest gods that ever were invented. How our grandsons and great grandsons (for it is only a matter of time) will laugh when

they come to compare notes. A plague on both your houses, will they say. They will kick the gods to the devil, the devil they'll take by the horns, and hell will end in a bottle of smoke. But after all the rows and disturbances, and dungeonings, and stripings, and wastings that we have given and received in our pious phrenzies to "protect" our respective gods, it will be pretty certain that these ragings and eccentricities will become historic wonders to very babes. The theological department of their museums will exhibit most extraordinary specimens; and the monstrosities of the god and devil sections will excite amazing interest.

Etzler\* has some diverting speculations concerning the museums of a forthcoming and less benighted generation. He pictures a mama or papa thus describing the various antiquities: "See here a coat of many coloured patches sown together in a particular manner, there are some hundred thousand stitches in this little coat, it is made of many thousand fine threads and protects neither against wet nor heat, and very poorly against cold; it rather soaks the water in. They were made only for show, and most people were eager to possess several of such coats, of different colours and make, for different occasions, and thought themselves only then to be decent people." Suppose we were to speculate in like manner. We might suppose the attention directed to the theological department. The diversified pictures and images of gods and goddesses, angels and devils, and other supernaturals, might be the subjects of explanation. In Etzler's museum of the future, we might suppose among the curious antique specimens of symbol worship, such a one as the following. In a chrysalis vase hermetically closed might be seen a small wafer. Observe, would a parent say to his children, one of the multifarious forms of deity. This was in vogue for ages after the spread of a religion called christianity, and for some years even after the introduction of steam-navigation, railway-locomotion, electrical telegraphs, and other clever but superceded inventions. A numerous and widely spread section of the sect called Christians, believed that the bits of bread, such as the enclosed specimen, were by a particular process converted into bits of divinity. It was considered a paramount duty by this variety of the god-believers of those days to swallow monthly, or at shorter intervals, such bits of bread, which being at one and the same time real flesh and blood, and real god almighty to boot, became incorporated with and helped to regenerate the sinners whose ancestors had offended

\* In his "Paradise within the reach of all," a work of the highest genius and worthy of universal perusal.

the said god-almighty 6000 years before, for having eaten an apple which he wanted to keep for himself. After making and baking their own god and serving him up for luncheon or supper, these godly people used to roast any body who denied that the baked form was the true form. A tremendous persecution was likewise instituted by those who asserted that god-almighty was three-headed, and those who maintained that he was only one-headed. And the favourite mode of determining the controversy was by the pillory, the whip, or the stake. As late even as the year 1842, of their Christian era, SOUTHWELL, HOLYOAKE, and others, conductors of an ante-theistical and penny publication, were imprisoned and fined (that is, made to pay a certain number of pieces of yellow metal, which many have asserted to be the true gods after all), because they contended that, in their opinion, there was no god at all, either three-headed or one-headed. Such were the extraordinary vagaries of people who called themselves enlightened, and who sent missionaries to the antipodes to persuade them, bully them, or buy them into an exchange of the god-notion of one hemisphere for the god-notion of another hemisphere.

M. Q. R.

#### WHY ARE WE ATHEISTS?

MR. EDITOR. — “A man of feeling,” as I am facetiously termed by W. C., is not, I presume, in his opinion, a man of *sensibility*, or he would not after the castigation administered in No. 40, have kept me seven mortal days on the *qui vive* for its conclusion. Instead of a man of *feeling*, he must have taken me for a man of *callousness*, for Col. Crockett, or Baron Trenck.

W. C.’s first point is, that the discovery of want of feeling in him may induce me to hate atheism, as a similar cause has led me to detest christianity. I believe the idea intended to be conveyed in his remark is correct, but its verbiage is liable to mislead. My discarding christianity arose (as I have stated) from perceiving *flagrant contradictions* in its *fundamental* doctrines, and when I perceive the same in atheism, or any other system, I shall reject it also.

I must acknowledge having mistaken his remarks to which my former letter referred. I perceive he admits that the contemplation of human wretchedness may awaken atheism. His words are—“the inference to be drawn from my reply to Mr. Mackintosh, in No. 36, is that I believed such Atheists might be.” But, as if sceptical of the very admission thus made, he indulges in a very ingenious dissertation on the *improbability* of disbelief in a god being produced, as the world goes, by a *single case* of religious persecution. This is his theme through many paragraphs.

He asks, was I conscious of no misery, had I witnessed no religious oppression prior to November 1841? Had I never read the atrocities of god’s chosen people recorded in the Jew-book? Had

Bartholomew, Peterloo, Rathcormac, told no tales of bloodshed by Christian men? And then concludes in a strain of eloquent irony upon the felicities in which I must have been cradled and reared.

As I take it—asking such questions is very much like asking Newton if he never saw an apple fall before the idea of gravitation struck him; and the supposition would be equally pertinent that he never heard of water running down a hill, or of rain descending until that famous day. One might also inquire if he had never read in the bible of the millstone that came down at Thebaz on the head of Abimelech, or of the tower of Siloam that fell: and finish with the apostrophes, “Oh happy time,” when he knew not of the crashing of dilapidated buildings! “Oh inauspicious hour,” when he first suspected a broken head from a sudden contact with the earth!

If men have been thus left in the dark by science which invigorates, little wonder I was left there by religion which deadens the faculties of thought. That obtuseness of perception which must be excused in an astronomer, ought easily to be pardoned in a Christian who must, while a ray of faith lingered with him, have laboured under that intellectual *ablepsy* christianity never fails to generate. My own experience tells me that it would be as wise to blame a hoodwinked horse for not seeing sideways, as to wonder why I, when a Christian, did not reason rationally. W. C. seems to assume christianity to be a paragon of coherence and logical beauty—a kind of starting point on the race-course of intelligence—a religious lens, revealing with microscopic accuracy the inconsistencies of blind belief. Instead of which, it produces little but crudity and perpetuates nothing save folly. Decrying, from first to last, man’s only sure guide—reason, who can expect its votaries to be otherwise than partial in their views, erring inconsistent, and ridiculous. W. C. says, “would it not”—(meaning my account of my conversion) “warrant the suspicion that I had never *reasoned* upon my belief?” W. C. surmises like a wizard. It is true I never had *reasoned* upon my belief. If I had it would have been shaken earlier than it was. In my present opinion, a little reasoning would spoil half the faith in the world. Until the circumstance occurred, formerly mentioned, I took the fundamental part of religion, belief in a god, for *granted*. I do not say this was excusable, but is very common; too common, with religious people, to be deemed *improbable*.

The anecdote quoted by W. C. from the report of the recent Gloucester Trial, is used to point out a little Christian *inconsistency*—the most common thing in the world. If I mistake not, W. C. quoted in a latter No. of the *Oracle*, an extract from Dale Owen, which proved Christian *consistency* to be *impossible*. Hence, when W. C. shows that I have been *inconsistent*, he is exceeding likely to be right. Thus, I answer all that is doubtful, dark, inconsistent, or improbable in my experience up to the time the change spoken of took place in my sentiments. Whatever anomalies are found therein, are accounted for on the remembrance that I was a Christian. “Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.”

With regard to other matters in W. C.'s reply to my letter, I add a few remarks in the order they are required. W. C. says that I "conclude there cannot be a god of love, because *man* is not perfectly happy." But either my pen has belied my intention, or he has mistaken my meaning. Deeming, as I did, that god was *able* and *unwilling* to remove all misery, the existence of pain on earth, or in Georgium Sidus, in men or in worms appeared, when I *reasoned* upon the matter, to invalidate my faith.

W. C. further contends that "from nature no argument can be drawn *against* the existence of a god of love, if a god exists at all." Such is not my opinion. I rather agree with Mc Neil, whom W. C. quotes, who says. "In external creation, exclusively and adequately contemplated, there is no escape from manichæism. It is in vain to say that the death of the inferior creatures is a blessing to man; for *why* in the creation of a *god of love* should any such necessity exist?" It would be difficult for me to halt between christianity and atheism unless it was with Arimanus.

"Our friend," says W. C. "was evidently a man of *one* idea." Since that *one* was erroneous is it not lucky he had so few of the sort?

I fully believe in the disinterested nature of W. C.'s exertions and the excellency of his motives. His answer to the question, "What principles will infallibly keep us Atheists," is clever, and betrays a shrewd acquaintance with the subject. He is not quite so happy in his remark on the immutable nature of the *probabilities* on which atheism rests. Though I cannot, myself, conceive what facts can arise to disturb the Atheist's conclusions upon the *eternity* and *infinity* of *matter*, still I should be loath to assert "that no subsequent facts that may be discovered can destroy that probability." Such broad assertions have been fashionable on all theories, but never modest, and seldom safe.

When I said, "if our children do not see the reason for disgust at religion we do so much the better," the fact was before me, that religion, though false in its every protean shape, is yet a thing of degree. Protestantism, though less consistent, is preferable to catholicism, and unitarianism is preferable to either; and hoping that if not exploded they might, before another generation be so modified by science and reason as to be less objects of disgust than they now are, I said, "so much the better"—"so much the worse," rejoins W. C. I think he mistook my meaning—

Finally, W. C. makes a distinction between an Atheist from *feeling*, and one from conviction, but if there is any difference between *feeling* and *conviction*, I have yet to see it displayed. It was laid down in my letter that my notions of deity included the belief that he was all-powerful and *could*, all willing and *would* remove evil—and it is clear the existence of such a combination would *compel* the removal of evil. The existence of evil is therefore a flat contradiction of my religious supposition or belief. Now it matters little whether men *feel* or are *convinced* of *contradictions* (supposing these terms to mean different things). Incongruities are alike fatal to faith and facts, to Christian or atheistical propositions, and it seems to me most *reasonable* to reject anything composed of such materials. The sufferings of humanity (a component part of the *contradictions* in question) being matter of *feeling* can hardly be esteemed less legitimate on that account. The conviction seems as sound as

any inference arrived at by Euclid, or worked out by Euler or Benouillis. I have yet to learn that the conclusions obtained through the medium of the *feelings* are not as legitimate as the cool deductions of mathematical investigations.

I agree with W. C. that the eternity and infinity of matter are excellent grounds to take, and have found much pleasure in investigating those and other reasons for atheism. It is likely that few persons who have been led to the consideration of atheism, will stop without examining the subject in every way: for while the Christian is frightened from the investigation, it is the interest of the Atheist to pursue it for the sake of complete satisfaction. Since men are so little affected by the properties of matter, and so easily and powerfully moved by the sense of pain, wrong, and oppression, it seems wise to lay hold of such powerful stimuli for awakening reflection on the folly of prevalent religious belief. But if such processes of thought should prove "*unreasoning*" and unsatisfactory, let them be relinquished! Employ others, though dry as summer's dust and protracted as the millenium. Be just, though a convert is not made in a century, I am Mr. Editor, not Makenzie's, but W. C.'s  
"MAN OF FEELING."

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

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Received post-office order for the above, and directed payment at Bristol, to Mr. Southwell's account. Having a promised remittance from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, can regulate the division with that and others hoped for. Futnre address to be, Enfield Highway, Middlesex, not Bristol.

RICHARD CARLILE.

Received—Two communications from R. Carlile.—R. N. K.—James Monk.

YOUTHFUL PIETY.—"Mother," said a sick boy in a rural district, "shall I die?" "Some time or other you will, my dear, but I hope not now." "If I were to die now, should I go to heaven, mother?" "I hope so, love." "Should I fly there?" "I expect so," said the mother, "all angels have wings." "Then," said the youthful *immortelle*, evidently delighted with his aerial excursion, "I'll catch crows as I go."

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Saturday, October 15, 1842.



THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, [PRICE 1D.  
No. 44.] for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months'  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

COLLOQUIES ON RELIGION AND  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

Few works have tended more to produce that line of Socialist policy often deprecated in the pages of the *Oracle* than those of the author "Hamden in the Nineteenth Century." The "Colloquies on Religion and Religious Education," a sequel to the preceding work, is pre-eminently distinguished for its conciliatory tone. But it is matter of serious doubt whether the opposing claims of morality and religion are capable of reconciliation, consistently with that justness of thought which should characterise reformers. The following remarks, written at the request of a young friend, upon the latter work, may, perhaps, be acceptable to the readers of the *Oracle*.

The perusal of the "Colloquies on Religion and Religious Education" has afforded me less pleasure than attended the examination of some former productions of the same elegant author. Of the *object* of the work, benevolence could scarcely speak too highly, and the most acetose misanthropy would fail to find matter for murmuring. But with regard to the principles on which the author recommends his projects, I entertain a mean opinion. I question not his sincerity, but doubt the solidity of his reasoning. To me it is matter of regret that the important superstructure of human advancement should everlastingly be rested on the dreamy foundations of theology. The elevated morality of the sentiments advocated is marred by an unhappy union with sublime nonsense. It would seem that the refinements of intellect, like those of civilisation, terminate only in effeminacy. Before my eyes the brilliancy of natural and philosophic truth grows dim and obscure seen through the hazy medium of religion. It may be that my convictions will evaporate with the inexperience of youth, and that I shall find that those substantial realities which form the bases of all true morality—unless tacked to airy nothings—will make themselves wings and fly away.

In the early part of the book a personage, with the not inapplicable title of the German *Mystic*, contends for a "union with god as the only condition on which a man can aid himself or his fellow-creatures." This is a

fair specimen of the discouraging philosophy of its pages. If it be urged in objection to this principle of the mystic that philosophers have never yet revealed to us what god is, it will be styled either a non-essential or a cynical dogmatism; but until either philosophy or fanaticism does agree as to what god is, and also points out very plainly the means of union with him (her, or it), I know not when the world will be benefitted, if the mystic's condition of its improvement is as absolute as it is made by the author.

But supposing finite capacities at last enabled to understand the infinite—to comprehend the incomprehensible, and a few other such trifling difficulties overcome, of what conceivable value to morality will be this all-necessary "union with god?" There is no dead villain who subsisted on the coin extracted from the pockets of helpless poverty, nor any living knave who exists by the duperly of his fellow-men but has and can boast a "union with god," without any mortal being able to disprove the truth of the connection.

The next fundamental principle advanced (p. 30) is infinitely more dangerous than the one just cited is discouraging. We are gravely told "that all great virtues are of celestial origin, and can never be found by penetrating the arena of nature;" which is equivalent to saying, they can never be found at all, and makes morality depend upon those polluted sources whence Christians have drawn that sickly thing—modern virtue. If we really can have no virtues but those descended from the gods, emulation of good—the best principle of human nature—is nipped in the bud, and men having as yet been indebted to the gods for nothing save vices, moral greatness becomes a chimera. "The evangelical party (mentioned p. 54) decry the pursuit of natural philosophy because men are born for eternity, where all mysteries will be revealed to them;" and from their premises it must be owned they reason logically. The only difference between them and the author of the "Colloquies" is, that he has higher and nobler aspirations. His error appears to consist in this, he reasons from the premises of these imbeciles, and expects as results Roman nobleness, Spartan greatness,

and Greeian intelligence, while the true consequences seem more likely to be, that meanness, knavery, and stupidity which have hitherto formed the grand ingredients of the Christian character.

Unfortunately there are persons whose support seems unattainable without pandering to their prejudices. To this class, which I think and hope is not large, the work may be attractive. But as far as my intercourse with such has gone, I have found that when liberal sentiments are addressed to them by a person of orthodox reputation, his labours are regarded as tending to *unbelief*, and are either coolly examined or carefully shunned. Also, if the philosopher bedizens his enlarged views in the fashionable garb of piety, the performance is described as infidelity in disguise; its well-meant professions are looked upon as insidious advances—truth is neglected from its close propinquity with suspected hypocrisy, and very often secret contempt is the only reward of philanthropy's delicate but mistaken pains.

Should it appear that any material element proper to be taken into account, has escaped my notice, I am willing again to consider my opinions, if desired. Less frankness than I have employed in my remarks, might be more complimentary, but certainly not so useful to the philosopher, who from the chaff of opposing convictions winnows the golden grain of truth. It is with regret I have found myself compelled to speak as I have of the work of a gentleman whose benevolence I have often extolled, whose splendid talents I have always admired, and whose motives I highly appreciate.

Since writing the preceding observations I have been told that they manifest the same intolerance towards the author of the book commented upon, as is shown by Christians towards myself. If it is meant by the intolerance charged upon me, that I have as cordial an antipathy to the policy, or manner, in which his opinions are put forth as Christians entertain toward my sentiments—it is perfectly true, I am intolerant. But if it is also implied that, like Christians, I would seek any other mode of combatting the author's opinions than that of expressing my own—it is false. Such intolerance I have never employed.

G. J. H.

#### GODLIES AND UNGODLIES.

So the goddists bigots are wincing. The mild followers of the lowly Jesus are casting about for fresh snares. The ignorant believers in the preposterous tales of the dirty Jew fanatics, Peter and Paul, and "the rest of the gang," are waxing wrath. Blessed are the poor in spirit, say these canting impostors, fit echoes of the Nazarene, the chief **santer**; blessed are the poor in spirit, say

they, and out they rush at the heels of the "blue devils," to seize, handcuff, and immure those who deny their black devils and the chief of the devils the Jehovah devil. These wonderfully pious and holy, peace loving and forbearing Christian men are in a strange fix, they know not what to be at. The lash seems to have told so well, the atl eistical knout has been so well applied, and so fitly administered that they are roaring, cursing, sweating, and making most hideous grimaces. They positively jump about the *Oracle* office like parched peas. It is the most comical thing in the world to see their gaping and staring, and stealing sly glances, and sending or sliding in to buy an *Oracle*, and then bolting as if the devil had them, hardly waiting for change. Then comes a wonderful cute fellow, edging up towards the terrible shop at an angle of ninety, and drawing a tablet from his poke notes down some "devil-worded" paragraph and stealthily makes off after the accomplishment of the unheard of enterprise. The Tory press are beginning to take the alarm, the fun now "waxes fast and furious." And yet our friends don't all see the gist of the thing. One says M.Q.R.'s "article in 42 is not the thing. It is not to the point. It rakes up dirt in heaps in our path in sufficient quantities to make it noisome—but it wants utility. I do not see its aim." Well, one would expect a critic acute enough to see so far would have seen a little further. He sees no utility in this theological scavenging. It is nothing in his estimation to rake the filthy and stagnant pools of Jewish and Christian mythology, to expose in the face of public wonder and disgust the existence of the noisome and pestilential *cloacæ*, and by a thorough clearance to freshen and purify the mental and moral atmosphere. Why Dr. Southwood Smith, the author of the admirable "Philosophy of Health," says in his "Sanatory Report," that the least nidus of malaria being left in a spot, more or less infects and pollutes the whole neighbourhood. Is mental malaria to be set at nought? Is not the work of its removal a useful and honourable one? But we give offence. Who ever heard of a good thing being done without giving offence. Remove their blockish, gorged, and bloated gods, and general yelling and consternation takes place among the Christian crew. Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is the god of the Jews and the Christians! In his early or Jehovah-god time, blood and blazes were his principal recreations. Throat-cuttings and burnt offerings being every day pastimes. Stagnation, corruption, and "dirt in heaps" must be left, forsooth, for the mythological mudlarks! In his later, or Christ-god and ghost-god time, still blood and blazes under other forms. Suicide, filicide, and homicide—self-slaughter, son-slaughter, and man-slaughter—yet not

three slaughters but one slaughter. Hell's blazes too, in all their ingenious varieties of cookery. Sure the dirt heaps and filth and rubbish must rot, lest the delicate nostrils of the worshippers of the blood sniffing devil-deities should be unpleasantly titillated. I remain of a different opinion, and thinking as I do will continue to ply the *Oracular* broom to the sewers of goddism, and loosen the flood-gates of *Reason* upon the augean stable of Christianity. They are offended are they? They don't like offence, eh? They don't mind giving it, though, notwithstanding their Christian cant of turning their innocent chops for another slap, and inconsistent rejection of the old Jew rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But it is very well known that the "turn the other cheek" precept is only bible fudge. The hypocritical humbugs, with charity in their mouths, and malignity in their hearts are crouching with tiger-like caution and ferocity to pounce on the heterodox they mark out as victims. But every victim shall be like another of the mythological fables, and shall be the striking off of one hydra head to be replaced by another; it shall be like the sowing of the dragon's teeth when forth shall stand armed men. Not offend them—forsooth! Then let them keep their hands off. They may growl and glare like caged hyenas, and while caged no matter. But they must keep their claws in or they will be belaboured in Van Hamburg style. Not offend them, indeed! They must first cease to persecute. Are they to immolate our friends and brothers? And shall we remain quiescent? They have thought to spike our atheistical cannon. They have tried to pick off our generals, verily the free voluntary bands of Infidels are not led hoodwinked like the Christian slaves. *Their* leaders slain, they flee in disorder and confusion. *We* are not composed of blindly obedient human automata, but of thinking and reasoning men, capable of acting each on his own account.

We can follow cheerfully and lead with alacrity. The Atheist, unlike the Christian whose christianity has been sucked in, or whipped in, or frightened into him, has arrived at his conclusions through the reasoning process. The Atheist, neither tricked by priests, bribed by god-almighties, or frightened by devils, is firm, steady, and self-relying in the midst of disasters in which the worshippers will fly to abject prostration. The religionist, inconsistent and outrageous, even in his self-sacrifices, rushes into the extreme of self-inflicted torture, deluding himself into a hope of a future recompense. The religious frenzy renders its votaries abject, worthless, injurious or absurd. The Atheist, from habits of reflection, and analysis and comparison, increases his information, enlarges his mind, and strengthens his judgment.

The finer qualities of human nature which characterise the individual and adorn the man are distorted and perverted by the curse of religion. The Atheist might be an enthusiast, the Christian would be a zealot, the former would be energetic, the latter furious; the former obstinate, the latter firm; the former urbane yet resolute, the latter a tyrant or a slave. The mind-debasing influence of blind faith, bloody sacrifices, passionate gods, and hell fire is seen by the alternation of furious rancour and prostration of spirit which sways the true Christian. Those who are true to humanity are false to christianity.

Let not, say some of the Christians, let not these persecutors, these infuriates, these drivellers be included in our ranks. They are not of us. Of whom are they then? Assuredly not of the Freethinkers. The true, right, and proper Christian may not be identical in sentiments, sympathies and passions with the less benighted and debased goddites. But what does this show other than that the latter are losing their goddism and acquiring civilisation. They are being influenced by the spirit of the age, which as it becomes less religious, becomes more tolerant.

M. Q. R.

#### THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XXV.

##### *Birds (aves) continued.*

A GREATER degree of uniformity pervades the muscular system of this than any other of the vertebrated classes, yet it will be found to present many peculiarities. From the rarity of the element they inhabit, as well as from their rapid and long-continued movements through it, their muscles acquire a considerable degree of vital energy, and are red, vascular, dense, and irritable in the high-flying and rapacious tribes, although pale, soft, and feeble in those of heavier and slower habits. The muscles of the lower extremity are remarkable for their long, slender tendons, and especially for the beauty and perfection of the mechanism by which they support the bird when asleep on roost, without any muscular action. This is accomplished by the *gracilis* (the muscle which extends the leg), which arising from the pubis (a bone situated at the upper and fore part of the pelvis) descends along the inside of the thigh, and ends in a strong tendon, which passes in front of the knee-joint, and subsequently over the projection of the heel to terminate by attaching itself to the outer origin of the *flexor digitorum perforatus* (the muscle which bends the second and then the first phalanx of the finger). From this disposition it results, that the more the joints are bent, the firmer the twig on which the bird rests is grasped, and the more secure it is. Every one is familiar with the fact of birds generally sleeping on one leg, this is for the purpose of throwing the whole weight of their body on it, and so grasping the firmer, and in order to increase the effect by adding to the weight of the body, some birds are in the habit of never going to

rest without grasping a stone, or some ponderous body in the other foot. Flight, which is the most characteristic mode of progression in birds, is effected by the animal springing into the air; or, where the legs are so short, and the wings so long that it cannot jump high enough to gain the requisite space for the expansion of the wing, it throws itself from some elevated point. The humerus is next raised, and the fore-arm extended, a considerable extent of surface thereby gained; the entire member being then forcibly depressed, the resistance which it receives from the air, effects the elevation of the bird; velocity of flight depends upon the rapidity with which these strokes succeed each other. The eider-duck is supposed to fly 90 miles an hour, the hawk 150, and every one has heard of the falcon belonging to Henry IV. king of France, flying in one day from Fontainebleau to Malta, a distance of 1350 miles.

The brain and spinal chord are in this class developed with more uniformity and perfection than in the cold-blooded reptilia, and bear a proportionate correspondence with the perfection of muscular energy which they possess. In a pigeon weighing 3360 grains without the feathers, the brain weighed 37, and the spinal chord 11 grains=48. The brain of the bird differs from that of the reptile in the greater size of the cerebrum (situated in the upper part of the cranium, which it completely fills), and the more complex structure of the cerebellum (situated in the back and under part of the cranium); it differs from the brain of a mammal in the smaller size of the cerebellum, and the rudimentary state of the fornix. The fornix is a continuation of the corpus callosum, a white substance so called from its being a little firmer than the rest of the brain; the fornix in man forms a sort of hollow ceiling, with four pillars, called cornua, from their winding direction. The brain also differs from the brain of every other vertebrate class in the inferior position of the optic lobes. The membranes investing the brain differ but little from those of the mammalia. The nerves present but few striking peculiarities, being distributed nearly as they are in man.

The peculiarities presented by the organs of vision coincide with the vigour of their respiratory, circulatory, and locomotive systems. In all the other vertebrate classes we meet with instances where the eyes, if not absent, are at least rudimentary, but in this class they are remarkable not only for their uniform existence but for their great size and perfect development. From the convexity of the anterior segment of the eyes, and their lateral location, birds command an extensive sphere of vision, and in many of the high-flying rapacious kind, the organ is prolonged in front into a tubular form, but in aquatic birds the anterior half is more flattened.

The organ of hearing resembles that of the crocodile there is no cartilagenous external ear, and but a rudimentary concha (a large cavity), which, however, is compensated for, especially in rapacious birds, by a peculiar arrangement of feathers about the external meatus (from meo, to pass, a large canal leading inward and forwards to the organ of hearing), which in general they can erect at will so as to catch distant sounds, and by that means either flee from danger, or pursue their prey through dark and gloomy places. The external ear of owls is furnished with a crescentic fold of integument in the form of a

valve. The cochlea (one of the windings of the labyrinth of the ear), though more developed than in reptiles, has not yet reached perfection, and the other parts of the internal ear present no remarkable peculiarities different from the inferior grades of the next class.

It is generally supposed birds of prey are gifted with an acute sense of smell, but the experiments of Mr. Audubon go to prove the reverse opinion; and according to the researches of Scarpa, the following is the order in which it is enjoyed, beginning with those in which it is most acute: grallatores, nata-tores, raptores, scansores, inessores, rasores.

The organs of touch in birds are in the bills, the cire in the falconidæ, the wattles of the cock, and the caruncles of the turkey. This sense is very limited in birds, which is in some degree compensated for by the free distribution of the fifth pair of nerves to their horny bills, especially those of the aquatic species, which procure their alimant from mud.

Some interesting particulars in connection with the digestive and respiratory organs must be deferred till next week.

## THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

### VI.

*Why* are the terms nature and art so variously interpreted and ill-understood?

*Because* of the corruption of language and the loose vagaried indefinite manner in which it is used by public and private teachers. Words have sometimes so many meanings attached to them, that the mind is wearied in searching for the true one. All things, as before observed, are parts of the great whole or universe, sometimes called nature; what are called the works of art are not distinct from nature, but merely one of its offshoots, in the same manner that the branches of a tree are as much parts of a tree as the root. The hatchet which is used to fell the oak is just as much a part of nature as the oak itself, and if nature maket the tool, nature makes the man; but then is is useful to use the word nature in a more limited sense, and to call all those things or effects natural which owe nothing to the labour and ingenuity of man, and therefore we say that the untrodden forest is the work of nature, while the cultivated garden, being the handy work of man, is artificial; in like manner the stormy and ever restless ocean is a stupendous natural object, whereas the peaceful lake, hollowed by the hands of man, is artificial. The utility of the arts, says Bacon, is dominion over natural bodies, remedies, machines, and numberless other particulars, though the schools, contented with what spontaneously offers, and swollen with their own discourses, neglect and in a manner despise both things and works. This is further treated of by that illustrious man in his "Novum Organum," when he strongly inculcates that knowledge and power are reci-

procal, so that to improve in knowledge is to improve in the arts by obtaining the power to command nature, and thus produce new works and effects.

In all Bacon's works he has proceeded upon this foundation; that it is possible and practicable for art to obtain the victory over nature, and swears at those who break into extravagant praises of human nature and the arts in vogue, lay themselves out in admiring the things they already possess, and will needs have the sciences cultivated among them to be absolutely perfect and complete; men who imagine themselves already got to the top of things, and there rest without further inquiry; he shrewdly adds that a fond opinion that they have already acquired enough, is a principal reason why they have acquired so little. Nor is he more merciful to those weak and fearful individuals who, contented with their present scraps of knowledge, are greatly alarmed lest in getting more they should be taking the reins of government out of the hands of nature and putting them into the hands of men, as though anything could be lastingly injurious to human beings save the monstrous ignorance and its first-born error, which, like the many headed giants of fabulous history, wage everlasting war against Jupiter or right reason; the strength of which latter is commensurate with and inseparable from knowledge. Art, like nature, has two meanings attached to it, one, the most usual, implies a tact or dexterity in applying such knowledge of a subject as is floating, so to speak, upon the surface or outside of things, and is to be obtained by our own practice, or by observing the practices of others, as in the manufacture of stuffs, gunpowder, paper, and other articles, which all may learn to do with more or less of difficulty; the other, and as generally considered, the higher meaning, includes a thorough knowledge of the nature of things, and how that nature may be modified or shaped to the end proposed, as to know the properties of colours and the effects of light and shade is one thing, but to execute a painting is another, many good critics are bad actors, and nothing if not critical, while the finest judges of works of art are notoriously deficient as artists, conception being one thing, and the realisation of that conception another, so that, as observed by a modern writer, no man can succeed in the higher branches of art without a thorough knowledge of the nature of things, as well as the principles of that particular branch to which his studies are peculiarly directed. And the skill of the great artist is best shown in first selecting from nature the things which are essential to his purpose, and moulding them into that form which is best calculated to produce the intended effects.

CHRISTIANITY AGAINST ATHEISM.

II.

CONCEIT is a malady of humanity, of which some people die. Charles Southwell and Joseph B. Lear are conceited about atheism. The former claiming to be the first man who has openly avowed atheism, and the latter discipleship in this antagonistic scheme of human salvation. If the distinction of being first-fool were desirable, I would contest the priority with Southwell; but I yield it to him with all its honours.

Atheism in relation to superstition is comparatively respectable; but atheism in relation to science is folly. I always guarded my language with this exception: saying, "there is no such a god in existence as any superstitious man preaches."

As I read the bible, its god cannot be wisely renounced; for instance (Matthew xxviii. 19), "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy-ghost."

*In the name of the father*, I define the teaching to be of all known physical science, or science of nature, non-mental, undesigning, the great first-cause, as eternal necessity.

*In the name of the son*, I define the teaching to be of moral science, of the uses of letters and figures, of art of every kind, of the principles of the human mind or spiritual world, the world of liberty and human salvation.

*In the name of the holy-ghost*, the spirit of love and truth, I define the teaching to be of the culture of the best human affections, of love of god and neighbour, the comforter, blasphemy against which is outrage on all that is good.

Let Charles Southwell or J. B. Lear raise an objection to this reading. Their conceits are neither argument nor evidence. It is but to do ourselves and the bible justice to read it as it was written, in the style of all the written documents of its day, as *theology, science of god, or mythology, science of fable, as mystery or allegory*.

The Hebrew language has no neuter gender, consequently all its principles were necessarily stated under personification as male or female.

The Hebrew language was also originally a language of consonants without vowels. As such, it could have been no other than the language of science and not of superstition; for the meaning of each word could only be deduced from the *thing* to which it referred. The filling up of the Hebrew language with vowels has been the foul work of a superstitious church in the fifteenth century of our present era, and is therefore no criterion of the original language of the bible.

Mr. Mackintosh's theory of god is not respectable; for it is *image-making* or idealism, without definition or reference to things; it is, to use a vulgar word—*humbug*. If superstitious, contemptible; if not, hypocritical. There is no science in it.

Atheism can only stand its ground as opposed to superstition. It is a degree of science, specially applied, but not omniscience, not palatable to the wise man, as a word of catholic application.

RICHARD CARLILE.

Enfield Highway, Oct. 5, 1842.

TO GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, CHRISTIAN PRISONER IN GLOUCESTER GAOL.

DEAR SIR.—Religious controversy is very agreeable to my taste with all talented men. It is particularly so with men whom I respect; it is peculiarly so with you its martyr in gaol. It is the root of all political reform, and I have learnt that there is no other way to improve human happiness than through science in the church.

Science and its product *wisdom* are limited properties in man. They are limited at one point with you, at another with me. I have passed your limit—you have not passed mine.

You complain that I retain old names under new ideas. That is not the truth as to our relative states of mind; but the truth is rather that I restore old ideas to old names.

You are a better Christian than Mr. Justice Erskine, not in the sense that christianity is the religion of vice, but that a vicious religion is not christianity; that his religion is vicious—yours not. I have not a doubt but that you would have got off with a month's imprisonment if you had not made a nine hours' Christian defence, that shamed the judge and confounded the jury. The foreman of your jury has said that he was convinced of your innocence by your defence, but, in meaning rather than in words, *that the god or idol of the judge required protection!*

Christianity with me derives not its meaning from any thing born as flesh, but upon the birth of wisdom in men. The word *god*, as an abstract of *goodness*, is surely etymologically unobjectionable, and if the word *Solomon* be now rather the cognomen of a fool than of a wise man, the fault is not in the word, but in the social perversion of its meaning.

I do not allow that there has been any social christianity through the last seventeen centuries; but mark most distinctly between the first and second century how the present heresy began of worshipping Christ as flesh born of flesh, instead of as spirit born of spirit.

The *oracles of reason* at No 8, Holywell-street, Strand, have a print in their window labelled "The appearance of Christ to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, before he was born!" This is mere ignorance of theology or grossness of heretical idea. Without Christ there could have been no garden of Eden—no state of happiness or pleasure; without Christ, from which to fall, there could have been no fall of man. Christ is but a classical mythical word expressive of science, wisdom, virtue, and love.

For the first time since my school days I have this last week been looking into "Tooke's Pantheon of the Heathen Gods," and I find Took as heretical in mythology as the various sects of the day are in christianity.

Before the time of Herodotus there was but one style of writing known—the style of the bible, *theology* and *gnomologue*, or a discourse about the incarnation of spirits in man, and about public morals. All my theology partakes of this character, not true by the letter as literal narrative in the article *theology*, but true in spirit. The *gnomologue* is true in and by the letter.

Do the bible the justice to read it according to the idiom of its date, and do not put your or any other person's conceited and foolish reading upon it, and

you deduce a volume of important truth. If the public does not know how to do this it ought to be taught in the church.

So long as we use mythological or theological books we ought so to study them as not to make ourselves fools with or about them.

You compliment me for some good I have done. I ask your credit for continuing to me the same disposition, even though you may not understand me. Write or speak against me from principle if you can; the more you attempt to do so the sooner you will approach me in mutual understanding. I see my past career but as a promise of what I hope the future is to be. You, Southwell, and others, are now where I once was, resting upon the mere flip-pant vulgarisms of what you and the world consent to call atheistic Infidelity, regulating your amount of wisdom by a critical contrast with other people's folly. Nothing that you say leads to any settlement of the dispute between you and them. I have passed on to an historical and classical explanation of the root of their errors, which you do not reach. It is one thing to bully, insult, pun, and ridicule; another to teach the root of errors. A fool may do the one; a wise man is required for the other.

Seeing something more is wanted than has hitherto been done in this way, I am about to start a new weekly periodical under the title of "*The Christian Warrior, or Church Militant.*" Your *Oracle*, as far as it is reasonable, I shall support; as far as unreasonable it must endure my common warfare with the errors of all sects and parties. I can, at least, promise some originality, not of the last seventeen centuries, but beyond that; I have nothing new, all is borrowed from the bible.

R. CARLILE.

### IS THERE NO GOD?

It has been remarked, that nearly all the wrangling and disputing amongst men arise from one or other of three causes.

1st. A misapprehension of the meaning of the terms employed. For example, by the term *god*, one party means one thing, and the other another thing.

2nd. Viewing the subject in a different light—one sees a subject in a clear broad day light; another in an obscure twilight glimmer; a third views it under the shades of night, with just light enough to perceive that there is a subject or object.

3rd. Viewing the subject or object from a different point of view. One views an object from the north; another from the south; one from the top of the hill, another from the plain. In moral and political subjects one views from a throne, another from a workhouse, &c.

To these three the phrenologists and modern physiologists have added another, which may be set down as the

4th. A difference in the physical organisation of the different viewers of an object or subject; from which difference two men will look at an object or subject in the same light and from the same point of view, and

yet each will form a different conception of that object or subject.

Instances of wordy cavilling arising from a misapprehension of terms must be familiar to the minds of every reader who has been much accustomed to attend to controverted questions. A very fine illustration of differences arising under the second head is given by the poet Merrick, in his fable of the chameleon. One traveller saw the chameleon in the sun and declared it was *green*; another saw it in the *shade*, and vowed it was *blue*; they wrangled of course, and to settle the dispute, they referred it to a third, who had seen the animal by *candle light*, and gave his decision that it was neither green nor blue, but *black*. Upon this, what may be called "a regular row" arose amongst the three, when the umpire remembers that he has the animal still by him, and can settle the matter by producing it: he then goes to bring it forth in *another light*, saying with full confidence—

And when before your eyes I've set him,  
If you don't find him black I'll eat him,  
He said, and full before their sight  
Produced the beast, and lo! 'twas *white*!

The story of the two knights and the shield illustrates the difference arising from looking at an object or subject from a different point of view. A statue with a shield was set up by the way side. The side of the shield looking towards the north appeared to be made of silver, that looking towards the south of gold. Two knights, one travelling north the other south, met at this point and stopped to admire the shield, one viewing it on the north side the other on the south. "What a beautiful silver shield," said one "Silver," said the other, "it is a very fine gold shield." So the dispute began, and ended in a battle; after which, they looked at both sides of the shield, and then laughed at their own folly.

The disputes arising from differences of organisation are, perhaps, especially in modern times, as numerous as any other. One man has a hard, sturdy, stubborn matter-of-fact kind of organisation; he can neither see nor conceive of anything except matter, and consequently becomes a Materialist. Another has a fine, soft, delicately organised frame; his nerves thrill with every breath of moral feeling, as the strings of an Æolian harp tremble with the physical breath of the atmosphere—such a being lives in a region of his own, and naturally becomes a Spiritualist. Shelley, the poet, who strangely enough is the poet of Atheists and Materialists, was a being of this spiritual kind, and as a matter of course, his poetry abounds with spirits, fairies, gods, and goblins. The matter of fact Materialist, and the aerial Spiritualist live each of them in a region

so wholly dissimilar, that it is quite impossible they should be able to feel and think alike or to understand each other.

Looking then at all these sources of difference of opinion, there need be little wonder that there should have been from the days of Epicurus down to the present time, some disputing concerning the existences and attributes, or mode of being of the power called god.

Of late the discussion of the question concerning the being and attributes of god has, I am sorry to say, taken a turn which, to my mind, and, I have no doubt, to the minds of many of the readers of the *Oracle*, appears quite puerile, and, I might say, contemptible. Perhaps this is in some degree to be ascribed to my own want of care; by giving expression to my ideas in such terms as might, by a careless or wilfully perverse opponent, be construed into a meaning quite different from that intended. I have it seems, said that "god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man," and upon this I am gravely asked "what influence this idea can have upon the motion of the earth round the sun, or upon its own axis?" with much more to the same purpose equally ridiculous (see *Oracle* 296-7 and 338-9). Now, it certainly could not be expected that I should seriously answer the strange questions put in these four pages, I will therefore pass them by, and shall proceed to express myself in such terms as cannot, I think, be so easily perverted.

The idea of god, as received amongst men, is a compound idea consisting of at least three more simple ideas, namely, *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*. Every man in these days has heard of physical power, or "physical force," as it is called. Now, if I were asked "is the earth whirled round the sun and round her own axis by physical power?" I should answer, yes: and I assert further, without the continual exertion of this physical power, neither the earth nor any other body would or could continue in motion for ever. But the idea of this physical power is not the idea of god. There are plenty of professed Atheists who will admit the existence of *blind*, *unintelligent* physical power as the operating cause of all motion and change throughout nature. If you ask them what this physical power is, they will tell you that it is attraction, repulsion, &c., that these are properties of matter, which properties are eternal, as matter also is eternal. If you push them a little further concerning this blind power, and say, "well, but this attraction of which you speak, it is a something or a nothing, if it be not matter it is nothing. Where is it? I have never seen it." The answer is still the same: "it is a property of matter, and it is everywhere, because mat-

ter is everywhere.' Further than this no man can go in this direction. But amongst these blind physical powers, whatever be their number, we can find no idea of god. An Atheist might admit them all, and still be an Atheist. There must be something besides the idea of mere physical power, or any other or all other merely physical ideas, to constitute the idea of god. In a word, there must be a moral idea introduced, such as intelligence, or goodness, or both, before we can perceive in our mind the most vague idea of a god. It is on this account that I have said and do still say that the idea of god is a moral and not a physical idea, without for a moment intending to signify that this moral idea whirled the earth round the sun and upon her own axis; although I can very well conceive whilst physical power moves the material universe, the moral power, intelligence, may direct the movement. I confess frankly that whilst it appears to me that mere intelligence or any other merely moral quality would be insufficient to give motion to so vast a machine as the universe or indeed to any machine, at the same time it appears to me equally impossible that mere blind unintelligent physical powers should or could conduct all the nice arrangements which I see around me and feel within me.

T. S. M.

(To be continued.)

GRACES OF THE VOVARIES OF NATURE.

(Copied from the Visitors' Book at the Bluckgang Chine Hotel, Isle of Wight.)

BEFORE MEAT.

For what we're about to receive,  
Thanks to IT in which we believe;  
Not to Him (!) who chuckled in heaven,  
And said that "it was good,"  
When He saw what the sun had given  
To man for food.

AFTER MEAT.

For what we ate and drank  
Let us now thank  
First the infinite universe,  
And the laws of eternal nature,  
Next our host and our finite purse,  
Alimentiveness and the waiter.  
September, 1842.

The following is copied from the outside of an envelope, sent by Isaac Ironsides, Esq., of Sheffield:—"G. J. Holyoake, Esq., who is engaged in a six months' study of the love, joy, peace, and long-suffering of christianity, and of the "beauties and mysteries of our holy religion," in one of her majesty's seminaries for the spread of learning and piety; that is to say, the Gaol, Gloucester."

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AND UNEQUALLED SATIRICAL RHAPSODY, THE  
Y A H O O!

With numerous ADDITIONS by the Author.  
368

NOTICE.

Rev. Fresham Gregg's letter, addressed "Satan," received, and will be attended to.

We have received a letter from the Bishop of Exeter, and feel obliged to him, but do not think it insertable.

J. Singer shall appear at our earliest convenience. H. G., Hull, has our thanks, we will use his communication.

The Oracle folks have their eye on one of "our peoplish," hot and rampant as in their crucifying days of yore, with a petition to put down the Oracle office. Better had the miserable a millstone round his neck and be cast into the sea. If once gibbeted on the "Oracle shutter," god help him.

Correspondents are requested to be more careful, to prevent the necessity of

ERRATA.—In the second line, first col., page 358, for "true," read "tree."

The 10s. 6½d. in the same no., collected for Mrs. Holyoake, should have been 10s. 8½d., at the Hall of Science Birmingham, on Sunday, Oct. 8.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

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Mr. Holyoake desires the acknowledgment of his receipt of 20s. from R. Carlile.

DIED,

On Monday, October the 17th, 1842, Aged 2½ years,  
MADELINE,  
The interesting and beloved daughter of  
GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

Beauty and virtue crown'd thee!  
Death in thy youth hath found thee!  
Thou'rt gone to thy grave  
By the soft willow wave,  
And the flowrets are weeping around thee!  
The sun salutes thee early,  
The stars be-gem thee rarely,  
Then why should we weep  
When we see thee asleep,  
'Mid thy friends who love thee dearly?

Printed and Published by THOMAS PATERSON, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, to whom all Communications should be addressed.—Agent for Sheffield, George Julian Harney, Bookseller, 11, Hartshead; Bristol, J. Chappell, News Agent, Narrow Wine-street; Macclesfield, Mr. Roche, Hall of Science; Barnsley, Mr. Thos. Lingard, New-street; Coventry, J. Morris, 35, Union-place, Butts; Preston, Jas. Drummond, 112, Friar-gate. And Sold by all Liberal Booksellers.

Saturday, October 22, 1842.



THE  
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ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

*Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842, to Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, for Blasphemy contained in No. 4. [PRICE 1D.*  
*Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months' Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.*

No. 45.]

**OUR COMMERCIAL ARTICLE.**

**CHURCHES**—Jew, Christian, or Pagan—never let a chance go by. We hear of trades once flourishing and widely spread become extinct or forgotten. Of all the trades in this trading world the church and priest trade clutches most tenaciously, and dies most desperately. Yet certain departments of speculation have been given up. Whence shall we seek the interesting cause of so interesting a result? Certainly not within the establishment. If revenue falls short through any laxity of fraud or plunder, we find that "pressure from without" exerts the most material influence.

The religious firms now carrying on the old concern of God, Christ, Ghost, and Co., are obliged to trade on the old stock. This may be accounted for according to the principles of political economists, by a reference to the ordinary laws of supply and demand. These imperturbable calculators know well enough that all commercial matters are regulated by profits. The profits must cease when the demand becomes too slight to pay the expenses. Demand ceasing, of course supply must cease. Thus it would happen that the prophecy article would no longer be made, the machinery would stop, and the master-manufacturers would have to live upon their capital. This they have been gradually doing more or less since the year of their lord one. And had they not discovered more scientific means of carrying on other manufactures they must by this time have shut up their factories. Lists of the old prophecy stock, as well as the old miracle-mongery are kept for inspection, and parsonic clerks, as at Perry's Bankrupt Office or the Next of Kin Registry, are salaried to turn over the ledger and explain the entries.

The demand now turns on the merchandise of reason, and a plentiful supply reacts to increase it. The *Oracles*, and *Freethinkers*, and *Yahoos*, and *Strausses*, and *Philosophical Dictionaries*, are looking up. The god

market is proportionably depressed. The wares of the sacred fortune-tellers, and conjurers, and polite letter-writers, and news-vendors, under the sounding appellations of prophets, and saints, and evangelists, and apostles are growing stale and unsaleable. The new cry of the Puseyites, of "more church room for the millions," is evidence of deep knowledge of modern principles of business. Give a sprat to catch a salmon. How sharp-sighted the fellows are when pelf is concerned. How readily, when obliged, they conform to the spirit of the age. With what facility the old monopolizing principle of business is given up for the modern competitive principle. Clear away the pews is now the modern church cry. We will find on what calculation the pew cry is based. Suppose the people stay away. The priests will say, "I called and they came not," and the odour of their sanctity will increase, while the people will be deemed a stiff-necked people. Suppose the people do come in and bring their pence in with them, the god business is thereby improved. But suppose they come in without the pence, still there is an appearance of business, and the shillings will come in more briskly from other quarters. Thus again is the business improved. Verily the Puseyites are wise in their generation. They know what shopkeeping is. They have not served their apprenticeship for nothing. They know that to be poor and seem poor is the devil. So in good shopkeeping, to have no business, and to seem to have no business, is downright ruin. The great firm of Day and Martin sent their own men to order their own blacking when beginning business. Lloyd, the great-little publisher, baited the public with a gratuitous penny paper. Exeter, London, and Co., on the same plan, call in the poor to hear gratis the mythological nursery tales, and see gratis the mythological peep-shows.

After all, we say clear away the pews! Republicanism is ill suited to the atmosphere of the altar. The "house of god" will be the more readily converted into the house of praise. We shall all the more easily turn St. Paul's Cathedral into a national assembly room and Social hall.

M. Q. R.

## IS THERE A GOD ?

XXIII.

When Bishop Berkeley said "there was no matter,"  
And proved it—'twas no matter what he said:  
They say his system 'tis in vain to batter,  
Too subtle for the aiest human head;  
And yet who can believe it? I would shatter,  
Gladly, all matters down to stone or lead,  
Or adamant, to find the world a spirit,  
And wear my head, denying that I wear it.

BYRON.

W. BAKER's critical letter, in No. 37 of this paper, really deserves and shall now have most respectful consideration. It would have been attended to weeks ago, but for certain tough unaccommodating circumstances, which W. B. will, I am sure, if at all good-natured, excuse my not stopping to furnish an account of.

The letter in question is little more than an industrious and laudable bringing in juxtaposition some contradictory absurdities, or presumed contradictory absurdities, coolly set forth as palpable truths in my paper, headed "Is there a God?" in No. 34.

Upon the better-late-than-never principle, I shall now endeavour with all practicable brevity and clearness to combat the assertions and answer the objections, and, oh, Herculean task! convince the judgment of W. B. if he have any. I say if he have any, because according to his own account, which I feel bound to respect, he ought instead of trying to detect flaws in my articles, to be seriously thinking of taking up snug quarters in Bedlam. "I am (he says) not what the writer of the article would wish me to be, i.e. 'a sober minded reader.' I am, there is no doubt, *non-compos*, one whose brains are so sadly addled, that every one of my five senses must have given up the ghost."

Now this unasked for confession of lunacy, I am not at all disposed to take advantage of, but most willingly place it to the account of W. B.'s *excessive modesty*, though I cannot but smile at the amiable candour and *sang froid* of a critical philosopher who doubts the existence of his own body, but don't doubt at all that "every one of his five senses have given up the ghost." Berkeley, in his Analyst, calls ultimate ratios, the *ghosts of departed quantities*. Now it may be, that W. Baker is sometimes visited by the ghosts of his departed SENSES. But to proceed. "The writer (he observes) begins by saying, 'It is a startling fact that Berkeley has not been answered. It is a fact yet more startling that he cannot be answered,' and at the end of the article I am told that all sober-minded readers will agree with Baron D'Holbach, 'that the existence of matter is a fact, the existence of motion is another fact.' Now (he continues), does it not seem as if it came from one of the most presumptuously dogma-

tical fanatics that ever put pen to paper, rather than from one who, I doubt not, admires the motto at the head of this paper ("Prove all things"). For a man to first, freely, frankly, and candidly to acknowledge the impossibility of proof, and then to sum up without any ceremony whatever, by hoping all sober-minded readers will admit a certain dogma as a fact, when he declared it cannot be proved, is indeed a great deal too much."

That what follows in *explanation* of the above paradox, which has so cruelly agitated the "addled brains" of W. B. may be easily and fully understood, I must first say something about the words MATTER and MIND, which will be found frequently to occur. By *matter* I mean a *reality*—all or any part of that which exists. By *mind* I mean an *ideality*—the *thinking principle* in man or brute. MATTER, according to my view, *actually exists*, and is *everywhere present*, whereas *mind, nowhere actually exists, is nowhere present*; it is an *ideal* not a *real* existence. When we speak of the principles of attraction, repulsion, and inertia, no one understands us to mean that there are *things* called inertia, attraction, or repulsion. By no means. Those words convey no idea of *body*; but states, conditions, affections, or as they are oftener called the *accidents of body*. Now *mind*, as it is usually called, is no more *entity* or *individual, actual existence*, than gravity, inertia, or any other of matter's principles. If it be objected that it is incredible matter should think, I reply, it is equally incredible that matter should attract, repel, or exhibit any quality whatever. Why matter should not *think* as well as *act*, I never could understand. Hume speaks of the "*little agitation of the brain, we call thought*," and even the carefully sage Locke saw nothing contradictory or absurd in the belief that god had "*superadded to matter the power of thinking*." Dr. Adam Smith tells us that the human mind and the deity, in whatever their essence may be supposed to consist, must be PARTS of the great system of the universe. Dr. Campbell asserts in his "Philosophy of Rhetoric," that "the human soul is surely as much included under the idea of *natural object*, as body is;" and even the metaphysical Dugald Stewart allows that "the human mind forms PART of the great system of the universe." Here then we have a glorious galaxy of authorities in favour, not merely of the proposition, that it is *possible* for human brains to think; but in support of the far more decisive and important proposition, that mind, in whatever its essence or peculiar nature may be supposed to consist, must be a part of the universe. Here then Materialists are on safe ground, "for it is manifest that a PART of the universe, no matter how small, is still a PART and must be MATERIAL. From this conclusion there is no escape, un-

less, like Berkeley, we deny the existence of the universe, our own bodies included, with those fine philosophers who "wear their heads, denying that they wear them." I will grapple them in due season. My opinion is, that *mind* is a chimera, no more an *entity* or *real existence* than time, space, motion, rest, inertia, repulsion, or attraction; that *matter* is the one and only thing in nature, or rather it is nature. When therefore I use the terms mind and matter, they must be understood in the sense I have here attempted to explain.

Now, in order to throw light on my dark paradox, and reconcile myself to myself, I will in the first place re-assert that Berkeley has not been answered; that the most learned and acute reasoners have failed logically to prove the existence of matter. As this opinion has not been challenged by W. B., I need not trouble myself to cast about for arguments and authorities to justify it. Indeed, the opinion that no reasoning can logically prove the existence of matter is as widely and firmly established as any opinion whatever. I go, however, a step further, and confidently assert that no reasoning can logically prove that there is such a phenomenon as mind or thought.

Here then it is conceded by a Materialist that matter's reality is taken for granted, not logically proved, and mindism or spiritualism so far may enjoy a "cheap and easy triumph;" but now comes their turn to concede, now I will compel them to admit that the phenomenon called mind is also taken for granted not proved, and thus furnish a triumph no less "cheap and easy" for materialism. The upshot of all this is, that there are no facts in the sense understood by W. B.; and my paradoxical assertion that matter could not be proved to exist, yet that all sober-minded readers would agree that the existence of matter is a fact, &c.—will no longer wear the face of contradiction or absurdity.

My position is, that though men are morally certain of many things (the existence of their own bodies for example), they cannot in strictness logically prove any; and that the existence of *mind* is taken for granted just as is the existence of *matter*. If this position be unassailable, Berkeley and his troop of all-mind, no-body simpletons, will be foiled at their own game, with their own weapons, and even the ghosts of W. B.'s departed senses will see nothing inexplicable in my use of the word *fact*; no kind of contradiction in declaring that Berkeley's arguments against the existence of matter, admit of no answer; and afterwards making what W. B. mistook for a counter declaration, namely, that the existence of matter is a *fact*, the existence of motion another fact.

&c. The existence of matter is equally well established, rests upon precisely the same foundations as the existence of thought; to disturb those foundations is "at one fell swoop" to leave reason without a place for the sole of her foot; it is foolishly and recklessly to plunge into the bottomless pit of hopeless, idle, and senseless scepticism.

Ignorance of the assumptive basis of all human reasoning caused the ingenious Descartes to make a great simpleton of himself. What could betray greater folly in a philosopher than to suppose, as he did, that consciousness can be logically appealed to in proof of consciousness; when, whether we are or are not conscious is the very point that thorough going Pyrronians dispute? It is easy to say I am conscious of existence, therefore I exist, or as Descartes expressed it—I think, therefore my mind exists; but who can fail to see the utter absurdity of such a begging of the question?

D'Alembert said of Descartes, that he commenced by doubting of everything, and ended by leaving nothing unexplained. An antithesis that has the fault of not being quite correct. Descartes, it is true, did begin by doubting of EVERYTHING, but he did not begin by doubting of every proposition; which is the idea D'Alembert evidently intended to convey by his pretty antithesis. So far was Descartes from beginning as an out-and-out doubter, that he started with the naked and most preposterous assumption that this *unproved* consciousness proved the existence (not of his body) but of his mind, as thoroughly dogmatic a piece of certainty as is to be met with in the entire history of sophism. I am not alone in this opinion, Professor Stewart, in his useful Dissertation, appended to the Encyclopedia Britannica, remarks, that "the only thing that appeared to him (Descartes) certain and incontrovertible was his own existence, by which he repeatedly reminds us, we are to understand, merely the existence of his mind abstracted from all consideration of the material organs connected with it." Mr. Stewart also observes, "It is wonderful that it should have escaped the penetration of this most acute thinker, that a vicious circle is involved in every appeal to the intellectual powers, in proof of their own credibility; and unless that credibility be assumed as unquestionable, the farther exercise of human reason is altogether nugatory."

These remarks are quite decisive as to the circularity, and of consequence, stupidity of that reasoning, which proves the existence of our intellectual powers, by appealing to the existence of our intellectual powers. They are also invaluable, as including a clear statement of the important principle that all our facts rest upon certain funda-

mental assumptions, which the learned professor well said must be assumed of unquestionable credibility, or the farther exercise of reason is altogether nugatory.

I must conclude, though my work is not yet half finished. I did expect to polish it off in one article, but find that two at least will be necessary.

## THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

## XXVI.

*Birds (aves) continued.*

“NOTHING can be more beautiful to observe (says Everſ) than the rigid economy which is displayed in the accurate adaptation of the digestive apparatus of birds to the various and dissimilar kinds of food on which, from their diversified living habits they are *destined* to subsist. The absence of teeth in this class is supplied by strong horny beaks and powerful muscular gizzards, the former performing the part of cutting and the latter of grinding teeth; the form of the bill will vary according to the food of the different species of birds and their mode of procuring it, thus in the climbing frugivorous maccaws, parrots, and cockatoos, it is broad and powerful to break the hard shelly coverings of seeds, and most of the granivorous order have a similar structure. The broad bills of ducks, geese, and other aquatic species are well adapted for obtaining worms and other substances from watery or muddy situations, whilst the eagle, the hawk, the owl, and other rapacious birds have short, strong, arched, dense bills, with cutting edges equally suited to seize, cut, or tear their living prey. The tongue, which in birds serves the purpose of a prehensile organ, is as variable in form as the bills, being long, broad, and covered with recurved spines in the swans; short, round, and flexible in the parrots and cockatoos, and short and muscular in the struthious birds. The tongue of the flamingo is very remarkable, it is composed of an elastic, celluloso-fatty substance, its form is nearly cylindrical, the pointed apex being supported by an osseous plate inferiorly. A deep groove runs along the centre of the upper surface with a row of recurved spines on either side. The os *hyoïdes* in this class very much resembles that of reptiles, and the length of its glosso-hyal element chiefly determines the length of the tongue.” The word *glosso* is Græek for tongue, and names compounded with this word are applied to muscles attached to the tongue; thus *glosso-hyal* element means a muscle which draws the tongue forward or backward.

“Since the food of birds remains but a short time in the mouth and undergoes very little change there, their salivary glands are small. In the crow they consist of a series of conical follicles situated along the sides of the mouth, and opening separately on its mucous surface; in most other birds, however, there are four pairs, one under the tongue, another at the junction of the angles of the lower jaw, another close to the cornua of the os *hyoïdes*, and the fourth is placed at the angles of the mouth: they are most developed in the frugivorous species. The uvula (or *pap* of the throat, the glandular substance which

hangs down from the middle of the soft palate over the root of the mouth) and *velum* (palati, or soft palate is a muscular membranous partition between the nose and mouth, it conducts the fluids of the nose into the mouth, and acts like a valve in preventing what we swallow passing into the nose) are not present, and the narrow laryngeal aperture is protected by the retroverted papillæ at the base of the tongue, except in the coot, the albatross, and a few others, where the epiglottis exists merely in a *rudimentary* form quite insufficient to cover the opening.” Epiglottis is derived from two Greek words, meaning “upon the tongue,” one of the five cartilages of the larynx upon the glottis. The glottis is the superior opening of the larynx at the root of the tongue. The larynx is the superior part of the trachea or wind-pipe.

“There is a remarkable pouch under the jaw of the pelican which serves as a net for seizing fish, and is capable of containing ten quarts of water; a similar provision is found in the swift, the rook, the male bustard, *at maturity*, and other insectivorous birds. The alimentary canal is much longer and more capacious, and the glandular apparatus better developed in the phytophagous birds than in those which subsist more exclusively on animal food. The long, wide, fleshy esophagus, with a cuticular lining, passes down behind and to the right side of the trachea, behind the heart and between the lungs. (Esophagus is from two Greek words, “to carry,” “to eat,” the canal leading from the pharynx to the stomach, carrying what is swallowed into the stomach. The pharynx, “to convey,” is a membranous bag at the end of the mouth.) In rapacious birds the esophagus is capable of enormous dilatation, but in the flamingo its diameter does not exceed half an inch. In the frugivorous, insectivorous, and omnivorous birds, the esophagus presents nearly a uniform capacity all through, but in the raptorial eagles and vultures, which gorge themselves at uncertain periods, it forms a lateral dilatation at the lower part of the neck termed the *ingluives* or crop. And in those birds which live exclusively on, and require to take a large quantity of vegetable food, the crop is large, globular, or oval, single in the common fowl, and double in the pigeon; it is altogether wanting in the swan and goose. The esophagus and crop are supplied with an abundant mucous secretion, and are provided with an external circular and an internal longitudinal set of muscular fibres, the reverse of the disposition observed in the human subject. Mr. Hunter has recorded in his animal economy, some interesting observations on the crop of the pigeon, from which it appears that this macerating paunch takes on a secreting function during the breeding season, and supplies the young pigeons with an abundance of milk, a diet suitable to their tender age, and the analogy of the *pigeon's milk* to that of the mammalia has not escaped popular notice.

“The parietes (wall) of the gizzard are subservient in a remarkable manner to a known law, to which the whole muscular system yields, that of increasing its growth in proportion to the functions imposed on it, this was strikingly illustrated in the case of a sea-gull, which Mr. Hunter kept for a year, living, contrary to its nature, upon grain. At the end of that period he contrasted its gizzard with that of

another sea-gull, which had been living on fish, and found that the digastric (two bellies) muscles of the former had acquired nearly three times the development of the latter. He accomplished similar phenomena by changing the food of an eagle and of a tame kite, the former thrived very well on bread, but that it was dissatisfied with its fare, is to be inferred from its seizing the earliest opportunity of breaking its chain, and effecting its escape. *These facts show IN A CLEAR MANNER the provision of nature for the preservation of life under a variety of circumstances.* When we contemplate the different lengths and forms of intestine met with in this class, we cannot help attributing it to some wise purpose, and a little reflection on the greatly diversified nature of the food on which the various tribes of birds are *destined* to subsist, *irresistibly* leads us to infer that economy *seems* to be the main design, for instance, the colon and cæca (names of intestines) of the African ostrich, which has to subsist on the scanty and uncertain fare of the desert, are *fifty* times the length of the same parts in the cassowary, which inhabits Java, one of the most fertile countries on the globe."

I shall, at a future period, offer a few remarks upon some of the observations I have quoted from Mr. Evers, and which I have placed in italics, with whom it is scarcely necessary to say I differ in respect to the conclusions to be drawn from the facts which he gives.

## IS THERE NO GOD ?

(Concluded.)

I KNOW that some writers in the *Oracle* have disputed the existence even of physical power, or power of any kind. This, if it were really seriously intended, I shall pass over with one remark. To doubt the existence of power is quite in keeping with a writer who tells us in one and the same article that the *existence of matter is the fundamental truth of materialism*, and that the existence of matter cannot be proved (see *Oracle* 275-6 and 309-10). I do therefore affirm (not that god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man, which is a faulty expression liable to be perverted, as has been seen, but) that the idea of god dwelling in the mind of man, is a moral and not a merely physical idea, because whatever amount of physical power may be conceived in the mind of man, there must be the addition of moral qualities, before the mind entertains the conception of a god of any kind. The question of the being of a god is rather a moral than a physical question. As I have elsewhere said—

The question of the existence or non-existence of an intelligent god, or of the belief or disbelief in god, is in reality not a question of *fact*, but of *moral influence*. The question of *fact* is of no further importance than as it serves to *establish and sustain that moral influence in the minds of men*: if the belief in an intelligent and good god, the ruler

of the universe, can be shown to have no beneficial moral influence upon the minds of men, then it is a matter of perfect indifference whether they believe in god or not, or indeed, so far as the well-being of man in this world is concerned, whether there be an intelligent god or no; and whoever sets about the task of banishing the idea of an intelligent god from the minds of men, must first establish the conclusion that this idea has no beneficial moral influence; for however he may deal with the question of *fact*, so long as the *beneficial* moral influence is believed, the idea will be cherished amongst men.

My opinion of this great question is, that like every other question, it must be ultimately settled by its own intrinsic merits; that is whether it be for the good of mankind to believe in a god of any kind or no. To this complexion it must come at last. Now, there are three phrases, and only three, I think, under which this question as a moral question can be viewed.

1st. A belief in an intelligent and good god has a beneficial influence upon the conduct and condition of mankind. If this be correct, then the Theist is right.

2nd. A belief in a god of any kind has an injurious influence upon the conduct and condition of mankind. If this be correct, then the Atheist is right.

3rd. It is of no consequence whether men believe in a god of any kind or not; because such belief has no influence whatever upon their conduct or condition either for good or evil. If this be correct, both the Theist and the Atheist are wrong.

For if the belief does not produce a good influence, why should the Theist support it? If it does not produce an evil influence, why should the Atheist attack it? If it produces no influence whatever, either good or evil, why should they contend about it at all?

W. C. says, or rather wishes me to say, (*Oracle* page 339) "I do not consider god-belief unconditionally necessary to morality—morality can subsist without it." That *some degree* of morality could subsist without a belief in god will be readily granted. Indeed, society could not exist at all without some degree of it, and the mutual wants and mutual dependence of men, as well as their natural sympathies for each other, would always be sufficient to maintain some degree of morality in society without a belief in a good god, or even with a belief in an evil god, which is worse than no belief at all. For the belief in a cruel and vindictive god has a tendency to make men more cruel and vindictive than they would be naturally; just as a belief in a kind and merciful god tends to make them more kind and merciful. Man is not either good or evil by nature. There never was a perfectly good man; there never was a perfectly bad man. The best man that ever lived might have been

better; and the worst that ever lived might have been worse. The difference between the best and the worst is merely a difference of degree. One is *better* the other is *worse*; but there is no man either absolutely good or absolutely evil, "no, not one." According to my notion then, a society of men worshipping a wicked god would stand very low upon the scale, although even here we shall find some degree of morality. A society of Atheists would occupy a higher position; but a society of men who worshipped a wise and good god would occupy a position on the moral side higher than either. But it has been questioned whether a society of Atheists could exist. Voltaire, who surely cannot be accused of bigotry, seems to decide in the negative (see Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary). Others have gone farther, and have doubted whether a society of Atheists could be formed. This may be met by the fact that we have at this moment the professed Atheists of Great-Britain associated together for mutual aid and protection. In my opinion, the present loosely connected association has its origin in the cruel, wicked, and stupid persecution of C. SOUTHWELL, G. J. HOLYOAKE and others. Persecution makes men of the same opinions cling together for mutual protection. If the government were to liberate Southwell and Holyoake, and cease altogether from prosecution, or persecution, in my opinion the present association of professed Atheists would be dissolved into its ultimate atoms in a very short time. At all events, one thing is certain, although we have many instances of professing Atheists, who in their individual and private capacity have been very good and amiable men, yet we have no instance either in ancient or modern times of a nation professing atheistical opinions who have occupied a high position upon the scale of moral and intellectual advancement. If atheism will furnish a basis whereon to erect a moral system of high value it has yet to be proved. I for one do not think it will.

W. C. greatly mistakes me if he supposes that I have given up the question of *fact* altogether. I have no intention of doing so, but as I look upon the question of moral influence as the major, and the question of fact as the minor, I prefer taking my stand upon the major in the first place, because when the major is once settled the minor will be very soon and very easily disposed of.

T. S. M.

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THE JUSTLY CELEBRATED  
AND UNEQUALLED SATIRICAL RHAPSODY, THE  
Y A H O O!

With numerous *ADDITIONS* by the Author.

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

SIR.—Be so good as to explain for me that the sovereign which Mr. Holyoake last week acknowledged as coming from me was only through me, from Henry Hartzburg, Esq. and other friends of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I have also to thank them for a sovereign subscribed to my summer expenses, with the acknowledgment of a similar compliment from a friend at Cheltenham, and another at Bristol.

Trivial errors creep into my letters, for which I, perhaps, am most to blame in my negligent writing; but there was one last week on which I may be challenged. It is said that vowels were added to the Hebrew language by a superstitious church in the fifteenth century. I certainly wrote the *fifth*. My authority is an indirect report of a statement on the subject to a friend by Dr. J. P. Smith. The issues of the question are vast in relation to modern religion; so accurate a statement of dates is indispensable. Our enemies crow over our alleged ignorance, on detecting perhaps accidental mistakes of this kind.

Southwell wants correction in his definitions about nature and art. There is confused nonsense in his first "*Because*" last week, when he says, "The hatchet which is used to fell the oak is just as much a part of nature as the oak itself." Then, in the same sentence, follows something which I charitably suppose to be a misprint, because it is sheer nonsense, about nature making the tool and the man. To know the proper distinctions between nature and art is to know everything there exists to be known. Southwell is one of those men who, in over-proof of a case, overthrows it. Bacon wrote no such nonsense as Southwell writes. Nature makes the human infant; but it is art that makes both the man to make the tool and the tool; to which we may add, that the felling of the oak is a work of art and not of nature. The only tool which I know nature to make is the teazle for dressing woollen cloths.

I do not envy you such a correspondent as "M. Q. R." As fierceness is not love, so neither can low jests and filthy satire be philosophical correction. They who are fond of depicting abominations must first have a mind suited to them. I have marked this truth in my experience with mankind. A lady once complimented Samuel Johnson with having omitted all naughty words in his dictionary. The bluff and honest lexicographer, detesting her hypocrisy, archly replied, "I see, madam, you have been looking for them." It is thus the bible, as a faithful volume of man's nature and art, may be made to suit all tastes.

RICHARD CARLILE.

PRISON THOUGHTS.

Of in the lowly roof, the humble cell  
Of poverty, where pain and sorrow dwell,  
Sincerer virtues in the breast we meet  
Than in the stately dome and regal seat;  
Where lords and kings are nursed in courtly wiles,  
Midst deep suspicions and insidious smiles.

ARIOSTO.

THIS might be made a glorious world. Mankind might lie down at night in peace and tranquility, and arise with joy and gladness. Their lives might be as a continual summer, everything calculated to please the mind or delight the body might be placed within the reach of all, even the labour which now is considered loathsome, degrading, and vulgar, might be made a source of happiness. Why is it that women take a pleasure in fulfilling the most disagreeable offices for their husbands or friends? There is the secret of society. Were we bound together on the principle of love and mutual good offices, were men to look upon each of their fellows as friends, brothers, sisters, and companions, willing to assist and comfort each other according to their several abilities, the feeling would at once become reciprocal. Instead of the pompous jargon of priestcraft, and the peace-destroying principles of profit, trade, or commerce, teach children a knowledge of nature, and the true science of society, and want, woe, and misery would soon vanish from the world. The rich know nothing of human nature, none of the noble and refined feelings of self-denying zeal and love of justice which exists amongst the working-classes. No! How should they, where could they learn it? brought up as they are in arrogance and haughtiness, finding themselves placed in authority over their fellow-creatures from their infancy, and whom they are taught to look upon as an inferior race of beings, merely brought into the world for their benefit and advantage. Thus they grow up, learn a little Greek and Latin, and thrust themselves forward as learned men, born to rule. "Knowledge (say they) is power," and of course the exclusive possession of the former gives them the latter also. But of what does their boasted knowledge consist? The best means for debauching themselves, for enslaving their fellows and keeping them in brutal ignorance and misery. Wealth-producers, awake! Shake off the lethargy in which you have so long been buried! Rise from the earth as one man—say you will be free—and the vice and wretchedness-producing institutions of this mundane hell will crumble into dust, "and like the baseless fabric of a vision leave not a wreck behind!"

A CHARTIST PRISONER.

CONSISTENCY.

I HAVE little wish to enter into a dry metaphysical arid dissertation on this quality. So with only a passing glance at correctness, will call it a virtue mankind have yet to learn.

Call a man inconsistent, and he will perhaps never forgive you. Say a person knows not what is right, and you almost certainly offend him. Yet how few of them who

know and profess what is right—do it? Consistency would correct this.

How many think the bible no better than the Shaster, Brahmin-book, or Koran; yet how few dare speak consistently with their belief, and call it folly, nonsense, myth, brutality, and trampery?

The Indian trinity of gods we can reason on as a *company* for keeping us spalpeens in order; why not call the modern trinity, Jehovah, Jesus, Holy Ghost, and Co., a firm for the same purpose? Consistency sanctions such phraseology.

The Unitarians believe Christ to be a mere *man*. Then why do we not hear of *Mister Jesus*, or, to be a little more respectable, of *Jesus Christ, Esq.*?

How would Mr. Moses sound, when talking of the ten plagues of Egypt? and, by-the-bye, as friend Christ said of the commandment of love, it was the eleventh and greatest of them all, so Mr. Moses seems to have been the eleventh and greatest plague of Egypt, that famous city of onion-gods and conjuring priests.

The second person of the godly firm went up and down the Jews' villages instead of minding his work. When a modern Shiloh does so he is stigmatised as a vagrant; then why not say that Mr. Jesus went vagabondising about the country?

Byron says, "I love the name of Mary." Pretty name enough; but when speaking of the Virgin Mary, Mrs. God seems much simpler, and Mother of God much sweeter.

It must be admitted Infidels do not set the example they should of straightforward conduct. But this is no excuse for Christians, as they profess not to copy unbelievers. From the first of the fathers to the last of the popes, as Gibbon unsocially says, Christians have been inconsistent. The "Sweeryites," or "Holy Rollers," of New York, are perhaps the best sect that has sprung up; but they may be much improved.

G. J. H.

INFIDELITY.—It is an unquestionable fact that the natural bias of youth is almost always inclined towards scepticism and infidelity. And such is the case, not merely because, as Bacon says, a little philosophy inclines us to atheism, and a great deal of philosophy carries us back to religion; but youth has an intellectual bias against religion, because it would humble the arrogance of the understanding; and a moral bias against it, because it would check a self-indulgence of the passions. This is especially true of young men in the incipient stages of education. They have a strong bias in favour of infidelity because it seems to emancipate the mind from superstition and prejudice, and because it lays few restraints upon the gratification of the desires.—*Fudge.*

THE HOLLOWNESS OF THE WORLD.

(From the Odd Fellow.)

I have lived to see the light of love  
Go darkly from my heart;  
I have lived to see each tender dream  
Eternally depart.

I have lived till even poesy  
Can yield but little bliss;  
And I may mourn that I have lived  
For such a change as this.

For weak and worthless are the joys  
That come when these are past—  
Cold thoughts of gain, and sensual cares,  
And grovelling pangs that last :

Oh, give me give me back that heaven  
Of feelings dear though wild;  
Of burning zeal and passions young  
Which first my heart beguiled :

For I would rather have for ever  
A light that led astray,  
Than tread with mean formality  
This worn and hackneyed way ;

Where we must have a ready smile  
For those we scorn and hate,  
And bend with cringing courtesy  
To rogues who live in state ;

Where we must follow Custom's rules  
Howe'er absurd and mean,  
Content to show with other fools  
Our love for what *has been* ;

To shun whate'er of light and truth  
Increasing knowledge brings,  
And bow to old Corruption's sway,  
To bigots and to kings.

To check one's hate—to shape one's love—  
By fashion's wayward rule ;  
Be zealons in frivolity—  
In virtue's cause be cool.

Oh, I would rather have for ever  
A light that led astray ;  
Than tread as worthless worldlings do,  
This worn and weary way.

J. W. D\*\*\*\*

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

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THE TRIAL OF GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE,

On an indictment for Blasphemy, before Mr. Justice Erskine, and a Common Jury, at Gloucester, August the 15th, 1842. From notes specially taken by Mr. HUNT; the Authorities cited in the Defence being quoted at full length.—Stiched in a wrapper.

The *Times* has ratted from its high church principles, and having copiously abused the *Dispatch* for its atheism, deism, and all other *isms* and *itisms*, now assumes our line of march, and actually becomes the blasphemer in an out-and-out style, to which there is no parallel, as the *Times* would say, even in the *Dispatch* itself. Here is a quotation from the *Times* :—“The Liturgy.—A correspondent suggests, that as the church is beginning to direct its attention to all subjects of improvements, alterations, pews, &c., a great improvement might be made by substituting others than many of the present first lessons, which are disgustingly indecent. It is painful to hear them read publicly before young persons, and the minister generally blushes for shame.” Who would have suspected the bishops’ journal, the high church organ, and the great Tory hireling, of denouncing the prayer-book as “DISGUSTINGLY INDECENT,” and as an infamy to be read to children, and the reading of which makes even clerical readers blush for shame? It is true that we (*The Weekly Dispatch*) have been saying the same things as forcibly as possible for ten years, but then the *Times* abused us as Atheists, villains, traitors, and monsters, “and all that there,” for so doing; but now the *Times*, though in the pay of government and the church, takes up all our language, and using it with its usual coarse taste, attacks the church service as a work of the most disgusting indecency. The common law holds that the church service is “a part and parcel of the law of the land.” The *Times* declares that the church service is disgustingly indecent—we agree with the *Times* though it is seldom that politeness can be stretched so far on our parts, and thus we violate the immortal and sacred laws of our adored country. The church service is most disgustingly indecent, as the *Times* says. What will the *Times* fall back upon? Will this muddy hireling better his case by going to the testament, old or new? The laws of wills have been extremely altered in this country within a very few years, and what will the *Times* do in this old and new testament case? What consistency is there in its columns? A difference of two days has produced an entire revolution in its sentiments. On Monday it poured forth a torrent of wretched abuse and personal venom, in its article on the education of the pauper children of St. Pancras parish, on account of a vestryman examining into their religious education; and on Wednesday it turns round, and calls a portion of the religious rites, which it before so warmly defended, *disgustingly indecent*. We may exclaim indeed—*tempora mutantur!*—*Dispatch*.

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THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, [PRICE 1D.  
No. 46.] for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months’  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

CHRISTIANS IN DANGER.

THAT christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, no man can reasonably, or at all events safely, doubt. Chief Justice Hale said so, and he was a respectable judge. All Christian judges since his time have repeated and acted upon the dictum. Christianity-law may be, indeed we know it is, judge-made law, but law it undoubtedly is nevertheless. Judge Hale made the law, and its application in the cases of CARLILE, HETHERINGTON, SOUTHWELL, and HOLYOAKE, is a practical and established fact.

Now what christianity is I take not upon myself to explain, I confess that it is to me quite inexplicable. What it is or what it is not Christians themselves don’t seem clearly to understand. If they can’t agree upon the matter, other people may be excused. My settled and sad conviction is that nought but the “second coming in power and glory,” or a wholesale apostolic resurrection will ever set the Christian world straight. But though all talk about and none exactly know the true nature of christianity, I suppose it may be affirmed without offence that the Sermon on the Mount is part and parcel of christianity, and per consequence (that is if the dictum of Judge Hale be worth anything) part and parcel of the law of the land. All Christians must agree here or they will agree nowhere. That they do agree upon this matter, that they all point with pride and pleasure, as a most wonderful, an altogether out-and-out sermon, to what Jesus Christ is reputed to have delivered on the mount, I don’t expect any one will attempt to deny. It would be rank blasphemy, in short, to deny so cherished a truth. If then the Sermon on the Mount is genuine christianity, is part and parcel of the law of the land; then I am as an honest man bound to declare that almost all, if not all Christians are in a very critical position. I have already acknowledged my innocence, or rather ignorance of christianity. knowing absolutely *nil* about it, and caring just as much. As a prudent individual therefore I shall say nothing *pro* or *con*, but simply call public attention to the Sermon on the Mount, because that is quite

understandable, and is allowed to contain the very essence of Christ’s doctrine. It may be a correct summary of his doctrine or it may not, all I care to insist upon is that Christians say it is, and it is very dangerous to dispute the truth of what they say. Now Jeremy Bentham, who was a capital lawyer and sound philosopher, though but an indifferent Christian, said, “If christianity be the law of the land, disobedience to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount is an indictable offence.” Which opinion, if sound in law, is sufficient to produce considerable consternation. It is evident that between Sir Mathew Hale on the one hand and Jeremy Bentham on the other, all but such Christians as I rather think are not to be found now-a-days, must find themselves in an awkwardly dangerous position. Hale will have it that christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land. If so, says Bentham, “disobedience to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount is an indictable offence.” If Hale is right Bentham must be right, and how Christians, who don’t act upon the Mount Sermon doctrines are to be saved, it will be difficult if not impossible to understand.

As this is matter of supreme importance to all Christians, I will quote a little from the said sermon, so that they may see the precipice whereon they stand, and avoid a tumble if they are able. It cannot, I think, for one moment be doubted that according to the judge-made and parson-applying law already mentioned every grown child of a Christian mother is open to indictment. From his grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, down to the most ragged and snivelling of parish-church Christians, there is not, I firmly believe, *one* who might not be indicted and legally punished for acting in diametrical opposition to the doctrines of the Sermon on the Mount, and of course in defiance of the law of the land. Let us go to the new testament for proof of this.\* “I say unto you swear not at all, neither by heaven for it is god’s throne, nor by the earth for it is his footstool, neither by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy

\* See Matthew v. 34 to 41.

head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let all your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto ye that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also; and if any man sue thee at law, and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away."

Such is neither top nor tail, but a small bit of the body of that celebrated sermon *said* to have been delivered by Christ, and I think it must be admitted that Infidels, if maliciously inclined, could easily fill our gaols with Christians. Christians have served out Infidels pretty severely, and now Infidels can pepper Christians in turn. I don't recommend this, I don't like the principle of revenge, agreeing entirely with Lord Bacon, that "he who revenges an injury is equal with his opponent, he who forgives one is superior." If public utility, however, demand that some thousands of Christians should be indicted, why no feelings, however amiable, should be allowed to stand in the way of a sacred duty. If the Sermon on the Mount is part and parcel of christianity, and christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, it is certain that every oath taken in our police or any other courts, renders the swearer liable to indictment, for the sermon commands a yea, yea, and a nay, nay *solamente*. If a drunken Christian strike a sober Christian a heavy thump on the right cheek, the poor devil, that is the sober Christian, must turn to him (the thumper) the other also, that *it* may be well bruised and thumped likewise, or take the chance of an indictment. If an impudent scoundrel strip us of our coats, we must not rest satisfied, but let him have our cloakes into the bargain, or the thief may indict us for violating a part and parcel of the law of the land. If a good Christian is compelled to go *one* mile out of his way he must insist upon going a *second* mile in the same direction, or he is open to indictment for disobeying the admirable precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. And lastly, he is no Christian who does not give to all who ask him, and lend just as much as all other good folks choose to borrow. Woe, alas, to such a Christian, for if he don't choose to give all but his skin, and lend even his teeth, if his neighbours require them, he not only breaks the law of the land, and is open to indictment, but he breaks the law of god, which is a much more serious matter. The civil magistrates may put a man in prison, or pillory, or even hang, if need be, but the uncivil chief magistrates in the realms of glory may doom an

unfortunate law-breaker to be always burning and never consuming.

If such things be true indeed,  
Some Christians have a comfortable creed.

But for the truth or falsehood of this fine Sermon on the Mount, or indeed the truth or falsehood of any other Jew writings, is nothing to the purpose, all I have to do with at present is the established fact, that christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, the other established fact that the Sermon on the Mount is part and parcel of christianity, together with the no less important established fact that not to act upon, or disobedience to the precepts of that sermon is decidedly an indictable offence. All, therefore, that any man has to do, if he wish to annoy a Christian, or get him into a serious scrape, is to go and hit him very hard on the right cheek, when if the left be not forthcoming, the said Infidel can either knock the Christian down or indict him, whichever may be most convenient; or having sued him at law, and got his best new coat, see that the said Christian *willingly* give his best cloak also. If the Christian grumble, the said Infidel may seize him by the nape of the neck, and having made him go a mile at a good brisk trot, watch narrowly if said Christian goes smilingly, willingly, and comfortably a second mile with his tormentor, just by way of keeping him company. Or a poor Infidel, a ragged empty-stomached rascal for instance, may go to a rich Christian, to his lordship the Archbishop of Canterbury to wit, and ask him for all the silver and gold he the said archbishop has over and above what is strictly apostolic, that is all above none, and if the rich archbishop would not give to him that asked, or attempted to turn away from the borrower, why all I have to say is, that if christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, and the Sermon on the Mount part and parcel of christianity, he could be indicted and sent to the treadmill, with the additional mortification of being compelled by law to love the scamps who sent him there, to bless them when they were cursing him, and do other impossible things in order to prove his repentance, and be one of "the children of his father *which* is in heaven." For if his lordship of Canterbury only loves those who love him, what reward has he? And if he salute his brethren only, what does he more than others? do not even publicans and Infidels so? Be ye, therefore, my lord of Canterbury, and all other good Christians perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.

I use the language of a true disciple of Christ, nay, it is the very language of Christ himself, so that if it savour of the absurd that is not my fault. I deny not that if any man or woman were to act upon Christian precepts they would infallibly be placed in a madhouse.

Let Christians defend their own dogmas and precepts if they can, but if they can't that is not my fault either, christianity's tub, like all other tubs, should stand upon its own bottom. It is not long since a gentleman of considerable fortune, well known in Birmingham, took the pious resolution of practising christianity's precepts. He was determined to do unto others as he would that others should do unto him, by way of commencement, and meeting one day a naked or almost naked fellow-Christian, he stripped off his own fine clothes to place them on the poor beggar, and walked through the streets naked as he was born, very like bare buttocked Isaiah, who was in the habit of doing that sort of thing as a sign and a wonder to Israel. As might have been expected, the naked and most benevolent Christian was speedily carried before a magistrate, who being a Christian of quite another stamp, ordered him to a lunatic asylum, which it must be confessed was the fittest place for so consistent a practiser of the precepts taught by the wise Jesus.

It has been observed by some one that men are rarely, perhaps never, so wise or so foolish, so good or so bad as their opinions. That Christians are not so bad as they would fain have us believe, is a truth "luminous as light and clear as crystal." Their precepts are so utterly nonsensical and not a few of them so desperately wicked, that did they attempt to act consistently with them society would be at once dissolved, and as regards all political or social civilisation chaos would come again, hence it is that their professions have ever been wide of, and ever must be in opposition diametrical to, their opinions. Whatever may be said of their wisdom and goodness, they never have been so foolish or vile as their opinions. The great sceptical critic, Bayle, thought that a society of *real* Christians could not subsist, and I am decidedly of that opinion. A *real* Christian would be a *real* lunatic, and though a society of such might be formed it would hardly hang together.

### WHAT IS GOD?

THIS question has been already so ably treated of in your periodical, that I cannot allow myself even the humble merit of furnishing a fresh answer. No! In this letter I must content myself with claiming "second best," being but a "gatherer and disposer of other men's stuff."

I take the answer as I find it written somewhere in the Jew-book, viz., god is love, and I also follow the Christians to their creed, where the god-idea is still further elaborated in the following definition:—God the father incomprehensible, god the son incomprehensible, god the holy-ghost incomprehensible.

Now I stop not to inquire *how* he, she, or

they can be incomprehensible, when they define it to be love. Surely they comprehend something of it to say thus much. Or do they mean to insinuate that love is not comprehensible? Any body capable of feeling it can comprehend it. Do Christians confess they cannot feel it—cannot comprehend it—and hence cannot act in accordance with its dictates? SOUTHWELL or H LYOAKE will say that a black list of ugly facts—true as gospel writ—ay, taken from the "book divine," corroborates the confession. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

But this is not my province, I leave the incomprehensibles by the way-side, that should I ever worship at the shrine of idolatry I may freely use them as my plea and mediation to "an avenging god," or on my road to Bedlam, the happy Canaan, they will serve for subjects of much curious research and endless inquiry. I proceed then to the examination of the credal definition of god.

God the father, that is love. God the son, that is the child of god the father or love. He must therefore be the child of love, that is a love-child. And god the holy-ghost, whom one would think was the mother-god of god the son.

But in reading the account of the birth and parentage of god the son, we find it expressly stated in the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of Matthew:—

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When, as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the *holy-ghost*." Hence, god the son must evidently have been a *love-child* as already stated, and his father was the holy-ghost.

In saying this it will be perceived that I leave all human agency out of the question, and cavil not with Christians on the incomprehensible nature of Christ's birth and parentage. I am willing to admit that Christ was born of the *Virgin* Mary, but it must be conceded me that the holy-ghost was his father, and not god No. 1, misnamed god the father. Few, if any, can doubt this if they admit the truth of the Jewish records.

Of course I do not, and cannot believe that god the son was the child of the *Virgin* Mary. If I believed this I must confess that there was a good deal of human agency in the affair. No, god the son must have been begotten before all time from god No. 1, and some how or other begotten again by the *Virgin* Mary, which on the face of it appears a work of supererogation. But god's ways are not our ways.

Difficulties now crowd upon me thick and fast, arising from the incomprehensible nature of the subject, and the contradictory not to say absurd positions already advanced,

to one less sanguine, such would prove insurmountable barriers to further progress. But in spite of them all I will proceed. Mine be the task to vindicate the creed of the Christian—to show it in its proper light, and lay bare its hidden springs, and remote consequences. What though I confound the common sense, and disgust the good feeling of the community, “truth is always consistent and shall prevail.”

Happy indeed shall I be if reason retains her throne amidst the mysteries of the incomprehensible, and intellect be not for ever dimmed in the glare of heavenly truth. Others have fallen. Tremble, presumptuous, lest thou share their fate!

I resume. Thus god the son is not the child of the Virgin Mary, but the son of god No. 1, who cannot be his father, for we have already fathered him on the holy-ghost, god No. 3. God the father ought therefore to be called god the mother, and the order runs thus:—

*Nominally.*

God the father.

God the son.

God the holy-ghost.

*Really.*

God the mother.

God the love-child.

God the father.

That I may not be thought to palm upon the Christians any idea of my own, I beg my readers to refer to his scriptures, where he will frequently read, “I will beget a son,” meaning a divine female will do it, and when the son is brought into the world, mark the solicitude of god No. 1. Hear her shouting, “This is my beloved son, hear ye him”—evinced the utmost maternal affection. God the father would, humanly speaking, content himself with saying, “this is my son;” it is only a mother who would say my *beloved* son.

Thus, all matter is under petticoat government. Nay more, millions who have grounded their present hope and future bliss on a belief in god the father, are wofully deceived. Generations too have descended to the grave to wake in future torments, through this sad mistake.

These considerations are weighty, and many will doubtless raise objections against this novel interpretation of the trinity. But I am persuaded that it is most consistent, and will be found a great help to explain many at present inexplicable passages and cross-readings.

Do take one. It appears very strange that Moses, when hidden in the cleft of a rock, and promised a sight of god No. 1, should have been favoured with only a back view. But now it is explained—modesty forbid her being seen in any other position.

Again, in the 26th verse of the 1st of Genesis, god says, “let us make man in our image.” Now be it remembered this occurred before the creation of Adam. Hence it must evidently mean the creation of god the

father, commonly called god the holy-ghost. This view, too, is much strengthened and explained by the Athanasian creed, by which we learn “that the *right* faith is thus:—that god the son is both god and man: yet is he not two but one Christ; one not by conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking of the *manhood* into god.”

Now the manhood of Christ being taken into god before any men existed, we can easily account for the life of celibacy he is reported to have lived. We can also account for the begetting of a son before all worlds. And god the mother having the Jews entirely under her thumb, it is not at all wonderful nor even inconsistent, that in her exactions of rams, bullocks, poultry, &c, for herself, she should not forget the manhood of her husband, by enjoining her chosen people to appropriate a certain number of virgins for the use of the god—such to be irredeemable at any price. It is only wonderful that of so many ladies that fell to his share, no sons of god were born. One would have thought he might have peopled the earth with them, and kept a goodly number by him for an emergency. But perhaps he would thereby have overshot the mark. Let us, however, rest assured that he did all for the best.

Hence, my position is not only tenable, but absolutely essential for the exposition of the holy scriptures, and clearly deduced from the catholic faith.

But my new views of theology have already trespassed too much on your valuable periodical. I therefore conclude, offering the following amended creed as most consistent with the facts of theology and the holy records of the “inspired” volume.

“Upon all necessary and fitting occasions, whether feasts or not, shall be sung, said, or shouted, this confession of the Christian faith, by the people sitting at home, and the priest howling to heaven.

*A tarnation good creed.*

“More pigs and less parsons.

“Whosoever will be saved before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith.

“And the catholic faith is this:—that we worship three gods, an old woman, her adopted love-child, and her husband, commonly called, god the mother, god the love-child, and god the father, and yet not three gods, but one.”

“Neither confounding the persons nor their places of birth. For god came from Teman, the holy one from Mount Paran, and the lamb on an ass from Bethlehem.

“And there is one person of the mother—that of an old woman, self-existent, vegetating in obscurity, surrounded by nothing till the last six thousand years.

“Another of the father, originally created

in the image of god No. 1, about six thousand years ago, but generally appearing in the form of a dove, because at Gaza he turned pigeon-hearted and could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because of their iron chariots.

“And another of the love-child, given as a propitiation for our sins, and made a little lower than the angels; he was begotten before the worlds, of the substance of the mother, who, after an eternity of labour, finding herself incompetent to the task, was obliged to adopt the offspring of an illicit amour between her husband and the spouse of a carpenter. However, she had not the generosity to support him. But with the exception of sending him a few red-herrings, and a shilling or two, when threatened by the ‘bums,’ left him dependant on the hard toil of the injured carpenter—the generous Joseph.

“And in this trinity none is afore or after the other, none is greater or less than the other.

“But the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.

“And the mother is ‘as long as the earth, and broad as the sea’—large dimensions for a woman. The father is about the size of a pigeon, and the love-child hath the dimensions of a man, so that they are all exactly equal!

“And the mother is older than eternity; the father is older than eternity, less six thousand years, and what is to come; and the son being only eighteen hundred and forty two, will nevertheless be as old as either, should he live long enough.

“It is necessary to believe all this to secure salvation from the bloody fangs of the ‘holy catholic church and communion of saints,’ in hopes too of the forgiveness of sins, and to ensure ‘a good birth’ in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

“This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.

“And if he does believe faithfully he becomes a child of promise—for the lunatic asylum, and an inheritor of the glory—of having lost his wits, and taken leave of his senses.”

J. B. LEAR.

## THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

### VII.

From what has been advanced, it must appear that science is, in its comprehensive sense, knowledge, while art is the application thereof. The scientific man is a theorist, I of course mean the mere man of science, whereas the artist is the practical

man; it is almost impossible to conceive a great artist who could be ignorant of the nature of the materials with which and by which he produced his works. The great Phidias must have been well acquainted with the human figure, or he could never have chiselled his Minerva or his Theseus; and it is unquestionably true that there are many men of science who are not and never can be artists, but no man can be eminent as an artist who has no science. The fable of the Sphinx has been supposed to have much deep meaning in connexion with the sciences and the arts. It is related that the Sphinx was a monster variously formed, having the face and voice of a virgin, the wings of a bird, and the talons of a griffin. She resided on a mountain near the city of Thebes; and also beset the highways. Her manner was to lie in ambush and seize travellers; and having them in her power, proposed to them certain dark and perplexing riddles, which it was thought she received from the muses, and if her wretched captives could not solve and interpret these riddles, she with great cruelty fell upon them in their hesitation and confusion and tore them to pieces. The plague having reigned a long time, the Thebans at length offered their kingdom to the man who could interpret her riddles, there being no other way to subdue her. Oedipus, a penetrating and prudent man, though lame in his feet, excited by so large a reward, accepted the condition, and with good assurance of mind cheerfully presented himself before the monster, who directly asked him, “What creature that was which being four-footed, afterwards became two-footed, then three-footed, and lastly four-footed again?” Oedipus, with great presence of mind replied, it was man, who upon his first birth and infant state crawled upon all fours, in endeavouring to walk—but not long after that went upright upon his two natural feet—again, in old age, walked three-footed with a stick—and at last growing decrepid lay four-footed confined. And having by this exact solution obtained the victory, he slew the monster, and laying the carcass upon an ass, led her away in triumph; and upon this, according to agreement, was made king of Thebes. This fable has been ingeniously interpreted by Lord Bacon, who, among other observations says, it was invented to represent science, especially as joined with practice (that is art). For science may without absurdity be called a monster, being strangely gazed at and admired by the ignorant and unskilful. Her figure and form is demon, by reason of the vast variety of subjects that science considers. Her voice and countenance are represented female by reason of her gay appearance, and volubility of speech (for science has in general rather been a

showy and talkative thing than solid, serviceable, and substantial). Wings are added, because the sciences and their inventions run and fly about in a moment, for knowledge, like light communicated from one torch to another, is presently caught and copiously diffused. Sharp and hooked talons are elegantly attributed to her, because the axioms and arguments of science enter the mind, lay hold of it, fix it down, and keep it from moving and slipping away. Again, all science seems placed on high, as it were on the tops of mountains that are hard to climb; for science is justly imagined a sublime and lofty thing, looking down upon ignorance from an eminence, and at the same time taking an extensive view on all sides, as is usual on the tops of mountains. Science is said to beset the highways; because through all the journey and peregrination of human life, there is matter and occasion offered of contemplation. It is added that the Sphinx was conquered, and her carcass was laid upon an ass; for there is nothing so subtle and abstruse, but after being made plain, and intelligible, and common, it may be received by the slowest capacity. The Sphinx was conquered by a lame man and impotent in his feet, for men usually make too much haste to the solution of Sphinx's riddles, whence it happens that she prevailing, their minds are rather racked and torn by disputes, than an empire gained by works and effects.

*Why is man called a responsible being?*

Because many ill-trained individuals hold the strange and fanciful notion that human nature is essentially depraved, radically and irretrievably vicious, which general corruption is a consequence of the fallen nature of man, brought about by the sin of Adam. These reasoners further say that, though fallen, degraded, with all the thoughts of our hearts evil continually, we might be better if we liked, and therefore deserve that pain and torture should be inflicted upon us if we do not act according to the received notions of right; and we always treat man as a responsible agent when we inflict pain in the spirit of vengeance, in other words, when we punish him, which according to lexicographers, is to revenge a fault with pain or death. All those therefore who inflict pain upon their fellow-creatures from wantonness, or a mistaken notion that their miserable victims deserve it, are punishers, and of course hold those they torture responsible, and are actuated by the infernal spirit of a Nero or a Caligula.

## THE WORTH OF MAN.

THE subject we have under consideration is of vital importance, and deserves to be regarded in the calm spirit of rational philosophy, apart from human predilection and prejudice, which have ever been the most fatal obstacles to the discovery and promulgation of truth. Man's worth should, nay, must be considered relatively to nature, and here let me express my dissent from a conclusion to which a recent Social Congress arrived. If I mistake not, Mr. Owen advocated, and the congress sanctioned, the retention of the word god instead of power in their theological disputation, because, said Mr. Owen, "it will have the additional recommendation of universal custom in its favour." Will any one tell me that the two words in question convey one and the same idea? I say no, the word god must ever carry with it the idea of personality, the word power never; speak of power, and the idea is an innate, continuous, natural force, speak of god and the idea is a controlling, superintending, and external image, therefore, I say, particular regard ought at all times to be paid to phraseology. To return to our subject, and as we would test man's claim to superiority by analogy, we will select an illustration from the vegetable world. Suppose a basket-maker and ship-builder seeking wood for their respective craft, while the first secures a willow the other fixes upon the oak, and they are each superior to the other (or as our dictionary definition of superior has it, greater in dignity or excellence, according to the purposes to which they are) to be applied, each therefore being greater in dignity or excellence than the other, there is no *absolute* superiority. Just so is it with animals, the same relationship that trees bear to each other, so is the relationship with animals, if the oak, relatively to nature, be in no wise superior to the willow, so then, relatively to nature, man is in no wise superior to the wolf. The words superior and inferior, good, bad, high, low, &c., have been invented by man for man's convenience, and owe their value entirely to man's continued existence. Suppose we destroy man at one fell swoop from the face of the earth, who will miss him, or rather who or what will regret his absence? Will the bird he imprisons, the fish he devours, the ox he slaughters, will these not continue longer in the healthful enjoyment of life, if life be worth conserving? Then will they enjoy their full term of years, and not be destroyed ere half that term be completed. Destroy man and away goes everything of which human thought is cognizant; the value of the diamond, the immortality of the soul, heaven, hell, god, devil, and all such imaginings. Where are they? The earth continues its

THE JEW-BOOK OF SOME USE.—A magistrate asked a Negro if he could read. "Yes, massa, a little." "Do you ever use the bible?" "Yes, massa, I strap my razor on it."

course, the seasons return as usual, all natural phenomena operate as before, the woods resound with the song-bird's melody, and the dolphin leaps gaily in the dancing sunbeams, cities have given up their sites for pasture, and flocks and herds browse in security on the fullness of a kindly soil. Here then it is plain that man in his petty greatness is not at all essential to the upholding of the fabric of the world. O man! thou imbecile, thou microcosm of miserable vanities, when wilt thou learn a lesson of rationality from thy brethren of the forest? When divest thyself of thy predilections for the human race? For a moment get off the stilts of arrogance and presumption on which your irrational pride has placed you, look abroad if you can over the surface of the earth with the impartial and unprejudiced eye of a philosopher, see you not life and motion in a variety of forms? life and growth in the tree; life, growth, and motion in the animal; see you not as much variety of action as of form, and death and decomposition as surely following life in man as in the so-called inferior animals? As night is to day, so is death to life; and we as surely rise again after death, the dog equally with the man, as the sun returns after an usual absence. What, it will be asked by the religious, do you think yourself no better than the dog? Just so, I reply, I think myself no better than the dog, but this implies no self-degradation, for I think the highest in the realm no better. But I would ask why is the dog singled out as an object of special degradation? I think it would reflect no discredit upon some of our human animals if they were to take a lesson in fidelity and honesty from the contemned brute. Nature recognises no inequality of rank among animal existences. There is no absolute high or low, up or down, for example, if we take a circle of our globe and place upon it at equal distances four individuals, bidding them at a given moment to point *upwards*, they would of course all point in opposite or contrary directions, hence no absolute up or down in nature. The upwards of the Englishman is the downwards of the Australian, and *vice versa*. The universe has been imagined as a continuous revolving circle, beautifully symbolised by the figure of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, ever in motion never at rest. Hence then we are bidden to seek a state of equality in harmony with nature's recognised and eternal laws. Let us now look at sentient beings in relation to each other, and I think it will be seen that man must lose by the comparison. Man is said to be a progressive animal. All animals are progressive, do they not during the course of life acquire ideas, knowledge, experience, and die? What does man more?

He communicates his knowledge—so does everything else; man must be trained by his fellows to know what Plato thought or said, or he would be thoroughly ignorant of the fact, and who will venture to say that all animals possess not a knowledge of circumstances attending their own previous life of yesterday, of the past month, seasons or year, and who will say that this knowledge is not capable of being communicated to the younger animals of their own species, and perhaps through many of their generations? If you take any animal in the creation, no matter which, it will be only reasonable to suppose that it possesses certain sensations, feelings, appetites, or mental associations of ideas peculiar to itself, man can know no more of what passes in the organism of the beetle, than the beetle can know what passes in the mind of man; and being in possession of life and sensations peculiar to itself, these are all important, as important as life and sensations are to man; and thus the beetle assumes as good and valid a title to be the head of creation and paragon of animals as man himself, seeing that the rest of the animal world is as nothing when weighed against its own existence in life.

CHARLES DENT.

(To be continued.)

#### REVIEW.

“*New Tracts for the Times: or Warmth, Light, and Food for the Masses.*”—Cousins.

WHAT sensations of delight and admiration the lover of his species, one who wishes all to see the truth, not as it is in Jesus but as it is in fact, experiences on beholding a fresh ally in the good task of repelling error. The prophetic voice of truth drives into the sea of oblivion the chimerical notions of superior intelligences, whether of gods or angels, devils, or witches. Such were my reflections on perusing the above tract, which ably combats many of the arguments concerning the divinity of Christ. It will be read by many who would faint at the very name of the *Oracle*, therefore I think it destined to do some good. An extract will better show the author's intentions:—

Isaiah ii. 2, 3, 4.—2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the lord's house shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. 3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the lord, to the house of the god of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the lord from Jerusalem. 4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, neither shall they learn war any more.

The point of the verse 2 of this prophecy is that, the lord's house, or the religion of the messiah, shall not only be established above others, but that all nations shall be converted to it. That this has been effected by Christ's religion we deny—Christianity has been established upwards of eighteen centuries. It has then had ample time to verify all those prophecies which it has presumptuously applied to itself—as the sun, however, will not go back to lessen the Christian calendar, we look to the result of eighteen centuries of Christianity. We look and we find that the Muhammedans, and the Druses, the Jews, and the Southcottians, the Pagans and the Parsees, the Infidels, and not least the noble Pantheists, far outnumber the Christians. We know, in fact, that while there are comparatively only a few Christians in the world, there are Christians who are not Christians; and we likewise discover that the twenty-one millions of England pay five times more, according to their number, for their religion, than is paid for their religions by the two hundred and nineteen millions of other nations. Joshua ben Joseph, or Jesus Christ, then, cannot be the messiah, for not only our souls, but our pockets, bitterly require salvation.

This is pretty well for a beginning. The bishop of Exeter thinks this journal rather inclined to heterodoxy, but I am of opinion he will stare at this piece of reasoning. He will no doubt be afraid that betwixt the attacks of one party and the other, the rhinoceros hide even of a Christian may not be invulnerable. I think the author might have gone a step further than merely exposing the nonsensical jargon of Isaiah, he might have shown the almost utter want of all internal or external evidence of the impostor styled "Joe ben Joseph," excepting that at present the Christians of this country are busy beating their plough-shares into swords and muskets, and manufacturing chain-shot, and other Christian-like weapons to annihilate the Chinese and Affghans. This I think is the only evidence extant. The tract continues—

The point of the verse 4 of this prophecy is, that the lord, or the messiah, should establish the universal reign of peace throughout the earth—that this has not been done by Jesus Christ, or by his followers, is scripted in blood-red letters around the globe. Ask the Saracens whether the Christians have performed it? Ask the Mexicans and the Peruvians, whether the Christians, Pizarro and Cortez, brought peace? Ask William Howitt's "Christianity and Colonization" about it: and then go and inquire of the poor widow of Rathcormac concerning it? They will all say, with one heart and voice, that Christianity has not brought peace. Christ himself said, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword;" his followers have re-echoed him. In Austria there are 280,500 warriors; in Prussia, 200,000; in Russia, 800,000; in France, 480,000; in Bavaria, 35,800; in Denmark, 40,000; in Belgium, 47,000; in Holland, 26,000; in Norway, 12,000; in Sweden, 45,500; in Saxony, 15,000; in Switzerland, 35,000; in Wurtemberg, 14,000; in Spain, 80,000; in Portugal, 30,000; in the Roman States, 10,000;

in Sardinia, 43,000; in Sicily, 55,000; in Greece, 6,500; in the United States, 7,000; and in the British Isles, 135,000 warriors. This, then, is not the prophesied reign of peace, and Joshua ben Joseph, or Jesus Christ, is therefore not the Messiah.

Here I am at issue with the author. It does not follow that because war, with all its concomitant horrors has attended the introduction of this detestable system of religion, that Joe ben Joseph was not the Messiah. For if Messiahs are to be supposed at all, we have a right, from all histories of gods, more especially the Jew-god, to believe nothing would be so pleasing to them as the scene of the world in arms. In fact, it is the only evidence of a god's existence, for wherever a few nations are gathered together to war, there is he in the midst of them. The slaughter anticipated by the clergy and the papers they patronise, in Affghanistan, fully supports the assertion that the religion of Christ has caused more bitter feuds, implacable heart-burnings, more of all that is detestable in vice, than any other religion ever promulgated, it has turned the earth into a hell.

The author proposes a remedy, "Communism," a state which will combine physical and moral improvement, it differs little from that laid down by Mr. Owen. He thinks all the advantages of present society, without any of its disadvantages, may be obtained on a much smaller scale than hitherto supposed. We hope his philanthropic wishes may be carried into effect, despite of the barriers of custom, or the spleen of priests.

T. P.

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Saturday, November 5, 1842.



THE  
ORACLE OF REASON;  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

No. 47.] Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842, to Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, [PRICE 1D. for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months’ Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

IN the earliest ages mankind materialised their notions of forces, erecting them into deities presiding over them, of this class was Jupiter the god of thunder of the Greeks, and Jehovah the god of war of the Jews. But men becoming too keen for such gross impositions, knaves threw dust in their eyes, lest they should reject gods entirely when they divested them of their corporeal bodies. They commenced by attenuating the idea, and concluded by spiritualising the attenuation. Instead of the material Jupiter and Christ gods, we have space, motion, power, and I know not what beside, and the bewildered victims of theological jargon seem fast approaching that awful condition when they will be “without god in the world.”

These emblematic evidences of the progress of intelligence amongst the masses, has not failed to frighten the theological vampires of Europe for the safety of their craft. This accounts for the new face protestantism is assuming in this country. Slowly and silently are the “new move” churchmen undermining the foundation upon which the reformed fabric has been raised. With the title of *puseyism*, an attempt is being made to establish the supremacy of spiritualism over all political, social, and moral institutions. The right of private judgment on matters of faith, curtailed and partial though it is, is now found to be a grievous evil. Atheists and Infidels claimed a participation in this fruit of the Reformation. This was daggers to the party who had obtained power and wealth by the assertion of the principle. They could have tolerated dissent on some small abstract matters of faith, but to open the sedan chair of their god and expose him to vulgar eyes was too much, and the reformed church is now striving to obtain the iron gripe upon the minds of the people once possessed by the Roman pontiff. Then will they be able to secrete its fooleries and pernicious delusions from the public gaze, then will they anathematize and damn all who expose their presumptuous arrogance. Let it not be supposed the efforts making by the Puseyites are likely to be ineffectual, from a want of energy,

friends, or patrons—no, they are well supplied with all. A Mr. Alexander, a converted Jew, has been appointed bishop for Jerusalem, and has proceeded to the east to take possession of his new see. The proposed plan of procedure is as follows: a gradual withdrawal from all bible societies; correspondence with the various churches on the continent; occasionally introducing some of the popish ceremonies during the morning service, and should the congregation complain through not being up to the trick, the bishop pretends to reprove the offending priest; that edicts or precepts shall issue from Jerusalem, or city of David, for the conduct of the faithful, and thus gradually introduce a glorious supremacy. All the bishops are heart and soul in the cause, several wealthy aristocrats have subscribed largely for the carrying into practice of a system which promises to protract the evil day for them which they now see approaching, the real object of the king of Prussia, in visiting this country, was to patronise the movement, and he contributed £15,000 towards its success. On the continent the same disposition is manifested, in the spiritualised plans of the mystic school, in the consolidation of the churches, in the building of Cologne cathedral, with the speech of the king of Prussia on the occasion, showing that a spiritual despotism, differing only in name from that of Rome, will be attempted.

Such is the system styled puseyism. Numbers have already withdrawn their support, from bible-distribution societies, with a view to limit its circulation ere it destroy those who at present live by it. I would recommend, despite Mackintosh’s “doubt,” that associations of Atheists be formed in every town possible, that communications be opened with the leading Infidel minds of the continent, that a union of action be determined upon, so that the machinations of religious schemers may be frustrated. And surely if god-worshippers can be banded together for the purpose of crushing freedom of opinion, Atheists may combine to prevent them. Another reason why we should put our shoulders to the wheel of political and moral regeneration at this crisis is, that religion is opposed to all and every kind of amelioration of man’s social

condition, and is contented with nothing less than the subjugation of his reason. The following extract from a church magazine will bear out the assertion better than anything I could say:—

“Religion is on the side of conservatism. The religious newspapers of the country are the open and uncompromising advocates of conservative principles. Religion and politics cannot coincide. The dissenter must leave his religion in a lock-up if he ventures abroad in quest of political light. His faith condemns his politics: his vote and bible must never be stored together. As a paper becomes religious it ceases to be Radical. A Radical Christian is a non-entity. The altar is the prop of the throne. The two alternatives are dissent and democracy, or religion and conservatism.”

This is the truth, a Radical Christian is a non-entity, and I know it, and would prepare the Atheists for the struggle, for by them must the real emancipation of man be brought about. Religion and political liberty cannot exist together, and before a people are politically free they must be free from stupidity, or religion.

T. P.

## IS THERE A GOD?

### XXIV.

When Bishop Berkeley said “there was no matter,”  
And proved it—’twas no matter what he said:  
They say his system ’tis in vain to batter,  
Too subtle for the airiest human head;  
And yet who can believe it? I would shatter,  
Gladly, all matters down to stone, or lead,  
Or adamant, to find the world a spirit,  
And wear my head, denying that I wear it.

BYRON.

I HAVE endeavoured to establish (see “Is there a God,” No. 45) first, that there is but one *real* existence in the universe, which real existence I call *matter*. Second, that *mind* is a *nominal* not real existence, like space, time, inertia, repulsion, attraction, motion, color, and which are all purely *ideal*, all words expressive of certain orders of material phenomena; in short, that *mind* is a well understood *effect* of which *matter* is the *cause*. Third, that there is no escaping a “vicious circle” when we attempt to prove the *first principles*; or as they are sometimes styled the fundamentals of human knowledge; and consequently in *logical strictness* there are no *certain* facts, for a *certain* fact or facts must rest upon a *certain basis*, whereas the whole superstructure of human reason cannot possibly have any other than an *assumptive* foundation.

The foregoing propositions are of immense importance. If *true*, they are fatal to all “cloud cap’t” metaphysics; if *false*, materialism cannot stand. I fancy their truth has been shown with tolerable clearness, but as W. Baker and others may be of a different

opinion, to “make assurance doubly sure,” I will, at the risk of some repetition, venture a few more paragraphs.

So much has been said and so many thousands of volumes written about *mind*, that many shrewd people are persuaded there really is such a thing. If I mistake not, however, the following observations will go far towards dissipating so ludicrous, illusory, and mischievous a notion.

That an *actual existence* must be a *thing*, by whatever name such thing may be called, or whatever *form* it may assume, will appear to every reflecting reader a self-evident truism. Hence the word *no-thing* can have no other than a *negative* signification, that is a signification signifying nothing but the absence of everything.

The prince of theological logicians, Dr. Samuel Clarke, said “nothing was the only thing with respect to which everything might be truly denied, and nothing could be truly affirmed.” It follows, that if *mind* be *nothing*, it is logical to *deny* and illogical to *affirm* anything respecting it, but if *mind* be *something* it must be *matter*, as a something NOT matter is inconceivable, and just such an inconceivable non-descriptable something is *mind*. To talk about the *reality* of *mind* is talking at random, it being an accident not a subject, a consequence of action not an actor. Those who suppose *mind* a thing, are no more rational than the man who took great pains to catch sounds, that he might put a few in his breeches pocket. Sounds are effects, so are minds, and of course without matter no such effects could be produced. Here it may also be observed, that whereas matter without mind is conceivable enough, it is impossible to conceive or imagine mind without matter, for *mind* is a *property* of matter, a consequence of the latter under certain indefinable modes of its operation. The difference between thinking and *unthinking* matter is simply one of state or condition. Nor is a thinking body, to the eye of a philosopher, either more or less wonderful than an unthinking one. The faculty of thinking is not one whit more marvellous than the faculty of sneezing, and when theologians or metaphysicians furnish the *ultimate reasons* why men sneeze, the writer will undertake to tell them in return why men think, why they feel, and many other grand secrets of importance. The truth is, all such questions are superlatively ridiculous. Fools are *ever* ready to ask, but wise men *never* ready to answer them.

The notion that *mind* was something of itself, led Berkeley into his most ridiculous errors. The learned and singularly acute bishop was not content to assert the existence of an immaterial something in the shape of *spirit* or *mind*, but with equal boldness and truth denied the existence of matter. He argued that Materialists could only reason in a circle

when they attempted logically to prove the *reality* of matter, but, as shown in No. 45, if Materialists have no right to argue, as though matter actually existed, because such existence cannot be logically proved, with what face could he or can any one argue as though *mind* actually existed, when it is obviously impossible logically to prove its *real* or *ideal* character. Here we have Spiritualists upon the hip, and this mode of dealing with such refined sophisters as Berkeley is the only one likely to bring them down to a common sense level. If they call upon *us* for proof of matter, we should return the compliment by demanding of *them* proof of *mind*; when they will be forced to admit, either that nothing is known, and nothing can be known, or what will suit Materialists equally well, that we have no more *certainty* about *mental action* than *material existences*. It is of no importance to the argument what *mind* may be supposed to consist of, whether it be something or nothing; the truth is plain, its *actuality* is assumed not logically proved.

In the "Clavis Universalis," of Arthur Collier, a book it is much to be regretted very little known, the same line of argument is adopted. It is there insisted upon that a direct *proof* of the external existence of body is impossible, and a direct proof of consciousness equally so. It is contended at considerable length that the Idealist has no better proof of the existence of his soul, than of the existence of his body. "When (observes this author) an Idealist says I am a thinking being, of this I am certain from internal conviction, I would ask from whence he derives this certainty, and why he excludes from this conviction all possibility of deception? He has no other answer than this: I feel it; it is impossible that I can have any representation of self without the consciousness of being a thinking being."

John Christopher Eschenback, professor of philosophy in Rostock, who *did* Collier's work into German, has followed up the argument with ability and excellent effect. *Feeling*, he clearly shows applies to the existence of body, and that the ground of belief is equally strong and conclusive in respect to the reality of the *objective* as of the *subjective* in perception. Arthur Collier has well said in the work above noticed, "A direct proof must not here be expected; in regard to the fundamental principles of human nature, this is seldom possible, or rather it is absolutely impossible." W. B. tells me that the answer scientific men make to his query, (What is matter?) or would make, is that "it is anything having length, breadth, and thickness. Now, length, breadth and thickness is not matter itself." Agreed. "Then (he continues) remove the length, breadth, and thickness. Suppose even for a moment

their absence, and what have you left?" The reply is easy—nothing. But then, unluckily for W. B.'s *idealism*, it is impossible to suppose their absence the millionth part of a moment. Let him set about supposing so fine a supposition, and he will speedily find his mistake; if he don't, why he will exhibit the wonderful faculty of supposing matter into the "infinite obscure," and establish his claim to the title of infinite suppositionist.

This astonishing supposer, assures me of what no man *compos mentis* ever doubted, that the properties of a something cannot be that something itself; but I should like to know how the brightest supposer, can suppose NOTHING to have PROPERTIES. He farther instructs me that there is not a scientific book, he is acquainted with, that even pretends to tell what matter is—only its properties. Will he be good enough to inform me in his next where or in what book I can find an explanation of what a property is? where or in what book the nature of attraction, repulsion, heat, cold, time, space, colour, and motion, is fully or at all explained? These are *properties* of matter; but attraction, repulsion, heat, cold, &c. are only names after all; and the best proof that they are merely names expressive of kinds of sensations experienced by us, is in each man's consciousness of inability to conceive of any such absolute existences as attraction, heat, cold, space, &c. If W. B.'s thoughts had taken this direction, he would soon have seen reason to conclude that our *knowledge* of properties amounts to just nothing; for what can be more obvious to practical reason than the simple yet important truth, that we only know what we have an idea of? A man knows an object or circumstance when he has a full and complete idea of it; nor is it common for an average intellect to be perfect master of an idea, yet unable to give any account of it. If then, W. B. *knows properties*, let him, for the sake of all that is useful, tell the world what manner of things or no-things they are. He tells us scientific men know *only* the properties of *imaginary* matter. Now, if this be true, scientific men can easily explain what attraction is, what repulsion is, what life is, what death, motion, colour, &c., are, for all these names come under the general term *properties*.

The eminently scientific Dr. Neil Arnott, tells me in Part I. of his *Physics*, that "any visible mass of matter there is, of metal, salt, sulphur, &c., we know to be really a collection of dust, or minute atoms, by *some cause* made to cohere or cling together; yet there are no hooks connecting them, nor nails, nor glue; and the connection may be broken a thousand times, by processes of nature or art, but it is always ready to take place again;

the cause being no more destroyed in any case by interruption, than the weight of a thing is destroyed by frequent lifting from the ground. Now (he adds, and W. B. should note well the addition), *the cause we know not, but we call it* ATTRACTION."

Attraction it is hardly necessary again to remind our reader is always called a *property*. What then becomes of the crude opinion that scientific books pretend not to tell us what matter is—*only its properties*? When W. B. can explain or point to a page where it is explained—what kind of entity or non-entity attraction, or any other *property* is, he will justify what he has written.

W. B. reminds me that "a point has neither length, breadth, or thickness, and consequently cannot have any real existence but in the mind of man;" it seems, however, to me that though a thinking man, without a nothing called *mind* is conceivable enough; the most lofty and vivid imagination must fail to conjure up a mind without a man, or some kind of material animal.

One extract more, and for the present I have done with my doubting critic. He says, "there are not really such forms as a circle, square, sphere, or any of the forms mentioned in geometrical books." Now the question agitated by Materialists and Idealists is not whether there are really such or such forms, but whether there are any forms at all. The idea of form draws after it that of body; so that whether things appear to us as they actually are, is of no kind of consequence to the dispute. The terms circle, square, sphere, as well as heat, light, life, death, attraction, repulsion, &c., are intended to convey our ideas of certain simple and compounded sensations, excited in us by the action of unknown agents. If matter or substance be not that agent, what can we even imagine it to be, understanding by matter (called sometimes substance), that which is capable of action. I think unless its existence be taken for granted, nothing can be more idle or absurd than to talk about *properties*—for our ideas of properties, as I think it has been clearly shown, are consequences of that unceasing *action* of which matter alone is capable, matter, the alpha and omega of all we know, of all we ever can know. Mind is a word which represents nothing—is the type of nothing—explains nothing, and is good for less than nothing.

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Horace Walpole says Addison, when he was dying, sent for the young Lord Warwick, to convince him in what peace a Christian could die. "Unluckily," says Mr. W., "he died of brandy—nothing makes a Christian die in peace like being maudlin."—*Walpole's Correspondence*.

## THEORY OF REGULAR GRADATION.

XXVII.

*Birds (aves) continued.*

THE absorbent system presents a somewhat higher grade of development in birds, both sets of vessels being more numerous and distinct, the valves are more abundant, but yet admit of the passage of fluids from trunks to branches. Glands appear now for the first time, in connexion with the lymphatics (lymph or water-bearers), but not with the lacteals (from their milkwhite colour, they convey the chyle, or the nutritious part of food, to its receptacle).

The heart, in this highly organised class of oviparous animals, consists of four separate and distinct compartments, and indeed presents a more perfect typical form than is met with even in the mammalia. Its form is conical, being sometimes short and wide, as in the crane, and sometimes more elongated, as in the emeu.

The lungs, in this class, are confined to the back parts of the cavities of the thorax and abdomen by the serous membrane common to these cavities; they are of a flattened, elongated form, smooth anteriorly, and grooved posteriorly by the ribs, between which they are impacted; they are of a bright red colour, and of a loose spongy texture; on the surface of the lungs there are openings through which air passes from the bronchial tubes into large neighbouring cells. In birds not organised for flight these cells are confined to the abdomen, but in others they extend along the neck, and even into the extremities; they also penetrate the cavities and diploë of the bones, a discovery for which we are indebted to Mr. Hunter. This great physiologist injected the medullary cavities of the bones from the trachea; he also tied this tube, and having broken the humerus of a fowl, and the femur of a hawk, he found that the birds respired for a short time through the artificial openings. The proportion in which the osseous system of birds is permeated by air has reference to their respective modes of progression, thus almost every bone in the body admits air in the kite, the hawk, the eagle, and other birds of high flight; and in the hornbill even the phalanges of the toes contain air. Four uses have been ascribed to this extension of the respiratory system in birds—first, to subserve the function of respiration; secondly, to aid by mechanical pressure the action of the lungs; thirdly, to render the body specifically lighter for the purposes of flight; and fourthly, by the distension of the cells in the extremities to assist in maintaining

the wings in a state of extension, during long continued flight. Mr. Hunter supposed it contributed to sustain the song of birds and to give it strength and tone.

months' imprisonment for the alleged offence of blasphemy.

"Since that period your memorialist has been confined in the common gaol and fed on convict gruel, bread, rice, and potatoes: though such food is loathsome to his palate and injurious to his constitution, which has always been delicate. It is true your memorialist is allowed the privilege of purchasing, to some extent, better food, but his imprisonment renders this privilege valueless, without the assistance of his friends, upon whose generosity lie also the heavy claims of his wife and two children left in want by his incarceration.

"Under these circumstances your memorialist applied to the surgeon of the gaol for other diet; by the surgeon he was referred to the governor; by the governor to the visiting magistrates; and by the visiting magistrates back to the surgeon; who subsequently has recommended though not prescribed, better diet: but from the recommendation of it, your memorialist concludes that in that gentleman's opinion it is necessary. Two other surgeons whom your memorialist consulted on entering his prison warned him that a generous diet was absolutely requisite, and the decay of your memorialist's health is a testimony of its truth.

"Your memorialist prays for other regulations than those under which he sees VISITORS. They have always to stand, sometimes to talk through the bars of a gate, and are permitted to stay but a few minutes. As your memorialist is far from his friends, these rules continually prevent him seeing them, and receiving those attentions to his wants he otherwise would.

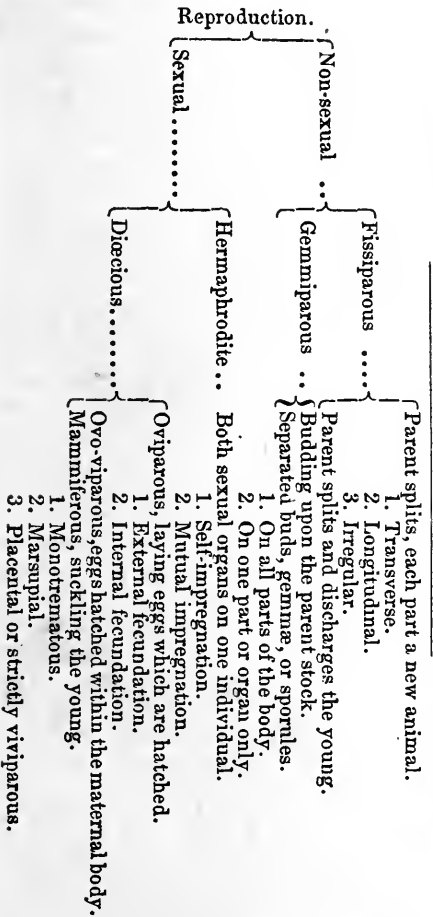
"Your memorialist also wishes permission to remain up in an evening until the hour of the debtors' retiring (nine o'clock), or at least to be allowed the use of a light in his cell, in which he is confined from twelve to fourteen hours, and during the winter he will be so shut up sixteen hours and a-half. Thus much valuable time will be lost your memorialist could employ upon a little mathematical speculation,\* which would afford him the gratification of contributing himself a few pounds to the support of his family.

"As every newspaper sent your memorialist is seized by the officers, or retained by the governor, your memorialist prays the liberty of reading them.

"Your memorialist does not complain that he is treated contrary to the rules of the gaol, as it would be hard for him to say what they do or do not allow. The visiting magistrates have said they should have no

\* Mentioned only to prevent the voluntary supposition on the part of Sir James, that the time would be employed in writing blasphemy, which would be fatal to the application.

The following is a TABLE OF THE REPRODUCTIVE PROCESS In the different Classes of Animals, as given by Dr. Thompson of Edinburgh.



TREATMENT OF MR. HOLYOAKE IN GLOUCESTER GAOL.

ON being sentenced by Mr. Justice Erskine to imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, Mr. Holyoake was put under the regulations of that part of the prison called the common gaol, and suffering in health and other ways from the kind of treatment to which he was subjected, he sought in the usual mode alleviation. For this purpose he applied, as will be seen below, to the surgeon, to the governor, and to the visiting magistrates. All being without effect, he then addressed the following memorial to Sir James Graham.

"Memorial of George Jacob Holyoake, prisoner for blasphemy in Gloucester County Gaol, to Sir James Graham, her Majesty's Secretary of State.

"SIR.—At the recent Gloucester Assizes your memorialist had the misfortune to be sentenced by Mr. Justice Erskine to six

objection to grant what your memorialist asks had they the power; and hence he prays the exercise of your authority on his behalf.

“As custom attaches little weight to the opinion of a prisoner, it becomes not your memorialist to speak of his own case, but trusts he may with propriety refer to it as one in which he believes will be found little that is aggravated. Seduced in the warmth of debate to express his honest opinion on a religious question, young and inexperienced, he took not the hypocrite’s crooked path, nor the dissembler’s hidden way, but unwarily uttered language disingenuousness would have concealed or art have polished, and became in consequence the ready victim of christianity. Criminal without intention, punishment brings with it no consciousness of guilt, and hence that which in other circumstances would be light, is, in his, a bitter infliction. GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.”

Subsequently Mr. Holyoake has been allowed to remain up until nine o’clock in an evening. Nothing more has been granted.

DICKENS’S CREATOR.—“It was not until I came on Table Rock and looked—great heaven, on what a fall of bright green water! that it came upon me in its full might and majesty. Then, when I felt how near to my creator I was standing—the first effect, and the enduring one—instant and lasting—of the tremendous spectacle, was peace—peace of mind—tranquillity—calm recollection of the dead—great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness—nothing of gloom or terror. Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart an image of beauty—to remain there changeless and indelible until its pulses cease to beat for ever. Oh, how strife and trouble of our daily life receded from my view and lessened in the distance, during the ten memorable days we passed on that enchanted ground. What voices spoke from out the thundering water; what faces faded from the earth, looked out upon me from its gleaming depths; what heavenly promise glistened in those angel’s tears, the drops of many hues that showered around and twined themselves about the gorgeous arches which the changing rainbows made! I never stirred in all that time from the Canadian side, whither I had gone at first. I never crossed the river again, for I knew there were people on the other shore, and in such a place it is natural to shun strange company.”—*A. Notes* Dickens has capped all. Three thousand miles to find a creator! Dripping in a waterfall, too! Oh, Boz, Boz, you were sadly put to it! Your brains had a rare cudgel-

ling before you found your “creator” in a cataract. By the bye, suppose your creator had been our creator, what a devil of a way we must have gone to find him. And then, was it quite the thing, master Boz, to keep it all to yourself on the Canadian side of the river, after your “creator” practising the cold water cure in the Niagara shower-bath, or pranking it like Sam Scott the diver, for your special amusement? After all, you’ll not beat Moses, try you ever so hard. You climbed up to his godship with only a wet skin; Moses stood right slap before the fire-bush with the fear of roasting before his eyes. Boz, my boy, keep to the humanities. Let the god-almighty people take care of their own. You have done too great service to your fellows to leave terra-firma for a flight to cataracts and creators. You are getting out of your depth, Boz. You are not made of the right sort of stuff for the god-folks. Cant and hypocrisy sit most awkwardly upon you. You who mourn over human misery with the most touching and heartfelt tenderness, whose very laugh at human absurdities is full of the heartiness of good nature, with none of the moroseness of the recluse, you cannot be spared from the service of your fellow-men; you must not be lost to humanity. M. Q. R.

WHAT BENEFIT HAS CIVILIZATION CONFERRED ON THE WORKING CLASSES?

IT has condemned them to a life of endless drudgery and contempt; it has shut out the toiling serf from the slightest enjoyment of those luxuries which he hourly creates; thereby aggravating the system of slavery to which the serfs of olden times were subjected, for in their days, if the slaves of the soil did not enjoy, neither did they produce the costly articles which now exist to mark the wretchedness of the miserable victim of *civilization* (?) Curse the word! and ten thousand curses on those heartless knaves who are everlastingly boasting of its *glorious* results.

The whole history of the world does not point out an instance of such abject slavery and wretchedness as is now the lot of “free-born Englishmen.” What matters it to them, that they live in the wealthiest country in the world? What signifies it to the starving priest-ridden wretches of England, that there is abundant means in existence to supply the whole of its inhabitants with every thing necessary to render life happy? What boots it to him that the machinery of England is capable of supplying the world with manufactured goods? Nothing! nay, worse than nothing, for the very wealth which is wrung from his emaciated carcass, is made use of to sink him lower still in the mire of hopeless poverty.

What benefit does civilization confer on the English artizan? Suppose him to have a family, and to be so fortunate as to procure employment. He rises in the morning at the sound of the factory bell,

and toils all day under the inspection of a number of heartless tyrants, at whose nod he trembles, and who exercise absolute power over him. When his day's labour is ended, he crawls to his miserable garret or cellar, for which he pays an enormous rent to some unprincipled money-scraper. He partakes of a scanty meal with his half-naked and spiritless children, and eagerly hastens to rest his exhausted limbs, in order to prepare for the labour of the following day. His life is spent in the same round of monotonous and unrequited slavery, and when turned off to make way for a more youthful machine, he ends his days in the poor-law bastille, amidst the clanking of iron doors and the insults of saucy officials, separated from all he held dear, and if his friends are not acquainted with his death, he is handed over to the surgeon for dissection.

Go now, you moving automatons, go to the fat, well clad, and well housed lazy, lying, priest. Go and hear him preach a sermon on "contentment," and the necessity of quietly submitting to the "powers that be," and then skulk home like drivelling idiots to witness the squalid looks of your innocent children, and sing some of Wesley's hymns, which were taught you to hinder you from thinking.

A CHARTIST PRISONER.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

A NUT FOR MR. MACKINTOSH.

SIR.—Having often observed in your paper an admission from W. C. that the existence of god could not be disproved, allow me to say that I think it can, and moreover that I consider the following argument is as strong a proof as proof can be of the non-existence of god. In the first place, Mr. Mackintosh must admit that no power or thing can make anything superior or equal to itself, and upon this fact I build my argument. In the next place, as matter and its essential and circumstantial properties are infinite, and as there is nothing superior to infinity, there can be no god, or rather, matter can have no maker.

R. N. K.

To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.

SIR.—I should like to know from Mr. Carlile how he reconciles the following dedication of the ninth vol. of the *Republican*, with what he now says respecting the bible.

JAMES MONK.

"Dedication to the bible societies.—Here! my friends, read here, and see what your bible is worth! But above all things, go on to put it into the hands of every human being! for I, who *abhor* it as a whole book, am convinced that it can only generate *disgust* as far as it is *fairly* read. Before it was read, there was neither Jew nor Christian but thought it to have been written by a superhuman power, for a superhuman purpose; but since the art of printing has been known to the people of Europe, since printed bibles have begun to circulate among them, dreadful has been the sectarianism which its *unintelligible*, contradictory, and incongruous contents have occasioned; and dreadful will that sectarianism continue

to be, until all become *disgusted and throw away this most mischievous of all mischievous books*. Therefore make it known to your utmost, I pray you, with the most earnest sincerity, a man cannot be an infidel to the bible until he has read it, until he has compared part with part, and words with existing things. Then and then only can he be an infidel to the bible; so you may be assured that I cannot finish Infidels faster than you prepare them for my hands. So get all mankind to read the bible, then the ninth volume of the *Republican*, which I dedicate to your notice and support, and then we shall all become of one mind; sectarianism, horrid sectarianism will end. So prays your co-operator, RICHARD CARLILE."

A correspondent writes, "From a paragraph in the *Times* of Monday, 8th Aug., it appears that the senate of the Berlin University have received a reprimand from the minister of religious affairs and education for refusing to sanction a society amongst the students of divinity, for supporting the historical view of christianity against the attacks of the modern school of philosophers. The senate modified its refusal, it seems, on the ground of its not being able to refuse to sanction a scientific union in an opposite sense, if such societies were at all authorized; but M. Eickhorn intimated that no ceremony should be observed in suppressing any tendency to unchristian principles in the University. Now, this 'refusal,' and the ground thereof of the Berlin senate, and the no less notable 'intimation' of M. Eickhorn may have escaped you. They strike, me thinks, at *Dr. Strauss*, who has so unceremoniously and skilfully handled the orthodox German professors in his masterly *Leben Jesu\** (Life of Jesus). His last work, I mean the Historical Development of Christianity, in Opposition with Modern Science, has created great alarm in Germany. The *Leben Jesu* was accounted only deistical in its tendencies, but if we may believe the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, the historical development has unmasked an Atheist. Nothing can furnish clearer evidence of alarm this discovery has caused than the fact already stated, that the Berlin senate has refused to sanction a society among divinity students for supporting the historical view of christianity, lest it should be compelled in common fairness to allow a scientific union in an *opposite* sense, namely, spoiling the historical view. This is a confession of fear on the part of Berlin's senate—but to have 'livers white as milk,' is a thing so common amongst those who have law, and nought but law on their side—that surprise is out of the question."

\* There are now, we perceive, 53 Nos. of this celebrated work published—completing the *Second* Volume.

**JONAH'S WHALE AND GOURD.**—The Rev. Dr. Scott, of Costorphine, in a paper read before the Wernerian Society, in 1828, has shown that the great fish that swallowed up Jonah could not be a whale, as often supposed, but was, probably, a white shark. It is true that "a whale" is not used in the text of Jonah, but "a great fish;" still "a whale" is mentioned in the reference to this passage which our saviour makes in Matt. xii. 40. While the Greek version makes the plant under which Jonah sat a gourd, the vulgate reckons it a species of ivy. The castor-oil tree, with its broad palmate leaves, has, however, been more closely identified with "the gourd" of Jonah; which is corroborated by local traditions, as well as by the fact that it abounds near the Tigris, where it sometimes grows to a size more considerable than it is commonly supposed to attain.—*Popular Errors.*

**INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF DIVINE AUTHENTICITY.**—(Jew-book. Old edition.) 2 Kings, 22. "And Hilkiab the high priest said unto Shaphan the chancellor, I have found the booke of the law in the house of the Lord; and Hilkiab gave the booke to Shaphan and he read it."

2 Esdras, 14. "For thy law is burnt, therefore no man knoweth the things that are done of thee, or the works that shall be done."

Ibid. "The most high gave understanding unto the five men, that they wrote the high things of the night which they understood not. But in the night they did eate bread, but I spake by day, and held my tongue by night. In fortie days, they wrote two hundred and foure books. And when the fortie days were fulfilled, the most high spake, saying, the first that thou hast written, publish openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read it. And keepe the seventy last that thou mayst give them to the wise among thy people."

1 Maccabees, 1. "And the bookes of the law, which they found, they burnt in the fire and cut in pieces. Whosoever had a booke of the Testament found by him, or whosoever consented unto the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death by their authoritie. And they executed these things every month upon the people of Israel that were found in the cities."

NOTICE.

A Meeting will take place on Saturday evening, November 12th, at half-past eight, at No. 8, Holywell-street, to enquire into mythological systems and overthrow religious error.

Received J. R., Brighton; J. Griffin H.; B. H.; and W. B.

Received by Mrs. Holyoake, from a Few Friends at Manchester, per Mr. J. Watts, S.M. £0 11 6

Mr. Holyoake has received from some old friends in Worcester, per Mrs. Allen .. 1 5 0

**COUNTER MARCH OF INTELLECT.**—During a scientific congress at Oxford, Mr. Faraday was exhibiting privately to a few friends his experiment of obtaining the electric spark from the magnet. While this was proceeding, the head of one of the colleges (Dr. F.) entered, and inquired what was going on. He was told that the professor of the Royal Institution was demonstrating a proof of his late very important discovery, the nature of which was explained to the reverend doctor. "I am sorry to hear it," said the very sapient rector, "I am exceedingly sorry to hear it; it will only put new arms into the hands of Infidels!"

**SUGGESTION TO THE DEAN AND CHAPTER OF GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.**—Economy being a great thing to divines, especially when the savings go into their own pockets; the following hint is respectfully submitted. Near one of the entrances of Gloucester Cathedral, is a tablet in memory of some modern saint, bearing at the bottom this, to an English ear, very felicitous inscription—"over, fork over." Now, on a pillar nearly opposite is a charity box, and the expense of repairing the long inscription upon it would be for ever saved, should the box itself be placed above the tablet, as then the motto of the tablet "over, fork over," would serve for the box and Christian pilgrims would of course fork out as they passed by.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

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Saturday, November 12, 1842.



THE  
**ORACLE OF REASON;**  
Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE."

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

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No. 48.]

[PRICE 1D.]

DEISTS.

THAT whatsoever is considered adorable, amiable, and inimitable by mankind, is embodied in one supreme, infinite, and perfect being—is the Deists' opinion of god. As to their origin, I find in Bayle's Dictionary, article Vizet, that "The name of Deists, as applied to those who are no friends to revealed religion, is said to have been first assumed about the middle of the sixteenth century, by some gentlemen in France and Italy, who were willing to cover their opposition to the Christian revelation by a more honourable name than that of Atheists. The earliest author who mentions them is Vizet, a divine of great eminence among the first reformers, who, in the epistle dedicatory prefixed to the first volume of his 'Instruction Chretienne' (Christian Instruction), published in 1563, speaks of some persons at that time who called themselves by a new name, that of Deists. These, he tells us, professed to believe in a god, but showed no regard to Jesus Christ, and considered the doctrines of the apostles and evangelists as fables and dreams. He adds, that they laughed at all religion, notwithstanding they conformed themselves externally to the religion of those with whom they were obliged to live, or whom they were desirous of pleasing, or whom they feared. Some of them, he observes, professed to believe the immortality of the soul, others were of the Epicurean opinion in this point, as well as about the providence of god with respect to mankind, as if he did not concern himself in the government of human affairs. He adds, that many among them set up for learning and philosophy, and were considered as persons of an acute and subtile genius; and that not content to perish alone in their error, they took pains to spread the poison, and to infect and corrupt others by their impious discourses and their bad examples." Thus Vizet, as quoted by Bayle. The character here given of gentlemen Deists it must be confessed is but so-so, indeed I dont know what worse could be said an' they were blackguards. It would perhaps be too much to say that Vizet has hit them off to the life, though for my own part I know not how the character could be

improved without wounding truth. That some of the most eminent Infidel writers of Europe were *nominal* Deists and *real* Atheists, cannot be denied. That they laughed (in their sleeves) at all religion—notwithstanding they conformed externally to the religion of those with whom they were obliged to live, from a desire to please, or that yet stronger motive, a dread of giving offence—is no less undeniable. It is hard to say what such philosophers as Blount, Shaftesbury, Polingbroke, Collins, Morgan, Chubb, and Tindal *would have written* had they *dared*. Like causes produced like effects upon the philosophers of France and Germany. Their opposition to all religion assumed a deistical form, which, though mere sham and deceit, served admirably well as a stalking-horse. Of the morality of such conduct I say nothing, but I do say that such will ever be the effect of power when arrayed against sincerity. Mr. Thomas Hartwell Horne, in his "Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures," says that modern infidelity, though it may assume the title of deism, is in fact little better than disguised atheism. He adds. "A man seldom retains for any length of time his first deistical opinions; his errors gradually multiply till he sinks to the last gradation of impiety," and then, by way of substantiating his point, quotes the testimony of Brittan, an Infidel writer, who, in his "Modern Infidelity Pourtrayed," declares that "Deism is but the first step of reason out of superstition. No person (says he) remains a Deist but through want of reflection, timidity, passion, or obstinacy," which it must be confessed was hitting the gentlemen Deists very hard, pummelling them in a style none but atheistical infidels would venture upon. I do not however agree that modern infidelity is little better than disguised atheism, being most decidedly of opinion that *bona fide* deistical infidelity, ancient and modern, is undisguised outrageous nonsense. I do agree with Brittan that deism is but the first step of reason out of superstition, and that no person *remains* a Deist but through *want* of reflection, timidity, passion, or obstinacy. None but an able and experienced shot could have struck the target of truth so

nicely in the bull's eye, and Brittan is as much entitled to a monument for printing that spicy bit of wisdom, as Lord Exmouth, Laumarez, and Sir Sidney Smith for doings of much more questionable utility. But that our modern gentlemen Deists will agree with this opinion I very much doubt.

It is worthy of observation that there are almost as many kinds of Deists as professors of deism. I am rarely lucky enough to light upon two Deists in any one company who entirely agree in opinion. They all allow there must be one god, but what sort of personage he, she, or it is (not knowing the gender, the *it* being neuter is safest), how employed, how to be worshipped, or whether to be worshipped at all.

What is it, how produced, and to what end,  
Whence drew it being, or to what it does tend ?

are questions Deists by no means agree about. They do however all agree that there is a god or omnipotent cause, who having well furnished brutes, insects, &c. left not the brain or mind of man without its director in this maze and lottery of things, giving reason as its sovereign rule and touchstone to examine them by, and to fit our choice to the double advantage of body and mind. All this, and much more to the same purpose, I find in deistical books of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One that has very lately fallen in my way, called "The Oracles of Reason," published in 1693, is uncommonly entertaining and instructive. Nor does it mortify me to think that our *Oracles of Reason* were not (as before supposed) the first that had disturbed the slumbers of good Christian people. Now in this really very choice little work I find deism defended and christianity attacked with skill, wit, and to the clergy, no doubt, most provoking good humour. Deistical or natural religion, according to one of the aforesaid oracles (for many priests appear to have been concerned in their pronounciation), is the belief we have of an eternal intellectual being, and of the duty which we owe him, manifested to us by our reason, without revelation or positive law, the chief heads whereof seem contained in these few particulars:—

1. That there is one infinite eternal god, creator of all things.
2. That he governs the world by providence.
3. That it is our duty to worship and obey him as our creator and governor.
4. That our worship consists in prayer to him and praise of him.
5. That our obedience consists in the rules of right reason, the practice whereof is moral virtue.
6. That we are to expect rewards and punishments hereafter, according to our actions in this life, which includes the soul's immor-

talilty and is improved by our admitting providence.

7. That when we err from the rules of our duty we ought to repent and trust in god's mercy for pardon.

Such were deistical notions about what they called god in the seventeenth century, and concerning the manner in which it (god) should be worshipped. The following, taken from the same book of reason's oracles, is curiously nonsensical :

"First, negatively, it is not to be by an image, for the first being is not sensible but intelligible. *Pinge sonum*, puts us upon an impossibility, no more can an infinite mind be represented in matter.

"Second, nor by sacrifices, for *sponsio non valet ut alter pro altero puniatur*. However, no such *sponsio* can be made with a brute creature; nor if god loves himself, as he is the highest good, can any external rite or worship reinstate the creature after sin, in his favour, but only repentance and obedience for the future, ending in an assimilation to himself as he is the highest good; and this is the error in all particular religions, that external things or bare opinions of the mind can after sin propitiate god. Hereby particular legislators have endeared themselves and flattered their proselytes into good opinions of them, and mankind willingly submitted to the cheat. *Enini facilius est superstitiose, quam juste vivere*.

"Third, not by a mediator, for 1st, it is unnecessary, *misericordia dei* being *sufficiens justitiæ suæ*; 2nd, god must appoint this mediator, and so was really reconciled to the world before; and 3rd, a mediator derogates from the infinite mercy of god, equally as an image doth from his *spiritualitie* and *infinitie*.

"Fourth, positively, by an inviolable adherence in our lives to all the things *φυσῆι δὲ χριστῶ*, by an imitation of god in all his inimitable perfections, especially his goodness, and believing magnificently of it."

This specimen of deism may, to the readers of *our* oracle, seem silly rhodomontadish stuff, but then it ought to be remembered that if any man had been audacious enough to write plain sense in the seventeenth century, he would have paid for his whistle by the loss of his ears, or perhaps his head. Atheism would not have been tolerated in those "good old times," and anything short of atheism, that is, anything short of uncompromising antisupe naturalism must be chimerical and radically erroneous. The inconsistencies and absurdities which disfigure the pages of Blount, Chubb, Tindal, Collins, Bolingbroke, and indeed all *reputed Deists*, were, I am persuaded, not so much a consequence of their errors in philosophy, as fear of fanatical intolerance.

WHAT IS GOD ?

MAN is a material being—formed of matter, depending on matter for his existence, and constituting nothing more than a part of matter. All his communications too with the world are necessarily conducted through the medium of material senses.

Hence, all his thoughts are material, his feelings material, and his brain filled with nought but material pictures or ideas. He can entertain no thought higher than, or superior to, matter—no conception foreign to the world in which he lives—no feelings but such as are implanted by material substances around, “for dust he is and unto dust shall he return.”

From this we may deduce an argument against the immateriality of the soul. For as the mind, like the body, requires food and exercise, it were a most palpable absurdity to talk of feeding an immaterial being with material substance. And as the brain is or can be filled with nought but material ideas, or the pictures of “stern realities,” seen, heard, or felt—the images of sensations already experienced, it is clearly impossible to entertain any idea of things we have never seen, heard, or felt, or picture forth in the likeness of the material, things *immaterial*,

Indeed, should it be called a thing? Should it be called anything—but an absurdity?

Now, words are sounds or material signs by which we express our ideas. And each word has its idea, and each thought its expression.

Hence, as the mind can only entertain material ideas, it is utterly impossible to express any but such ideas. Nay more, though it were possible, which it is not, to entertain an immaterial idea, still would it be impossible for us to utter any sound or sign equivalent to it. Immaterial ideas would require immaterial sounds, which are no sounds at all.

Christians then should never forget that total, ineffable

Silence is the least injurious praise.

Whenever we use the term god, we must attach to it some material idea or representation of something seen, heard, or felt.

Thus we may perchance liken him to one of ourselves—a little bigger than a good-sized giant—one that knows “a sight more” than the best of us, a little more than Sir Isaac Newton—and who can see farther than a hawk. Others may liken him to some such a subtle agent as electricity or magnetism, or a spirit stronger than brandy and more proof than the best gin. Others again may liken him to the earth, and tell us that his perfection “is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.”

All these definitions are doubtless sublime, but they are also so often ridiculous that one

must needs set them down as the drivellings of big babies on the altar of idolatry.

What then is god but a being like ourselves, and if he exists at all subject to all “the ills that flesh is heir to?” as is well exemplified in the history of his beloved son. What is god but a part of matter? the purest worship of which is gross idolatry.

To the man of reason this worship is abominable, and the Christian is expressly commanded, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”

But if god is not to be likened to anything we have seen or felt, we can have no idea of him—he cannot exist to us. Hence this command alone would make us all Atheists, “Men drop into truth they know not how.”

Thus, between the Atheist and the Idolater—the man of reason and the worshipper of stocks and stones—there can be no middle class or gradation of belief.

On the horns of this dilemma let fanatics writhe and bigots rave. Society will soon learn to estimate them at their true worth, as fools “who live without god in the world,” or knaves professing one thing and living by the practice of its opposite.

JOS. B. LEAR.

THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

VIII.

*Why* are men sometimes said to be naturally responsible?

*Because* the precise meaning of the term law does not appear to have been well understood by those who are the readiest to use it upon all occasions. Coombe's definition, that a law is a rule of action, is clear, and has the merit of conciseness. Now, a rule implies a ruler, and a ruler a personal agent, as the term divine government implies a divine governor. If then we insist that men are naturally responsible, we get into an awkward dilemma, and are constrained to admit one of two things: either that nature is a being of some kind or other, which punishes man, in revenge for a fault he has committed—if so, it will only be proved that man is responsible to nature by showing that nature is god, and what is worse, a god that understands not the character of the creatures he has made, and though capable of “weighing the hills in scales and the dust in a balance,” is filled with cruelty and all those diabolical feelings which are held disgraceful even when found in the human form—we say this conclusion must be arrived at, or the word responsible must be shown to possess or

convey a different meaning from that given above. If we look narrowly at the meaning of the term responsibility, we shall find that the idea of punishability is inseparably connected with it. When we say that we hold a man responsible, we mean that he is capable of discharging a certain obligation, or doing certain acts, which obligations and acts if not discharged and performed, proves criminality in him, and renders him a fit object of reward or punishment, varying in amount according to the nature of the crime—in such a case only can the term responsibility be correctly applied, as here we have a punisher or punishers as well as punished, those who call to account and those who are accountable, the executioners and the victims. But nature cannot know anything of the suffering her changes produce in us—an earthquake, which destroys thousands, good, bad, or indifferent, at one fell swoop, is a phenomenon; a fact—not a law, promulgated by some old man with a beard, who exists somewhere in space, looking down upon the inhabitants of earth and savagely punishing them because he thinks they might have been better if they pleased and therefore deserved to be so swallowed up, as in sacred books we are told that god burnt up the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and all contained therein, because of the vice which then prevailed. Individuals are occasionally struck dead by thunderbolts, against what law have they sinned—could they help the thunderbolt passing through them? If not, supposing the thunderbolt to have been thrown by a god or devil, how could the offending individual be held accountable for a fault he had never committed, or expected to discharge an obligation he had never incurred? This amounts to the absurdity of giving back what we never had, of returning that which we never received. A man lost in a fog, trying to grope his way home, mistakes his road, tumbles into a ditch, and is smothered. Pray what law of nature has been violated in this case? If so, those who act contrary to them are to be pitied not blamed, but as well might we call the bird responsible when it is firmly fastened in the net spread for it by the bird catcher, or the lion when crouching, faint, and bleeding beneath the spears of his pursuers, or the goose in the mouth of the half-starved ravenous fox, or even the poor hare when hunted to death by the hounds. This would indeed be filling the cup of absurdity to the brim, or nearly so, for some have gone a step further, and held stocks, stones, and trees responsible. We read of Xerxes, who, when throwing a bridge across the Hellespont, with a view to form a passage for his army into Greece, lashed the waves, because they would not lie still, and was augered and chagrined

that they paid no attention to him, but continued waving and swelling as before, whereupon he threw his chains among them, but with no better success. We should therefore do well to bear in mind that what are called natural laws are the facts or the phenomena exhibited by matter, that when we speak of universal laws of nature, they mean universal facts of nature, for instance, it is a universal fact that a chip of potassium thrown upon ice will cause a flame to burst forth, that is, what chemists call combustion takes place; a certain degree of heat applied to metals will cause them to melt; in stating these things we state facts, not laws, for men are the only law-givers, and when ignorant of human nature they do not—as wisdom dictates—make laws with a view to restrain men from the commission of bad deeds, or move them to the practice of virtue, but borne along by the gusts of passion, and breathing revenge, reason has been lost sight of; and the aim and end of all laws grossly misunderstood; so that law, which was manifestly intended to be the terror of evil-doers, and the shield of the oppressed, has been converted into one of the most terrible engines with which tyranny arms itself, while the spirit of legislation, up to a very late period, may be summed up in the Jewish maxim, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

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## THE WORTH OF MAN.

(Concluded.)

BUT what, after all, does this accumulation of knowledge amount to? It is generally agreed that this earth had a beginning (this does not deny the eternity of matter), if so, an end may be expected some time or other in the natural order of things. What then will become of man and his boasted acquisition of knowledge—will not he and his records and his braggart superiority be swept away in the common ruin? Nature is no respecter of persons or things. It is said that man has a greater degree of intelligence—he need not boast of this, it is as much the accident of a combination of atoms as that the dog was born a dog; we are all alike natural productions, and all alike creatures of necessity; besides, where is the merit of his intelligence? Man, as far back as we can trace him, is said to have been the most irrational of animals, which certainly appears very like the truth, although he has been pleased to call himself the most astonishing creature in existence, and principally so because he has a language. Why have not all animals a language? What is the delightful warbling of the bird, the plaintive bleating of the sheep, the neighing of the horse? Man is so tenacious, too, of his self-conferred dignity,

that he will not listen to a comparison of himself with the brute under any aspect, although I should never consider it a degradation to be compared to beings more rational than myself. But why speak we of this quality, to which we have given the name intelligence, as good and desirable— to whom is it good? Is the intelligence we boast good to the thousand and one animals over whom we have dominion, whose natural liberty we restrict to gratify, in many instances, a whimsical passion for show? Is the goodness of our intelligence manifested in the innumerable slaughters of our fellow-creatures from very wantonness of pride and ambition? No! let us rather yield the palm of goodness to those animals who are said to lack intelligence, the dictates of whose natural wants prompt them to kill for food, and food only. All animals have a desire to protect and conserve their existence, to this end they prey upon each other, and all having life have an equal right with man to preserve that life. I mean a natural right by virtue of their existence. Man's greater amount of intelligence is scarcely apparent; witness the bondage to which, through all past ages up to the present moment, man has ever been subjected by his fellow man—witness our plantations, our coal mines, our cotton factories, our mad-houses, gaols, workhouses, our thousands annually dying for want of food—out upon him, for a very ass! nay worse, a fool, to brag of his intelligence, yet see and suffer this. Where is his superiority over the bee, the bird, or the beaver, who have always had wherewith to supply their natural wants, *without waiting as man waits*, for a greater degree of intelligence to rescue him from his miserable degradation.

I believe that until man dismisses from his mind the idea of his great importance in the scheme of creation, he will never act as becomes a rational being; and I believe, also, that the knavish priesthood of the world are content to allow the Infidel, whether Socialist or Atheist, to proceed as he has hitherto, busying himself from generation to generation in destroying a belief in a god and a future state—I say, the priesthood are quite content with socialism or atheism as long as their disciples show that they retain a lively sense of their own intrinsic value above all other beings. By adopting a new line of argument, by showing by close comparison the identity of animal life, the Atheist would accomplish his object in a much shorter period than by that hitherto pursued, and the Socialists themselves having no belief in a personal god nor in a future state, have deprived themselves of the only standard by which their superiority was manifest even to themselves. This, then, is my conclusion

from the preceding observation:—that man is not of more thought, of more care, of more importance, or of more value relatively to nature, than the so-called meanest reptile that crawls on the face of the earth, and yet I have given a picture of human nature, which if realised *would be* destructive of inequality of rank and condition, and would indeed become the blessing *and support of us all*.

CHARLES DENT.

### CHRISTIAN CHARITY AND FORBEARANCE.

It has been the custom of all ages upon the first announcement of any principles that were at all opposed to the received notions of the age, or in any way at variance with their own preconceived ideas upon the subject, at once to denounce them as untrue; and without thought or inquiry, without giving themselves the least trouble to investigate any of the facts from which the principles have been deduced, they have declared them to be subversive of religion, and opposed to the practice of morality and virtue; while the promulgators thereof, who were men perhaps of high intellectual attainments and moral worth; men who have devoted their time, their talents, and even sacrificed their fortunes in endeavouring to effect an amelioration in the condition of their fellows, were looked upon only as fit subjects for ridicule, abuse, and persecution. And they have had heaped upon them all the contumely, scorn, and contempt that malice could invent, or a bigotted and intolerant fanaticism engender. Instead of the learned of the day coming forward to grapple with the principles introduced, and of disputing point by point the propositions laid down, they have invariably chosen the easier, but less honourable, method of exciting the passions and prejudices of the ignorant, and endeavouring to overturn by sophistry, clamour, and misrepresentation, the facts which they could not contravert by fair argument. But when these gentler means have been found insufficient to effect their object, when the voice of truth has yet been heard despite the din and clamour which has been raised against it, when despite the maledictions of the priest and the mad fury of a bigotted populace, the banner of truth has yet waved unfurled, then have the mightier engines of persecution been brought out, and they who have had sufficient moral courage to uphold it have been dragged from their homes, their wives, their children, and all that was near and dear to them, and have been immured within the walls of a dungeon; or else they have had immediately to pay the forfeit of their consistency

by the sacrifice of their lives amid the blaze of the faggot, or by the excruciating torture of the rack.

Such has been the implacable hatred manifested by the priesthood to the introduction of anything which had a tendency to enlighten the mind and improve the mental condition of man, that no outrage however daring, no persecution however brutal, no cruelty however ferocious, was ever left unperpetrated, if by its instrumentality they would be enabled to effect their diabolical purpose of crushing the rising intellect of the human race, of placing a barrier to the attainment of real knowledge, and keeping the labouring classes in that state of physical and mental subjection that was best calculated to foster credulity, bigotry, and superstition, to feed their rapacity and pander to their lusts. It was a matter of no consequence to them as to what might be the private character of the individuals, however exemplary they might have been in their moral conduct, however useful as citizens, kind and affectionate as husbands and as parents, all these inestimable virtues were looked upon as nought compared with the monstrous crime of being a little wiser than their guides, of arrogating to themselves the free uses of all their senses and faculties, and claiming the right of judging for themselves. The only virtues of which they had any notion were those of credulity and gullibility; believe that which they tell you to believe, feel just as they would have you to feel, know precisely those things which they in their infinite wisdom and goodness think it right that you should be acquainted with, and, above all, pay them well for being at all this trouble to tell you what you should believe, how you should feel, and what you should know, and depend upon it though you may lie, cheat, steal, illuse your wife, and neglect your children, though you may be faithless as a friend and revengeful as a foe—still, if you believe, feel, and do as the priests tell you, you are an exceedingly virtuous and holy man, and not only deserving of a large share of the good things of this world, but an unperishable crown of glory hereafter. While the really consistent, virtuous, and intelligent man, who refuses to prostrate his endowments, his senses, and his reason, at the shrine of intolerance, bigotry, and superstition, who stands firm to his principles, because he believes them to be true—a man like this, I say, is scoffed at, ridiculed, spurned, and contemned; and not content with inflicting every possible atrocity upon him in this world, they would consign him to unutterable and everlasting punishment in another.

I know not of a single discovery that was ever worth the trouble of propagation that

did not, upon the first avowal, subject the individual to persecution or malevolence of some kind or other, while even the simplest truths, which now appear too self-evident to need demonstration, were at the time of their first promulgation denounced as false, decried as immoral, and abhorred as blasphemous, and it was not till long after the original propounders had passed to "that home whence no traveller returns" that their truth became acknowledged, and the blot of infamy erased from those who gave them birth. You have only to turn over the page of history, to find that whenever a human being has come upon this earth, gifted with extraordinary perceptive faculties, who has pierced the thick gloom of ignorance and superstition, and there beheld some truth upon which, perhaps, the physical, mental, or moral welfare of nations might depend, and who possessed sufficient moral courage to propagate that truth—he has been assailed with every species of obloquy, and has had to contend against the butts of irony, the shafts of ridicule, and every other species of persecution that a dishonest priesthood could wage against him.

How many instances might be adduced in support of these assertions. But I need only allude to the case of the great Florentine philosopher, Galileo, who, after having devoted a long life to the study and contemplation of the grandeur and wondrous sublimities of the universe, a man who had given a greater impetus to the march of science than any who had preceded him, one who, considering his thirst for knowledge, his wonderful attainments, and the gigantic powers of mind which he possessed, was entitled to the sympathy and support of the whole human race—was denounced as a blasphemous heretic; was cited to appear before the tribunal of a superstitious priesthood, and there upon his bare knees, on pain of imprisonment or death, was forced to forswear the honest convictions of his mind, because those convictions did not square with their own, or accord with what they considered to be "divine revelation," and was compelled to make a solemn recantation of his "Theory of the Earth's Revolution round the Sun," because it was in opposition to their ignorant and puerile notions of deity; because it burst the cords which bound the infinity and omnipotence of the great actuating spirit of the universe to the paltry and insignificant world inhabited by themselves: which confined creation to this mere speck in comparison to the millions of worlds which Galileo revealed as revolving in the vast infinity of space.

But think not that Galileo was the only martyr to science and truth! I would that

we could say so. But, alas! the clanking of the chain, the stifled moans of the immolated father, and cries of the widowed mother and her orphan children, have been heard too often to allow such a thought to be entertained. So general has been the persecution of those who have had the courage and manliness to advocate new truths in opposition to existing errors that I would say, in the language of Miss Frances Wright, that "I know of none, from the modest Socrates and gentle Jesus, down to the least or greatest reformers of our own times, who have remembered the poor, the ignorant, or oppressed; raised their voices in favour of more equal distribution of knowledge and liberty; or dared to investigate the causes of vice and misery with a view to their removal, I know of none, I say, who have not been the mark of persecution, drank of the poison of calumny, or borne the cross of martyrdom."

J. GRIFFIN H.

CRITIQUE UPON THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE ANCIENTS.

BY LORD BACON.

I.

THE earliest antiquity lies buried in silence and oblivion, excepting the remains we have of it in sacred writ. This silence was succeeded by poetical fables, and these, at length, by the writing we now enjoy: so that the concealed and secret learning of the ancients, seems separated from the history and knowledge of the following ages, by a veil or partition-wall of fables, interposing between the things that are lost and those that remain.\*

Many may imagine that I am here entering upon a work of fancy or amusement, and design to use a poetical liberty in explaining poetical fables. It is true fables in general are composed of ductile matter, that may be drawn into great variety, by a witty talent or an inventive genius: and be delivered of plausible meanings which they never contained. But this procedure has already been carried to excess, and great numbers, to procure the sanction of antiquity to their own notions and

inventions, have miserably wrested and abused the fables of the ancients.

Nor is this only a late or unfrequent practice, but of ancient date, and common, even to this day. Thus Chrysippus, like an interpreter of dreams, attributed the opinions of the Stoics to the poets of old; and the chemists at present, more childishly, apply the poetical transformations to their experiments of the furnace. And though I have well weighed and considered all this, and thoroughly seen into the levity which the mind indulges for allegories and allusions, yet I cannot but retain a high value for the ancient mythology. And certainly it were very injudicious to suffer the fondness and licentiousness of a few to detract from the honour of allegory and parable in general.....

Upon deliberate consideration, my judgment is, that a concealed instruction and allegory was originally intended in many of the ancient fables. This opinion may, in some respect, be owing to the veneration I have for antiquity; but more to observing, that some fables discover a great and evident similitude, relation, and connection with the thing they signify; as well in the structure of the fable, as in the propriety of the names, whereby the persons or actors are characterised: insomuch, that no one could positively deny a sense and meaning to be from the first intended, and purposely shadowed out in them. For who can hear that fame after the giants were destroyed sprung up as their posthumous sister, and not apply it to the clamour of parties, and the seditious rumours which commonly fly about for a time upon the quelling of insurrections? Or who can read how the giant Typhon cut out and carried away Jupiter's sinews, which Mercury afterwards stole and again returned to Jupiter, and not presently observe that this allegory denotes strong and powerful rebellions, which cut away from kings their sinews both of money and authority; and that the way to have them restored is by lenity, affability, and prudent edicts, which soon reconcile, and as it were steal upon the affections of the people? Or who upon hearing that memorable expedition of the gods against the giants, when the braying of Silenus's ass greatly contributed in putting the giants to flight, does not clearly conceive that this directly points at the monstrous enterprises of rebellious subjects, which are frequently frustrated and disappointed by vain fears and empty rumours?

Again, the conformity and purport of the names, is frequently manifest, and self-evident. Thus Metis, the wife of Jupiter, plainly signifies counsel; Typhon, swelling; Pan, universality; Nemesis, revenge, &c. Nor is it a wonder, if sometimes a piece of history, or other things are introduced by way of ornament; or if the times of the action are confounded; or if part of one

\* Varro distributes the ages of the world into three periods: viz. the unknown, the fabulous, and the historical. Of the former we have no accounts but in scripture; for the second, we must consult the ancient poets; such as Hesiod, Homer, or those who wrote still earlier; and then again come back to Ovid, who in his metamorphoses seems, in imitation perhaps of some ancient Greek poet, to have intended a complete collection, or a kind of continued and connected history of the fabulous age, especially with regard to changes, revolutions, or transformations.

fable be tacked to another; or if the allegory be new turned; for all this must necessarily happen; as the fables were the inventions of men who lived in different ages, and had different views; some of them being ancient, others more modern; some having an eye to natural philosophy; and others to morality, or civil policy.

It may pass for a farther indication of a concealed and secret meaning, that some of these fables are so absurd, and idle in their narration, as to show and proclaim an allegory even afar off. A fable that carries probability with it, may be supposed invented for pleasure, or in imitation of history; but those that could never be conceived, or related in this way, must surely have a different use. For example, what a monstrous fiction is this, that Jupiter should take Metis to wife; and as soon as he found her pregnant, eat her up; whereby he also conceived, and out of his head brought forth Pallas armed? Certainly no mortal could, but for the sake of the moral it couches, invent such an absurd dream as this; so much out of the road of thought!

[We give insertion to the following because Mr. Carlile has no publication at his disposal in which he could defend himself from the attacks of his enemies, otherwise its nature would prevent its appearance in our columns. The *Oracle* can no more make common cause with Mr. Carlile than it can with Mr. Brindley. They are both laboring in the same vineyard, though employing different means and perhaps for different objects. The attempt to perpetuate the superstitious veneration attaching to the bible, on the part of Mr. Carlile, is more disgusting and more humiliating to an honest man, than the same attempt by a man of Brindley's character.—W. C.]

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

SIR.—A copy of the following has been sent to John Brindley. RICHARD CARLILE.

Middlesex, Enfield Highway, Nov. 7, 1842.

Sir.—If you have written and caused to be printed in your last number of the *Antidote*, that I am a cheat and a deceiver, I answer, that you are in that case a liar, and in all cases a blackguard; you are neither Christian nor gentleman, neither teacher nor scholar of anything good. I am neither cheat nor deceiver, but throughout the last twenty-five years have given utterance, much to my damage, to the precise thoughts of my heart. What other man can give similar evidence of such a martyrdom to truth?

I enclose my letter to the people of Bristol, that you may, if you can, prove me a cheat and deceiver. As much as you I detest socialism as sectarianism, and have everywhere opposed it where I have raised pen or voice. But I detest, too, that superstition, which is not christianity, which you illmanneredly, ruffianly, and unprincipledly advocate. I advocate

christianity, not a contemptible scheme of eighteen hundred years, but as the science of the spiritual world, as declared in the first verse of Genesis and St. John's gospel, and sustained throughout the bible.

This, because you have a name for debate, not that you are a gentleman, or that I think you a scholar qualified for the task, I will debate with you in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, Bristol, or anywhere else on equal terms of profit or loss.

I throw down the gauntlet for theological debate to the entire clergy of England, dissenting preachers, and all men, and say, that there is not one of them who can, by historical, literary, and scientific evidence, maintain his ground opposed to mine.

For this I am your humble servant,  
John Brindley. RICHARD CARLILE.

[I presume the following paragraph is extracted from Brindley's paper, it accompanied Mr. C.'s letter.]

THE NOTORIOUS CARLILE.—We think it necessary to caution the public against this unblushing deceiver. He professed to recant his Infidel errors and to believe in the Christian religion—this is a complete cheat. He is as decided an Infidel and Atheist as ever he was. His blasphemous proceedings at Bristol, where he has lately been, as he impiously calls it, "consecrating" the late Socialist Hall to Christian purposes, are really of too awful a character to dwell upon. We trust that none of our operative friends will be drawn by his false placards to attend to his "ministrations."

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

*For the Anti-Persecution Union,*

|                                          |                |   |   |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| W. S. Limes .. .. .                      | £0             | 1 | 0 |
| H. Popley .. .. .                        | 0              | 1 | 0 |
| Thos. Brittain .. .. .                   | 0              | 1 | 0 |
| A Few Friends at Bethnal Green, per G.R. | 0              | 9 | 0 |
| Mutual Instruction Class, Kensington..   | 0              | 2 | 2 |
| Collector No. 8 .. .. .                  | 0              | 4 | 0 |
| Collector No. 26 .. .. .                 | 0              | 7 | 0 |
| Mr. S., Birmingham .. .. .               | 0              | 1 | 0 |
| London.                                  | M. RYALL, Sec. |   |   |

NOTICE.

The Public Meeting in connection with the Anti-Persecution Union will take place at John-street Institution, on Monday, Dec. 5, half-past eight, p.m.

A Benefit Ball for Mr. Southwell will take place on Monday, Dec. 12.

A Meeting will take place on Saturday evening, Nov. 19th, at half-past eight, at No. 8, Holywell-street, to Inquire into Mythological Systems and Overthrow Religious Error.

Printed and Published by THOMAS PATERSON, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, to whom all Communications should be addressed.—Agent for Sheffield, George Julian Harney, Bookseller, 11, Hartshead; Bristol, J. Chappell, News Agent, Narrow Wine-street; Macclesfield, Mr. Roche, Hall of Science; Barnsley, Mr. Thos. Lingard, New-street; Coventry, J. Morris, 35, Union place, Butts; Preston, Jas. Drummond, 112, Friar-gate. And Sold by all Liberal Booksellers.

Saturday, November 19, 1842.



# THE ORACLE OF REASON:

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

“FAITH’S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE.”

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842,  
to Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100,  
for Blasphemy contained in No. 4.

Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months’  
Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

No. 49.]

[PRICE 1D.]

TO RICHARD CARLILE.

I.

I may stand alone,  
But I would not change my freedom for a throne.

SIR.—The writer is well known to you, therefore what follows cannot be tortured into an insidious or cowardly attack. You have set up *reformer of all reformers*, and most heartily do I wish you success, but it seems to me at least doubtful whether you have ability, or even integrity sufficient for the accomplishment of so Herculean a task. Reasons for this scepticism on my part are forthcoming.

In your address to that portion of the people of Great Britain and Ireland calling themselves reformers, published in 1839, you boast of having beaten the Tories, beaten the Whigs, in short, beaten everybody and everything beatable. Your words are, “In the course of twenty years I have fought and beaten the Tories as to the unlimited freedom of the press, in the discussion of all matters of public principle in politics and religion. I have fought and beaten the Whigs in the matter of free oral discussion, on the sabbath as well as on other days.” Then, after flaming away about mastering both Tory and Whig administration, you promise to work out “the most difficult of all reforms, the necessary task of reforming the reformers,” aye, and reforming them to such a tune, that they shall make but “one body and one mind.” Prodigious! What a thrashing reformer, to be sure! Why, sir, your appetite for beating and reforming throws into “shade of darkest hue” the far-famed dragon of Wantleys, who

Ate up the church, ate up the steeple,  
Ate parson, clerk, and all the people.

In sober seriousness, I begin to think you mad, thoroughly crazed by excess of vanity. It is quite clear that nothing will suit you but the undisputed cockship of the political roost, indeed I much question whether any kind of political success or supremacy would satisfy your craving, restless, jealous spirit. However, you are going, so you tells us, to reform all the reformers. For more than twenty

long years you have had that stupendous job in hand, and the only tangible result of your prodigious efforts that I can see, is disgust and disappointment. Why at this very moment there is not a single reformer of note in the country with whom you are not at daggers drawn. The cause is obvious. It is that senseless and extravagant egotism of which you are the slave and victim. It is that which has in the past and must in the future render it impossible for any men of independent feelings to act with you—nay, not only do you prevent them acting with you, but in nine cases out of ten compel them, as you have compelled me, to act against you. In the pamphlet referred to, what is really admirable in it is so mixed up with personalities and nauseating frivolities, that the perusal rather excites disgust than admiration.

All this I am well aware will not at all shake your faith in your own infinitude of political wisdom. The lord forbid, for suicide would be the certain consequence. It will be enough for me if the eyes of all *Oracle* readers are so far opened by these letters that they may clearly see your true intellectual and moral dimensions. You are a man with nerves strong as steel, and opinions no more flexible than your nerves. You have comfortably settled down into a conviction of your own infallibility, and feel, or affect to feel, supreme contempt for the abilities and opinions of other men—but whether the self-complacency of a Narcissus, and jealous intolerance of a Hunt are elements of, or even compatible with that moral greatness, which alone can achieve or deserve success in the mighty work of reforming all the reformers, I leave to the decision of my readers. Nor does it seem, sir, that you are one of those who, like wines, will be mellow and improved by age. A famous Grecian sage said, “I grow old learning many things,” but your head is so set upon teaching, and teaching too what you don’t very well understand, that it is unlikely the idea of seeking for something new, or looking to others for instruction, ever disturbs the equanimity of your intellectual operations. Your reason, like Stoics virtue, is fixed,

Yes, fixed as in a frost,

and I am persuaded that should you live to the age of Methuselah, your philosophic planet will not remove out of its present orbit. My confidence therefore in your wisdom and power to work so great a marvel as reforming all the reformers, is by no means equal to your own. Indeed, so far from thinking you a competent man to reform all the reformers, I am decidedly of opinion that there is not a reformer in the country stands more in need of reformation than yourself.

Not many years since you proclaimed yourself "Republican in politics and atheistical in religion," now your politics are incomprehensible and your religion inconceivable. Since you have abandoned the better-to-be-honest principle, and tried the safe spec. of teaching atheism in the language of christianity—since you have stooped to steal and use without acknowledgment the Hutchinsonian *Jewology*, for what you are now preaching about finding the germs of all true philosophy in the Jew-book, was much more learnedly and better taught by Dr. Hutchinson, years before you were born—finally, since you have practised the stale trick of grafting upon philosophy the abominable *double doctrine* and *scientifically* "paltered in a double sense," your intellect has suffered a kind of palsy, and what you have written has been either unintelligible or useless. Your communications to this paper have been puerility itself, absolutely beneath contempt. A brass farthing would be dear payment for a wagon load of them, and I warn the editor that the publication of a few more such specimens of god-sauce and Christian philosophy will leave him without readers. If such trash should be continually stuffed into the *Oracle's* pages, all I can say is, an announcement should be made forthwith that in future every purchaser will receive, instead of pay—a penny!

You have been talking much of late about bringing science into the church, which is "a consummation devoutly to be wished," no doubt, but what sort of science is it to be? According to my notions, science is the only *teachable* thing, it includes all that man can know, and simplicity is its very essence. Science is always intelligible even to ordinary intellects, when those who preach or teach it are honest and skilful. There are no mysteries in science, at least none ought to disfigure it. Its language should be so clear as to admit but of one interpretation, and he is the great man of science who, so to speak, brings down its most exalted truths to the level of meanest capacities. Science is neither *super-natural* nor *sub-natural*, but *natural*. Nature is its only and everlasting source. You told the writer, a month or two since, that your science is sub-naturalism. Wishing to escape the charge of being a *super-naturalist*, you took refuge in *sub-naturalism*,

when the meanest tyros in philosophy know that nature is all, and therefore there can be nothing either *above* or *below* it. Idiots might talk about subnatures or supernatures, but no honest philosopher would pen such mischievous twaddle. The late Prince Talleyrand jestingly affirmed that the true use of language is to hide, not express, our thoughts. Sir, you must have studied long and deeply in the Talleyrand school, but it is a pity you dont understand that such a *true use* of language may be well enough in diplomacy yet out of place in philosophy, admirable in statesmanship upon the expediency principle, but disgusting from the lips of a reformer of all the reformers.

You pique yourself upon your complete command of the language of your subject, and with excellent reason, if by this mastery of language we are to understand a wonderful facility in the art of writing line upon line, and page upon page that no reader on earth can infuse sense into. This kind of merit I shall not attempt to rob you of, but if this is the sort of science you are anxious to bring into the church, may the lord help those who are compelled to study it. If your new sub-natural science of a *three-headed* god is to be taught in the *perfect* manner you teach through the columns of this paper, why I am persuaded that none but *six-headed* gods will comprehend it.

Now I willingly allow that the impenetrable obscurity of your god, son, and ghost science *may* be a consequence of your want of ability to properly expound it, not from any radical or essential defect in the science itself. Perhaps, as you found yourself so great a master of the *language* of the subject you thought it hardly worth while to know or teach anything about the *subject itself*.

However, in order to do you and myself justice, I will quote a few short paragraphs from your last *explanation* of the new science, and leave my readers to rummage out some meaning from the chaos of words, if they can. You say,\*

"As I read the bible its god cannot be wisely renounced: for instance (Matt. xxviii, 19), 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy-ghost.'

"In the name of the father, I define the teaching to be of all known physical science (query, can there be *unknown* physical or any other science?), or science of nature, non-mental, undesigning, the great first cause, as eternal necessity.

"In the name of the son, I define the teaching to be of moral science, of the use of letters and figures, of art of every kind, of the

\* See *Oracle* 44, article "Christianity against Atheism."

principles of the human mind, or spiritual world, the world of liberty, and human salvation.

“In the name of the holy-ghost, the spirit of love and truth, I define the teaching to be of the culture of the best human affections, of love of god and neighbour, the comforter, blasphemy against which is outrage on all that is good.”

Now, in the name of all three at once—father, son, and holy-ghost, I define these three definitions to be

A precious specimen upon the whole  
Of the figure of speech called rigmarole,

and do most gladly dismiss it in the hope, sir, that you will either satisfactorily *explain* this *explanation* of your three-headed god-science, or cease to inflict your unintelligible gibberish upon the readers of this paper. When you start your new periodical “The Christian Warrior, or Church Militant,” you will have “ample verge and room” to play any or every sort of fantastic trick, proving yourself with equal success Atheist, christian, griffin, or salamander. The “Christian Warrior” will live at least a few weeks, when he will die a mute, inglorious, natural death, or, full of virtuous contempt for life, will, like many Trojan and Roman heroes, commit suicide, killing himself dead,

Dead as herrings,  
Herrings that are red.

You will probably complain that I bully, pain, insult, and ridicule, but dont forget, please, that you have *first* bullied, pained, insulted, and ridiculed as well as you could. Southwell you call plain *fool*, Mackintosh you insinuate is a mere *humbug*, O'Connor and O'Brien you denounce as “wild Irishmen,” bastard ditto, traitors to their persecuted country—in short, there is not a living public man you have not directly or indirectly charged as fool, knave, or traitor. The writer, therefore, does not feel called upon to mince matters with you, especially as you have *forced* him to take this course, literally goaded him into a discussion, he would for many potent reasons have carefully shunned. You have in this case, according to long custom, hurled the first stone, and should be prepared for a second, that may bruise you to powder. It is my intention to hit you just as hard as I am able, and in those places I know to be sorest. This frank exposition of my intentions ought rather to gratify than affront you. A christian warrior and church militant should glory in wounds received from the hands of an Infidel, even though “deep as a well, or wide as a church door.” Besides, he who so mercilessly used “A Scourge,” cannot for very shame turn sniveller when the rod is applied to his own shoulders.

## IS THERE NO GOD?

THE impudence of goddites and godmongers is proverbial, and naturally belongs to the doctrine, for the first principle in supernaturalism is the rejection of reason for the accommodation of folly. It is well known that when men have a weak or rotten cause to support and defend, they usually resort to the very means best calculated ultimately to destroy it. They shuffle and shirk, and bully and bluster, when they should openly meet and quietly argue the matter in dispute, taking care not to expose their own weakness by an affected display of courage and strength, for such conduct seldom or never succeeds even for the time, and is certain at last to be turned against themselves. It is of no moment whether a man believes in a stock or stone god, a flesh and blood god, a spirit god, or like Mr. Mackintosh, a *nothing* or no-god god, the impudence of the believer is proportioned to his estimate of his own importance and the relative insignificance of his opponent.

Mr. Mackintosh's bullying of men calling themselves Atheists, in his “Dissertation,” called forth some severe strictures upon that work in this paper, and since that time many communications have appeared with his signature, all of them without exception strongly marked with the characteristics I have mentioned above—evasion or abuse, to which might be added assumption. Of this latter article he has made plentiful use in his late contribution (Nos. 44-5) not forgetting both the others.

It was my intention when I wrote my last reply to Mr. Mackintosh's sophisms, not again to have troubled my readers with the subject, thinking with Mr. M. they must many of them look upon the discussion as “puerile, and, I might say, contemptible.” The plausible statement of Mr. M. in No. 44 has induced me to alter my determination. He therein complains of my wilful perversion of his meaning, and says, I “shall proceed to express myself in such terms as cannot, I think, be so easily perverted.” This may lead some to suppose that he really does what he professes—instead of which he merely goes over again the same rigmarole he has so many times stated as *his idea* of a god. Mr. M.'s treatment of his subject reminds me of *Billy Waters*, and what befel him one dark night, when Mr. W., being three sheets or more in the wind, got his wooden leg or timber toe in a plug-hole, which accident the fog which enveloped his brain prevented him from perceiving, and, under the impression that he was travelling homeward, he continued to go round and round until morning. So it is with Mackintosh and his god—“physical power” is his timber toe, and the moral idea “dwelling in the mind of man” is the hole in which he has set it, but the *moral influence*

of god-belief, beclouding his mind, renders him oblivious of the fact. Upon this point he is continually revolving, buoyed up with the pleasing delusion that he is hourly reaching home, whereas he has not moved an inch forward since he started. "Every man has a right his own hobby-horse to ride," provided always, as the lawyers say, he does not run against and upset, or try to upset his neighbour who may be similarly mounted. Mr. M. may have spun himself round for the term of his natural life, or even have *directed* his friend Physical Power to have carried him to the moon, without our interference, if, in his journey to the goddess of deranged intellects, he had not run against our hobby-horse, atheism, and with much bully and swagger threatened to upset us. But having done so, we were compelled to take up the cudgles of discussion, and return bang for bang, and with far greater success than was anticipated by many, which trumpeting forth of our own prowess will of course be justly charged upon our inordinate vanity. Mr. M. thought a god's name, like a king's, "was a tower of strength, which we of the adverse party lacked," and forgot that a good cause was far better. His all-powerful god has been destroyed, and his every attempt to reproduce him has ended in a failure, and Mr. M. is "a miserable sinner," without god in the world.

I shall now briefly notice a few points in Mr. Mackintosh's *last*. He opens with some very useful remarks upon the causes which lead to wrangling and disputing among men, giving an appropriate example to three of the four causes which he enumerates, and furnishing an illustration for the first in the whole of his after remarks. This first was, "a misapprehension of the meaning of the terms employed," and it will be very apparent to the most casual reader that what we call shadow he calls substance, and what he calls substance we call shadow, and that occasionally Mr. M. jumbles the two together, either through ignorance or wilfulness.

After the illustrations of which I have spoken, Mr. M. expresses his suspicion that the discussion would appear to many of the *Oracle* readers to have assumed a puerile, and he might say contemptible appearance, adding that,

Perhaps this is in some degree to be ascribed to my own want of care; by giving expression to my ideas in such terms as might, by a careless or wifully perverse opponent, be construed into a meaning quite different from that intended. I have, it seems, said that "god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man," and upon this I am gravely asked, "what influence this idea can have upon the motion of the earth round the sun, or upon its own axis?" with much more to the same purpose equally ridiculous.

This very ridiculous query of mine was

suggested by Mr. M.'s "equally ridiculous" assertion, which assertion is again reiterated by him in the article I am now noticing. In the first paragraph in No. 45, he says,

I do therefore affirm (not that god is an idea dwelling in the mind of man, which is a faulty expression liable to be perverted, as has been seen, but) that the idea of god dwelling in the mind of man, is a moral and not a merely physical idea: because whatever amount of physical power may be conceived in the mind of man, there must be the addition of moral qualities, before the mind entertains the conception of a god of any kind.

Now, I maintain that this is the same idea clothed in words slightly differing, and that Mr. M.'s god is still "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" to his own brain. He has stated over and over again that the question with him is not a question of *fact* but of moral influence, a proof that he has no faith himself in the *existence* of a god, though he has in the influence of the *assertion* of such an existence, and upon this miserable, shuffling subterfuge has he abused Atheists as bigots and fools—he has never been able to question their honesty! After the world for thousands of years has been led to believe there is a god or gods, and after Mr. M. has actually written a book to support such belief, and has ridiculed and abused Atheists for denying it—he coolly tells us, "that like every other question, it must ultimately be settled by its own intrinsic merits; *that is, whether it be for the good of mankind to believe in a god of any kind or no!*"—quite regardless of its probable truth or falsehood. How consistent—how like a parson—why the most virulent and brazen-faced Jew-booker could not have uttered a greater insult to his fellow-men. Mr. M.'s writings upon this question prove him to be an expediency-monger *par excellence*. He tells you without a blush, that the teaching of truth is all a hum, and that if it be *expedient* to humbug men they should be humbugged!—and why? for the same reason that men are humbugged now—that those who humbug them may obtain an undue share of power and wealth. He does not say this, but such is the object of deceit—in fact, if he has nothing to gain by other men being less wise than himself, why blind them?—and if he has anything to lose by all men being his equal, it is presumptive evidence of the rottenness of his title and the injustice of his claim. Will any person believe Mr. M. when he says *he* believes in the existence of a god? If he does, why not defend the moral good which may result from a belief in a god upon the ground of the probable truth of such a belief—and not say, if it be *a lie* it is *better* for men to believe it than the contrary. Admirably spoken for a teacher of *truth* "without mystery, mixture of error, or fear of man." If a belief in *one* lie will be so beneficial,

would it not bring about the millenium if we rejected truth altogether? We could then clothe ourselves with lying as with a garment. Doubtless the poor wretch who is starving with cold and hunger would be exceedingly glad if he could believe he was well fed and clothed. But facts are stronger than fiction, and however much he may *desire* to feel warm and comfortable, he is just as cold and hungry as before. So is it with Mr. M., however ardently he may try to believe in a god, he is just as much without god in the world as the *honest* Atheist, who has no wish to deceive himself nor his fellows, and who rejects expediency from a conviction of its villany.

Mr. Mackintosh says, if "a belief in an intelligent and good god has a beneficial influence upon the conduct and condition of mankind, then the Theist is right." Is he so? Is he right to declare *there is* a god because he *imagines* it will produce a beneficial moral influence, whether he can prove his assertion or not? And is the Atheist right to declare there is no god, or no facts to show that there is a probability of such an existence, simply because he conceives god-belief to be immoral and ridiculous? What has the morality or immorality of murder to do with the fact of its commission? The man who looks upon murder as immoral does not, as a consequence, doubt that men are murdered. Why then should a man dispute the existence of a god because of the immoral tendency of the belief in such a being—or another assert its existence upon the ground of its moral influence? No answer but its assumed *expediency* can be given. The *advantage of advocating lies* is a novel feature in Social Missionaryship!

Fearful of tiring my readers, I shall pass over many portions of Mr. M.'s communication upon which I should like to comment, and shall now say a few words upon what I consider ungracious and unwarrantable assumptions of Mr. M.'s. In p. 374 he says,

It has been questioned whether a society of Atheists could exist. Voltaire, who surely cannot be accused of bigotry, seems to decide in the negative (see Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary). Others have gone still farther, and have doubted whether a society of Atheists could be formed. This may be met by the fact that we have at this moment the professed Atheists of Great Britain associated together for mutual aid and protection. *In my opinion*, the present *loosely connected* association has its origin in the cruel, wicked, and stupid persecution of C. SOUTHWELL, G. J. HOLYOAKE, and others. Persecution makes men of the same opinions cling together for mutual aid and protection. If the government were to liberate Southwell and Holyoake, and cease altogether from prosecution or persecution, *in my opinion*, the present association of professed Atheists would be dissolved into its ultimate atoms in a very short time.

In the first place, it is a general rule for men to question the truth and practicability of everything with which they are not acquainted, and therefore for men to question the possibility of a society of Atheists existing is no more wonderful than it is for them to do the same thing with respect to Socialists—but the Socialists have no doubts, because they are better acquainted with their own principles than the doubters. The stability of any and every society depends upon the *morality* of the individuals composing it, and not upon the dogmas they hold. Voltaire's opinion must simply go for what it is worth—he was ostensibly a Deist, and if not a bigotted one, which I much question, he was an exceedingly inconsistent one.

In the second place, there is no *formal* association of Atheists, either loosely or tightly connected, that I know of, I wish there was, but there has been no attempt made to join them. Mr. M. has sufficient knowledge of the parties actively engaged in the present struggle to be aware that they are not associated for protection, that similarity of feelings and affections is the cementing bond, and not their disbelief of goddism—that an ardent desire to awaken their fellows to a sense of the degradation and ignorance in which they are now steeped, and which inflicts upon them an immensity of misery, impels them to their present course. If he does not know he has yet to learn, that the individuals connected with this paper were friends and companions in some cases whilst only Deists, in others whilst unaware of the tendency of their principles, and in ALL cases long before the *Oracle* was thought of. The persecution of Southwell has had nothing to do with their union, they were united before, it only incited them to more vigorous exertion. The prosecution of Southwell if not courted was expected. The law which prescribed bounds to the freedom of expression was disregarded, with a clear perception of the penalty likely to follow. The odious and unconstitutional enactments of the common law were but imperfectly known, and there was no hope for its repeal unless, as in all other cases, its folly and barbarity were exhibited in practice. This could only be done by personal sacrifice—the sacrifice was willingly made, and the only acknowledgment asked of the public was that it should exert itself to procure a repeal of the laws against freedom of expression. Another and another victim may be taken, and no more will be demanded or expected than in the first case, and I will answer for it, whenever the object sought for is obtained, we shall one and all be happy to enjoy the peace and liberty we now sacrifice for our own pleasures and the general benefit. In the mean time, asking no praise and fearing no censure, we

only wish to be considered honest, and if that be not conceded to us—we will e'en go on without it, being certain at last to *prove* it.

Mr. Mackintosh concludes as follows :—

We have many instances of professing Atheists, who in their individual and private capacity have been very good and amiable men ; yet we have no instance either in ancient or modern times of a nation professing atheistical opinions, who have occupied a high position upon the scale of moral and intellectual advancement. If atheism will furnish a basis whereon to erect a moral system of high value it has yet to be proved. I, for one, do not think it will.

Morals are derived from an observation of nature's modes, and can have no foundation but *facts*. The speculations of atheism or goddism, or any other doctrine, can never be made the foundation for truths, and morals are truths, forming the science of life. To talk, then, of erecting morals upon atheism or goddism is rank nonsense. The grossest immorality may subsist with atheism, and we know it does with goddism and ever has. The questions then are, can morality subsist with atheism, and can it subsist with goddism? But these, of course, are questions distinct from the existence or non-existence of a god, and not to be jumbled with it.

Mr. M. is a Social Missionary, the defender of communities of co-operation. Can he point to *one* successfully carried out, producing the happiness which he predicts *will* arise from the adoption of the social schemes? If he cannot, how can he with any face deny the probability of a moral system of high value being connected with atheism because it has not been proved, at the very same time that he is contending for the absolute necessity of the social system, as promulgated by the party he serves, producing the utmost happiness and plenty—when that has never been tried? Why, the paltry objection to atheism here noticed is the hacknied one of almost all the opposers of socialism, and belongs to Brindley, Barker, & Co. I myself heard R. Owen abused by Brindley and his gang at Bristol, upon this very point, for half an hour, and the meeting declared against the truth of Owen's views—because they had not been tried. The value of socialism is as deficient of proof as the value of atheism. Men have co-operated with advantage, and Atheists have lived who have been virtuous men—but neither an improved social community or a nation of Atheists has yet been known. Where or when has god belief produced a "moral system of high value?" Echo answers—"Where?"

With whom does the charge of the puerility of the discussion lie, if not with the advancer of such contemptible, broken down objections as those I have noticed? The

fault is not with Mr. M. but with his subject, and I would seriously advise him, for the sake of his well-earned credit in the field of physical science, to leave the god-mongers to fight their own battles, and not sully his hands with their foul and paltry weapons which he has not nor ever will have the address to use, with any chance of success.

W. C.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

GOD AND ANTI-GOD IN INDIA.

(From a Correspondent.)

THE interpreter to our forces in China is a missionary, the Rev. Mr. Gutzlaff. He once preached god, christ, holy-ghost, and co. to the Chinese, and may probably continue the same ministry now, as nothing incompatible with his present profession, which is to announce to the Chinese that they are to *pay* for the *poison* they have destroyed, and which christians so kindly goaded them with, and that they are in future to allow its free entrance into their country. These benevolent intentions he generally publishes to them on the eve of action, when, if they do not surrender, and agree to the conditions, he leaves them to the alternative—destruction by fire and sword, the loss of their property, and the violation of their families who may survive. In the war against Afghanistan, the Bishop of Calcutta expounds the views of god, christ, holy-ghost, and co. While the military and the diplomatists thought of retreating, the bishop, on the 28th of February last, thus declared the resolutions of goddism at the end of an address to Lord Auckland: "The season will break, the passes will be open, and then, only let us get at them!" The *Friend to India*, the organ of the clergy in India, is the newspaper, which urges the prosecution of the war against the Afghanistans. Thus does the christian company of god, christ, and co. exhibit themselves abroad! But the Atheists are at work there. The *Friend to India*, June 9, speaking of the death of a Mr. Hare at Calcutta, who was formerly a watch-maker, says, "He established a school, which he is said long to have supported from his own resources; and he was one of the chief instruments in promoting the establishment of the Hindoo College. Thus he gradually became identified with the cause of native education as conducted on the principle of excluding religion, and acquired the confidence, we might almost add, the affection of the native youth of the metropolis to a degree never known before. At the same time it must be confessed with deep regret, that his inveterate hostility to

the gospel produced an unhappy effect on the native youths, who were so largely under his influence, by indisposing their minds to all inquiry after religious truth, and inducing a general scepticism, the melancholy consequences of which will long continue to be apparent in the opinions and conduct of the present generation of enlightened natives." Atheists have still more encouraging notices from the Wesleyan Circular.

We may anticipate therefore, amongst other failures at this commercial crisis, the awful failure of god, christ, holy-ghost, and co. in Calcutta. We therefore suggest, as a good commercial speculation, to send out all the Infidel publications of the day to Calcutta, and the other presidencies of India. The sterling gold of truth will take the place of the *fimsy credit* of falsehood, whose notes, according to the bankrupts' own account, are rapidly passing out of circulation. There are persons willing to send out Infidel publications gratis, if others better acquainted with India would kindly let them know to whom they might entrust them for distribution.

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

SIR.—As to the question, ought the truth at all times to be spoken? there are two opinions. To write and to express at all times the truth without mystery, mixture of error, or the fear of man, is the advice of the venerable patriarch of socialism, but that refers to a rational state of society; for in the case of Southwell and Holyoake, we find that it is *unsafe* to write or to speak what may appear to be truth in the seeing or hearing of some parties. In the cruel persecution they are now suffering their feelings may be hurt and their health injured, but the satisfaction of having scorned the hypocrite's crooked path abundantly pays for all. Who covets the reflections of the pious spy Maitland in Holyoake's case? It will be well for him before he becomes the cat's paw to any faction, to consider the misery he may inflict on the friends and dependants of the persecuted party. To reflect that for six months Mrs. Holyoake and ~~her~~ two infant children are to be deprived of the protection of one of the best of husbands and fathers. Such was the confidence I felt in the honesty and morality of Mr Holyoake (and it is now more than ever confirmed), that I had placed my son under his care for tuition, and for twelve months would he have had the advantage of receiving instruction from one of the best of tutors but for this shameful affair. After reading the following extracts, you will see what *infinite pleasure* Maitland has yet to experience when he gets with the "saints in glory."

"The happiness of the elect in heaven, will, in part, consist in witnessing the torments of the damned in hell; and among these may be THEIR OWN CHILDREN, PARENTS, HUSBANDS, WIVES, and FRIENDS. Every time they look upon the damned it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of god in MAKING them so to DIFFER. One part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torments will be eternally ascending in the view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of those miserable objects, will say, amen, hallelujah, praise the lord." — *Emmon's Sermons.*

"The saints in glory will be far more sensible how dreadful the wrath of god is, and will understand how terrible the sufferings of the damned are; yet this will be no occasion of grief to them, BUT rejoicing. They will not be sorry for the damned. All sympathy destroyed—it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them, but on the contrary, when they see this sight, it will occasion rejoicings, and excite them to joyful praise." — *Edwards's Practical Sermons.*

JOHN RANSOM.

Brighton, October, 1842.

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

SIR.—A fair question, in your No. 47, under the signature of James Monk, shall have a fair answer. I wish all my ignorant and unprincipled abusers would thus deal with me. James Monk is to me an *incognito*; but that is nothing in the case of fair and free inquiry. I am asked to reconcile the "Dedication" of the ninth volume of the *Republican* with what I now say respecting the bible. An honest man will meet and bear any questioning.

I then described the bible as the *most mischievous of all mischievous books*. In the use that has been made of it, I still think so; and in my most recent lectures, my auditors have heard me so describe it, as the greatest curse that has been presented to the human race. But this, be it remembered, applies to the abuse, and not to the best use that may be made of the book.

Up to the ninth volume of the *Republican* I had travelled no farther in theological inquiry, than to apply common sense and historical investigation against the prevailing superstition. The first number of that volume, addressed to the late Dr. England, then Archbishop of Dorset, and the seventh number addressed to the late Dr. Herschel, the high-priest of the Jews, present my then accumulation of evidence, that neither Jewish nor christian religion had any accurately stated historical origination. I was the first, of modern times, historically to discover that Jesus Christ never existed as flesh, in the first or any other century, in Palestine or elsewhere; as I have also been the first to say of late, that the Jews were not known to inhabit Palestine of Syria under the name of Israelites, or any

other name, before the time of Alexander of Macedon, who brought them there in his expeditionary return from India.

This, then, was my state of mind, in concluding and dedicating the ninth volume of the *Republican*. With the tenth volume, or in its course of publication, it may be seen that I entered upon a new course of theological inquiry, to which my former researches had gradually brought me: it was the identity of the christian with all former mythologies. Assisted by the Rev. Robert Taylor, I asserted the mythological sameness of Jesus Christ and Prometheus, and discovered generally, of which I am now elaborating and making so good a use, that Jesus Christ is the name of spirit, or mental principle, of wisdom, science, virtue, love, combined for human salvation, and not the name of any mere flesh, blood, and bones that ever existed.

Every subsequent volume of my periodical has more or less embraced this subject, until, in *The Isis*, I attempted to make a system of theological interpretation from it, and am about to renew the attempt in a new periodical entitled "The Christian Warrior," &c.

Ignorant men may find contradiction in all this; but wiser ones will see it to be the fair and honestly stated progress of an inquiring mind, faithful to truth alone.

I have several volumes of the *Republican* unsold; but not perfect sets. Have been selling them of late at the low price of half a crown a volume, which is less than a fifth of the original price. I will place some of them with my son, Alfred, at 1, Bouverie-street, Fleet-street; but no lower trade price will be taken. Young political and theological inquirers will find in these volumes some of the boldest and best essays on almost every subject ever printed. They are clearly the origination of that style which Mr. Williams, as Publicola, has introduced into the *Weekly Dispatch*. Free discussion had its birth in the *Republican*. Beyond that publication it can nowhere be traced on record as having been in practice. The words were scarcely associated. To superstition all discussion is horrible; but more than this, there is neither political party nor religious sect, yet in the country, that can bear free discussion. The ridiculous *new-moo* Chartists in Holborn, have said *no religious discussion* in their hall. They want *music*; but *no religious discussions*! They want anything but truth and political wisdom, with honesty. There must be many other moves, before we reform the parliament, or repeal the corn laws. At present, and for five and twenty years past, nobody has moved, but your humble servant,

RICHARD CARLILE.

Enfield Highway, November 12, 1842.

ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

All Collectors requested to forward the amounts of subscription to the office, 8, Holywell Street, by Monday, November 29. And the London Collectors are specially required to attend with their books at the committee meeting, at Eight p.m. of the same date.

The Public Meeting in connection with the Anti-Persecution Union will take place at John-street Institution, on Monday, Dec. 5, half-past eight, p.m.

London.

M. RYALL, Sec.

THE ARTICLES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PARAPHRASED,

For the benefit of those Clergymen who swear to them.

That three are one, and one is three,  
I hold a sacred verity:  
That Jesus Christ went down to hell,  
But what for, the devil must tell:  
And then he winged his way above,  
To join the father and the dove.  
That Mary, *veneranda mater*,  
Gave being to her own creator,  
Married, but neither wife nor maid,  
As by no nat'ral impulse swayed;  
Her husband, Joe, for very shame sake,  
Acting just like his sheepish namesake.  
We've no free will that we can trust to,  
But die, for doing what we must do.  
Good works, like rags, are of no use,  
But our damnation will produce:  
But if we've faith, and show docility,  
God will reward our gullibility.  
I do believe the creeds, and thence  
Conclude all damned, who've common sense;  
That ev'ry knave and ev'ry doxy,  
In Eve and Adam, sinned by proxy;  
What time the serpent chose to cram 'em  
With golden pipins stol'n (god dâma him!),  
And that all infants, for their sin,  
Who die, without a christening,  
Are justly doomed, as parsons tell,  
To creep and crawl, like toads in hell!  
The ancient testament is true,  
Though so contrary to the new.  
All this is from inspired pen:  
Let every jackass bray AMEN.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

|                                                                                                            |        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| From a Nonagerian Yahoo, for Southwell and Holyoake                                                        | £1 0 0 |
| One Month's subscription W. J. . . . .                                                                     | 0 3 0  |
| W. S. in former lists was incorrect.                                                                       |        |
| R. R. . . . .                                                                                              | 0 2 6  |
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| For Mrs. Holyoake, per Mr. Hodgkinson, Sheffield . . . . .                                                 | 0 1 6  |
| Erratum. For Collector No. 50 in No. 45, read Society of Free Inquirers, Paddington, per Collector No. 50. |        |

BENEFIT BALL,

FOR MR. HOLYOAKE AND FAMILY.

On MONDAY, Nov. 28, a FESTIVAL BALL will be held at the SOUTH LONDON HALL OF SCIENCE, the proceeds will be given to the Fund for the support of Mr. Holyoake and Family during the period of his incarceration. Tickets 1s.  
A Benefit Ball for Mr. Southwell will take place on Monday, Dec. 5, at John-street.

The second Vol. of "Strauss's Life of Jesus" is just published. And we understand all the numbers of Vol. I. are now in print.

Now Publishing—Numbers, 1½d., Parts, 6d.

THE JUSTLY CELEBRATED AND UNEQUALLED SATIRICAL RHAPSODY, THE Y A H O O!

With numerous ADDITIONS by the Author. No. 10 is just out.

Printed and Published by THOMAS PATERSON, No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, to whom all Communications should be addressed. Saturday, November 26, 1842.



1 reader!

Beware of Blasphemous Writing

# THE ORACLE OF REASON:

Or, Philosophy Vindicated.

"FAITH'S EMPIRE IS THE WORLD; ITS MONARCH, GOD; ITS MINISTERS, THE PRIESTS;  
ITS SLAVES, THE PEOPLE"

EDITED BY THOMAS PATERSON.

No. 52.]

Originally Edited by CHARLES SOUTHWELL, sentenced, on January 15, 1842, to Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Bristol Gaol, and to pay a fine of £100, for Blasphemy contained in No. 4. [PRICE 1D.  
Second Editor, G. J. HOLYOAKE, sentenced, on August 15, 1842, to Six Months' Imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol, for Blasphemy, at Cheltenham.

## A HOME THRUST

AT THE ATROCIOUS TRINITY.

Lay on Macduff;

And damn'd be him that first cries—hold, enough!

THERE IS A BOOK, which has occasioned more deplorable calamities, more fierce animosities, and more heart-rending misery, than any similar compound of criminality and absurdity which has ever contributed to the demoralisation of the human race.

*There is a book*, in whose blood-dabbled pages are found the types of all the savage atrocities which have so long been a reproach to the criminal codes of those countries which have been most curst with its influence.

*There is a book*, in which the most absurd contradictions and immoral rubbish are palmed on the credulous as divine revelation; in which knowledge has been held up as a bugbear, the search after it forbidden, and its acquisition punished with horrible barbarity.

*There is a book*, the making up, selection, and custody of whose numerous fables, rhapsodies, ravings, and rhodomontade, babbled by all sorts of maniacs, impostors, and drivellers, in every variety of disgusting and filthy phraseology, and at various stages of barbarism, have been intrusted solely to vampire priests, backed by cut-throat soldiers.

THAT BOOK IS THE BIBLE [OF THE CHRISTIANS!

THERE IS A RELIGION, whose tenets are unintelligible, whose precepts are immoral, whose worship is debasing, whose gods are criminals, whose devil is superior in potency.

*There is a religion*, whose revelations are pretences, whose miracles are cheats, whose inspiration imposture, whose scriptures are forgeries, whose traditions are false, whose prophecies are guesses.

*There is a religion*, whose church is a swindle, whose followers are persecutors, whose career is one of blood, whose promises are worthless, whose threatenings are futile, whose chief supporters have been tyrants, bullies, or knaves, and principal maintenance the lash, the torture, dungeon, fine, or massacre.

*There is a religion*, which has checked improvement, retarded science, engendered hypocrisy, deadened the affections, inflamed the passions, warped the judgment, crippled the body, and distorted morality, by introducing fear as the leading motive of action; and which, finally, by its bloody and devastating career has been the ever-active and ceaseless obstacle to the progress of reason.

THAT RELIGION IS THE RELIGION OF THE CHRISTIANS!

THERE IS A GOD, whose earliest recorded act was to create a pair of sentient beings, with a high capacity and relish for enjoyment, which they were only suffered to taste, in order, with the greater intensity of bitterness and anguish, to feel the reverse of misery and death; who created a world full of miserable wretches, with wants, feelings, emotions, passions, which they were expected to subdue, but which were made too powerful for control; and who finally involved in general and terrible destruction all who failed to regard those mandates which he had made them incapable of obeying.

*There is a god*, who sent "strong delusions" and "lying spirits," to create and perpetuate

fraud and deception, whose delight it was to issue orders to his enemies, which he compelled them to neglect, by "hardening their hearts," and then scourged them for disobedience.

*There is a god*, whose monstrous appetite for blood, required for its gratification, during 4000 years, continual supplies of fresh victims from bands of sacrificial butchers, till the life-blood of "his only-begotten son" trickled down the felon's gibbet, and which to this day, wherever his maleficent influence is felt, compels the sacrifice of the good and just, at the hands of his butcher-priests.

*There is a god*, whose amusements have consisted in the measurement of dressing-gowns, the stitching of breeches, the counting of buttons, the embroidering of petticoats, the sketching out of candlesticks, &c., for which dignified employment he selected his foremen, journeymen, and apprentices from a particular family or two, set apart from among the fickle, ignorant, and besotted savages, who rejoiced in the title of his "peculiar people."

*There is a god*, whose promises unfulfilled, threats not executed, denunciations without consequences, whose alliance without strengthening, and favoritism without advantage, have stigmatised him as unsurpassed for implacable vengefulness, bitter malignity, horrible atrocity, miserable imbecility, contemptible vanity—in short, an intense concentration of the most detestable passions which have signalised the most notorious of malefactors.

THAT GOD IS THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIANS!

M. Q. R.

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"HALL'S CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED" (NOT BAXTER'S).

"As *man* was, in the beginning [gulled], is now, and ever will be"—while christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, so long will credulity be part and parcel of his being. These pithy remarks, and many more, equally sage, have been suggested by the abusive letters and notices in the *Times*, *Herald*, *Post*, and some weeklies of the same kidney, recommending persecutions for blasphemy, and conjuring up the grandiloquent victories that would be obtained were we proceeded against, if only for the nuisance created by the numbers congregated at our office window, with the rewards which would follow our certain conviction.

At last the tempting bait caught a flat of a policeman, named Medicott, whose largeness of swallow is unquestionable, and whose nose reminds one of the Peak of Teneriffe. He summoned us to Bow-street "for exhibiting a certain profane paper in our window."

He was, however, discomfited, for the bungling and informality of the proceedings were so glaring, as to compel the magistrate to dismiss the case. The reward of the blue-coated\* god-defender, was his trouble; his summons was "all vanity;" his victory, "vexation of spirit." The turnkey of the House of Correction would have rejoiced more over the imprisonment of one blasphemer, than over ninety and nine pickpockets, whether of the church, the state, or the street.

The three policemen paid 4s. for the christian tract, *vulgo*, summons, which has put them in a sanguinary perspiration, called, in gospel *twaddle* a "bloody sweat." This was the work of the *Times*. The "lobsters," though boiling with rage, still look blue. Poor automatons, how they must feel their take in! Naughty godmongers! after advising these asses to adopt lions' skins, to see them cudgelled out of them without interfering, was rather too bad.

These "clever idle dogs," after doffing their royal blue, and taking to their greasy jackets—after putting aside their "hazel twigs," and drawing their steel—pens, and copying "What is god?" and other "useful knowledge," from our window—and trying a hundred little manoeuvres to sniff up a case of blasphemy—after all this, to be told by Midas Hall, that it "was no go," must require nearly as much philosophy as falls to our share, which is considerably more than has yet been served out to christian bludgeonmen. And we pray (for the first time) the Jew-god, not to put his light (if he has one), upon these dark and foggy nights, under a bushel, but to stick it on Waterloo-bridge, and take care that none of the force, in their new clothes, or the Vice Society, with the last quarter's report, throw themselves from its parapets, and thus deprive us of a world of fun.

We must not forget, for the benefit of our readers, Mister Justice Midas Hall's definition of a thoroughfare. He said a *shop-window* was one! So that any jolly costermonger may, if he fancies it, drive his donkey through your windows into your shop—nay, he may summons you for obstructing the thoroughfare, by putting glass in it! A pretty specimen of justice's justice. Their power, fortunately, is fast passing away—a train of ill-luck seems to attend their movements—the public mind will not sanction prosecutions—free expression has invaded the glorious rights of christianity, and, should

\* The bishops' bludgeonmen should have some other coloured clothes—the devil's livery being "blue, turned up with thunder and lightning." But we suppose it is, in celestial, as in mundane matters—spirits will ape their betters, and the "Lord of Hosts" takes the fashion from the "Prince of Darkness."

a coroner be shortly summoned to attend a *post mortem*, the word "persecution" will be found engraved on their hearts. The Atheists have done the trick, and their occupation is nearly gone—the splendiferous schemes of *unto-de-faism* are knocked on the head. Christianity, although still breathing, has had its teeth drawn—it can no more bite—its murky hell is now obscured—its priestly demons and lay dupes have been eclipsed by the apostles of freedom of thought—the power once vested in the hands of heaven's *vice-gerents*, have become "fine by degrees, and beautifully less." One striking lesson is to be gleaned from the preceding events, the utter impotence of religious efforts to prevent the march of mind. The sword of the god of the christians has been shivered on our shield of truth—the "all in all" has fallen before the arrows of inquiry—and we have now given to slavery, despotism, and monkish frauds their just characters, and designated them by their proper names. So perish all religions! T. P.

## ANTI-PERSECUTION UNION.

### PUBLIC MEETING.

A PUBLIC MEETING in connection with the above society, was held at the Social Institution John-street, Tottenham Court-road, London, on Monday, Dec. 5, at half-past eight, p.m. Mr. HETHERINGTON in the chair.

The Chairman opened the business of the meeting in an effective speech.

Mr. LLOYD JONES moved the first resolution, as follows:—

"That all legal interference with the free expression of speculative opinions, is both impolitic and unjust—impolitic because, though potent to make hypocrites, it never can make converts; unjust because it retards the progress of truth, and inflicts a gross private injury without producing any general good; that the true and *just application* of the law is to protect the weak and the minority, in the announcement of their opinions, and the only *legitimate* tribunal is the public voice after full and free discussion."

Seconded by Mrs. CHAPPLESMITH, and carried unanimously.

Mr. J. C. BLUMENFIELD, said—Blasphemy! persecution! It is strange, that one should be the consequence of the other; it is strange to see bricklayers and carpenters, whom I would have supposed to be apprentices of the devil, if I was a believer, building prisons out of ideas and words of a blasphemer; it is strange, that a blasphemer, who refuses to go to heaven with a set of

rogues (denying such a thing as heaven), should be compelled to go to a place which is so anti-heavenly, as to form the very evidence of his disbelief in heaven. All this is very strange, if we are to believe those church crossacks, who say, that they have, in all they do, no other object than to convince man of heaven and its bliss. If I was one of those captains of the cross, I would have opened to Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake the best apartments of Buckingham Palace, given them the best coats from the French court, provided them with Burgundy wine, Champaign, and Malaga, and Havana cigars. All these good things would, perhaps, give to these two Infidels some idea of a heaven and its enjoyments; if not, I would have added to these good things the following words:—Friends, the frontier of heaven is the heart—out of the heart you have the palace, the French coat, the Burgundy wine, and the Havana cigars. Do you not *now* believe in heaven? I am sure they would have at once said, We do, sir! But how do *they* convince the infidels of their heaven and god? They throw their bodies into a dungeon, and skilley into their bodies, and call out, "mind our heaven and our god." It is a great pity that Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake believe neither in hell nor devil, else they might have very properly answered them: Go to hell with your heaven; go to the devil with your god; we do not like to be in that way convinced of their goodness! Now, is this savage mode of convincing Infidels of a gracious heaven, of a merciful god—not strange? Strange! no! if we consider the state of mind under which these bandits of heaven labour. Long before the evangelical Mademoiselle Mary had married her first husband, god senior (I hope her first husband died or separated from his lady by a decision of the pope, for we must not accuse that poor woman of bigamy), I say, long before Mary's first singular marriage, have these rogues existed. But we will not dwell upon those of past ages. Besides, the trade of religion has, since the olden times, experienced a great modification, just like the trade of opium in China. Formerly, the articles of religion were sold by stealth; that would not do for the greedy priest-merchants of modern ages, they took up arms, like the English government, fought a great bloody battle with the unexperienced human race, subdued it, and established the free-trade of their poisonous heavenly merchandise. We have, therefore, in our present investigation, to speak of those of our age. We said the persecutions of Infidels by christian priests, are by no means strange, if we consider the state of mind of the persecutors. In consequence of numerous forgeries, in which they had been detected, they got into a mess,

out of which they did not know how to escape. I don't know if they feared to be hung or smothered, or that their pockets might be emptied; what they feared, I don't exactly know; this I know, that in consequence of some fear or other, they adopted the stratagem to prosecute their prosecutors, and thus save themselves. The affair I learnt afterwards was this: Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake presented themselves in a house as clerks, with valuable articles, and very cheap too, from the old established house of Reason and Co. The customer answered them, that he had been already supplied with much superior articles, of course much dearer, from the house of god and co. "Why," exclaimed Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake, "you have been humbugged, sir, such a house does not exist, and the articles you bought are not worth a hungry dog's dream." The clerks of god and co. denied, and the Infidels maintained, the fact. Both parties then applied to an honest old merchant of the city, who was to decide the question. "Why," said the merchant, "the house of Reason and Co. I know very well, it is in London, in Manchester, in Dublin, in Paris, and in Constantinople; but where does the house of god and co. exist? We may at once write to this house, and thus ascertain the truth or falsehood of the assertion of these two Infidel gentlemen." It is in heaven, was the answer of the clerks of god and co. "Heaven, indeed, I never could make out where such a place could exist. Can you show it me on the maps?" The poor clerks of god and co., thus pressed and puzzled by the questions of the merchant, and not being able to prove the existence of the house of god and co., and to establish their honest character as clerks of the same house, brought an action against Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake; charging them with having calumniated god and co. This manœuvre of the heavenly clerks, although not of a nature to prove that they were not rogues, inasmuch that their god, the calumniated individual, has not himself signed the action brought against Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake (for I read, ever since, every day, the *Times* paper, and never saw the signature of god himself), was, according to their judgment, qualified enough to deliver them for a moment from the scrape they had been brought into by the two Infidels. I, however, was not of their opinion. I was convinced that these unmasked rogues, covered with every crime and human blood, must be hanged or smothered, or sent with empty pockets to the tread-mill. What was, my astonishment, when I heard, that not the swindling priests, but the honest Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake had been committed to prison. I asked a clever advocate the reason of such a strange event, and he told me this: you

must know that the fraudulent trade with heaven has been carried on for centuries, not alone by the priests, but by millions of other descriptions, and that, therefore, the important discovery of Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake, was such a dreadful thing as to raise, not alone the priests, but the whole world of lords, ministers, kings, and queens, who were engaged in that trade, and to effect thus a general bankruptcy amongst them. To prevent such an alarming monster-bankruptcy, they threw Messrs. Southwell and Holyoake as the evidence against their pick-pocket gods, into prison. This is the affair which passed between the reason and religion traders. Those who have ears may hear, those who have eyes may see and judge. At the last and true judgment, however, the victims for reason and love, and justice, and humanity, will be released from their prisons, and the swindling priests, with their catechisms, with their churches, with their devils, with their god, with their hell, and with their heaven, will disappear from the earth for ever. With this sweet hope, let us embrace and console our noble sufferers, Southwell and Holyoake, and wait for a better time.

Let us study, let us read,  
Reason's scriptures, reason's creed,  
Gospels of humanity;  
And the wolfish priests will die,  
And their tiger-god will fly;  
Heaven, the earth will be.

Mr. Blumenfield concluded by moving—

"That CHARLES SOUTHWELL and GEO. JACOB HOLYOAKE now undergoing sentences of fine and imprisonment, for the obscure, doubtful, and undefinable crime called blasphemy, are victims of irrational, vindictive, and savage laws—the dicta of bigotted judges in a superstitious period, and utterly at variance with the improved spirit of the age."

Mr. J. CAMPBELL, General Secretary to the National Charter Association, seconded the resolution, which was carried.

Mrs. MARTIN moved the next resolution

"That Messrs. Southwell, Holyoake, &c., having set aside private and personal considerations for the advancement of a great public principle, by conscientiously expressing and unflinchingly promulgating their honest convictions, are (whether right or wrong in those opinions) entitled to the sympathy and support of this meeting, which determines on an immediate subscription in their behalf—and the adoption of a petition to her majesty, to be signed by the chairman."

Mr. G. SIMKINS seconded it.—Carried.

A Memorial to the Queen was also adopted. A collection was made in aid of the objects of the Union, and the meeting separated, after a vote of thanks to the chairman.

THE FREE INQUIRER'S WHY AND  
BECAUSE.

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOUTHWELL.

X.

*Why* is it supposed, that if men were not held responsible for their conduct, that vice would go unchecked?

*Because* it is said, that it would be inconsistent to make men suffer for their misconduct, seeing that they cannot help acting as they do, yet those who urge this, would not hesitate if they saw a man, drunk or mad, about to swallow arsenic, to dash it from his lips, even though they should knock a tooth or two down his throat in so doing—still less would they hesitate so to act if they saw him about to administer the poison to another—as the loss of a tooth would be as a feather in the scale, when weighed against the great good of preserving a fellow-creature's life. Again, if a child, knowing nothing of the nature of powder, should prepare to let off squibs and crackers in a powder magazine, would our knowledge that the child was as innocent as the unfledged bird prevent us using all necessary means to prevent the destruction of life and property? It would be but one step farther in folly, to say that none hereafter should kill fleas, because, poor things, they are not responsible, and can't help biting. Our knowledge that vice is madness, will not abate one jot our horror of those who practice it, or lead to the abolition of a wholesome and necessary restraint, but redouble our vigilance, lead to a discovery of the causes of crime, and the practical adoption of the simple but invaluable principle, that "prevention is better than cure," that all law being, at best, but a necessary evil, is only defensible on the score of its utility, and is rather tolerated than admired; so that those men who glorify the law, and are filled with a kind of wild fondness—like misers, who gloat over their shining heaps—are so lost in the worship of means as to forget the end. Hence the rant of idle declaimers, when they cry out, "let the world be destroyed, so that the law be maintained," as though the law was anything more than a human invention, to keep vice in check and hold out inducements to virtue, by throwing the shield of its protection over the innocent, and striking terror into the hearts of evil-doers. Hence it follows, that the law, like an external covering, should be worn as long as it affords us protection and warmth, but be thrown aside, like an old garment, when worn out and useless. We may sum up by observing, that the term law signifies a rule or regulation established by man for the guidance of man, the ostensible object of which is the good of all and the injury of none. Nor would any but mad-

men weaken the force of necessary restraints which just laws impose, without first abolishing the necessity for such restraints, by improving the condition, and, as a consequence, the morals of the people; but many depraved men have made of law the mere instrument of vengeance, ever ready to glut their diabolical appetite for cruelty, so that the law, which should be respected by all as a guardian angel, or genius of protection, has been abhorred as a foul and most ugly fiend. We are, therefore, advocates of law and order—of the former, because it will produce the latter if wise and salutary—as it is clear, that without some stringent regulation society would go to pieces, and return to anarchy; but then no laws should be framed in a vindictive spirit, or savour of cruelty; men should be made to suffer for their misdoings, but none should be punished. In Russia, where a darkness that may be felt reigns over the land, and men are less free and happy than brutes, the laws are framed in a savage, harsh, and brutal spirit, for the wisdom of the Russian legislator has not yet reached the great truth, that human beings are made to be what they are, and that it is far easier to check the growth of crime by humanising the people, by early training and implanting good habits, than by attempting to stem the torrent of crime, which flows from their accursed institutions, as from an inexhaustible fountain. The French criminal code is, to our shame be it spoken, the least harsh and cruel in Europe, perhaps, in the world, and sheds more lustre on the memory of Napoleon than did his most brilliant victories. Australitz will be forgotten when the code of Napoleon will live in the minds of men, unless, as we are told by Shakspeare, men's virtues live in sand, and their vices in marble.

*Why* are severe penal laws still advocated by many well-meaning individuals?

*Because* they hold the doctrine that the human heart is naturally depraved, which depravity can only be held in check by practising upon the fears of men, hence torments the most exquisite have been invented, and

Man's inhumanity to man  
Has made countless thousands mourn!

Did such mischievous reasoners understand that society, as a whole, makes its members good or bad, virtuous or vicious, it would at once dart upon them, that the only way to reduce the amount of human vice, and its inseparable companion, misery, would be by the removal, as far as practicable, of poverty, and giving to all a sound knowledge of men and things, which will call into existence that self-respect which is the parent of all good and virtuous acts. When this is, at all events, attempted by statesmen and legislators, then and then only will a ray of hope

illumine the darkness that surrounds us, nor will virtue much longer be a shadow, which eludes the grasp, but a living reality—and jails, gibbets, and other instruments of death and torture, will be pointed at as things that were—relics of a barbarous age.

THE NEW ARGUMENT

“A POSTERIORI”

FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

III.

And I will send a lying spirit into the mouths of their prophets.—JEW-BOOK.

AND, in accordance with this spirit, they have all gone astray, “speaking lies,” to prove the existence of god—and, as lies never serve a good purpose, so we find, in this instance, that they only serve to make darkness visible. Even Origen Bachelier, in his discussion with Dale Owen, proves just the contrary position to that which he affirmed he would prove. Indeed, discussions are strange things; in looking over them, it will generally be found that one of the combatants, and of course him who feels his inability most, while he makes a great noise about the victory, is actually playing the game of the sailor in his flight from the bear, first throwing down a cap, and then a shoe, and then a glove, to take off his opponent’s attention from the main point, and thus keeps up a running fire to such a length, that many parties doubt on which side the victory is.

This is Origen Bachelier’s game. He opens the debate referred to, as god’s champion, and it was, of course, for him to adduce proof of his master’s existence. Instead, however, of doing this, he begins by analysing an adverse position, and one set up by himself, too (see p. 5). Now this is begging the question to begin with, and may, account for his attack on the other side. Why did he not stand up like a man, and if in god’s employ bring out the agreement; why not give us the witnesses at once, that such a firm as father, son, and holy-ghost existed, and had engaged him as copying clerk or amanuensis, to write their letters? Even had he overthrown his opponent, his conclusion does not follow, for it might be that both were wrong. We remember an account of a debate amongst the students of the Epicurean philosophy—whether the vicious are more deserving of indignation or contempt. It was carried on for a long time, neither party supposing there could be more than two sides to the subject, when it was suggested, that the master always treated them with compassion, and the third side was immediately voted victorious.

We complain, however, of both the disputants in the debate referred to, for Owen,

instead of taking advantage of the tactics of his opponent, joins issue on the minor points of accountability, thus leaving the real point at issue between them, out of the question.

Bachelier says (p. 5), “were all things in accordance with the limited wisdom of man, there would be reason to suppose they were not contrived by wisdom superior to his; and consequently not contrived by *infinite wisdom*, and, therefore, that there is no infinite wisdom—no god.” Thus, at once, it appears to us, involving the most egregious contradictions. He (Bachelier) would have it, that was man able to *perceive* this wisdom, it would be *evidence against* the existence of god, and therefore that the non-perception is proof of deity’s existence, and yet this very assumed consciousness or proof, or whatever else it may be called, must needs rest on the basis that man does perceive *so much*; for even Bachelier is not a god, and thus the argument pokes out one eye of his deity in the very act of pointing to the other. And all this is finished off, aptly enough (page 6), with the assertion, that the *apparent* imperfections in the universe, tend to corroborate that evidence of a deity’s handy work to be drawn from the perfections thereof! while the very expression, *apparent imperfections*, raises the inference that they are not such in reality, but are, in fact, perfections, which, as such, in time destroys the evidence sought to be drawn from them in their contrary character, as well as confirming the position that all things are in accordance with man’s limited wisdom—inasmuch as he can see through the apparent imperfections, and therefore, forming evidence against the existence of any higher wisdom, and, according to his own argument, evidence against god. Now, let us look again at this matter. Bachelier, in analysing what he calls the position of the Atheist, asserts that all things are in accordance with *infinite wisdom*, and as he asserts this in the plenitude of his own (man’s) limited wisdom, it follows that, according to his own showing, they were not contrived by wisdom superior to his, and consequently *not contrived by infinite wisdom*, and therefore, that there is no infinite wisdom—no god. And again (page 9), he says, “There is or there is not a god,” and he makes it a duty on the part of his opponent to decide this one way or the other, as if it were a tangible problem for mathematical solution; or, as if he was not nearer truth who believed not at all, than he who believed erroneously. Owen answers this by saying, “There may, or there may not be one, or a thousand and one, superior existences to man in the universe; there may be inhabitants in the sun, but that it is impossible to stretch analogy from earth to heaven, and he sees no reason to assert or deny.” Owen might have put

this position much stronger—for instance, there is or there is not, in the vast regions of space, another globe, answering exactly to the description of ours—such a thing may be and it may not, and yet it is impossible to decide upon it. And shall we, who literally know nothing of these globes or world-balls—shall we presume to entertain familiar notions of their god or maker? A god over we know not whom, or where, or what.

But again, if we allow, for the sake of argument, all that Bachelier contends for, “Is there reason to believe in the existence of god?”—we find him again discriminating between knowledge and belief, and the former rests upon probabilities and not positive certainty, and yet we are told that it is possible for man to know god. If so, the nearer we approach to knowledge, the further we travel from belief, until, at last, finding out god, as a positive certainty, belief merges in knowledge, and man is brought so near to god, that the essentials of a godhead, *infinite superiority*, are at once destroyed, for man must be infinitely superior himself before he can comprehend infinite superiority.

Thus, by pushing the question on any side we get an absurdity, and we are continually reminded, that “to speak of gods befits not (such) men.” Are we wrong in calling god’s writers-up, blunderers? Bachelier is one of the best, or we would not have wasted time with him. And now, having shown up the errors of former advocates, we shall commence our own demonstration. W.

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PROSECUTION *versus* PRINCIPLE.

*To the Editor of the Oracle of Reason.*

SIR.—Believing your object to be the emancipation of the mind from the thrall of religious superstition, I beg to congratulate you on your triumph, on Monday last, over your savage persecutors.

As a lover of my country, her laws, and institutions, I cannot but feel rejoiced in the result of your trial by police magistrates for blasphemy—for I look upon it as nothing else; and with a pang of shame I read that Mr. Hall asserts that the legislature has empowered him to fine and imprison any man who may have placed to view, within his windows, any paper or book which he (Mr. H.) may consider *profane*, and that policemen shall swear annoyed them (getting the fine thereby). “This power (says Mr. Hall) I may exercise, *though large, without any very forced or strained construction of the words of the act.*” Gracious goddess! Hast thou stripped thine eyes and transferred thy bandage to thy ministers? Justice herself, surely, must have descended from her pedestal to teach this police-lawyer this new

reading of criminal construction. In future, be it known to all shopkeepers, that Mr. Hall, of Bow-street police-office, considers that he can try, condemn, and imprison, any of her majesty’s subjects, without the assistance of judge or jury! T.

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“THE PARSONS’ SCAVENGER,”  
AND THE ‘ORACLE’ OFFICE.

(From a paper Edited by Brindley.)

“OF all the daring exhibitions of awful blasphemy that have come under our observation, that in Holywell-street, London, is by far the most outrageous. Ever since the conviction of Southwell, the Socialist, at Bristol, for publishing the *Oracle of Reason*, have the wretched creatures, occupying the shop we referred to, filled their windows with prints and paragraphs, which, for nakedness and filthiness of expression, exceed any thing that has been previously attempted. What can the authorities be about? And where, too, are the parish officers, that they have neglected to report what has been going on there? We cannot, we dare not venture on a single quotation from the prints that have filled their windows in open day, for at least these three months’ past. But we can say that they are infinitely worse than the grossest blasphemies published by Southwell. The *Oracle of Reason* is still sold by them, and one number, published in October, contained verbatim, the principal passages upon which that wretched man was convicted. But the comments appended, upon the holy-ghost, the virgin Mary, and our blessed lord and saviour, are of so horribly lewd and fearful a character, that unless they were read, it could not be believed that the diabolical wickedness of man could invent, much less dare to print, these shuddering blasphemies. We call upon the authorities—we call upon every christian man and woman in the metropolis, not to let another month pass over without using their influence to have this iniquity blotted out. There is no excuse to the government if they fail to prosecute, because we have the fullest evidence to convict the keepers of this den of infamy. We prevailed upon our most trusty London correspondent to visit the place, and to purchase Nos. 42 and 43 of the *Oracle of Reason*. He is now prepared, upon oath, to swear to the identity of the person or persons who served him; and we are willing, at any moment, to give up the copies so purchased, and the name of our correspondent, on application from the proper quarters.

“We would also beg to add, that we have forwarded to the right reverend prelates of London and Exeter, to Sir Robert Peel, and the home secretary, copies of the blasphemous libels contained in those numbers.

THE ORACLE OF REASON.

We, therefore, trust and pray that the nuisance may be immediately suppressed."

At a numerous meeting of the "wretched creatures"—"keepers of the den of infamy," No. 8, Holywell-street, Strand, London, the chairman called their attention to the above, when it was moved, seconded, and carried unanimously, "That the warmest thanks of this meeting be given to *honest* John Brindley, *alias* the Parsons' Scavenger, for the above excellent advertisement—and, also, for his liberality and kindness in forwarding to the parties named therein copies of the *Oracle of Reason*, containing the 'shuddering blasphemies' of which he speaks so highly."

It was also resolved, "That the Parsons' Scavenger, or his agents, upon the production of their credentials, be for the future supplied *gratis*, with any future numbers of the *Oracle of Reason*, which may contain 'shuddering blasphemies,' to be applied by him to the same christian purposes, as those previously distributed at his own expense."

Signed, on behalf of the meeting,  
T. P., Chairman.

A NEW DOXOLOGY.

"PRAISE god from whom all blessings flow,"  
And curses too!—for most men know  
A preachment of apostle Paul,  
Wherein that famous saint let fall—  
That god, omniscient and omnific,  
Sends *all things*, general and specific.  
Besides, we have the writs of Moses,  
Which every christian true, supposes,  
To be the speeches, word for word,  
Of old Jehovah, Jove, or lord.  
And doth not Moses demonstrate  
That, "like the devil," god can *hate*?  
That e'en from him all curses flow  
To us poor wretches here below?  
Then, not alone in hymns of praise  
But thus your tuneful voices raise—  
"CURSE gods, from whom all CURSES flow—  
DAMN them, ye damned, in hell below—  
Damn fathers, sons, and holy-ghosts—  
Damn all the baneful heavenly hosts!"

W. B. C.

Should any body object to this as being "most contemptible doggrel," the writer would maintain that it is quite "in keeping" with the subject—and he would challenge the goddists to do better if they can. Furthermore, if the squeamish should nauseate some parts of the phraseology, they must be reminded, that the "holy scriptures" of the Jesu-christians, *alias*, the Jew-book, is the source from which such objectionable portions are derived.

NOTICE.

A Meeting will take place on Saturday evening, Dec. 17th, at half-past eight, at No. 8, Holywell-street, to Inquire into Mythological Systems and Overthrow Religious Error.

SUBSCRIPTIONS,

For the Anti-Persecution Union.

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| London.                         | M. RYALL, Sec. |

Received by Mrs. Holyoake, from a Few Friends at the iron works of Acraman, Morgan, and Co., and three Socialists, Bristol .. .. . 0 6 6

ERRATA, in J. M'Cullough's letter, in No. 36, page 299, headed "Correspondence." In first column, fourth line from bottom, for "prayer of a god," read "praise of a god." In second column eighth line from top, for "and upright," &c. read "an upright." In sixteenth line from top, for "paternal associations," read "fraternal associations." In twenty-seventh line from top, for "daring doctrine," read "darling doctrine." In third column, 26th line from top, for "ankering," read "hankering."

Just Published, price 1½, No. 1 of

THE GREAT DRAGON CAST OUT!  
OR PARADISE LOST:

Being a full, true, and particular account of the great and dreadful bloodless battle, that was fought in the celestial regions, about 6000 years ago.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE "YAHOO."

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Saturday, December 17, 1842.







