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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

No. 1.] **BLOWS AT THE BIBLE.** [1d.

BY

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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Who was its author, when and where it was delivered, before what audience, I do not care; the value of the discourse is no greater though a great man uttered it; is no less, though the production of a booby. If it descended or ascended from heaven, it is no better or worse for that; if it sprung from earth, or Purgatory, or Hell, that makes it no worse. If God preached it, it is just as it is; and you must admit no more nor less, if the preacher was the Devil. If a Holy Ghost inspired it, that does not enhance its value; if a foul or filthy spirit instigated its utterance, the sermon is no fouler or cleaner for that. We may estimate the qualities of the author by those of the sermon; but not those of the sermon by those of the author.

Blessed are the poor in spirit (Matt. v., 3.) Poverty of purse is bad enough; poverty of spirit is the condition of fools, slaves, lunatics and idiots.—*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* What a blessed set, therefore, constitutes the kingdom of heaven! Wise men are excluded—by their own choice, of course.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted (v. 4). Common Sense says, Blessed are they who do not need to be comforted. The word translated "blessed" all through these "beatitudes," as they were piously and lackadaisically denominated, should be rendered "happy." The "Revised Version," however, from which I quote, keeps the old translation. Perhaps the revisionists did not like to expose their good book to ridicule. "Happy are they that mourn!" To which I reply, *Tall are they that are short! Fat are they that are lean!* Amen. It requires much grace and divine enlightenment to understand a sermon, my Brethren, and Sisters, specially when, like this on the Mount,

it abounds in absurdities. Not one of those who heard it asked any questions; discussion was not invited. And if they had demanded an explanation, no doubt the good-natured Jesus (if he was the preacher) would have mercifully damned them for their impertinence.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (v. 5). History abounds with proofs of this truth. The meek Israelites expelled and murdered all the Canaanites they could, and took possession of all their victims had owned. The meek Romans conquered the world, or a great part of it; and the exceedingly meek Danes, Jutes, Saxons, and others conquered and peopled England. The meek English stole India and other countries, as the meek Spaniards stole South and Central America. Jesus did not understand history. Gentleness is the characteristic of a strong man who has strength enough to be self-controlled and goodness sufficient to direct his power to worthy ends; but meekness is mental and moral paralysis. Gentleness is a virtue, meekness a vice. The former is independence, the latter absolute slavery to the priesthood.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness (v. 6). Nonsense! Blessed are the righteous is the proper thing to say. People who hunger and thirst after righteousness usually do nothing else, poor things; their double appetite feeds upon themselves, and they are weak and miserable as children with worms.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (v. 7). It is so sometimes, though very often the contrary happens. After all, the just are better than the merciful, though both are good.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (v. 8). The pure in heart are good, though not always happy. They will never see God, though. 1. If God is infinite, he can never be seen, for there is no place where we could stand to see him. 2. If seen, he is not infinite. The pure in heart have their own reward, and no more need a sight of God than I do a sight of the Queen.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God (v. 9). This is a joke equal to another I will perpetrate: *Blessed are the members of the Peace Society: for they shall be called the sons of Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Napoleon, Bismarck, Beaconsfield, or Bartle Frere.* When

did God ever make peace or prevent war? When was there ever a war his servants did not ascribe to him?

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (v. 10). Then persecution also is a good thing? If so, the persecutors ought to be blessed too. To be persecuted is a nuisance, a great evil, a shame, a disgrace to civilisation. And if the persecuted have no compensation except the kingdom of heaven, their case is more hopeless than that of the followers of Don Carlos or of Jefferson Davis.

As for people now-a-days being persecuted and slandered for the sake of Jesus, the conception is too grotesque for discussion. It is his pretended and pretentious followers who do all the persecution; and the kingdom of heaven consists, not of victims, but of stupid and brutal persecutors. If the "persecuted for righteousness' sake" are to obtain a great reward for their endurance, Hurrah! I mean, Hallelujah! we shall get the prize, and our Christian persecutors will go——. I do not know what will become of them.

Jesus says, "They so persecuted the prophets" (v. 11). What prophets? This preacher must have referred to a different Old Testament from ours. The old Israelitish prophets were bitter persecutors when opportunity occurred; but none of them suffered persecution, strictly so named. To encourage persecution itself is not much worse than to encourage its endurance by calling the persecuted happy. The good teacher does his best to inculcate manliness and justice, which will, in time, render persecution impossible.

Matt. v.—*Ye are the salt of the earth* (v. 13). If Christians ever were the salt of the earth, they must soon have lost their savor: as far as we can trace them back they have been the world's "bitters," without being anywise its tonics. Or—let me see! Salt of the earth! In large quantities salt renders soil absolutely barren. And wherever Christianity has reigned in unchecked sway, there has been a general dearth of all good things. *Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid* (v. 14). This was no doubt intended to produce modesty. Those poor illiterate disciples of an equally ignorant master were the light of the world! Look at the Science, Philosophy and Art of the world, and ask how much of it all is due to Jesus and his followers.

Christianity never shed a ray of light upon anything. Its lantern is a dark one, having neither wick nor oil.

So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven (v. 16). Let your rushlights shine, that men may honor the sun. Amen. What nonsense, to call upon twelve boobies to confer honor upon an infinite being! If the Father in heaven knew the rubbish his only begotten son was spouting on earth, he would have shown his good sense to have corrected him. It says little for that parent's fatherly qualities that his children behave so badly as they do. Worse behaved beings than sons and daughters of God there never were—ignorance, insolence and brutality are their usual characteristics; and they are just like their father. *Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets (v. 17).*—No, no, Jesus, you had not the power, your countrymen still cling to them and leave your doctrines and religion alone.—*I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.* How fulfil? To keep, do you mean? To obey? If so, the Christian Church sorely misunderstands you. What Jesus says about heaven and earth passing away is nonsense; but what he says about those who disobey Moses and the prophets shows him to be a Jew, not a Christian, and puts all Christians in the wrong—if he was right. Jesus knew no other law than that of Moses, no other inspired book than the Jewish Scriptures, he never hinted that any other was needed or would be written; yet his professed followers have almost superseded the Old Testament by the New, as they supersede the New Testament by their creeds, confessions, catechisms, and theological writings.

Jesus next proceeds to improve upon Moses, though he above said he came only to fulfil. "Thou shalt not kill," said Moses—though he was frightfully fond himself of killing. *Thou shalt not be angry with thy brother,* says Jesus; *to be so, thou shalt be in danger of the Judgment,* or local petty court. *If thou say, Raca to thy brother, thou shalt be in danger of the Council, the Sanhedrim, or the highest Jewish court; and to call thy brother a fool, shall expose thee to hell fire!* (v. 21, 22). Thus, it is bad to be angry, worse to say Raca, but a damnable thing to call a brother a fool. Yet Jesus and Paul did not hesitate to call people fools. I hope they are not damned. If your brother is a fool, and gives you good reason to tell him so, do it. It may open his eyes and lead to

improvement. The clergy usually try to give the word "fool" here some deep and mysterious and dreadful meaning, in order to justify Jesus in his absurd denunciation of it; but it means nothing worse than fool. It may be an impropriety to call a foolish brother, or even a neighbor, a fool, but it is not a crime.

As to offering gifts at the altar (v. 23, 24), had Jesus been wise, he would not have sanctioned but condemned the miserable superstition. Gifts are offered at the altar which ought frequently to be paid as just debts to debtors; in every case it is disgraceful to waste upon gods what men, women and children so much need for their life.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, etc. (v. 25). Surely this ought to depend upon the justice of the case. If men can honestly avoid law and lawyers, they are great fools to have any connexion with them; but there are many cases when a man must be a coward and a fool to agree with his adversary. Though if Jesus had agreed with his adversaries, or even had made any rational defence before Pilate, he probably would not have gone to the cross.

The 27th and 28th verses are simply atrocious, for they condemn every healthy man that ever lived, and would, if they could be obeyed, depopulate the earth. Licentiousness is bad; asceticism is a thousand times worse. Verses 29 and 31 are most brutal, and their moral tendency debasing in the extreme. To fear hell at all is barbaric, to fear it to the extent of mutilating oneself or its equivalent is brutalising.

Had Jesus been a married man he might have spoken (v. 32) with some authority on the subject of divorce. None of his utterances on the sexual relationships are at all edifying. There are just causes of divorce; a divorce which is not a perfect divorce ought never to be effected; when once effected, the parties ought to be as free to marry again as bachelors and spinsters.

What Jesus says respecting perjury and swearing (v. 33—37) I entirely endorse, except that about the Evil One. To swear is folly. A man that cannot be bound by a promise, cannot be bound by an oath. But it is amusing to note how Christians send Jesus to Coventry when it suits them. Their conduct and teaching on oaths are the most perfect hypocrisy that could be conceived. In most respects they are to-day, as the result of purely secular influences, immeasurably superior

to their Master ; in respect to the oath business they are as far behind him. In that respect they are false, hypocritical and brutal. If they had their way, they would depopulate the world for the sake of their superstitions.

Resist not evil (Matt. v. 59). What must we resist then? Must we resist good? Jesus seems to have been unable to run from one extreme without rushing to the opppsite. Retaliation, in most cases, may be foolish and wrong ; no general rule can cover all cases. But non-resistance of evil is the best way to encourage it. There is "a law in our members," much older and much more potent, which tells us to resist evil with all our might—viz., the law of self-preservation. And Jesus was as much under the force of that law as other people. He never turned the other cheek (v. 39), but gave cheek for cheek whenever opportunity occurred. So did his disciples. And his followers have always been more ready to smite than be smitten.

Let him have thy cloak also (v. 40). Jesus was too poor to know the value of clothes, hence this stupid rule of life. Here, too, we have a most direct and thorough encouragement to dishonesty. People are too fond of law as it is ; what would be the state of society if every rogue who stole a coat could get the owner's cloak too by simply suing him ?

Verses 39—42 of this Sermon on the Mount are amply sufficient, if put into practice, to destroy civilisation and reduce mankind to a state of anarchy and violence. Fortunately, professing Christians have always, with an exception or two, been more ready to steal than to throw away their property, more ready to compel others to walk the "miles" than do it themselves. Bad as this is, it is better than what Jesus taught.

Love your enemies (v. 44)—*that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven* (v. 45). No man can love his enemy. The father in heaven cannot do it, or he would long since have hugged and caressed the Devil. Jesus did not do it, or he would have turned those stones into bread, as the Devil requested him when they met in the wilderness. "Do good to them that hate you!" By what law? It is contrary to reason and nature both. Someone asked Confucius what he had to say "Concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?"—It was a very old superstition, evidently—Confucius replied, "With what then

will you recompense kindness? Recompense injury with justice, and kindness with kindness." That is good philosophy; the language of Jesus is babyish.

He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (v. 45). He does nothing of the sort. The sun doesn't rise; it is the earth that spins round in front of him, like a leg of mutton before the fire. And if God did this work, he also makes his sun scorch good and bad alike, and sends rains or drought indiscriminately. If we followed the heavenly father's example, no day would pass without our doing much mischief and murdering more or fewer persons. Better leave him alone.

What reward have ye? (v. 46—47). Just so. Jesus was enslaved to the barbarous philosophy of rewards and punishments, and his followers have never grown out of it. The Christian is taught to expect a reward for everything. If he gives away money in charity, it is to get riches in heaven; if he spends his money upon church and chapel building, it is to get an endless annuity in the New Jerusalem, or to be insured against the unquenchable fire; and those who hangfire at parting with their cash are gravely assured that they will be "recompensed at the resurrection of the just"—the date of which will be about the time the sky falls.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men (Matt. vi., 1). Christians read this the other way, viz.: *Take heed to do your alms before men, to be seen of them.* They boast of what they give out of their abundance and taunt us with not giving what we do not possess. They accept challenges to debate at times, on condition that the proceeds shall go to some charity, not at all caring if we should be compelled to apply for charity as a consequence of having to work for nothing. If Christians were half as good as they pretend, they would be too good to pretend at all; and if Christians would leave off wasting, and robbing, and swindling, all would have enough, and charity would no longer be needed.

When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites (Note, Hypocrites meant originally an actor); *for they love to pray, standing in churches and chapels and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men* (v. 5). Here I improve both the translation and the original. How many of the parsons would ever pray if no man or woman were by to hear?

Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. True! True! ranging from £50 per annum to £15,000 and perquisites. Not bad remuneration for actors in religious theatres.

But when ye pray, do not jabber like foreigners, etc. (v. 7). I make the orthodox commentators a present of this rendering; it exactly gives the sense. A paraphrase is:—Don't jabber away like foreigners landed on a strange coast, who utter a multitude of words in the hope of being able to make the natives understand them. All the orthodox commentators have missed the point of the advice. And most parsons have a sort of regulation time for prayer, hoping that their God will answer a long prayer, though he won't a short one. In fact, they treat their deity exactly like dishonest beggars do their victims—they try the virtues of unlimited blarney. Were I a god, I would much more readily relieve the Atheist who never asks for anything than those who make a trade of prayer—that is, begging. There are laws against begging, but none against praying; which shows that Christian states respect the public more than their God.

Your father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him (v. 8). He is a poor father, then, to wait to be prayed to before doing his duty. It is a father's duty to see that his children have their wants supplied whether they ask or not. The great father in heaven should spend a fortnight at some well-conducted house to learn the ways of civilised people. If he did this, he would burn the Bible and order a new one, this time not written by his amanuenses, but by men who could teach him more than all eternity has been able to do.

The prayer that follows as a model, the Lord's prayer, has about all the faults a prayer can have, probably, except length. There the pious pray for a kingdom to come. All just government grows. We don't want foreign rule, though we can have no objection to God's will being done on earth as in heaven, because it is not done there at all. Men should work for their daily bread, not pray for it. *Forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* If Christians believed in "a prayer-answering god," they would be afraid to pray thus: for they do not forgive, and so, in effect, they ask not to be forgiven. They are the most unforgiving of all people, being inspired perhaps by the great father who will burn his enemies with unquenchable fire. *To pray not to be led into temptation,* is

wise, if the Bible be true; for God tempted Abram to murder his son, David to number Israel, etc. But to ask to be delivered from the Evil One, is like a frightened child begging his father to keep away the black man the nurse has been speaking of.

Your father will forgive you, if you forgive others; he won't if you don't. Good example. Sublime morality! You are to be perfect as your father (chap. v., 48), and he threatens to be imperfect if you are so! That is, you can make him just what you will, forgiving or malicious, good or bad; for his conduct is regulated by yours. This is the very highest point in New Testament morality!

The directions Jesus gives (Matt. vi., 16—18) for *fasting* are good enough, supposing fasting were itself of any conceivable use. The only parties who ought to fast are they who have eaten too much or whose health may probably be improved by a short period of abstinence. Fasting as now practised in Christendom is sheer hypocrisy. And as Christians do not now honestly practise it, no more need be said, but that Christians would get far greater good by a little healthy honesty than by all "the means of grace" they employ.

The rest of Matthew vi., 19—34, is so openly antagonistic both to civilisation and to clerical conduct, that the wonder is modern Christians have not long since repudiated it as contrary to their religion:—

1. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth* (v. 19). The best of Christians obey this by laying up all they can upon earth.

2. *But lay up treasures in heaven* (v. 20). Many Christians would do this too, but they know not where heaven is. They would not object to treasures here and hereafter both; but having no prospect of heaven, and being wedded as closely to the earth as any misers, they make sure of earthly treasures, and trust in providence for the others.

3. *For where your treasure is there will your heart be also* (v. 21). No people love the world more fully than Christians; and the "love of the father," of course, "is not in them."

What Jesus says of the single eye and the light of the body (v. 22—23) may be ignored: he understood neither physiology nor optics, nor was he any better instructed in moral rights and obligations. He uttered rules, proverbs and commands, which his followers are ever praising and ever

deliberately breaking, and must break, or renounce civilisation.

No man can serve two masters God and Mammon, for example (v. 24). Another blunder. The clergy can serve God and Mammon first rate. The first step is, perhaps, the most difficult. You renounce the world in your baptism, that is, your godfathers and godmothers do it for you, as theirs did for them. This is all you need to do. Henceforth you are safe; your baptism regenerates you, and the "new man" serves Mammon and God with the most perfect assiduity for all the rest of life. If in any case God should grumble at the rivalry of Mr. Mammon, he is politely kicked out of doors, and Mammon reigns supreme. Jesus was not half so clever as his followers; the parsons could put him up to many a dodge were he now on earth.

Take no thought for your life—neither for food nor raiment (v. 25). This is the language of a pure barbarian or maniac. The commentators say, "anxious thought," "undue thought," etc. There is nothing in the gospels to authorise them. Jesus never inculcates the duty of industry; but here he enjoins an absolute indifference for all worldly pursuits. The fowls (26) are to be your model as regards providing food—and they neither sow nor reap nor garner; but your heavenly father feedeth them and will much more feed you, for you are much better. And why care about clothes? The lilies are clothed by providence; how much more will he clothe you? To all except perverse divines this language is so plain that one wonders even at their temerity in trying to reconcile it with common sense. But Jesus points it still more:—Can you, by taking thought, add a cubit to your height? The answer is obvious. Neither can you get food or clothes by "taking thought." "*Therefore take no thought,*" etc. (v. 31). The Gentiles take thought; they seek food and clothes. But you have a heavenly father who knows all about what you need; and if you only seek his kingdom and righteousness, he will see to it that all your wants are supplied.

Good father!—How is it nobody trusts him? I should like to see a community founded on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. The bishops might take the lead in such an undertaking. They have the best security. They have a father who is all-good and almighty. He says he will supply all their needs if they will seek first his kingdom, etc.

Their is neither bishop nor pastor who believes it. In that they show their scepticism and good sense. They are infidels—that is, unfaithful to their own professed principles; we are infidels in a better sense—viz., we no more believe the truth and wisdom of Jesus's teaching than they do, and we say so much. For our honesty we shall be damned, while they will be saved for their hypocrisy. So be it.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself (v. 34). Confucius said: "If a man takes no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand." If Jesus had taken thought for the morrow he would have had a place "to lay his head;" he would not have been poorer than foxes, as he admitted, nor would he have gone hunger-bitten to the fig-tree and cursed it for bearing no figs out of season.

Still there is in the world to-day something much worse than even the fanaticism of Jesus or his poor insanity, and that is the miserable cant, found even amongst Unitarians and a few Freethinkers, which affects to admire and eulogise the character and wisdom of the teachings of Jesus! If those panegyrists are honest they do not understand what they do; if they understand, they are veritable hypocrites. Every enlightened man does habitually, and as a consequence of his enlightenment, the very things Jesus condemned. He never more plainly condemned adultery or murder than he did social prudence and industry.

The early Christians understood their master as I now do, and it was only the stern reality of life which showed them how false and pernicious his doctrines are. Cave, in his "Primitive Christianity," p. 230, says: "They never met with opportunities to have advanced and enriched themselves, but they declined and turned them off with a noble scorn." Origen, he says, obeyed the precept not to have two coats, to wear shoes, nor to be (anxiously) careful for the morrow" (p. 242). Cave invents "anxiously" here. "Nay," says he, "so little kindness had they for this world, that they cared not how little they stayed in it; and, therefore, readily offered themselves for martyrdom at every turn" (p. 246-7). This agrees with Tertullian: Calamities, etc., "injure us not; in the first place, because we have no further concern with this world than how we may most quickly depart from it" ("Apology," c. xii.)

When modern Christians exchange cant and hypocrisy for truth and honesty they will either follow and obey Jesus in reality or else openly renounce him. Which will they do?

Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matt. vii., 1).—Harsh judgments and censorious comments ought to be avoided; but honest judgment is one of the best means of moral education, and moral education cannot be obtained without it. Besides, no one ever violated this rule more than Jesus himself. He judged and condemned in many cases; nor did he ever make it appear that he understood the importance or the justice of a fair and open trial. Had he been wise and good, he would have given some hint, at least, respecting the forms and administration of justice. The codes of civilised nations owe nothing to Jesus or to his religion. His conceptions of justice and law were those of any petty Oriental despot.

The mote and the shaft—spear-shaft—in the eyes constitute a figure of speech grotesquely overdone, and ridiculous into the bargain. Who with a mote in his eye would wait for some one to ask to extract or remove it?—while a spear-shaft in the eye means the destruction of the organ and the death of the owner.

It was not charity, but bitter and coarse satire, which inspired what he says about giving holy things to dogs and casting pearls before swine (v. 6, 7). If men are dogs and swine, it must be because God made them so, that is Jesus, if he was God. Why sneer at his own handiwork? Why not make them better?

Ask and it shall be given you (v. 7, 8). If this were true, how rich and prosperous and powerful the Church would be! How soon the world would be converted! How quickly they would hear and see the last of the *Freethinker* and its wicked crew. All the prayers in the world—I mean the Church—cannot stop these Atheistic sermons, nor confound the preacher. Let them try. *Ask and receive!* The parson prays to God and receives from men. Their prayers, indeed, are mostly intended for human ears; and those that do not reach human ears are never answered. The Church has never been ashamed to beg, and it has got a million-fold more than it has deserved. When the orthodox confess themselves un

worthy, we agree with them, and when most of them confess themselves "miserable offenders," we cannot but admit the justice of the plea.

The contrast (v. 9—12) between earthly fathers and the heavenly one is all in favor of the former. Most earthly parents do something for their children; the heavenly father does nothing. By the way, how can a man have *two* fathers, unless one is merely grandfather or father in a merely legal or social sense? If, then, we have earthly fathers, we have no heavenly one.

Beware of false prophets (v. 15). Amen. Amen. All prophets are false prophets. Truth is found only by experience, not revelation. All pretenders to revelation are false prophets; beware of them and their sermons and gospels and predictions. All those who follow them only repeat the original lies. And revelation lies have filled the world with confusion, bitterness and blood.

They come in sheep's clothing—good broad-cloth made of wool; but they dress in many ways. *Ye shall know them by their fruits* (v. 16). Yes, yes! What has revelation, what have its prophets, done for man? All the world's science, government, philosophy, sanitation, medicine, are due to the prophet's enemies. No prophet ever revealed a pregnant truth that enriched or enlightened the world. To prophets we owe persecution and darkness; to secular workers and thinkers we owe all the knowledge and all the wealth of the world. By their fruits ye shall know them—if they bear any. The bishops are barren, the Church is a desert, and the parsons ever cry, "Give, give!" We hope Jesus' prophecy is correct, that the useless trees shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. Then the churches are doomed. They bear no good fruit; they cumber the ground and produce poison.

If none but those who do the will of the father (v. 21—24) enter into the kingdom of heaven, there are few destined to enter. There is no parson or priest now existing that conforms his life to the Bible, and that is generally called the will or word of God. Who, then, will people the kingdom of heaven? I fancy the standard will have to be altered or the kingdom will never be anything but a kingdom on paper. And those who don't go to that kingdom must, if popular theology is correct, people the Devil's kingdom. I have no respect for the Devil, or his empire; but he is going to beat

the other gentleman. Not only most people belong to him, but all the best are his. The parsons cannot question this, for *they* belong to the Devil as much as I do, and they serve him as heartily too. In face of existing facts, the kingdom of heaven must be pronounced a complete failure, and its effects are not worthy of a sale by auction. You, Jesus, need not make the gate so narrow. Nobody will enter even if you make a large gap in the fence.

The peroration (v. 24—29) of the Sermon on the Mount is a splendid one. It fairly rises to the height of true oratory. But it is awfully selfish and egoistic, besides being maliciously unjust and severe. Who can do those sayings of thine, Jesus? Who can love his enemies? Who can follow the example of fowls and lilies? Who can turn the other cheek, or give his cloak to the thief who steals his coat? If thine own rule is to be the law, thou thyself art hopelessly condemned. There is nought but destruction and ruin in store for thyself and thy hearers and readers, if thy sermon is the standard of judgment. That sermon would damn all men, women and children; all angels, archangels, seraphs, and cherubs; and God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost will be damned with the rest; for there is not a being in the world who does or ever did obey what it enjoins. And yet the orthodox beldud what must damn them and all. I wonder if they'll boast of that sermon when it has damned them?

THE LORD'S MERCIES.

"The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works."—Psalm cxlv., 9.

THIS, be it remembered, is not an empty boast. The Psalmist understood the matter well, being inspired by the Holy Spirit. He did not, as sceptical and profane persons would have done, look at the world and carnally survey the deeds and vicissitudes of life; he piously closed his eyes, and thus saw plainly that the Lord was "good to all, and that his tender mercies were over all his works." The pious king—when have kings *not* been pious?—adopted the only possible method of discovering that the Lord was good to all, etc., he saw it by faith, as any one may who has faith enough.

But this sublime and salutary and universally comforting truth may be proved to a demonstration.

I. The Lord is almighty, and can do whatsoever he will. He can make two and two to be seven, or turn a summersault, or turn himself inside out, if you give him time enough to do it in—that is, *all* time. He made all things in six days the very first time he ever tried, and could no doubt do it in six minutes now, were he so inclined. I mention these facts to show that the Lord is quite able to do everything.

II. He is all-knowing too; and so, in point of knowledge, as well as power, perfectly competent to execute goodness and extend his tender mercies to *all*.

III. Historical proofs may now be given of the above truth; and these are so numerous that we can merely select a few out of an almost infinite miscellany.

1. He made a man and woman and put them into a garden, where there was a tree they were not to eat of on pain of death. He also made a "subtil" serpent who tempted the two to eat, and they "did eat." For this the Lord cursed the pair, the serpent, and the very earth. All the posterity of this couple were involved in their parents' fate, and are to this day doomed to pain, toil, want, sickness, misery, and death for that old crime of eating forbidden fruit! This is the first proof of divine goodness and tender mercies.

2. Less than 2,000 years later, when men were numerous and not over good in their conduct, the Lord resolved to show how far he could excel them all in criminality and cruelty. There was not a man then living who would, if he could, have drowned the whole world. But the Lord showed his goodness by pouring down 1,000,000,000 (one thousand million) cubic miles of water upon the earth, or two thirds of a cubic mile for every man, woman, and child now in the world! So abundantly plentiful was the supply that each man might have truly said with the grateful Psalmist, "My cup runneth over"—if he could have spoken after being drowned. It is true, the story says that eight persons were saved in this universal deluge; but they might just as well have been drowned for any good we know of them. The water, by the way, was so plentiful that it seems to have disgusted Mr. Noah, who broke the pledge and went out on the spree as soon as he could get anything to tipple upon.

3. Not to confine his exhibition of tender mercies to a

No. 5.] **BLOWS AT THE BIBLE.** [1d.

BY
JOSEPH SYMES.

JUMPING COMMENTS ON GENESIS.

And Noah . . . drank of the wine and was drunken (Gen. ix., 20-21).—(1) Teetotallers pretend that some Bible wines were not intoxicating; but most were, or people might have drunk them with impunity. The Bible was not written by abstainers, nor was total abstinence ever contemplated by God, except for a few peculiar people. (2) Noah was a saint, and so it was no disgrace for him to get drunk and expose himself as he did. (3) The verses of this chapter numbered twenty-two—twenty-seven are a curiosity. Ham, Noah's youngest son, saw the beastly conduct of the old man; and Noah, when he found it out, vented his curses upon Canaan, Ham's son! This was written by some unscrupulous Israelite to justify his countrymen in exterminating the Canaanites. The roguery is too transparent to be misunderstood—it is the assassin endeavoring to stand well before those who know of his crime. Suppose Noah had cursed Canaan for what Ham did! That would stamp him an idiot. Besides, when did this happen? There were only eight human beings in the ark (1 Peter iii., 20). Canaan was Ham's fourth son, and could not have been old enough to have mocked or insulted his grandfather till many years after the flood, though the story implies that it was not long after that event. What an ill-tempered old grandfather Noah must have been to vent his spleen upon his grandson, if he really did thus; and how much more ill-tempered and diabolical God must have been to execute Noah's curse upon Canaan's innocent posterity so many hundreds of years after the death of Noah! No gods were ever much to boast of; but the Jewish-Christian idol is worse than all the others rolled into one. Besides, how stupid of him to save

such a paltry lot as Noah and his family when drowning the world! Any sensible god would have made a clean sweep both of animals and men, if he had proceeded as far as Genesis describes, and then have started *de novo* with better races, fashioned on an improved plan and made of better materials. But this God is *par excellence* the God of blunders and blunderers. Still, the Bible is anything but "a comedy of errors;" it is a tragedy in which few but mad gods, mad prophets, mad angels, fools and helpless wretches bear their parts. Homer's Iliad turns upon the wrath of Achilles, and the Bible upon the fury, the very fermented wine or expressed juice of, the wrath of God.

Genesis x. and its pretended pedigrees of the nations may be jumped over, for no doubt the writer, some very late scribe, invented the names. Anybody could invent pedigrees, I presume. Noah, I just this moment learn by inspiration, had other sons in the ark with him. One of them ate a man for his dinner, and they called him Man Chew. Was he not the father of all those who dwell in Manchuria unto this day?

And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech (Genesis xi., 1). Just so. This is a precious fragment of the word of God. "Read, mark, learn," my reader, "and digest." Men would build a tower—(why not?)—whose top should reach to heaven—(well, Jacob's ladder did)—so that should there be another flood, they might climb the tower and escape drowning! Very sensible project I should say; but God viewed it in a totally different light. What! not allow him to drown them when he felt disposed to have a little sport that way! Imagine, my reader, the feelings of an angler, if all fishes united to wear wire respirator-things or mouth screens, to defend them against hooks! Fancy the feelings of butchers, were sheep and oxen to adopt invulnerable armor that no weapon could pierce! Conceive the chagrin of fowlers and sportsmen, were all birds to use shot-proof dresses! Then you may comprehend in some faint degree the chagrin, the fury of God when his creature man, whom he had made for his own private and exclusive sport, proved daring enough to unite to defeat his ends by building a tower whose top should reach to heaven! If the earth had exploded like a modern bombshell, it would not have startled and amazed him half as much!

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower (Genesis xi., 5).—In those days the Lord had no angels to go and come for him, and so he went on his own errands. Later he made angels; and then he hit upon a better expedient still—he expanded himself until he filled all space. The Christians still entreat him to come down into their temples and dwellings, but he never heeds them. On this occasion he went to see the wonderful city and tower, just as you might go to the Fisheries Exhibition. But the sight alarmed him! And he exclaimed, when he saw the works, “Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do!” In plain words, that means that Jehovah was really afraid that men would raise the tower to heaven, and so secure themselves against another flood! How extremely childish this is must be apparent to all. The Lord is and always has been in his dotage. Therefore all must be children who would go and dwell with him, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Strong-minded men and women are not wanted there.

The Lord having no engines by which to destroy the tower—thunderbolts and earthquakes not having been invented—undertook to confound the language of men, so that they should not understand each other. The results were awful. “Mortar!” shouted a bricklayer; and up came a hod of bricks. “Bricks!” cried another, and up went a hod of mortar. “Bring up that plank!” shouted a third; and up went a can of tea. A mason dubbed his man a blockhead, and the man felt delighted at the compliment, and fully expected higher wages on Saturday. The architect gave orders to push on as fast as possible with the building, for the sky seemed threatening rain. Therefore, the master mason gave instructions to his men to pull down the left wing and rebuild it better. The men misunderstood him, and walled up several of the windows. No two men spoke alike. If a man said “Good morning,” to his fellow, his fellow thought he called him names. Then they fought to assist their mutual understanding. Things went on like this for two days, when the whole world dissolved partnership, and supposing the tower and its vicinity bewitched, all spontaneously left it, rushing away to every point of the compass, some of them never stopping till they met on the opposite side of the world. The Lord and his party went back to heaven, climbing the

unfinished tower, and stepping from its walls into paradise, where they laughed till the universe shook again, at the wonderful success of their joke.

And the Lord played a worse joke still some 1,800 to 1,900 years ago. He gave the world a revelation of his supreme will, throwing together scraps of his autobiography, history, romance, poetry, mythology, statistics, ritual, law, agriculture, cosmogony, ethics, politics, criminal jurisprudence, lies, nonsense, pointless jokes, puns, platitudes, false philosophy. This he put together in a book called the Bible, and would have printed if he had known how. And the result? The churches have been fighting about the meaning of this book ever since—"they rest not day and night" praising the book and quarrelling about its teachings. In this contest reason is never allowed to intrude. Theological language is always at sixes and sevens. Millions upon millions of human lives have been destroyed to prove how divine and precious is the Bible; it has perverted the best and noblest sentiments of human nature and social life; it has confounded all those who have endeavored to follow its lead; it is a will-o'-the-wisp, an *ignis fatuus*—a maze, a labyrinth, a whirlpool, in the midst of which men neither understand themselves nor their neighbors.

Another leap, and we find ourselves in the company of Abram or Abraham, son of Terah and friend of God. The very best parts of Abram's biography are not in the Bible. I beg to suggest that the gentlemen who meet in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, to improve the Bible, should insert the Rabbinical stories of Abram and other saints, for such additions, even if much that is now in the book should be omitted to make room for them, will enhance the value of the word of God a hundredfold.

Abram's father was Terah and also Azer or the planet Mars; likewise Zarah and Athar. It is not every man who can boast of five or six fathers. Abram's father—(I relate the story from memory)—lived in high honor at the court of Nimrod; and a prophecy went forth that a son of Terah should dethrone the king. Therefore his wife, reflecting that Nimrod would destroy their new child, should it be a boy, removed out of the town and took up her residence for safety in a cave. There Abram was born. To make doubly sure, his mother did not mention the event even to her hus-

band ; and she spent as little time in the cave as possible, to avoid suspicion. Abram was a remarkable boy for his age, and grew wonderfully fast. At fifteen months old he was as big as an ordinary boy of fifteen years. And "on what meats did this our Abram feed, that he was grown so great?" There lies the point of the whole case. He merely sucked—his thumbs or his fingers! Don't be sceptical; the Lord was in those digits of Abram, just as he was in the burning bush of Moses, as he is in a salvation drum, or the hallelujah beer sold at the "Eagle."

Things turning out so unexpectedly, Mrs. Terah thought it time to tell her husband; and one evening she conducted him to the cave on a visit to their extremely interesting son. Lest any should doubt the divine truth I am relating, I will mention an incident that took place a few months back at Euston Station. I was in the waiting-room waiting for the midnight train to Birmingham, my companions being a young lady, and a gentleman with a little boy, apparently of four or five years. He was running about the room. And his father remarked to the young lady, "That's a wonderful child. How old do you think he is?" She said, "Four years, perhaps." "He is only four months old," replied the father; "I am just come from Canada with him. Don't you think he is a wonderful child?" I asked him if he had not made a mistake; and he solemnly assured me that the child was only four months old. I gave in, thinking this child, like some in Palestine in former days, might have been filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth. Besides I reflected that I had no means of proving that he was more than four months old; and if he had said four weeks, I should have been equally silenced.

Your fathers dwell on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods (Joshua xxiv., 2).—It is a long jump from Genesis xi. to Joshua xxiv., no doubt, but the subject is the same. The child Abraham, as previously reported, grew at a marvellous rate; and his mother took his father to see the prodigy. Terah was a courtier, a class of men often enough very cunning, but rarely remarkable for knowledge or wisdom. Now when Terah saw his son he deemed it best to present him at court, for although he knew there was some danger in that step, he thought there would be much more

should Nimrod discover that he was hiding such a child from him. So he and his wife resolved to take him home at once. Terah soon found that his son was intellectually no less wonderful than he was physically. On the road home the precocious youth bored his father about the nature of the gods, and which was the right and the true one. Terah's answers were anything but satisfactory, for Abraham seemed determined to probe matters to the utmost. How he had learnt to talk and reason the story does not say; perhaps the Holy Ghost could tell you if he would. However, he spoke with such good effect that his poor father was thrown into quite a perspiration, and foresaw trouble at the court of Nimrod. Abraham was no courtier, and had no modesty to check his impertinence; and Terah plainly foresaw that he would as soon dispute with Nimrod as a chimney-sweep. Artificial distinctions were unknown to this overgrown child, and he was no more abashed in the presence of Nimrod than a sensible man would be before the shadow of monarchy remaining in this country. Nimrod was as much confounded by Abraham as the Jewish rabbis were at a later date by the twelve-year-old Jesus. And, of course, the king resolved on vengeance, especially as Abraham scouted his gods.

But here I am met by a difficulty. There is no sort of doubt at all that Nimrod did his uttermost to win the crown of martyrdom for Abraham, and would have succeeded, had not a miracle most inopportunately sprung up to rob him of that eternal honor. But for that untoward miracle, Abraham would have had the honor of figuring in the calendar as the young martyr of only fifteen months old, who was put to death by Nimrod because he could not withstand the wisdom with which he spake. But it is not very clear why Abraham was to be martyred; whether it was for confounding the king before his whole court, or for another reason, does not clearly appear. The better account of the two is this, substantially. Terah was either a manufacturer of idols or else he had charge of Nimrod's pantheon, where all the principal idols were kept and taken care of. One day, some great national feast day, all the city went out to the Ninevite *Champ de Mars* to enjoy themselves. Abraham scorning to take any part in the heathen festival, stayed away, and explored the city. In the course of his investigations he stumbled into the chief temple (some say it was his father's workshop or warehouse),

and looked with not a spark of reverence upon the idols great and small there set up. No more abashed before gods than he had been before the court, he took an axe, and with most sacrilegious hands proceeded to demolish the gods whose worshippers were too far away to defend them. He had destroyed them all except the largest in the place, when a most happy thought arrested the blow he was about to deal him. Instead of demolishing that one he put it to a remarkably good purpose. He took a piece of cord and tied the axe around the neck of the only surviving god, and then calmly awaited the return of the people from the festival.

The first to arrive in the temple was his own father, who for several seconds failed to realise where he was; the chips and rubbish about rather puzzled him. When he had fairly taken in the situation he was horror-struck, and demanded who had been guilty of this sacrilege. In almost the same breath he accused his incomprehensible son, who, however, pretended to be innocent. "The fact is, my revered parent," said he, "a woman came to the temple with an offering of fine flour; and the gods all scrambled for it in so rude a manner that it came to a deadly fight; and at last that big one there took his axe and destroyed all the rest, as you see. In proof of my veracity, behold the very axe still suspended round the neck of the murderous god!"

This story only made Terah more furious. It was absurd, he said, to suppose that idols, gods of wood, could quarrel about an offering, or that one of them should destroy the rest.

Abraham did not forget the sarcastic and obvious remark that it must be exceedingly absurd to worship gods that *could not do as he averred*. But Terah was in no mood to argue; his blood was up; his piety—like that of Judge North—was boiling over; and he resolved to bring his wicked son to condign punishment. So he dragged him before Nimrod and told the mighty hunter how his son had treated the national gods. Nimrod and his whole court were almost speechless with horror and indignation. The fury of Jehovah himself when his breath was hot enough to kindle coals (*see* Psalm xviii., 8), scarcely exceeded it. So Nimrod ordered immediate preparations to be set on foot for the execution of the culprit.

A large meadow was filled up with wood to a great height, and, at the suggestion of the Devil, they constructed a large engine, a kind of *lithobolus* or *balista*, or catapult, sufficient to

hurl a man to a great distance. This was needed for special reasons. The fire was to be so tremendous in size, and they wished to light it and let it blaze up a little before flinging the victim into it; and how, without an engine of this sort, were they to get him into the midst of the fire? When the fire was just hot enough and the court and people were expecting eagerly the grand holiday sight of a heretic roasting, they fastened poor Abraham to the engine and fired him off! And now, behold a wonder! The aim was correctly enough taken, and the victim flew along the parabolic projectile-curve right into the midst of—not the fire, not the pile of wood. The whole pile, fire and all, disappeared in a twinkling. A flash of lightning never came and went faster. And the young saint fell upon a bed of flowers in the very midst of a beautiful meadow!

I do not know how Nimrod endured the disappointment; though no doubt he learnt the lesson never to hunt saints again or try to kill them. What became of Abraham immediately after I cannot say; though I doubt not he thoroughly enjoyed the day's sport and fun, as much as some of us enjoy the smashing of gods in these degenerate times.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. xii., 1-3).—Having delivered Abram from the fell designs of Nimrod and the Devil, we may now resume his history in the Bible. The pious reader will not fail to note (1) the unsocial nature of the Lord's religion, which begins by sending Abram from home, (2) the low and vulgar promises held out to his ambition, (3) the vengeful spirit of the Lord, who threatens to curse the man that curses his favorite. This is a very appropriate start for the Jewish-Christian religion—the Lord seems never yet to have won a single follower except by means of bribery or intimidation. He never will; and now those old weapons are almost out of date.

This story of Abram's leaving home is a good specimen of Bible history. In chapter xi., 31, we are told it was Terah who left his native place, Ur of the Chaldees, taking Abram

and Lot with him; and they went forth to go to Canaan. There is nothing here about leaving "his father's house;" that house went with him. But the text quoted above from chapter xii. says God told Abram to go out from his kindred and his father's house. Where Ur was, or Haran of Charran, cannot be ascertained—somewhere near New Jerusalem perhaps.

And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran (Gen. xii., 4).—Is it possible the Lord would send a poor old fellow of that age on a long journey into an unknown land? And did he talk to an old fogey of that age about leaving his *father's* house, etc.? If his poor old father was still living, Abram should at least have stayed and buried him before setting out. And if Terah was dead when God told this youth to quit, as the last verse of chapter xi. says, what sense was there in God talking to him about "his father's house?"

And there was a famine in the land (Gen. xii., 10).—Ah! if the Lord had only told the saint how to prevent famines, and the saint had imparted the secret to the world, then he would have made him a blessing to mankind; as it is, the world does not owe anything good to Abram yet, and I fear it never will.

Abram's example is instructive. In consequence of the famine he went to Egypt. His wife, only ten years younger than himself, is so fair that he fears the Egyptians will kill him for her sake; so he bids her tell a lie and pass as his sister. This was a most ungodly saint, for he had no faith in the Lord to protect him in Egypt. What wonder if so many saints to-day follow the example of this ancient infidel, the father of the faithful, and trust in anything rather than Jehovah? The Egyptians must have had a plague, we suppose, just previous to this visit, in which nearly all the women had been swept off. It is impossible otherwise to account for Pharaoh's selecting so old a woman for his harem. Is this a story that Sarah herself told, when she returned from Egypt, to some of her gossips over a cup of tea with a little reviving spirit in it? Anyhow, why *did* the Holy Ghost pen or dictate so stupid and indecent a tale?

And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold (Gen. xiii., 2).—He does not appear to have had anything when he went to Egypt: he returned a very rich man. Sarah is said to have been beautiful; and Abram, friend of the

most high God, enriched himself in the most unmanly and immoral fashion to be conceived. Why had not the Holy Ghost the decency to throw a veil over this part of the saint's life? Yea, why did he ever mention such a man at all?

Abram's treatment of Lot is described by an Israelite so as to redound to the glory of the former; had one of Lot's descendants written Genesis xiii., no doubt Abram would have been exhibited as the more selfish man.

I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered (xiii., 16).—This is a good specimen of Bible promises, preposterously impossible of fulfilment. The dust caught up by one gust of wind, in what the Scotch call a "stoury day," contains more particles than all the people that have ever lived, most likely. Abram's descendants, if he has any at all, are not even among the most numerous of mankind. Both Abram and his God are mere names, no doubt of beings that never existed, except as Jupiter and Juno existed.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God (Gen. xiv., 18).—Here is a delightful source of theological speculation! Who was Melchizedek? The Jews said he was Shem, son of Noah. Some of the fathers said he was an angel; some heretics (that is, unfashionable Christians) held that he was a Power, a Virtue, or Influence of God; others regarded him as being the Holy Ghost. Some Christians thought he was the son of God; and some Jews their Messiah. The Epistle to the Hebrews (v. and vii.) clears up the whole difficulty in a style which leaves nothing to be desired: Melchizedek, according to this, was not Shem, not an angel, not the Holy Ghost, not the son of God, not the Messiah; he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life!" Here all difficulties vanish in an outburst of faith; and I have no doubt the sceptical commentators who attempt to explain things beyond this will be damned for their pains. For my part, I cannot prove that he had parents; they are not necessary for gods and high priests. Those beings have the power to create themselves, and their ancestors also, when they care to indulge in such luxuries. *And he gave him tithes of all (xiv., 20).*

MORAL AND PRACTICAL REFLEXIONS.—(1) How wonderfully

kind was our heavenly father thus to invent this lying story for the sake of his servants the priests, who always take tithes when they cannot get more! (2) How marvellous are the ways of God, to inspire one of the priests themselves to write this story in his blessed book! (3) Note the marvellous success that has followed this divine fraud. Had it originated with a mere man it must have failed; but it has robbed the dupes of the Bible of untold millions; and this grand success is a standing miracle calculated to show to all, except undecivable sceptics, that the Bible is the word of God. There are only two or three fatal points in the story, which we must note:—

1. Salem is an unknown place, and divines don't know where to locate it. I may tell them from my own knowledge that it is in the very middle of Utopia, and within a few miles of the Garden of Paradise on the one side, and New Jerusalem on the other. To the north is the mountain, from the top of which the Devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Other interesting topographical points might be mentioned; but these are amply sufficient to lead any explorers to the very spot where Melchizedek still reigns and deals in bread and wine.

2. The god for whom Melchizedek was priest creates some difficulty. It was Eliun, an old Phœnician god, who knew nothing more of Jehovah than Jehovah did of him. They are both with Melchizedek to this day, though he does not recognise the difference between them.

3. Abram swore by Eliun (v. 22) along with Jehovah; showing that he, too, was a polytheist, though Christians absurdly claim him as a monotheist and a champion of that cause.

I should note, further, that in the third century there arose a sect of Melchizedekians, who held that he was the Holy Ghost, and thus superior to Jesus Christ; for, said they, Melchizedek was the intercessor and mediator for angels, Jesus being only such for man. The priesthood of the latter, they add, was a mere copy of the former. The latter point, I must say, is purely scriptural. See the passages in Hebrews above referred to. The Cocceians (disciples of Cocceius, a Dutchman of the seventeenth century) and the Hutchinsonians generally still believe that Jesus and Melchizedek were one and the same. So do I. Jack-o'-the-Lantern, Will-o'-the-

Wisp, Apollo, Baldur and Prester John are only other names of the same individual. He is rarely seen now, and the reason is, that the churches have neither faith nor grace enough to induce him to visit them. He has retired in disgust, carrying his lantern and his bread and wine with him; and will never return until the churches renounce the world, and parsons live upon charity begged from door to door.

Problem.—What will be the date of his reappearance?

Abraham is called the Friend of God (2 Chron. xx., 7; Isaiah xli., 8; James ii., 23.) There is not much in the Bible to warrant or suggest the relationship; besides it is ridiculous, if God be infinite. The Mahomedans have a very good story on the subject, much better than any in the Bible. In a time of dearth, say they, Abram sent to a friend in Egypt for meal. The friend refused, for he knew that Abram would give it away instead of keeping it for his own family. His servants being ashamed to be seen returning with empty sacks filled them, for appearance sake, with a very fine sand, closely resembling flour. They told Abram, but not Sarah, of their failure to get meal, and the old man was so overcome that he soon fell asleep. Sarah, finding the sacks full of flour, as she supposed, set to make some cakes; and the smell of the new bread awoke her husband, who demanded wherever she had obtained the meal. "Why, your friend in Egypt sent it," replied she. "Nay," said he, "it is not my friend in Egypt who sent it, but my friend God Almighty."

Now such a story is far more to Abram's credit as a believer than almost any in the Bible; and if it were inserted to the exclusion of several others, the Bible would gain by it—though the new editors might be damned for improving God's word. I sometimes think I will bring out a Bible of my own, retaining all the good in the old one (not very much), and improving it by a few genuine new revelations. I am quite qualified, having as much Holy Ghost as any man that ever lived.

And when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abraham; and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. (Genesis xv., 12).—Read the context. Abram killed a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon, and divided them all in pieces, except the birds. And when it was dark he saw a fiery furnace, and a lamp that went

between the pieces. The cresset was, I presume, God the father; the lamp, the son—the Holy Ghost not then being born, perhaps.

The Mahommedan account of this transaction has the merit of making a complete story of it, which the Bible does not. They say Abram was in doubt or perplexity respecting the mode in which God would raise the dead. Abram, at the command of God, took an eagle (some say, dove), a peacock, a raven and a cock, cut them up and pounded their flesh, bones and feathers all up together in one mass, merely keeping their heads intact. Then he called them all by their names, and the parts came together again, and the birds resumed life as if nothing had happened. That is as true as any miracle you ever heard or read of; and I do not for a moment doubt that a sausage maker could obtain like results any day, if he only had faith enough. For fear of revelations of too startling a nature, however, it may be as well not to suggest that to the fraternity.

Genesis xvi. and xvii. have not much quotable matter in them. Verse 17 of the later tells us how Abram (in this chapter his name grows one syllable longer) laughed when God told him he and Sarah should have a son when their respective ages were 100 and 90. In this matter all the world now joins with the saint to laugh at God's amusing promises!

And God went up from Abraham (Genesis xvii., 22). This must have been a very small god. The infinite one cannot move; he fills all space, and has no room to move in. He is an absolute solid, and that is the only quality he has—a perfect block, but he does not know it. If Christians only read and studied the Bible, instead of wilfully perverting some of its words to fit them into others, and all its teachings to fit them to their own views, how soon they would discover how ridiculous the old book is, and how opposed to their creeds. I suppose their God has given them the spirit of slumber to prevent their understanding the defects of his word.

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself towards the ground, etc. (Genesis xviii., 2).—This story of Abraham feeding God with veal and bread (mustard, peper, salt and other condiments not mentioned) is a puzzle to the orthodox. They believe their God

to be almighty, and yet cannot understand how he could make himself so very small; nor do they quite understand how he managed to eat and digest Abraham's calf. It is a bit puzzling, even to me, though I have the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide me into all truth. However, let us hope God's teeth were sound, that his liver was in good order; though I fear me, that badly-cooked veal sadly disagreed with him, for immediately after his hasty dinner he went and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire! No man could do that—no god could—whose digestion was good. Good digestion when it waits on appetite, brings us into harmony with all around, and we almost love our enemies—at least, those that are too weak to be able to harm us. If God had enjoyed his dinner and readily digested it, Sodom and Gomorrah would not have been so ruthlessly destroyed.

MORAL.—When you invite God Almighty to dine with you, be sure to get good meat, well killed, well cooked, and well served; for if he does not digest it well and readily, he may, under the influence of the internal burden and torment, go and burn up a few more cities. Better never invite him than produce such frightful results.

My own view of the story is this, that three young fellows, good looking and well dressed, who knew that poor old Abraham was near-sighted and immensely credulous, played pranks with him, one of them pretending to be God the father, and the other two the son and the Holy Ghost. When they appeared before him and audaciously began to play their rôle, Abraham, too conceited to doubt if God would visit him, too delighted at the honor to be at all suspicious, assisted the young fellows to gammon him. They found the old man dying for an heir, and promised him one, at which Sarah laughed till her aged sides shook again. (It was the custom with saints in those days to laugh at God; familiarity bred contempt. For fear of like treatment from saints, he never appears now-a-days.) Those young fellows by bribes and flattery, enlisted Sarah in the plot and instructed her in the part she was to play. At the time appointed they secretly sent a new-born babe, which Sarah, to content the poor old man, told him was her own. Thus the divine promise of Isaac was fulfilled; thus prophets and apostles were sold: and thus the Jewish and the Christian communities became the victims of a practical joke, and the world's laugh-

ing-stock unto this day! This view of the case makes everything plain; the orthodox opinion leads only to a cluster of absurdities.

The story of Sodom reflects little credit upon any of the parties concerned in it. The Sodomites were bad enough; Lot was worse; and God worst of all. To commit wholesale and indiscriminate murder is certainly the worst of crimes. And stories of brutal punishment only brutalise those who read and approve them. When I believed the Bible I was barbarian enough to approve of capital punishment and even hell torments; in growing out of superstition I grew more humane.

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt (Gen. xix., 26).—Some people, alas! treat this story as a myth. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" But if anybody doubts the transformation of Lot's wife, let him read some Classical Dictionary or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There he will find Daphne was turned into a laurel and Io into a heifer; Actæon was turned to a stag, and torn to pieces by his own dogs; and Atlas was transformed, not into a paltry pillar of salt, but into a mountain. If the Bible had only said that this unfortunate lady had been turned into mount Lebanon, of course all the world would have regarded the story as of divine origin; but, a pillar of salt! What God would work a whole miracle for such a trifle?

And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham (Gen. xxii., 1).—This is fully confirmed by James, who assures us that God tempteth no man (James i., 13). "Lead us not into temptation" is a very appropriate prayer for Christians. Had Abraham known the character of his God he might have used the prayer and so have escaped the temptation. Can anyone distinguish this temptation from a practical joke played by one man upon another on April 1? I cannot—except it be that here the fun is entirely absent, though that redeeming feature is sometimes quite evident in a joke perpetrated by man. I believe, however, that this transaction really did occur on April 1, a time when deity considered himself at liberty to unbend, to resolve the monarch into the clown. So he sent Abraham to Moriah to murder his son; and when there, and about to do it, he cried, "Stop! it is a ram you have to kill, not Isaac!" Thereupon his courts rang with the laughter of his flatterers, while Abraham felt himself deceived.

And Abraham gave up the ghost (Genesis xxv., 8).—He had lived 175 years, so the Bible says, and all the good recorded of him might have been easily performed in 175 minutes. There is nothing said about immortality in connexion with the old patriarchs. Indeed, there can be no doubt the writer made them live so long because he never expected, sensible man that he was, that they would ever live a second time. Had he expected his heroes to live again, he never would have stretched them so long “upon the rack of this rude world.”

And Isaac loved Esau because he did eat his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob (Genesis xxv., 28).—“All scripture is profitable,” says an apostle—chiefly, I should say, in teaching you how you ought not to act. This family was a saintly one. The husband and wife, equally pious, are at sixes and sevens; the old father prefers one son before the other for the sake of his venison, which he was too old to catch for himself; and his wife loved the other son only, it appears, because his father made a favorite of his brother. Between the brothers the most deadly hatred existed. Esau was a “muff;” Jacob was a swindler, a coward, a cheat—a very picture of his God, and his special favorite. He robbed his brother of his birth-right, though nobody can exactly define how much or little that meant. Jacob, of course, was too clever a swindler to plot and scheme for a trifle; and no doubt he got at least a million per cent. for his “mess of pottage,” bread and lentils (verse 34).

The twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis may be skipped at a bound, for it is false from end to end, a mere repetition of the story of Abraham's sojourn in Gerar.

(To be concluded in No. 6).

No. 4.] **BLOWS AT THE BIBLE.** [1d.

BY

JOSEPH SYMES.

JUMPING COMMENTS ON GENESIS.

IN verse 14, Cain is made to complain that he is *driven from the face of the Lord!* Where did he wander? *And from thy face,* says he, *I shall be hid!* And the Lord does not correct him, therefore he must, I suppose, have been right. The Lord was confined to some spot in those days; to-day he is nowhere.

Cain also feared he should be murdered; and the Lord set a mark upon him to prevent that, and threatened *seven-fold* vengeance on whoever should slay him! This is curious. The writer of this was evidently an Arab, a son of the desert, where the kinsmen of a murdered man were bound to slay the murderer. He has, in this romantic tale, supposed that this method of punishing murder was in vogue in the first family. If the Holy Ghost inspired this, he too fell into the same innocent blunder.

But of whom was Cain afraid? This question had better not be pressed, if you wish to believe that Adam and Eve were the first of living men and women. The story of Cain implies that the earth was pretty well stocked with people; and that shows how fabulous is the tale of Adam and Eve. The fact is, we are here dealing with nursery tales, which the orthodox blasphemously ascribe to the inspiration of an almighty and all-wise God. And the tales are so miserably edited or compiled that all the learning of 1600 years has been expended upon them in vain—they are as confused and irrational as ever.

It may not be amiss to put the question here: How could the murderer of Cain be punished *seven-fold*? Was it intended to kill him seven times over, or what? Besides,

It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (vi., 6).—The Lord is unchangeable; here is one of the scripture proofs. He is the first to repent; the conclusion is that he must have been the first sinner. His repentance, however, did not do much good to anybody. Instead of laying the blame where it all honestly fell, upon himself, he blamed his creatures for being just what he made them. So God resolved to commit indiscriminate murder because his creatures did not please him—a grand example for all kings, rulers, parents, slaveholders and cattle-owners for all time! Any civilised deity would have made a distinction between the good and the bad, and punished only the latter. Any rational ruler, god or otherwise, would never have permitted his kingdom to become corrupt. In this case “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth”—from man down to the microscopic monad; there were only a handful of saints left—viz., Noah and his family, and such other sacred things as they had about their dwellings and persons. Those shall be saved in the ark, along with others yet to be named.

So Noah, being warned in time, set to building his ark. By the way, they have just found the timbers, half-buried in the snow, on Mount Ararat. No doubt they will discover the stalls and cabinets, all labelled and numbered, in which Noah kept the menagerie during the flood. Pity we can't bring mountain and all to Great Britain; then sceptics *must* become saints in no time at all.

The dimensions of the ark were as follows:—300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. Altogether the area was 15,000 square cubits, and the solid content 450,000 cubical cubits. A cubit originally was the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, and it varied at different times and places. The Jewish cubit was sometimes 18 inches, at others 21. Suppose we take the larger value. Then the ark measured 525ft. long, 87ft. 6in. wide and 52ft. 6in. high. This ship was the largest ever built—except the “Great Eastern.” Of course Noah found no difficulty in its construction. He merely had to get the wood, cut it into shape, fasten it together in the desired fashion, pitch it within and without, and lo! it was prepared for the storm. Anyone who questions the patriarch's ability in so trifling a matter had better lay down this book never to read it again. Of all

people in the world, sceptics and unbelievers are my dread. You believe in the "Great Eastern," why not believe in the ark? Must we bring its remains from Mount Ararat to convince you? Must we resurrect Noah and his family, and repeat the experiment of the flood to excite your faith?

Into this ark Noah was ordered to collect two and two of all animals in the world (vi., 19, 20). Some priest or Levite added to the story later, and gave Noah orders to take *clean* animals by sevens (vii., 2). "If you have faith prepare to use it now!" To build the ark would have been no trifle to a man not inspired; but to collect pairs of all the animals in the world! and no natural history book, no collection of specimens to guide him! Ah, Noah! much better had it been for thee hadst thou but died prematurely at the age of 599 years, instead of lingering on to 600 and having a task like this imposed upon thee! Prythee, good Patriarch, how many fly-catchers, bird-catchers, hunters, microscopists, animal tamers, and others didst thou employ? And how long did they take to finish their work? And how didst thou know when all the animals were in? Art sure that no species was omitted? How didst thou feed them when in? Art perfectly sure the pairs were all rightly adjusted? Art perfectly sure, good Noah that, thou wast sober when thou toldest this tale of the flood? Couldst thou do the like again, thinkest thou? For my part, let me be set to drain the ocean with a sieve, rather than have thy task to do!

There are said to be 400,000 different species of insects now in the museums of civilised nations; those have been collected and classified by the labor of over a century, by people who know their way about the world, and who have means of transit such as modern times only can boast of. They are not impeded by forests and marshes and the total want of roads, as man must have been in the days of Noah. There can hardly be *more* species now than in ancient times, if orthodoxy and not Darwinism be true, though there may be fewer. And into the ark, if the story is true, all insects must have found their way, except such as spend their whole time in water.

A few details will now be given which will doubtless tend to raise admiration for the divine wisdom and goodness, and to show how totally God's ways and thoughts differ from ours.

And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark (Gen. vi., 19).—My readers! I am puzzled and bewildered, for I do not see how Noah did what he was commanded. Some blasphemous parsons will tell you that the flood was not universal; but such men are “clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever,” because they contradict the Bible, which says plainly that the flood should “destroy all flesh from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die” (Gen. vi., 17); “and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth” (vii., 4). Read the whole of the seventh chapter, and you will find it stated that this threat was executed to the letter—no living thing remaining except those in the ark! By-the-bye, it seems rather unfair that all land animals should have been drowned, while those in the sea were not hurt, as verse 22 implies. Perhaps the “finny monsters of the deep” had not sinned, though, and corrupted their way. That is an interesting point for orthodox commentators to clear up. They have the holy ghost to guide them into all truth; he never assists me.

Noah took into the ark two and two of all flesh, and suitable food for them all; a stock of provisions for a year or more.

(1) BUTTERFLIES.—For the cabbage butterflies (*Pieridi*) he must have planted a kitchen-garden in the ark; nettles would be needed for the *vanessæ*; the white admiral lives on honeysuckles when a caterpillar; the poplar butterfly must have horse-droppings; the purple emperor would require an oak tree or a gooseberry bush; the *satyridi* live upon grasses, elms and hawthorns. Noah must have embarked a whole country for butterflies alone. I have mentioned only a few.

(2) MOTHS would be equally difficult to manage. The bee-shaped *sesia* lays its eggs on the bark of poplars, and the caterpillars eat into the tree. They remain caterpillars for two years, by the way; others must have flowers, the honey of which they sip while on the wing; another moth needs the *euphorbia* to feed upon; others, oleanders, though fuchsias are not refused on occasion; the squeaking death's-head moth needs the potatoe plant or the jasmine, though it does not

object to a hive of honey; to satisfy another moth, Noah must have brought in a *Banksia* bush from Australia; the *lasiocampa* is said to live on heather; the *lockey* moth is fond of apple-tree leaves; the goat moth needs old trunks of elms or willows to excavate into galleries; the caterpillars of the *acronycta* are fond of the mosses and lichens which grow on trees, walls, etc.; one kind of *tortricina* feeds on green peas in the pods; another gets into apples and pears; another into plums; others into acorns and beech-nuts, chestnuts, etc.; some of the *tineidæ* moths are the pests that destroy garments.

(3) Among *hymenoptera*, some of the saw-flies want rose-trees for their eggs, etc.; others turnips; others firs and pines; the gall-flies (*Cynipsidæ*) need trees to puncture in order that galls may grow and protect their eggs and larvæ.

Ants are among the most interesting beings in the world. It would probably be of little or no use to take two of them into the ark. You need at least three to carry on the affairs of an ant-nest. The male and female of the common ants have wings, the workers none. The latter do all the work, construct the nest and keep it in repair, take special care of the eggs, removing them from spot to spot to keep them at the right temperature, rip them open to let the larvæ out at the right time, and nurse the young ones till able to do for themselves. Two of them could not construct a nest. Moses and the Holy Ghost did not know that. The mason ants and the miner ants would be as helpless in pairs as the little red ones.

The *formica fuliginosa* lives in old trunks of trees, which it tunnels in a most marvellous manner. Others get into the beams of houses and hollow them out. What Noah would have done with a few of those in his ark it is easy to imagine: he and his whole menagerie would have gone to the bottom, for they would have riddled his ship for him till it was no stronger than a bandbox.

The *polyergus rufens* is a warrior ant. They are only males and females and do no work. They make war upon the nests of the black ants, steal their larvæ, and carry them off to their nests, where the prisoners are reared as slaves and compelled to work for their masters. Certain American ants, also, are said to follow this trade.

Noah might have been at his wit's end with the Driver ants of West Africa. They range about in large armies

having, like the ancient saints, no certain dwelling place. They march by night. The army is divided into three groups, soldiers to attack and disable the prey, assistants to divide the prey into portable portions, and the laborers. They are terrible things, and few animals can resist them. They have been known to kill the python, the largest serpent in the country.

When they enter a dwelling, rats, mice, lizards, and cockroaches get out as fast as possible. They visit all dirty houses and towns where scavenging is needed. A few of those would have emptied the ark in a short time.

The excavating insects would have given Noah no little trouble. When adult they are strict vegetarians, and yet they have to provide for flesh-eating offspring. There are four species of them, which differ somewhat amongst themselves. The mother digs a hole in the earth, a tree, or wall. Having prepared the nest, she attacks caterpillars, spiders, etc. These she stings, so as to disable and paralyse, but not to kill. The prey is placed in the nest and the eggs deposited. The young larvæ find ready for them living food as soon as they are ready to eat it, and the victim, though stung and half eaten, still lives till his enemy has had enough of him. Such is one of the ways of divine providence, though the writer of Genesis did not know of it. The *scolia* goes to even less trouble, for it finds a larva of a beetle in the ground, digs down to it, stings it so as to render it helpless and torpid without killing it; and then deposits its eggs under the skin of its victim, which is by and by devoured by the young *scolia*. How did Noah manage for all these? Neither he nor his God knew anything of these matters. If they had they would never have undertaken to save the twos and twos of all flesh!

Need I mention the fact that bees also could not have been preserved without more than a pair of each species? I must pass over beetles, spiders, and other insects, and merely mention the fact that most insects have parasites, as well as many larger animals. Besides, why were some of them preserved at all? Fleas and bugs, the itch-insect, mosquitoes, *pediculi capitis*, locusts, ticks, phylloxera, the tsetses, etc.? And why were the tapeworm and the trichina preserved? Trichina usually enters the human system in underdone pork; I presume it entered the ark in Ham.

More than half of the insects taken into the ark might well have been excluded, and many of them would have been if there had been an enlightened superintendent appointed to oversee the embarkation. As it was, they were all taken in, and Noah must have provided them with sufficient food for a whole year and more. Those who know anything of natural history can well enough perceive that he must have carried in a slice of every country in the world, and must have had some means of reproducing all the world's various climates to keep his freight alive and well. This must have been a heavy task, for we must remember that during the whole year the ark was floating five miles above the old sea-level, for the flood was more than five miles deep, as we shall see later on; and though the rigors of this arctic temperature may have been slightly modified by the general rise of what then was the earth's surface, yet the cold must have been intense; and the wonder is that the whole concern did not get crushed amongst the myriads of icebergs which must have abounded. Of course, nothing is too hard for the Lord—except to do a sensible thing.

If Noah felt difficulty with the insects, what must he have felt respecting the largest of the beasts? There were giants on the earth in those days, and giantesses too, and they had to be got into the ark some way or other. Horses, cows, camels and elephants were not easily disposed of. Some of the giant birds might have exercised his skill—the moa, for example, or other extinct monsters. Besides, the celebrated phoenix—in whom the fathers believed as devoutly as they did in the holy pigeon, *alias* Holy Ghost—could have been embarked only as a unit, for a pair of them never existed.

The dinotherium is estimated to have been eighteen feet long. He was probably fond of marshy ground, or may have spent his time much in the way the hippopotamus does. A pair of these, standing end to end, would reach thirty-six feet—about half-way across the ark. Themselves and their food and accommodation would require no trifling portion of the space available for the whole menagerie. Perhaps, however, like Milton's devils in Pandemonium, the animals in those days were not so rigid and exacting as now, and may have accommodated themselves to the space allotted them—

“ . . . the signal given,
Behold a wonder! they but now who seemed
In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room,
Throng numberless like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount.”

There is, at any rate, nothing in the world so handy as a miracle to help one out of a fix; and as Noah must have sorely needed a few of those accommodating events, of course piety suggests that we suppose them, though we cannot prove them. Anything is better than common sense in expounding the Bible. No truly devout man ever tries that as a key to unlock its secrets and mysteries. God forbid!

The megatherium was an animal from 12 to 18 feet long, 8 or 9 feet high, and 5 to 6 feet wide behind. His tail, stout and strong in proportion as a kangaroo's, was six feet long, and his foot about a yard from heel to toe. It is supposed that he lived upon roots which he dug out of ground, or else upon twigs of trees. I should like to know how Noah found him employment for claws and jaws during the voyage. It would have been nothing to him to have scratched a few holes through the bottom of the ark.

The mylodon (11 feet long) and the glyptodon (9 feet long) must also have been preserved. The mammoth, which makes the elephant look like a good-sized calf in comparison, must have taken a large space; and he did not live upon nothing. A pair of these must have devoured many tons of vegetables during the year.

How did the patriarch manage the megalosaurus, a land lizard about 40 feet long, which very likely fed upon such smaller lizards as crocodiles?

Authorities differ as to the length of the iguanodon. Mantell thought it must have been 70 feet long; Professor Owen brings it down to 30 feet. But its thigh-bone is 4 feet 8 inches long. Fancy four of those tremendous lizards (megalosaurus and iguanodon), beasts 15 to 20 feet high, and more than double that length, and broad in proportion—fancy them, I say, having a fight in the ark, or running about to catch such prey as crocodiles and alligators—scores of tons of flesh and bones bouncing about on the floor of Noah's box! And how would elephants, tigers, lions, behave when such a row was forward?

It is all very well, of course, for divines to assume that the giants above named were extinct before Noah's day. They may say so if they will; but what extinguished them? I will give my own inspired opinion; and whoever shall receive it shall save his soul alive. My own view is this: That when Noah undertook to get pairs of all the animals into his ark he assumed obligations he never contemplated. When he blew his whistle as a signal for them all to appear, away they came, each pair bringing a full year's provisions with them—the elephants had theirs packed in their trunks, of course, and the kangaroos came with their pouches full; the rest brought their stock upon their backs. But when Noah saw the number of animals approaching, the hundreds—where he had bargained, as he thought, for twos—when he beheld the enormous sizes of those above named he cried out: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived (Jeremiah xx., 7). I will back out of the bargain. It would take fifty arks to stow away all this rabble; and who, I should like to know, would risk his life in a box for a year—for ten minutes even—with all these ferocious beasts?" And it came to pass that the Lord answered and said unto Noah: "I also am greatly amazed at the multitude of living things and at the greatness of them. Go to, therefore, shut the giants out and let them drown, for it repenteth me that I made mammoth, and megalonyx, and mastodon, and megalosaurus, and iguanodon upon the earth. Lo, I will even put my hook in their nose and my bridle in their jaws if I can, and lead them back by the way they came, and thou shalt see them no more for ever." So Noah was comforted. Is it not written in the book of Jasher and in the visions of Iddo the seer?

And thus those enormous animals became extinct, and their carcasses were buried in the strata of the earth as a warning to all beasts, lest they also should eat and drink and grow too large, and thus provoke the Lord to cut them off from the face of the ground. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

I have no wish, my reader, like commentators in general, to bore you with further remarks tending to expose the absolute absurdity of the flood; though the subject might be pursued to a very great length, and every step would only tend to show how totally false or mythological is the narrative. Even Christians themselves are beginning to throw ridicule upon

it. Just recently they have spread reports of the finding of the ark on Ararat ; and one American journal has discovered that it was insured in a New York office as a vessel to convey passengers and animals, owned by Noah and Sons. Whether the menagerie was insured has not yet been ascertained. When sacred subjects such as this can be so treated in common newspapers, honest men may rejoice to think that malice and stupidity will not much longer send men to gaol for doing what their Christian neighbors do,—viz., ridiculing the holy and ever-blessed revelation God gave to the world to enlighten and save mankind.

Pray don't forget that the flood was universal ; the earth was encased in a shell of water, like an orange with its rind, like the fruit with paste in an apple-dumpling. This shell of water covered all the mountains, and they are over five miles in perpendicular height.

We will now inquire into the quantity of water required to drown the world, and speculate a little on the wisdom of so expensive and clumsy a method of gratifying vengeance.

The earth is a globe (nearly so) 25,000 miles in circumference ; and the area of its whole surface equals about 200,000,000 square miles. Its highest mountains rise more than 5 miles above the level of the sea ; the flood rose about 26 feet above the top of the highest of them. Therefore, the earth must have been encased in a shell of extra water about $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 miles deep, the highest peak in the world being over 28,000 feet high. This equals an ocean 25,000 miles long, by 8,000 wide, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 miles deep, measuring down to the ordinary sea-level. The solid content of this new and universal ocean could not be less than about 1,000,000,000 cubic miles of water, or about 1-80th of the solid contents of the whole earth as it now is. If this water could be formed into a river 1 mile wide and 10 yards in depth, it would stretch out to the enormous length of 176,000,000,000 miles, almost 2,000 times the distance from the earth to the sun ! If the water of that river flowed by at 7 miles per hour, it would take 2,878,188 years to run away !

Whence did all this water come ? From heaven, and down through its windows ? It must have been very many millions of years on the road. And when it is remembered that the earth is totally invisible from heaven, we must conclude that he who fired or squirted all that water from his syringe must

have been a most excellent marksman indeed, not to have hit the sun instead of so tiny a mark as the earth, and so absolutely invisible as it must have been. We cannot, I am sorry to confess, sufficiently admire the goodness and wisdom of God in this transaction, especially when we consider that he must have shot the water from his syringe many millions of years before either earth or sun was created! Now this shows divine skill in its most transcendent phase. Imagine, my reader, a marksman who could fire his rifle, and while the shot was flying could go and create the target and then coolly wait for the flying bullet to hit the bull's-eye! Jehovah, the war-God, was the very best marksman ever yet known. How carefully he calculated the time and the position of the moving target! Remember, this earth is flying through space at the rate of about 65,000 miles an hour! How clever of him to hit the mark under such conditions! Then, how kind of him to arrange for drowning the world so many millions of years before it was created! What an exhibition of foresight and providence! Who would not worship thee, O Jehovah! after this display of thy goodness and wisdom?

What became of the water after it had done all the drowning, I am not able to say. Nor can I explain how it was that so large a mass of water, falling from heaven with a velocity some hundreds of times greater than a cannon ball has, did not bear the earth before it as a falling drop of rain does an invisible grain of dust. These are mysteries we had better leave alone. Divine wisdom has thrown a veil over them. Who shall dare to lift it now?

There are many other incidents connected with the flood that prudence bids us not to meddle with, if we would retain our faith. Therefore, let them remain buried in the divine oblivion which shrouds them.

When Noah escaped from his box he murdered one or more of all the clean beasts and fowls he had with him, and burnt them for Jehovah's dinner. The Lord had kept Lent for over a year, poor fellow; and never had been so delighted in all his days as he was with this sacrifice. He *smelled* but does not seem to have eaten it. So delighted was he, that he promised never to drown the world again. Perhaps he feared he might lose all the animals in another flood, and so get no more smoke of burning flesh as long as he lived. How extremely

condescending, my friend, it was of the infinite God, who fills all space, to stoop so low as to bring his nose near enough to sniff up the reek of Noah's sacrifice! One might have thought that he would have been above such conduct. But no; the Bible reveals God as having nothing better to do just then than to enjoy himself smelling the burning animals. Of course he has been wonderfully civilised since. The bishops have taken him to task over a good many things, and you wouldn't know it was the same God now, so great a transformation has there been in him. Indeed, the incident of Noah's sacrifice is now never mentioned in his presence. The slightest allusion to it would produce an earthquake.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of every man . . . whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed (Gen. ix., 5-6).—The Bible has been translated into many languages, but not into all. Why are the poor beasts forgotten? They shed men's blood, some of them; and God will require it at their hands. To this day the beasts have never been warned. How shocking! Lions and tigers, mad bulls and wolves have shed many a man's blood because they did not know the risk they ran. Why does not some pious divine go and tell them that they will be damned if they shed human gore? Alas! to think of the many serpents and ravenous beasts that might be tamed and converted by this Bible text if they only knew it! And how hard-hearted are the worshippers of God, that they don't go and tell them. Put up this text in all places where men and beasts meet, in the languages of all the animal species of a dangerous nature; let them know the real price of human blood; and neither beast of prey, nor flea, nor bug will ever shed another drop as long as the world shall last.

The latter part of the text is the stronghold of the public executioner. But for the Bible the death-penalty would probably disappear. In obedience to divine commands men have burnt witches and heretics, and still hang murderers to glut their taste for vengeance. What good is done to anybody by hanging a man? Does it restore his victim to life? Does it deter from crime? Not at all. It is the result of superstition, and merely multiplies murder.

Behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the

fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you (Gen. ix., 9-10).—Here Jehovah enters into a covenant with Noah and all the beasts of the earth, pledging himself never to drown the whole earth again for the term of his natural life. What better evidence could we have that the writer was demented? The flood seems to have affected what little brain he had; and so he invents a treaty between the animals and the extraordinary deity who first makes, then destroys, and then makes a covenant with the animals! I wonder if he took them in the lump or canvassed them one by one! And what could the animals think of him? He who had gone to such pains to destroy their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and playfellows—with what delight they must have welcomed his advances! How readily they must have fallen in with his proposals! No prudent animal or man could enter into covenant with such a God as Jehovah, so soon, too, after his general massacre. They may not have uttered all they felt when he was canvassing them; but we can realise it all notwithstanding their silence. Enter into covenant with the universal destroyer! The Bible writers had no conception of a joke—unless the whole book is to be regarded as a grim and ghastly jest at the expense of the Jewish-Christian religion. Certainly, whether the writer meant it or not, few jokes ever equalled this story of the covenant; and the few stories that do rival it are found in the Bible.

He would not drown the whole world again, so he would not! How kind of him! Does he think we can't see through it? The fact is, all the water was gone, and he had no means of drowning the world any more. At least, it would take him several millions of years to do it, and he was not prepared to undertake the task a second time. So he made a virtue of necessity; pretended to Noah and the beasts that he could if he would drown the world just as often as he pleased, but he would not do so because the smoke of the sacrifice had so delighted him.

And then he proceeds to indicate the sign, token, or proof of the covenant. No deed was drawn up; neither God nor Noah could write their names; they and the rest of the animals could only make their marks. The rainbow, therefore, is made the sign, the signature of the covenant; but only one of the parties signifies adhesion to it—viz., God. And his signature turns out to be a sham. The rainbow is as old as

rain and sunshine in unison. Ever since rain fell and sunbeams flashed upon the falling drops, there the rainbow has lighted up and beautified the scene. It not only skirts the rain-cloud; it dances (or its sisters do) upon the spray of fountains and of dashing breakers. And how could Noah be so hoodwinked? He had lived 600 years and more: could you persuade him that he had never seen a rainbow before the flood? Well, the bow had been no guarantee that God would behave himself *before* the flood, and how could it be *after*? For well nigh 600 years he had seen the bow crossing the cloud when he happened to be between the sun and the shower; and yet in his 601st year there was the universal deluge! How, then, was it possible for Noah, or his sons, or his daughters, or his wife, or his cattle, or anything that was with him in the ark, to put any dependence on this covenant, ratified by a well-known natural phenomenon as old as the nature which produced it? Who would take the rainbow as a receipt to a bill?

And I will remember my covenant (Gen. ix., 15).—Yes, God will remember! He will look upon the bow to refresh his memory, as he adds in the following verse. He who remembers and refreshes his memory with a sign, may and does forget. Other texts of scripture show this beyond doubt. “Forget not the humble” (Psalm x., 12)—the very parties most likely to be forgotten. “How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?” (Psalm xiii., 1). “Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever” (Psalm lxxiv., 19). “Forget not the voice of thine enemies” (lxxiv., 23). Manifestly the Bible maligns God, or he is liable to forget. I prefer the latter alternative. Of course he can’t remember everything—the strongest-minded man needs to keep a diary, how much more a God!

(To be continued in No. 5).

No. 3.] **BLOWS AT THE BIBLE.** [1d

BY

JOSEPH SYMES.

HOW A FAIRY WAS TRANSFORMED.

THERE once lived many ages ago a fairy king, named Miholé. He dwelt in a far-away land, and was ruler over a very large kingdom. Miholé was skilled in magic, and could work the most astonishing wonders; out of nothing he made worlds, and living beings like men and women out of clay. But this great king was wayward, cruel, jealous, headstrong; and delighted in nothing so much as shedding blood and inflicting misery. So cruel was he that he even exerted his magic to create living things for the sole purpose of tormenting them.

At one time he made a world of pretty large size, just like the earth. Then he made all sorts of plants and animals grow in it; and even made a pair in his own likeness, who could talk and reason like men. This pair he put into a palace where there was a room locked, which they were commanded not to open on pain of death. He then gave them the key and departed. On leaving he chuckled with glee at the thought that they would disobey him, as he knew perfectly well they would. To be sure, they were mere babies, without experience to guide them.

Now Miholé, in order to make sure that Madab and Biba (for those were the names of the unfortunate pair) should unlock the fatal door, sent a sort of monkey, named Jocko, to them, who amused them exceedingly by his antics. This monkey could talk, and was a clever, gay, sprightly fellow, of endless fun and frolic. He was at once a favorite with Madab and Biba, and they could not bear him to be out of their company. One day Jocko snatched away the key from Madab and began to examine it with pretended surprise; and after a time he fitted it into the lock of the room they were forbidden to enter. Both Madab and Biba ran to him in alarm and tried to persuade and coax him not to open the door, telling

him that Miholé would kill them if they did. At this Jocko laughed till the Palace rung again, saying, "Are you such babies as to believe that Miholé was in earnest when he bade you not to enter this room. Booh! He was only joking. Come on; we will see what is inside."

He opened the door and entered, Madab and Biba reluctantly and timidly following. When they were in they were delighted beyond measure. Here were all things rich and rare that Fairyland could ever produce, in the greatest profusion too. In this room the three friends enjoyed themselves the whole afternoon, and paid no heed to the waning of the day. Before they knew how late it was, they heard a loud fierce voice, shouting, "Madab! where the — are you? Here, I have been running all over the Palace looking for you the last half-hour. What!" he continued, seeing the door of his secret room open, "What! have you broken into my treasury? You shall pay for this, I promise you!"

Madab and Biba, in dire confusion, and blank with terror, excused themselves by throwing the blame upon poor Jocko. And Miholé at once made a great dark pit full of fire and brimstone, and there he shut up Jocko for ever. He would have died, of course, from the fire and the stifling vapors, but the cruel king magically kept him alive for the purpose of inflicting pain and misery upon him. When he had disposed of Jocko, he turned to Madab and Biba, and told them they would have to die. But here, too, he tortured before killing. "You shall die," said he, "but not just yet. You shall live and people this world with your miserable brood, who shall suffer want, cold, hunger, cancers, coughs, rheumatics, and a thousand horrible tortures. They shall die of famine, flood, pestilence, earthquake, war, murder; and after they have died once they shall live again, and be cast with Jocko into the unquenchable fire, where they shall gnash their teeth and yell with anguish and despair for ever and ever." Then he drove them out of the Palace to the open field, fastened the door, put the key in his pocket, and went away in a mighty rage.

All the evils he had threatened to Madab and Biba, and their poor children, came trooping one after another, or altogether at times, so that their life was dreadfully bitter; and they cursed the day that Miholé had made them, as well they might; for he meant them nothing but mischief from the first,

and had even planned and incited their disobedience for the sake of gratifying his own malignity in seeing them and their children suffer every variety of torture.

Now fairies are not like men and women, for they live for millions of years. Madab and Biba, after their disgrace, lived on to old age, and then died, leaving their country to their children, and they to theirs for thousands of years. In the meantime poor Jocko was burning in his hell, with now and then a holiday granted him by Miholé, who let him out for nothing in the world but sheer mischief; so that he might have an excuse for punishing him yet more, and also have the gratification of seeing multitudes of the children of Madab and Biba enticed into his own lake of fire. Indeed the wickedness of Miholé knew no bounds, and the older he became the more and more malignant he grew, as the following will show.

He had an only begotten son, whose mother was unknown even to his best friends. There was a mystery about this son; though, being the only one, he was made much of. Now a grand and awful scheme entered into the head of Miholé. He bethought himself thus:—"Those beings I made, Madab and Biba, have deeply offended me, and I will never forgive them. Of course, I planned it all; but I shall not forego the gratification of punishing them on that account. I can do what I will with my own. Still, I will not send the whole race of their children into that fire; I will select a few and bring them to my Palace to live with me. They will make good sport for me no doubt; and the craven-spirited wretches will sing my praises and honor me, though they are well aware that I am roasting their own flesh and blood in the lake of fire. Yes! I will do it. But I must have satisfaction. I am not going to save them from the fire for nothing. I must and will have some equivalent. If I forego the pleasure of damning them, I must and will have an equivalent of pleasure in another way.

"Now this is what I will do. I will take my only son Jessah, and will transform him by magic into one of the descendants of Madab and Biba; and then I will get him crucified; and on the cross he shall suffer the most exherciating tortures that even a fairy can endure. Bah!—never mind the pain. I shall not feel it. I shall glory in it. And

thus I will redeem to myself a few of the doomed race. This is my will, and it shall be, it must be done."

"Jessah!" shouted he to his son. His son came and paid him his respects.

"My son, you know I love you tenderly, do you not?" said Miholé.

"Yes, sire," replied the son, with no great enthusiasm.

"Well, my boy, I have some work for you to do. You remember how Madab and Biba disobeyed me about 4,000 years ago, and how I have had no good will towards the race of them from that time till now. You know how I have punished them, and how I have merely made a favourite now and again of one or other of them whose crimes or stupidity served to amuse me. Now I intend to save a few of them from entering that fiery pit below there, and bring them hither to live in this palace. But I must have an equivalent of suffering in another direction for the pain I am going to remit to them. Do you understand me, my son?"

"I believe I do, sire," replied Jessah. "And I am glad you are going to show them mercy; though I wish you would forgive the whole race and Jocko, too, and not trouble about any equivalent of pain."

"Ah! ah! Just like the child you are. You do not understand business, my boy," replied the old fairy. "Give up a privilege without compensation! No! No! I have spent many a year of pleasure in hearing their groans, and do you suppose I am going to forgive them and stop their yelling! I had rather give up all I have and die myself than put out hell-fire or release a prisoner without compensation! So no more on that point, my son! No more!"

"Now listen to me. You go at once to the world where the race of Madab live, and by a trick I will show you you can transform yourself into a baby and be born of one of the the same race. I may tell you beforehand that I am going to make you a sin-offering for that cursed race; and you will be crucified and die in awful agony to gratify my fierce wrath and justice. Then I will raise you up to life again, and you will return to the palace none the worse for your journey, and be followed by a select number of the children of Madab."

Poor Jessah was wild with amazement, and begged and prayed his cruel father to forego his design. But in vain.

"You will do as I bid you, boy," said he, "or—do you see yonder lake of fire?—I'll hurl you into that and roast you there as long as I live. Take your choice. It is all one to me."

So the son yielded to the mad father's whim, and became incarnate; lived a miserable life; was crucified by enemies instigated thereto by his awful father, who heaped upon him all the agony in his power while dying. Three days after death he restored his son to life and took him home. And there was an end of the farce. Miholé was no more satisfied than before. He resolved next to send his son again to the world of Madab to call all its inhabitants to judgment; then to burn up the world with fire, and to shut up most of the unfortunate race in Jocko's hell for ever. But the son, sick and disgusted, fled from his father's den for ever, to escape the misery and humiliation of executing his father's mad schemes and infernal wishes.

* * * * *

"Which things are an allegory." My Fairy Tale is the Christian Scheme of Redemption, stript of its pious trappings, writ as it ought to be writ, and exhibited in its gory features and its diabolic qualities. I hope it may help to throw contempt upon the pious tomfooleries of Christmas-tide, and expose to ridicule the farce of the incarnation of the Son of God.

JUMPING COMMENTS ON GENESIS.

No matter, for my present purpose, who wrote the Bible, nor how old it may be. My jumping, skipping comments relate only to the contents of the book, and will be just what the title indicates, for I shall jump from one text to another, instead of wasting time in noticing the intervening passages.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.—Genesis i., 1. Beginning of what? Time? Time never had a beginning. Of the world? It could not have been made *in* its beginning, for it existed exactly the same moment it began to be. Then what does it mean? The beginning of God's work? If so, he must have been a lazy fellow to idle away in doing nothing at all the immeasurable time or eternity which preceded the moment he began to work. And what made him begin just then, I wonder? Had he been all his life before making up his mind whether to create or not? I think it is a pity that it should have taken him so long and not a little longer. Surely a god who could do without a plaything during his early life might have done without one for ever. The world seems to be his shuttlecock, created for this own amusement; and his sport involves the misery and death of his creatures. It is no credit to a god to have made a world like this. It is not the work of a good god!

The heaven!—That is a purely fictitious place. The firmament or heaven is only an optical illusion, the mere boundary of vision, larger or smaller in proportion to the power of the eyes of the world. Modern astronomy shows beyond the possibility of doubt that the heaven, or heavens, do not exist, and never did. So the Bible opens with a blunder which shows that the writer, instead of being inspired by a being who knew everything, drew his inspiration from his own narrow experience, and egregiously blundered in the first sentence he wrote.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.—i., 2. More nonsense. The earth always had a form, pretty much the one it has now, too. As

for the darkness on the face of the deep, we will comment upon that when we know what deep is meant. Does any one know?

The spirit of god or of the gods—if it means anything, it is the wind. That need not have been mentioned, surely.

Let there be light—i., 3. Did God say that? In what language? To whom? Why did he say it? If he had his tinder-box by him, he need not have said anything about it; for flint and steel work no better for being spoken to.

And God divided the light from the darkness—i., 4. I am sure he never did, for light and darkness never were mingled. Light is the positive state; darkness the negative. Darkness is but the absence of light. How absurd, to talk of dividing light from darkness! You need inspiration to commit folly like that.

And God made the firmament or heaven—i., 7. Why, he made that in the beginning, and here the next day he makes it again! Did the first not please him? Did he pull it down and build it up again the next day? Poor architect! Oh! I forgot, he had no one to guide him, had no experience in world-building. Were he to try now with all the advantages human science could give him, perhaps he would make a much better job of the whole affair. He could scarcely do worse.

And the earth brought forth grass—i., 12. In the next chapter (ii., 3-8) we are told that he made every plant and herb before they grew and then "planted" them—no doubt using a dibble and watering-pot, after digging the soil with a fork or spade, as a regular ordained gardener would do to-day. The reader had better believe both accounts. He is not bound to understand either—better not try. The less you know about God and his ways the better you like him.

Lights in the firmament—i., 14. There is no firmament. Therefore no lights were placed in it.

Two great lights—i., 16. The sun is a light, the moon is no more a light than the earth. It merely reflects the sunlight. The author of Genesis did not know that. To him sun and moon seem to have been about equal; in reality the sun is about 60,000,000 times larger than the moon. Besides, for about one-half of its time the moon is next to useless for lighting purposes, without reckoning wet and cloudy weather.

He made the stars also—i., 16. A mere fleabite, the

making of the stars, evidently. They are so small. No doubt god made them of the sparks struck out by his flint when lighting the sun. Why, the nearest of them all is so distant that light takes three years and seven months to travel from it to the earth; while others seen in the telescope are so far away that light spends many thousands of years upon the journey. And some of them must be at least hundreds of times larger than the sun! Had the author of Genesis understood astronomy, he would not have written this nonsense about the creation.

And god made the beasts of the earth . . . and everything that creepeth upon the earth—i., 25. He might have found better employment than making serpents and snakes, hyænas, wolves, tigers, etc. And what was he thinking about when he made parasites, such as trichina and tape-worms? But Darwinism shows that the vegetables and animals, good or bad, were not manufactured in this sudden manner; but were gradually evolved or developed from older forms of life—a subject too large to enter upon here.

So god created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them—i., 27. In the Hebrew it is “gods” not god—the *Elohim*—that made man. They were evidently male and female themselves, as all respectable deities were. And Adam and Eve were made in their image; in fact if you had seen the creators and the created together you could not tell which was which—stature and build, color, hair, and everything were just alike. The only difficulty one meets with is this; how could Adam and Eve be the parents of such diversified tribes and families of men as now people the earth? Black and white, of various shades; short and tall; fat and lean; round heads and long heads; Caucasians and Negroes; and all the endless variety existing to-day? Which of all these descendants are most like the first pair? I should say that most likely the lowest, ugliest and most degraded couple to be found are just the very image of the first pair, and they were exactly like their creators. Tut! tut! I don't wish you to worship such a pair of deities. Everyone to his taste. But if you can worship the creator of a world like this, you need not pretend to be squeamish.

Every seed-bearing herb and fruit-bearing tree . . . to you shall it be for meat (Gen. i., 29).—All herbs and trees bear seed, and therefore all herbs and trees were for human food,

according to this. Poor first pair! Look through some "Family Herald," my reader, and see what those poor things had set before them for food! There is no discrimination exercised by the nurse; but those two full-blown babies, who had never sucked nor had pap given them, are just left to themselves to select their food as best they may from a universal Botanical Garden, teeming to excess with every plant and weed that ever grew! The trees are included in the stock. And no cookery yet invented! How sickly they must have been the first week or two! The marvel is they did not get poisoned before the first sunset.

And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good (i., 31).—The man who wrote that had never been chased by lion or tiger, nor bitten by a snake or serpent; white ants had never destroyed his dwelling, nor moths spoilt his wardrobe; fleas and bugs had never teased him, nor mosquitoes driven him mad; thorns and thistles had never pricked and lacerated his flesh, nor miasma laid him down with yellow fever; tropical heat had never roasted him, nor Arctic cold frozen his extremities. The world he describes is not the one we live in; he but echoes the dreams of the golden age of poets and mythologists, and tells a tale of the past that never was present. Geology tells the blunt truth about it, and shows that this world has always been the scene of strife, pain, misery and death almost ever since life itself existed in it. If this world is a manufactured article, then he who made it must have been the essence of folly and barbarity. As we never hear anything of him now, I presume he has had what the Scotch call "a cast of grace"—has committed suicide to escape the wretched sight of his own infernal handiwork. Pity he did not commit suicide before creating the world!

Genesis ii.—The first three verses of this chapter belong neither to the first nor the second properly. They were added to the ancient story by some priest who wished to impose the Sabbath upon the people beneath his charge, and who knew that that could not be done without a good round lie. He says:—

The heaven and the earth were finished (ii., 1).—The heavens, of course, never existed, any more than the Greek Olympus or the Scandinavian Valhalla. But the earth never has been finished yet. Geology teaches that the earth is just

as much in course of creation now as ever it was. Coral zoophytes, globigerinæ, many plants; all waves, streams, rain-showers, frosts and snows, volcanoes and earthquakes, are engaged in reconstructing and re-arranging the strata of the earth. The process never was finished and never can be. The earth, like every other material thing, except probably ether and atoms, is a growth, not a manufactured thing, as the Bible falsely teaches.

And he rested on the seventh day, etc. (ii., 2).—"Behold I show you a mystery!" An almighty god spent a whole eternity in doing absolutely nothing; five or six thousand years ago he built the world, at which he worked six days; the putting of these few atoms together so exhausted him that he rested the whole of the seventh day!—and has done next to nothing since. To doubt this is blasphemy; to believe it is piety! If you ridicule it, the bishops and their creatures will send you into solitary confinement for at least nine months, and allow you nothing to read but this stupidest of books!

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens (ii., 4).—Here beginneth an entirely new account of the creation by a writer who worshipped Jehovah not the Elohim. It was the Elohim who created all things in six days according to Genesis i. This chapter says Jehovah Elohim did the work in one day—"in the day that the lord god made," etc. Each of the stories is true; divinely so, though they so flatly contradict each other, and both equally contradict known facts. Never mind. Believe both. Contradictions and lies constitute nine-tenths of the whole stock of revealed truth. What then? It is the fashion to pretend at least to believe it all, and if you find a flaw, "mum" is the word. To mention it might have the effect of damaging the interests of spiritual policemen and tyrants "set over you in the lord" and elsewhere, who rob the poor and the starving to build temples and palaces for their own glory and amusement.

The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (ii., 7).—This, my reader, is very sublime language, praise the lord! Man's body consists, then, of dust of the ground; and his soul is nothing but a mixture of atmospheric air, carbonic acid and

water-vapor, breathed out of the lungs of his maker into his own! A man's first breath would expel most of what the lord breathed into him, and a few subsequent acts of respiration would get rid of it all. He was soon without any soul, except the constant inrush and outrush of air, etc., to and from his lung.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, etc. (ii., 17).—As divines long since gave up as hopeless the task of trying to find where the Garden of Eden was, I shall not notice it, except to remark that in the first chapter man had all trees given him without exception; here he is forbidden the tree of knowledge—almost the only one worth eating of; and, by implication, he was forbidden to eat of the tree of life also (iii., 22).

The first man was exceedingly wise, however, without eating of the tree of knowledge, for he gave names to all cattle and fowls and beasts of the field; and he seems to have been no time about it either. A very precocious youth, certainly! The Lord could no faster make animals than Adam gave them appropriate names. What language he used is not said. Some contend it was Welsh, and I shall not dispute it.

Adam's wife was made of one of his own ribs; and yet he calls her "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" (ii., 21—23). But she was only bone of his bone. Besides, if he was asleep when that surgical operation was performed upon him, how did he know that his rib had been extracted and used in this way? He preferred Eve to all the animals he had seen and labelled, as any fool might have done; but how did he know that she was like himself, never having seen his own shape in a mirror? Oh! I forgot! God was just like him, and no doubt told Adam so, and thus he knew his own shape from his maker's!

I may say that that bold, bad, blasphemous man, Bishop Ellicott, in a new commentary on the Bible, has the audacity to affirm, in flat contradiction to God's blessed and most holy word, that Eve was not made out of a rib of Adam! He is too respectable to send to Holloway Gaol; but wait till he is dead; then he will go down to Dante's *Inferno*, where so many blaspheming bishops and popes are already "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

The second chapter of Genesis closes with the confession

that the Elohim or Jahveh had not the decency to clothe the pair they had made. We need not be surprised. Gods and goddesses have never been civilised enough to clothe themselves. All the garments they have ever worn have been woven and made by mythologists, painters and sculptors. Not being clad themselves, the Elohim, including gods and goddesses, never once thought that the human beings they had made, just like themselves, had any need of garments. Dr. Watts, in a hymn many of us learnt in childhood, seems to regret that civilisation should have effected what God had left undone. The hymn is both pious and edifying—

"The art of dress did ne'er begin
Till Eve, our mother, learnt to sin;
When first she put the covering on
Her robe of innocence was gone;
And yet her children vainly boast
Of those sad marks of glory lost!"

John Milton also, in "Paradise Lost," has something to say upon the subject. That magnificent Zoroastrian or Manichæan poem should be read by all worshippers of orthodoxy. Milton's real hero is Satan; his God is a pitiable thing.

GENESIS iii.—*The serpent was more subtle (sty) than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made* (iii., 1).—Yes, the serpent was always an emblem or symbol of wisdom; though it required very little of that quality to out-wit the Lord God and the first pair. Of course the story is a "mystery" in the old-fashioned sense of that word. The language is emblematical, and intended to show that all sin and evil, misery and death, spring from the union of the sexes. It was written by some vile ascetic.

By the way, how is it all clothiers and manufacturers of textile fabrics do not adopt the serpent as their symbol or as their arms or trade mark? The whole of their art is due to the action of the serpent. Had he not been wiser than the gods, clothes had never been adopted.

Lest anyone should be bold enough to question if the serpent ever held the reported conversation with the woman, let it be remembered that in "Æsop's Fables" nothing is more common than for animals to talk; and nursery tales and folklore abound with similar incidents. "Be not faithless, but believing." "Ye believe in Æsop, believe also in Genesis." If you doubt the speaking of the serpent, re-

member Balaam's donkey; if you are tempted to doubt the donkey-tale, remember that of the serpent. By thus comparing scripture with scripture you may assure yourself of the truth of one absurdity by reflecting upon another equally bad. If you should still be tempted to doubt, remember that all doubters will be damned; reflect upon the flames of hell until the conception drives you half mad. You will be able to believe anything then.

And Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden (iii., 8).—You need not wonder now how the serpent dodged the Lord God and got into the garden unknown to its owner! *They were out of his presence!* He could not see them; and had to call them to find out where they were! If I wrote here that I hid from the Lord God, and got out of his presence, I might go to Holloway Gaol for blasphemy; and if I pretended it was revelation I was writing, and raised the late Archbishop of Canterbury from the dead to prove my mission, Dr. Benson and his party would give me an extra twelvemonths' of solitary confinement for disturbing existing arrangements, while the resurrected defunct would have to be disposed of or "removed" as fast as possible. God could not see far in those early days, evidently; and his presence was no more extensive than Adam's. In process of time he grew in bulk till he became infinite—that is, ruptured and destroyed himself like Æsop's ambitious frog; and now men can no more find God than God could find Adam and Eve. He is dissipated, like the gas of a ruptured balloon, or, rather, like the vital spirit of the torn and tattered creeds.

With a kangaroo bound I leap over the other incidents of the story, and alight plump upon the upshot of the first sin. "*Behold the man (literally the Adam—that is, both the man and the woman) is become as one of us, to know good and evil*" (iii., 22).—I told you the creators were more than one. They speak in the plural—*one of us*. The volumes of learned rubbish written to explain this would surprise one, if he did not reflect that twenty useless books are written for every good one, and that for every great book you might find a waggon-load of literary rubbish. This mystery is usually explained by means of the trinity in unity—a mystery that will clear up almost everything in theology. One of the three is spoken to by the Elohim! That is, the unity speaks

to one of the trinity, or to all three. That is, one of them at least talks to himself—a sign of weak intellect generally. That is, they all three speak with one voice, so lodged that all can use it at once, or one of them alone. Where the said voice was placed, or how it was managed I know not; I was not there. As this communistic or socialistic voice uttered what all three equally thought, each of the three heard with his own pair of ears what he himself and his two companions uttered; and thus each of the triad came to understand for himself what all three knew equally well before all three combined in this co-operative manner to pronounce it for the benefit of himself and two companions. Ah, me! My last sentence, I fear, is a bit mixed; so am I. It is that trinity that has done it. I feel as poor Captain Webb did, probably, in the Niagara whirlpools, so I'll make for the shore.

So he drove out the man (literally, *the Adam*) iii., 24.—This was an act of vengeance blind and cruel. It was an act of jealousy. For the three, that is the one, felt afraid of Adam and Eve. They knew too much. So they persecuted them, just as the bigots persecute now. The gods and bigots have always claimed a monopoly of knowledge: being densely stupid themselves, they have always done their worst to prevent other people growing wise. To claim a monopoly of knowledge is merely to wall up your windows with the object of shutting in all the sunlight, and to find yourself in absolute darkness as the result of such folly. Had gods and bigots (they are both of the same species) been successful, the world would never have emerged from brutal savagery. The act of expulsion from Eden was one of mere spite—“*lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever.*” These wicked gods begrudged man knowledge. The serpent assisted him, and he won it in spite of them. Then they deprived him of immortality. Here, too, the monopoly proved fruitless. Men die; but the race of man still subsists. The gods die, and leave no successors. Most of them are dead. The Bible gods are as dead as the dead languages that record their deeds.

When the horse was gone God shut the stable-door, and set cherubs with a flaming sword to guard it! That is a specimen of divine wisdom. Had he but set that guard at first the serpent might never have got in; had he not made the serpent he could never have tempted Eve. Inexperience

and folly mark the whole of this story of the creation and fall. Nothing to equal it in these particulars can be found elsewhere. Most other nursery tales have some sense and some humanity in them; this is destitute of both, And yet this silliest of stories is taught still as divine truth even in Board schools, at the expense of the ratepayers. And those who laugh at it are sent to prison, for the gratification of bishops and other humbugs who fatten upon falsehoods and grow rich out of the credulity of the poor.

GENESIS IV.—This chapter gives an account of Cain and Abel. The former seems to have been a vegetarian and a sort of Buddhist, who refused to kill animals. Hence he offered the lord the fruits of the ground, which were scornfully refused. Abel offered him some fine fat rams, which delighted him. I presume the story was invented to throw discredit upon agriculture, inasmuch as ploughing or digging the soil disarranges the order of divine providence; while the mere cattle-breeder was supposed to be living in a state of friendship with the deities, only because he lived in a state of nature. The writer or inventor of the story was in favor of the nomad life of the desert, and so represented his god to be of the same sentiments. Cain, the farmer, should have had nothing to do with the shepard's god; he should have invented an agricultural god for his own particular benefit. And so to-day, Atheists and heretics can never please the gods that now exist; if they ever please any at all, they must make gods for themselves, as others have done. By the way, it is easier to invent a whole pantheon of gods than even one priest. A priest must be a man of some kind; a mere name or epithet will do for a god.

The writer of Hebrews (xi., 2) says that faith was the element that made Abel's sacrifice acceptable to the Lord; while the want of it led to the rejection of Cain's. That is sheer nonsense. The Lord wanted his breakfast, and a few good fat lambs were just what his appetite required. Besides, the way this writer puts it would lead to the conclusion that Cain, the man of no faith, persecuted to the death Abel, who had plenty of it! That is absurd. If Cain really did kill Abel in this religious quarrel, he must have been the more fanatical—that is, the better believer; and Abel the worse. It never has been otherwise; the man of no faith could not persecute a believer. He might punish any other fault, bu

not his religion, unless the religion led to open or secret acts of violence, and then not the religion, but the acts of violence would be punished.

Beloved reader, the lesson we learn from the story of those ancient brothers is one of deep significance. It will be observed that they quarrelled merely about religion, a thing neither of them understood. Before this we may suppose they had lived as became brothers. Now in their full manhood they fell out. Up to this time they seem to have had no religion; consequently all went merry as a marriage-bell with them. No sooner did they betake themselves to religion than they differed, grew warm, because the thing intoxicated them. They fought, and the stronger killed the weaker! It is a significant fact that the first time religion is introduced in the Bible it leads to fratricide. From that day till now the history of the Jewish-Christian religion is a history of quarrels, lies and blood. Therefore, have nothing to do with it.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? —iv., 9. Ah! If the Lord had only been present at the quarrel, he might have prevented the murder! But providence and policemen are generally out of the way when most needed. They are always at hand when sacrifices, offerings, and rewards are to be presented.

The sentence pronounced upon Cain is full of nonsense. *The earth was cursing him* (verse 11); *would refuse to yield him her strength when tilled!* Why, land saturated with blood, animal or human, is enriched thereby, and produces better crops for being so manured! Nor does it know the difference between a brother's blood and that of a dog. Scarcely can you take a step in the Bible without stumbling upon some gross superstition. So far is the earth from cursing those who saturate it with blood, that it yields better crops, for the murderer and anyone else for it.

(To be continued in No. 4).

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No. 2.] **BLOWS AT THE BIBLE.** [1d.

BY

JOSEPH SYMES.

THE LIFE OF ADAM.

THIS gentleman was the first that ever lived; his father's name was God (Luke iii., 38), and his mother was the earth or the ground (Genesis ii., 7). Adam was made, or begotten, or manufactured, or born, or produced twice at least. In the first instance he was made the same day with his wife, viz., on the first Saturday that ever dawned; and after this gigantic effort the creator dropped work, "rested and was refreshed" (Exodus xxxi., 17) during the first of Sundays, and has, we believe, done no work to speak of since.

At his first creation Adam found the world prepared for him. As Hood, one of his late descendants sung, he came

—————"tenderly ushered in
To a prospect all bright and burnished •
No tenant he for life's back slums—
He comes to the world as a gentleman comes
To a lodging ready furnished."

There was the earth, in all its vastness of glory, furnished with a crystalline roof (time, alas! has destroyed it long since), in which were fixed the sun, moon, and stars—now, sad to say, left to wander through space as best they can, with no firmament to hold them fast! What would the astronomer of to-day give to gaze upon the world as our first father saw it! Overhead that beautiful sapphire vault, roof at once of the lower world and floor of the musicians of the gods! What a pity it was ever permitted to decay! Had it been kept in proper repair the theologian might confound his sceptical foes by merely pointing upwards, and dramatically crying, "Behold!"

When Adam first opened his eyes upon the vegetable world no parasites were found anywhere, and a fungus had never a chance to grow. The leaves of the tree grew, but never decayed; the blossoms consolidated into fruit, the fruit ripened, but it never fell. The animals, too, were in a most extraordinary state. The lion played with the lamb, and the cat with the mouse; if the hawk chased the sparrow it was merely in fun; and the veriest cormorant to be found would as soon have dreamt of swallowing a crow-bar as a fish. In those days all beasts of prey browsed in the meadows; and the whales and sharks grew fat upon nought but sea-weeds. Then it was that tigers had neither fangs nor claws, the wasps no stings, the serpents no poison; mosquitoes had not yet left their eggs, the locusts had never begun to devour, and phylloxera and the Colorado beetle had never cast murderous eyes upon vine, grape or potato.

These were delightful times when our first parents sunned themselves in "Eden's bonny yard," untroubled by the nought of debt or danger, untrammelled with skirts or pantaloons, big romping babies that they were, the very image of their father!

But Adam's second Advent was different. In the first instance he was made, but of what material we know not; when he was made the second time it was of dust (Genesis ii., 7). Whether the dust was moistened and worked up with water, like plaster of Paris, is not said. A modern man consists chiefly of water; Adam's one element was dust. Whether it was stone dust, or clay dust, or saw dust, or gold dust, or diamond dust, or brick dust, or coal dust, or a mingling of them, we cannot say. Divine wisdom has not seen fit to enlighten us further than to condescend to inform us that our first father was made of the dust of the ground; and as the dust of the ground differs so in different regions, we must leave the solution of this interesting problem till the Great Day, when the whole of his descendants will, no doubt, rush to him simultaneously and exclaim, "Oh! Reverend sire, of what dust did thy creator form thee?" Adam's reply must, I am sorry to add, be postponed *sine die*.

As Adam consisted of dust, and as sons and fathers are usually of the same material, I presume it is but logical to infer that Adam's father—or God—was also of the dust. One thing is certain, he has been turned to dust or something

less substantial for many ages ; and his worshippers can no more find a relic of his than they can one of Eve's hair-pins.

When Adam was made on this second occasion, and the dust was worked up into its required form, proportions, symmetry, and consistency, his maker "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man (Adam) became a living soul." The result must be pronounced wonderful and altogether different from what might have been expected. It must be remembered that he breathed into Adam, that is, the creator breathed *out* of himself or expired his own breath ; and that breath would have poisoned Adam if he had been previously alive, for it must have been highly charged with carbonic acid. So it appears that what would kill a live man will make a dead man live.

Of course, we should not believe this story if we found it in Homer—unless we had been coaxed to believe it by a promise of heaven, or frightened to it by a threat of hell ; but seeing it is in the Bible, and reflecting that we must be damned if we doubt it, it seems safest to believe it.

When God the second time created Adam, he certainly did not improve upon his work ; for this time Adam found the earth bare ; he himself was the very first living thing created. When he awoke to life there was nothing to eat, no one to speak to. A little later he saw a garden rise suddenly around him, and then beasts, and birds, and insects crowded into life. But none of them suited him, though the creator seems to have tempted him to amalgamate with beasts. The Lord God thought it not good for Adam to be alone, and so gave him a sleeping draught of extra power, and while he lay in deep repose, proceeded to vivisect him. Opening the side of the sleeper, the surgeon-creator extracted a rib, and then stitched up the wound, leaving Adam a lighter if not a wiser man. Of the extracted rib the creator now made a woman. When Adam's skeleton is dug up it may easily be identified by being a rib short.

Here we face a decided difficulty. If Adam was an ordinary man, a rib of his would make but a very small woman, and merely a *bone* woman after all. A woman so small must have been a very poor "help meet" for Adam, even if consisting of bones and flesh and all things human ; and a woman of bone, whatever her size or shape, must have been

of far less value than one of ivory, not to mention marble or the precious metals.

This, however, is merely a sceptical difficulty, and decidedly dangerous. We prefer sticking to God's holy word, though we cannot tell how a rib, no more than a pound or so in weight, could become a woman, weighing 140 lbs. For if the rest of the material was taken from some other place, then manifestly only one hundred-and-fortieth part of Eve was due to that rib; and, therefore, the Lord God did not make that extracted rib a woman, as the story avers. It would have required all Adam's ribs and nearly all the rest of him to make a woman of respectable proportions as compared with himself. Still it is better to believe than be damned.

After his second creation, as just related, Adam—in company with Eve and the animals which he had named (if not baptised) before he lost his rib—lived very pleasantly in Paradise. This was a garden, as every Sunday scholar knows, "planted" in Eden, where grew the tree of life, of which if one ate he would never die (Genesis iii., 22), and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of which the happy couple were forbidden to eat on pain of death.

Thus says holy writ. But the sceptic will be sure to ask what sort of a tree it was? Why they were forbidden to eat of it? and how they could be awed by a threat they could not understand? These deep questions are far too profound for finite minds to solve, and we must leave them beneath the dark veil divine revelation has seen fit to shroud them in.

Alas!

"The best laid schemes o' mice and *gods*
Gang aft agley."

In stocking the world with animals the creator or creators had manufactured the serpent, and the "serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field," so much so that he began to talk; and soon he showed himself a more powerful and successful orator, reasoner and commander than all the creators together. The creator told Adam and Eve not to eat the tree or touch it, lest they should die. The serpent said, "Pooh! pooh. It's the best tree in all the garden—is good for food, is pleasant and agreeable; and, besides, it possesses the most astonishing educational properties; for you no sooner eat this fruit than you open your eyes, and know

good and evil ; in a word, Sir, Madam, you no sooner swallow a little of this delicious fruit than you become like the gods themselves, who, out of jealousy, have forbidden you to touch it."

No pedlar ever succeeded better, no quack doctor ever gained an easier victory. Before this, Eve would not have touched that tree for the world ; now she felt that she could eat every apple it bore. The serpent's eloquence and subtlety prevailed ; Eve ate two apples on the spot, and ran off with one in each hand to her husband, whom she speedily induced to follow her example and eat of this marvellous fruit. The serpent now chuckled with delight at the success of his exploit ; and Adam and Eve felt no worse, nor very much better for the new food.

Their deity, however, who had probably seen the serpent enter Paradise, suspected something wrong. He descended in haste, and began to look about among the trees and bushes for the disobedient pair. Adam heard him rustling through the long grass, and hid himself among the bushes, rightly judging that his maker was not in the sweetest of tempers. At length in desperation he cried, " Adam, where art thou ? Hast thou eaten of that tree ? " Not daring to hide longer, Adam now slowly crawled out of his hiding-place, begging his majesty not to be so angry with him, as in truth, the woman had pressed him to eat the fruit in question.

Still, the deity was not pacified, and he pronounced a curse upon Adam and his descendants, upon the ground, upon the poor woman, and upon the serpent that had deceived them ; and then went back again to his mansion, his wrath still burning as it will do for ever and ever.

This story, gentle reader, is extremely instructive. You know that there are thorns in the world ; they are the results of the above crime. Mothers, as you know, bear their offsprings in pain and sorrow ; it is because Eve ate an apple or two. All serpents go upon their belly ; that is because the first serpent, who, no doubt, crawled upon his back, tempted Eve to sin. Before that date pain and death were known only by name ; since then there has been little else. Hell, at that date, was peopled only by devils, and even they were not regular denizens, but merely occasional visitors ; ever since about that date, men and women, and children have been dropping into it in ever increasing numbers, whereas, not

a human being would ever have sniffed so much as a whiff of its sulphur, if Eve and Adam had not sinned. All which shows what sort of a thing divine justice is, and demonstrates that, of all beings known, none need so much to be civilised as the gods.

Adam and Eve were next driven out of Paradise to prevent their becoming gods, the older gods being afraid of the possible consequences. They knew that the serpent was too subtle for the best of them, and they, no doubt, feared that under his tuition Adam and Eve, should they eat of the Tree of Life, would be more than a match for them. Therefore, driving the unfortunate couple out, they guarded the gate of Paradise by cherubs with a flaming sword. Whether this was a Damascus blade or Toledo, I cannot say; antiquaries having never yet lighted upon it. Perhaps Dr. Schliemann, when he has finished Troy, Mycene, and other classical sites, may take a trip to Paradise to explore that region.

Some little time before this expulsion, the guilty pair took to vestments. They had been created naked; nor did their maker see the necessity of clothing them. Taking the hint, no doubt, from the "aprons" he saw them wearing on the day he cursed them, the creator next turned butcher, and killed two beasts and flayed them (we hope he did not flay them alive); then becoming a tailor, he made the skins into two coats *à la mode*, no doubt, for the man and woman. Clothes had not yet become "differentiated," and both sexes dressed alike; coats, then, were all-sufficient; it was a later civilisation that first demanded skirts and pantaloons.

After leaving Paradise, this interesting pair were blessed with a family of sons and daughters, who intermarried with each other, and came to but little good. The eldest son murdered the second, and then became a vagabond. Of the rest we know nothing; though to judge from their descendants, they were little to boast of. Adam himself lived no more than 930 years and then died. If any should fancy that he lived too long, let them reflect upon the misery he might have inflicted upon the world if he had never eaten the apple! In that case he would have lived for ever and have been an endless nuisance to mankind. Eve, I presume, never did die, for the Bible does not record any such event in

her history ; and I should not like to incur the "plagues" that will fall on those who "add to" the Word of God.

Such gentle reader, is a summary of the life of Adam (and Eve in part) as given in the Bible. It is very interesting and instructive, is it not? The lessons we learn are : never to listen to a talking, garrulous serpent ; never to eat forbidden fruit, nor too much of what is lawful ; and if we should ever have a chance to eat the fruit of the "Tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and also of the "Tree of life," the fate of Adam and Eve suggests that we should eat of the latter first, for that, it seems, will ensure our immortality, eat of the other while we may.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him."—1 John ii., 15.

THE apostle John, or indeed, all the apostles together, might utter this cry on any Exchange in the world, from morning to night, and from January to December, but he would make no impression. The assembled merchants, traders, stock-brokers, and what-not would vote him a nuisance, laugh at his fanaticism, chaff him and quiz him, or send for a policeman to take him in charge. The most pious present as well as the profane would all concur that the apostle was out of place ; that he should keep his sermon for Sunday, a day specially set apart in Protestant lands for hearing denunciations of the week's transactions and for forming resolutions and pious resolves—to be—more worldly during the week to come.

And if our Exchanges and emporia are not the appropriate places for such sermons, where shall they be preached. In the churches, of course : where, no doubt, the preacher would be listened to with profound and prayerful attention ; his words would sink deep into the hearts of the clergy, who would confess their sins, bewail their worldly-mindedness, acknowledge themselves "miserable sinners," as they really are, and declare that they desired only to hold the world with a slack hand, that they really valued nothing so little as the

dung and dross which constituted the world's wealth, that they cared only for the wealth that did not fade, the riches of the kingdom of heaven; and would pour out volumes of twaddle and heartless excuses, and resolutions never to be kept.

Tell the Archbishop of Canterbury that he will be shut out of heaven or be clapt into hell, and you hardly impress him. Tell him his palace is on fire, or his bank broken, his railway and other shares rendered useless through some commercial disaster, and he would turn white as a sheet and be ready to give up the ghost. Of course his grace does not really love the world and the things in it; but then it looks so much as if he did that neither you nor I, the Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, nor all together, with the Archbishop to assist us, could tell the difference between real worldly love and his grace's counterfeit.

If you and I, having none of the grace of God, had a splendid palace to live in, and £15,000 per annum to live upon, and great titles and huge honors into the bargain, we should almost certainly love them. But an archbishop has divine grace sufficient for his very trying position, and his strength is just sufficient to his day, and so exactly balances his income, perquisites and privileges, that this Right Rev. Father in God can love the world and the Father (*i.e.*, himself) both at once and about equally. And besides God the Father is not quite so particular now-a-days. In olden time, when he, like the Pope, ruled much of the world, he insisted upon all his rights and monopolies; now he has to beg a favor where he could formerly command; and, on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread, he accepts what he can get—just as all his followers do.

In dwelling profoundly upon this text, and with the assistance of the Holy Ghost who or which inspired it, I note that it is entirely out of harmony with, I won't say the world, but the churches of to-day; and, therefore, either the text or the churches must be faulty. The question is, Which? It cannot be supposed that so many churches are at fault; they would enlighten each other, and naturally criticise each other to so great an extent that any serious deviation from the truth amongst Christians is next to impossible, especially on so plain a subject as loving the world or the Father.

I presume it would be next to impossible for a person to have a strong liking for anything and yet not know it. If the Christians love the world, its wealth and pleasures, its pomps and vanities, they can hardly be ignorant of the fact. And if they love the Father to any great extent, they must know it, whether *he* does or not. It is also very unlikely that Christians could hide their preferences from their neighbors. If they love the Father and despise the world, people must know it; if they loved the world and despised the Father, they could not hide it. A tree is known by its fruits; and people's likes and dislikes are ascertained by their conduct.

Well, I know of no church that does not love the world most intensely; I know of no people who love it more than those who pretend to renounce it. And the text says the love of the father is not in such people. No doubt the text is a blunder. The Holy Ghost and John were but babies compared with the Christians of to-day. They thought that religion was to be distinguished from the world; the moderns have discovered that God and the world are both one, and that to love the Father is to love the world, and to renounce the world would amount to renouncing the Father, so they stick to both. Bravo! this is a grand discovery. And the Church was not long in making it when once those stupid apostles, who crucified the flesh, were dead and out of the way. Christians to-day crucify the flesh of others and spare their own—another great modern improvement.

To be sure, profane and illogical persons will say that if Christian conduct is right, the Bible must be wrong. Not at all. You must not understand either party seriously. When the Bible bids you not to love the world, it means the *other* world, not this; and when Christians to-day profess to think lightly of the world, they mean "the world to come." Christianity is a huge, grim, practical joke. The Church started by renouncing the world, and culminated in the possession of most of it; then the civil power had forcibly to wring from her her ill-gotten gains.

Churchmen still roll in riches and bedeck themselves with honors, though they profess to be followers of that Jesus who for their sakes became poor, and to be the spiritual descendants of men who voluntarily went about in sheep-skins and goat-skins. In their baptism, by godfathers and godmothers, they

renounce the world with its pomps and vanities, the flesh and the devil. This serves them for life. It is a wholesale confession, followed by plenary absolution for all the sins they will ever commit. Having thus hoodwinked the blessed Trinity, they ever after love the world with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and their neighbor, the flesh, as themselves.

I feel no doubt that Christianity and the churches' hypocrisy will some day stand exposed before all men, and become the world's laughing-stock. But the people are so blind and priest-ridden that it must take long to accomplish the work. In the meantime our duty is plain—to expose, to ridicule this greatest of shams with all our might.

THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION.

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews."—John iv., 22.

HERE is a text of three clauses, two false and one true. "Salvation is of the Jews!" This is absolutely contrary to fact. The Jews are a lost race themselves, and never afforded salvation to anybody. For well nigh 1,500 years they lived, if their chronology can be trusted, in Palestine. But during that long period they produced no philosopher, no great general, no architect, no discoverer, no scientist, no statesman, an indifferent poet or two, no inventor. From what, then, have the Jews contributed to save the world? The ancient Jews are remembered for almost nothing else than sundry superstitions; and superstitions are the curse, not the salvation of man. Had the Jews never existed, the Bible never been written, what would the world miss? That Jews in modern times have distinguished themselves I readily admit; but never except in the midst of Gentilism and under its inspiration.

Thus the last third of the text is disposed of as an empty boast.

"We know what we worship." This also is absolutely untrue. No Jew then, no Jew nor Christian since, ever

knew what he worshipped. The only persons who really do know their god or gods are those that worship tangible or visible objects. The worshippers of the golden calf, sun and fire worshippers, the devotees of stocks and blocks, of trees and running streams, knew something of their deities, though not much; for had they known the truth they would not, could not have worshipped.

This, too, is purely an empty boast, though quite worthy of the man who told people he lived before Abraham (John viii., 58), that he "came down from heaven" (John vi., 38), that "all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii., 18), and that he could raise the dead again to life (John xi., 25—27). His was just the spirit of every fanatic: "I am right, you are wrong. I am divine, you are stupid. I shall be saved, you will be damned—unless you submit to me and adopt my creed." It is a thousand pities there was no Freethinker present when Jesus and the woman of Samaria were conversing; for he could very soon have confounded both parties, and have exposed the pretended knowledge of deity which Mary's son was boasting of. Though probably the world might have had one more martyr to enroll in the "noble army;" for Jesus and his disciples (as soon as they arrived) would no doubt have flung the sceptic into "Jacob's well."

Finding no shred of truth in the second and third clauses, let us turn to the first. Every Christian will inform you that he worships "God," and all the sects of Christendom would have you believe that they all in common worship one and the same God; but of this they can have no proof whatsoever, and facts are against them,

I. Jews, Mahommedans, and Unitarians have a God who is one and indivisible. But that is only one section of the orthodox God. This God is the father of all, be it remembered—THE FATHER. He is the father of the earth and heavens, the sun, planets, comets, stars; the father of sunshine and storm, of flood and fire, of earthquake, volcano, epidemic and famine; the father of health and of all diseases; the father of vampires, serpents, snakes, fleas, bugs, mosquitos, Colorado beetles, locusts, sharks, lions, tigers, jackals, hyænas, trichina, and tape-worms; the father of murderers, robbers, pirates, popes, persecutors, and devils! What a family! And every one of them all is the very image of his dad.

What a father! What a God! What an object of worship! Verily I do not wonder that persons who can worship such a deity call Atheists fools—it is the very highest compliment they could pay us. No doubt the inmates of Bedlam, in like manner, regard all outsiders as idiots. And we cannot help it. We need never wonder that this God's worshippers behaved so idiotically and cruelly while in power.

II. Most Christians add two or more extra wings or sections to their deity, and increase him, at least by about two-thirds. They have the father, of course, and the Catholics very logically supply a fourth wing or section called the "Mother," while Protestants half acknowledge and half repudiate this addition. All, however, agree, except Unitarians, to accept the Son and Holy Ghost. The father is, they say, such from all eternity. But the son is of exactly the same age as his father, and of the same size, and never was any smaller. He was begotten, though never born, from all eternity. These two never began to be, yet one of them is father of the other; and, as far as a profane Atheist can perceive, either of them might equally well be the father or the son of the other. One wonders if the divine two ever get confused over the matter themselves! Possibly: they are both alike, both of an age, height, complexion, and it is not known how the one distinguishes himself from the other. They have never seen themselves, for certain, for they are both infinite, both occupy exactly the same space, they cannot move an inch out of each other's way, and no looking-glass could be large enough to reflect them, either singly or together. That is to be regretted. It is a pity they cannot see themselves.

Then, in addition to the two just named, there is the Holy Ghost. He, she, or it, is also infinite and eternal, and also occupies the same same space exactly that the Father and Son fill so absolutely. The three are most unfortunate. They are each infinite, and there is but one infinite room for them to occupy. Three infinite persons in one infinite room must be awfully uncomfortable, especially in hot weather. I suspect they suffocated each other long ago, or died of unendurable pressure.

To make things themselves a little more pleasant in their infinitely overcrowded one-roomed house, about 2,000 years ago it was decided that the Son should "be born again," and this time become a baby of 17 lbs. or so. It was done. This time he

had a different father, too. Tired of his old dad, he *chose* the Holy Ghost as his father this time, and the Holy Ghost chose a mother for him. The reader will not ask me to explain—I cannot. And all Christian divines, commentators, and gods are as helpless as I am in the matter. However, here we are, face to face, and at the same time back to back, with the Christian God! How beautifully simple the Gospel is! “A wayfaring man, though a fool (provided he *is* a fool, that is), need not err therein.” “He that runneth may read”—the posters are so large. 1st. A Father infinite and eternal; 2nd, a Son, ditto; 3rd, a Holy Ghost ditto; 4th, a woman finite and rather young; 5th, the Son of this woman and the Holy Ghost, formerly the infinite and eternal son of the father only, begotten but not born. These five or six persons are the two God the Fathers, the two God the Sons, and the Holy Ghost and Mary. Here we have a double Trinity in Unity; and thus the Christians are twice as well off in gods as they have ever directly let the world know.

Verily “great is the mystery of godliness!” “Who can know it?” The Christian God is the most unmitigated sham ever palmed off upon a credulous world. In fact, when they do not pay their devotions to Mammon, to sensuous pleasures, or other physical deities, all their worship is directed to they “know not what.” I would offer them a reward of £1,000,000 sterling, if I had it, on condition that they told me what their God is. They much need the money, but could never get it, for they “worship they know not what.” And if men were wise enough to see how they are duped, they would pay not a farthing more for or to the Gospel until its priests informed the public who or what it is they worship. In that case Christianity would be starved out in a few weeks. That fate awaits it.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

“*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*”—Acts v., 11.

No doubt! No doubt! Peter was now in power: the Church was at his feet. Peter, who always had a keen eye for the main chance; who gave up nothing himself for or to his

master except under promise of one hundredfold more in the time that then was, and in the world to come life everlasting (Matt. xix., 28, 29). The most unconscionable money-lender or bill-discounter in the world never excelled that. Peter was determined to do his best, while the new converts were at the white heat of their "first love" and religious excitement, to realise the promise of Jesus and secure the one-hundredfold here, at any rate, whatever might be his fate in the "life to come!"

In this respect, the followers of St. Peter, whether at Rome or elsewhere, have closely copied his meritorious example, and done their utmost to win the one-hundredfold, or the millionfold, if that were possible.

Of course Peter soon saw that it would be highly impolitic to allow these two, Ananias and his wife Sapphira, to give in just what they pleased to the exchequer of the Church—others might follow the example, and thus much wealth be diverted from the *proper* channel.

Besides, something bold and terrible needed to be done to impress the rabble, inside and outside the Church, with the power of this new movement, and especially the power of the leaders. It was not legitimate power they were content to wield, but the power of superstition. The Church started life without a single grain of objective truth; and to support itself was compelled to have constant recourse to the supernatural—that is, to fraud, to tricks, and to jugglery. Now, if Peter could only make away with Ananias and Sapphira, and give it out that the Holy Ghost had done it, what a deep and horrible impression it would create! and how effectually it would prevent anyone following the example of these two! So the deed was done.

I now proceed to give definite reasons for holding the opinion that the Holy Ghost did not kill these two, nor any other person of the Trinity:—

1. Those divine persons never hated lying—most of what they themselves are reported to have said is of that stamp.

2. They not only indulged in this weakness themselves, but had friends who did the same. Abraham told lies about Sarah; Jacob deceived his poor old blind father; Jesus said he came down from heaven—a manifest falsehood; Peter swore he did not know Jesus! Now, if the Holy Ghost wanted to make an example of any person why not of one

of those? 'Tis true, Jesus and Peter, if reports are to be credited, did die violent deaths. Is that to be regarded as proof that the Holy Ghost killed them for lying?

3. It has never been the practice of the Holy Ghost, Father, or Son to kill people for lying. If it had been, in what age of the church would there have been half-a-dozen saints left alive? Why, there never could have been a church without wholesale lying. The worst thing that could happen to any Church is the dissemination of truth. Lying! In it the Trinity, the church, and all other shams "live and move, and have their being." What! let the Holy Ghost go through the church to-day and slay all that preach false doctrine, and that do little else than teach conscious and unconscious lies, and the churches would be in the condition of Sennacherib's army—they would waken up next morning to "find that they were all dead corpses!" (Isaiah xxxvii., 36). No, my brethren, the Holy Ghost never did kill liars; they are his very best friends.

But if the Holy Ghost did not kill Ananias and Sapphira, who did? That is the question. There can be only one answer, and that is—Peter was their murderer. Look at the facts. They had offended Peter. He was furious with them. Both these persons died suddenly in a place where Peter and the officials of the Church were assembled. There were certain "young men" who at once disposed of the bodies. And that was the end of it.

1. Are Christians satisfied with the story and the conduct of Peter?

2. Could Peter possibly stand forth in a worse light?

3. How was it he did not challenge investigation? Why were the corpses so suddenly, and without the least examination, buried?

4. Would not an honest man or church have done something to clear themselves of suspicion in such a case?

5. What would a few able detectives and an honest coroner's jury have brought to light, had they investigated the Petro-Ananias and Sapphira case? It is a fortunate event for Christianity that it rose in an age and time when coroner's inquests were unknown, for in modern London the killing of these two would have resulted in the sudden death of the Church as well. And this double murder *will* eventually help to kill the Church. Murder will out; and the

blood of those two cries, not to heaven, but to common sense, for vengeance, and vengeance it will have.

There is nothing in the character of Peter to warrant or even suggest his innocence; and fanaticism and crime have generally gone hand in hand. Witness the bloodthirsty temper of Moses, of Joshua, of Abraham, of Jephtha, of the Jews who murdered Jesus, and of Jesus who threatened worse than murder against *all* who disbelieved and opposed him; witness the wholesale and horrible persecutions of the Church in all ages. Let any candid man weigh the matter, as if he were on a jury trying the case, and say whether, having regard to the whole circumstances and the almost invariable character of apostles, prophets, and religious leaders in all countries and ages, the chances are not a thousand to one that Peter, the first of Popes, did what Popes have rarely hesitated to do—committed murder for the sake of the Church's peace, and covered his crime by a dreadful falsehood in the interest of truth?

Lastly. I care not much who murdered Ananias and Sapphira—they were murdered, whether Peter or the Holy Ghost did it: the one had as a good right to kill as the other. And even if either had possessed that right, the two offenders should, in common justice, have had a fair and open trial. Instead of which, they were murdered without the least chance of self-defence.

We need not wonder that Christians to-day keep Mr. Bradlaugh from his seat by brute force; they have never been friends of justice—except for themselves. Their divine book gives no example of an honest criminal trial; the highest judicial proceedings known to the Bible and the blessed Trinity are just those of the barbarians or of the “unspeakable Turk,” when he exhibits himself in his worst possible fashion.

Reader, instead of “remembering Lot's wife,” Remember Ananias and Sapphira, who, whatever their character, were murdered for the good of the infant Church, as millions of innocent people have been for the same institution and principles in later centuries.

THE FREETHOUGHT

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BY

JOSEPH SYMES.

JUMPING COMMENTS ON GENESIS.

And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born (Genesis xxvii., 19).—Ananias and his wife were struck dead for lying; Jacob was protected and favored by the Lord immediately after this atrocious lie. As Jacob bamboozled his earthly father, so most Christians to-day treat their father who is in heaven. He is too blind to detect the fraud, or he would soon make short work of the bishops, who rob the poor Esaus of their birthright. Every priesthood lives by imitating Jacob. That is why the patriarch is so popular with them.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it (Genesis xxviii., 12).—This must have been a divine dream, or it would not have been recorded. A ladder reaching to heaven! How preposterous! Angels running up and down! This was probably before they were fledged, or, as someone has suggested, it may have been at the season when they were moulting, their wings then being too tattered for a lengthy flight.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not (Genesis xxviii., 16).—The saint did not know that his God was where he slept! He had evidently not said his prayers before going to sleep. He had left home without taking his God with him, and was startled to find him going on the same journey. *And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven* (verse 17). Ay! ay! it is always so. There is no place, except one, that saints find so dreadful as the gate of heaven, and that is the gate of its antipodes. If a saint ever needs comfort it is when in sight of the heavenly city. Then he sends for the doctor

—or two or three doctors, if he is rich enough—to kill the messenger, the disease, God has sent to call him home. If the doctors succeed, there is rejoicing; if they fail, the poor saint shuffles off his mortal coil as reluctantly as he would strip off his clothes in the Arctic regions; and he enters heaven (that is, exits from life) with a face as long as he would wear were he going to prison or the workhouse! Ah! yes—the gate of heaven is a dreadful spot, and I should not be surprised to find it worse inside than out.

And he took the stone that he had put for the pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it (verse 18).—Here we land in absolute and widespread idolatry. Jacob was a phallic worshipper, and he consecrated this stone in the usual manner, his God, of course, being quite delighted with the act. He anointed it, and so made a Christ of it, that is, an anointed, greased, or smeared one.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep (that is, protect) *me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee* (verses 20-22).—This text is full of the marrow of divinity. 1. Jacob enters into a bargain with God and puts him to the test. He will have nothing to do with a God that will do nothing for him. In that he was right. Neither will I. 2. The vow shows that Jacob had not yet received Jehovah into his pantheon, and was resolved to experiment upon him before he did. Right again. 3. If the God did his duty, he should have that *stone for his house!* Very kind of Jacob; and the God did not object. Perhaps the stone had a hole in it. 4. He will pay God ten per cent. of all that God gives him! That must have been very tempting to Jehovah; and we must suppose he at once fell in with the proposal and accepted the bargain.

NOTE.—We are often told of the disinterested love of God and his saints. But the article cannot be found in anything except words. The Bible exhibits no love but what expects a reward.

We shall see in the sequel that, whatever the Lord did, Jacob never performed his part of this vow. It was the offspring of panic, as most vows are, never meant to be kept, but

only to appease the present wrath of the deity and ward off a supposed or real danger. Religion, when dissected, is found to be selfishness consecrated.

The story of Jacob and his married life had better be left where it is—in the Bible, one of the few places really fit for it. Comment is both unnecessary and impossible.

The way in which Jacob contrived to grow rich at Laban's expense was clever, ay, miraculous—which shows that God was with the rogue all the way through. Honest men never get nor need his assistance. To judge from what the Bible teaches, especially in connexion with Jacob, Moses, Joshua and Elijah, Jehovah was the patron God of cut-throats, swindlers and thieves.

And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian (Genesis xxxi., 20).—Exactly so. Moses did the same from Egypt; and delivered the Israelites from slavery under pretence of going out for a holiday—that is, to worship. But God was with them.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day (Genesis xxxii., 24).—The context shows that the man was a god, whom Jacob saw "face to face." The struggle between the almighty and his servant Jacob, at that time nearly one hundred years old, if Bible chronology can be trusted, was a very severe and protracted one; and for a long period it was doubtful which would win. If I knew the language of the ring I would describe the scene; but I fear me that would prove as great a task for me as God found it to defend himself against Jacob. After several throws on each side—angels, no doubt, being seconds and bottle-holders—God gave in and acknowledged that Jacob was too many for him. He thereupon surrendered the belt, and begged Jacob to permit him to retire. When he got back to heaven, I have been told, nobody knew him. His wig, like John Gilpin's, was "upon the road," and his person was all bespattered and covered with dust and perspiration. However, a hot bath and a week's rest put him all right again. It may be remarked that Jehovah rested only one day after the week he spent in creating all things. If I am rightly informed, he needed seven times the repose after this wrestling bout. True, he was 2,000 years older at the time he entered the ring with Jacob, though even then he had not reached the years of discretion.

Genesis xxxiv. must be passed over with the remark that Jacob's sons were chips of the old block in cunning, as may be seen in their murders and plunder of Hamor and his son. Jacob chid them, it is true, but only because he feared the revenge of his neighbors. Saints usually love the Lord their God, *alias* themselves, with all their heart, and so have no love left for other people.

And Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem (Genesis xxxv., 4).—Jacob had been in Canaan now for a long period, and yet had not paid his vow to God; and the latter reminded him that the debt was still standing, and ordered him to the place where he had seen the ladder reaching up into heaven. Though Jacob had conquered Jehovah in the ring, he still deemed it best to be on good terms with him. So he packed up to go to Bethel to worship, and he told his household to put away the *other* gods they had. Those were handed over to Jacob, and he merely buried them along with certain jewels and trinkets under the tree. This was merely a compromise; the other gods were merely put out of the way while Jehovah was being attended to—just as people to-day go to churches and chapels, where they pretend to worship God; though they are merely enduring the "service" until they can rush back again to the pleasures and riches they left behind them.

Jacob built his altar to God and offered sacrifice; but he did not give the tenth of all he had, as he had promised when he had nothing at all to give. Of course not. Whoever thinks of keeping his word with Jehovah? With whom does Jehovah keep his pledges?

And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel (Genesis xxxvi. 31).—This is genuine revelation, and shows us that Moses did not write Genesis. It must have been written after Saul and David, for kings of Israel are mentioned as having reigned at the time the writer lived. We know not who did write Genesis. We know Moses did not; unless his book has been largely interpolated and corrupted. Though it matters not the least who wrote it; one man is as likely to be inspired as any other.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children (Genesis xxxvii., 3).—Gods and saints usually have favorites; and nothing better exhibits their weakness. Jacob loved Joseph,

made a regular guy of him with a harlequin's coat; he became a spy upon his brothers, and reported what he saw to his father. His brothers hated him, and sold him; and that was as good as he deserved. Joseph in Egypt turned out a full-blown professor of dreams, as his brothers had sneeringly called him (xxxvii., 19); married the daughter of a priest of On, or Heliopolis, a heathen; became grand vizier of Pharaoh (a purely fabulous title, by the way), gathered up the corn during the years of plenty, sold it out during the famine for the people's money, cattle, land, and *themselves*, thus making all the people absolute slaves to the king. No doubt the writer thought he was sketching a splendid and saintly character; in truth he has presented us with one of the very worst tools of despotism. He never interfered with the lands of the priesthood (a priest wrote the story); their organisation was too powerful, and Joseph was too closely allied to that guild to interfere with their possessions.

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him (Genesis l., 1).—Joseph was very affectionate. For many years he enjoyed himself in Egypt without ever inquiring for his friends, and would probably never have sought them again if the famine had not thrown them in his way; yet he makes an awful fuss now when he finds them and afterwards when his father was dead!

My jumping, capering comments have now run quite through the book of Genesis. I may just remark that many people will regard my comments as altogether inadequate, and even positively faulty in all respects. Well! I have written as I thought best under the circumstances, and for the end I had in view; as I have consulted my own whims and fancies in writing, I should be sorry not to allow the reader the same liberty.

My comments, faulty as they may be, are quite worthy of the Bible, *regarded as a divine revelation*; considered as an antiquity, no comment can be too good for it. My object is not to damage the Bible, but to render it impossible for men to damage themselves by worshipping it or its worn-out God. Still I must say, my comment is more honest and straightforward than any orthodox one ever written upon the Bible; for I have not perverted a single text to support foregone conclusions; while orthodox commentaries consist of little else than perversions of that nature.

THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE following true and faithful history of Jesus has just been handed to me by the Holy Ghost for publication. This is true, as true as the Bible. If any wicked sceptic disbelieves it, I will not send him to hell—I would scorn to do such a mean trick—but I will prove by a miracle that “my record is true.” I will even do this—Let a bishop or Tyler drink enough strychnine to kill him; and when he is dead, I will restore him to life. If Christians will not submit to so simple and safe a test, let them doubt as they will; I will not waste time in arguing with such idiotic people. The story I have to relate is so evidently penned by the Holy Ghost—its morals are so pure, its tone so serious and grand, its revelations so far beyond the reach of mere reason, so immensely transcending all that science or even romance ever wrote—that any person with the least pretence to spiritual insight must at once acknowledge that it could not have been written by a mere man. Therefore, let all who value their credit for intelligence, and who do not wish to be regarded as lunatics, acknowledge at once that the following history is of divine inspiration.

The Holy Ghost told me, as he handed over the manuscript, that he supposed few would believe it. He had never been very successful since intelligence and science got abroad; but still he thought it his duty to do what he could. “At all events,” said he, “publish it. I give you *carte blanche* as to what you shall give to the world and what omit. You understand the ways of the world better than I, and I am bound to say I am delighted to have secured you as my editor and literary executor. This is my last work; and I wish you to render it as attractive as you can. A little embellishment, I presume, will not be amiss; and, of course, you are at liberty to expand the miracles a little if you do not think them striking enough for popular taste. I am told that sensation is now the order of the day, especially with the churches; so do not be over-scrupulous.”

I promised to do my best, and the Holy Ghost left. All this, reader, is TRUE!—as true, I am bound to say, as that

Moses saw the western side of God ; as true as that the walls of Jericho fell at the blast of rams' horns ; as true as that Jesus came down from heaven ; as true as that Paul was caught up to the third heaven ; as true as that Tyler is honest or sensible. And thou knowest, thou sceptical reader, thou ! that nothing can be truer than these.

If the wicked infidel wants further proof still that this gospel is true, be it known unto him that I once went up to the sixty-fifth heaven, and saw Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob there, carrying on their old tricks as upon earth. There I saw the beasts full of eyes before and behind ; and one of them calved while I was there. In fact, there is a whole menagerie of curious beasts there now ; and they are getting so numerous that they wished me to buy up a number for exportation. But it was not in my line. I was told that they made Jacob the head overseer of all the animals, with all the young beasts of a certain color that might be born as his wages. Jacob, true to his character, increased his own share artificially as he did when under Laban (Gen. xxx., 37). When caught he denied it, but truthful Peter gave evidence against him ; and "immediately the cock crew." Then they sent Jacob for twenty years to hell ; but the Lord was with him.

Thou foolish sceptic, dost thou now believe ? If thou believest not me who have been to the sixty-fifth heaven, how canst thou believe Paul, who rose no higher than the third ? Wilt thou compel me to boast yet further ? Be it so. I will conquer thy unbelief. Once on a time, about three thousand years before I was born (John viii., 58), I was on tramp ; and coming to a mountain that stood in my way I bade it be gone, and it skipped away like a sky-rocket, and I saw it no more. Where the mountain stood there remained a hole of immense size. Into that hole ran the river Jordan ; and that hole is the Dead Sea ! Dost thou now believe that I am inspired by the Holy Ghost ? If not, I leave thee to thy hardness of heart. Go thy way. Read this new gospel. And may it open thine eyes ! Amen.

THE GOSPEL.

Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise : His mother Mary had been a nun, and her cousin Elizabeth had been one also. Now Elizabeth was gay, and her husband Zacharias was old and well-stricken in years. And, behold, an angel of the

Lord, about twenty-five, who served the Lord day and night as a monk in a convent near her dwelling, came unto her by night, and prophesied that she should have a son.* And in process of time his prophecy was fulfilled.

Now it came to pass that for many days the husband of Elizabeth, even the aged Zacharias, who was not ignorant of the ways of the Lord's angels, was dumb, and spake not unto his wife either good or bad, for he perceived that she was too subtil for him. Nor yet did he open his mouth when her cousin Mary came to commune with her.

Now Mary, being young and well-favored, was betrothed unto a man named Joseph, by trade a carpenter. And lo, he was good-natured and gentle, one that feared God and his espoused wife, believing all things, hoping all things. But when he perceived that Mary was as became her not, he was perplexed. Although he was aware that Gabriel, another angel of the Lord, who was also a monk, had visited her, saying, "All hail, *beau ideal* of women! The Lord hath chosen thee to be his friend!" Mary not comprehending the salutation, the angel explained, and went his way.

Now it came to pass as Joseph was sore perplexed and in desperation, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him by night and pleasantly greeted him, and bade him be of good cheer † And the angel said, moreover, forasmuch as thou art poor, behold, the Lord hath sent thee one hundred pieces of silver to cheer thy heart withal. And Joseph was content, and took his espoused wife unto himself.

Now when Jesus was born, there came twenty-five venerable handmaidens of the Lord to commune with the young child and his mother, for he was filled with marvellous wisdom even before he was born, and could even speak "as never man spake" before he could suck; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Now the first words that Jesus uttered were these: "Bring hither those mine enemies, and slay them before me!" And Joseph, being astonished at the miracle, even took his axe, and slew fifty thousand and three-score and ten of the old women, as

* Using my discretion, I omit a few sentences here from the Holy Ghost's narrative, which are scarcely fit for ears polite.

† Here again I am compelled to omit a few sentences from the Holy Ghost's narrative.

it is written in the book of Samuel the prophet concerning the men of Beth-shemesh.* And all that heard thereof were amazed, and gave glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will towards men. But when the king heard thereof he was wrath, and sought to kill Joseph and Mary and the young child. But Gabriel came to Joseph by night, saying, "Up! Why tarriest thou? Take the baby and his mother, and get thee into the land of Egypt, and dwell there till I send thee word; for the king seeks the young child's life."

Then Joseph arose and took the young child and Mary his mother, and fled to the land of Egypt; and there they remained until the death of the king, which was accelerated by Gabriel, who was even the king's confessor; and he gave unto him the sacrament, and the king was sick, and lay down upon his bed, and gave up the ghost.

Then did Gabriel send to Joseph, saying, "Up, return to thine own land, and bring the young child and his mother with thee, for thine enemy is dead. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

But, behold, or ever the message came Joseph was ready, knowing that the king was dead. For it came to pass that as the king gave up the ghost, even in that self-same moment, Jesus rose in his cradle and cried, "Return to thy own land, for thine enemy is dead!" And immediately he turned his cradle into an ass, ready saddled for the journey! And all that heard it did marvel beyond measure, saying, "Why should a child of so great power and wisdom flee from his enemies?" But all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Behold, I will confound the wisdom of the wise; and fools and folly shall be exalted!"

And when Jesus was about fifteen months old he went into the temple, even into the place where the scribes and elders and bishops and all the Levites were diligently reading the word of the Lord, and religiously quarrelling about the meaning and interpretation thereof. And one said on this wise, and another on that; and there was no wisdom nor agreement amongst them, for the Lord had confounded them by giving a revelation which no man in heaven or earth could

* 1 Samuel vi., 19.

understand. And behold, they did chide, and foam at the mouth, and gnash with their teeth, and curse every man his fellow because of the multitude of opinions that prevailed. Then Jesus stood in the midst of them and asked them questions, and gave them answers which astounded all those that heard him. And his fame spread abroad throughout the whole region and to every nation which is under heaven, inso-much that the newspapers reported nothing else but the sayings of Jesus for weeks thereafter.

Then did Mary and her husband suddenly rush into the temple, and when they found the child they took him away to their home; and Mary said, "Why hast thou done thus unto us?" Then answered Jesus and said unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? I'll tell the old man of Gabriel's visits, if you don't mind." And Mary kept that saying, and treasured it up in her heart.

After these things Jesus went out to the river Jordan, where his cousin John was conducting Salvation Army work and dipping the people into the river to wash away their sins. And Jesus, feeling his need of cleansing, prevailed upon John to dip him. He stayed in the water too long, and caught a violent chill. This brought on a fever and delirium, during which he raved about a spirit (*it was not I, certainly) driving him into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.

And, behold, Jesus, as he lay in his fever, did rave exceedingly, and said that the Devil had come to him in the wilderness, where he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and was very hungry. The Devil brought unto him a pig and tempted him to eat it; but he repelled the temptation with horror. Then the Devil caught him up and flew with him to a battlement of the temple and hurled him over; but an angel caught him before he fell to the earth. Then the Devil took him away to a mountain exceedingly high, and showed him all the cities and kingdoms of the world, even in both hemispheres at one view; and promised to make him the ruler of them all, if he would only worship him. This he refused to do. And the Devil left him there upon the mountain, cold and hungry, and not knowing which way to turn to find his road home. Then an army of angels, as soon as the Devil was out of sight, and they were no longer afraid of him, took

* Parenthesis by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus up and bore him home to his bed in a moment of time. And behold, he awoke and told his vision to his Mother Mary; and she perceived thereby that her son would be great, and that divine wisdom dwelt in him more than in all the prophets that were before him.

And Jesus, when the fever had left him chose twelve disciples, and their names were these: Simon *alias* Peter; Andrew (Peter's brother); James and John Zebedee (also brothers); Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas *alias* Didymus; Matthew *alias* Levi; James Alphæus; Lebbaeus *alias* Thaddæus; Simon the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot. These he sent out to preach his Gospel. They were bidden not to meddle with Gentiles, but only Jews; and to cry as they went, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" They were commanded to heal the sick and to cast out devils; for Jesus would never forgive the king of the devils for tempting him to eat pork. Therefore, would he have war with him and his angels for ever. And he commanded them, moreover, to raise the dead to life. They were forbidden to take any gold, silver, or brass with them; he commanded them not to have two coats; and to wear sandals instead of shoes.

Then the disciples went everywhere shouting their cry "The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" and healing the sick and raising the dead in multitudes; insomuch that the doctors and undertakers and the parsons were deprived of their occupation and their burial fees; and they cried out against the disciples with an exceeding bitter cry. And all as many as held property under their fathers' wills, when they found their parents and ancestors rising up to life again, did gnash their teeth with rage against the disciples of Jesus. And it came to pass that all the devils whom they had cast out did unite with the physicians, and the undertakers, and those whom their fathers had disturbed and dispossessed, and the parsons who had lost their fees: and they set upon the disciples, and drove them out of their cities. And all men wondered at that which they beheld, and said, "Why could not those men who raised the dead defend themselves against the living?"

After these things Jesus and his disciples and his mother went to a wedding, so that the wine ran short. But Jesus turned a large cistern full of water into prime old port; and then "the fun grew fast and furious;" and many good toasts were drunk and good songs were sung. And they all sang a

new song, even the song of Moses and of the lamb, in honor of Jesus, saying,

“For he’s a jolly good fellow!
For he’s a jolly good fellow!
For he’s a jolly good fellow!
Which nobody can deny,” etc.

And passing on from thence Jesus met one thousand old women, very decrepid, withered and toothless. And when they asked alms of him, he said, “What will ye that I should do unto you?” And they say unto him, “Lord, that we may be restored to our youth and beauty.” And he healed them all, insomuch that they became the most beautiful women upon earth. Some of them remain even unto this day “to witness if I lie.” And when this was noised abroad, behold, all that had old and decrepid wives and sisters besought him to heal them also. But he passed by and hid himself in a desert place.

And his disciples went into a ship to cross over the sea; and lo, a great wind arose, and the ship was in danger of being overwhelmed in the midst of the sea. And the disciples, as becometh good Christians, were sore afraid, saying, “Alas! must we enter into the New Jerusalem before our time?” And Jesus breathed upon the sea and it dried up; and he turned the ship into a chariot, and six sharks into horses, and thus rode, he and his disciples to their own home. And all men, as many as heard it, did marvel greatly at those things that were done.

And going on from thence he met a man who had fifty million devils in him. And he cast them all out, and the man was empty. And the devils he sent into a herd of swine; and behold, the pigs began to fly like eagles, until they were over the sea. And then did they all tumble into the water, and were drowned, they and the devils also. And when the owners of the pigs heard thereof, they ran out, they and their neighbors, and chased Jesus out of that region.

And when he came to a fig-tree, he went to see if there were any figs thereupon; for he was very hungry. But the season for figs was not yet come, and he found nothing on it but leaves. Then he began to curse and to swear, and the fig-tree turned as pale as death with fright, and entreated Jesus not to curse it so, for it was unreasonable to expect figs out

of season. But Jesus gave no heed to its entreaty, but he answered and said, "Because thou hast not borne figs to feed me when I am in need, henceforth let no figs grow on thee for ever! Selah!" And it came to pass that the fig-tree, being condemned in his own conscience, suddenly fell down and gave up the ghost, and became a pillar of salt, as it is written in the book of Moses concerning Lot's wife. And behold the man whose fig-tree it was did weep and lament exceeding sore, both he and his wife and family, for that which had befallen their tree.

And going on from thence, there encountered them certain of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And it came to pass that as they chid him and mocked him, behold he performed a miracle and turned them all into cabbages; and when the sun shone hot upon them, having no root, they withered away. And all men wondered at that which had come to pass.

Then began Jesus to say unto his disciples and to the multitude, "Behold, I came down from heaven." And they said unto him, "When didst thou descend from heaven? Lo, wast thou not born in Bethlehem? Didst thou come from heaven before thou wast born? Or hast thou been up to heaven and returned therefrom? Tell us, we pray thee, what explanation thou canst give." And Jesus was wrath, and said, "He that believeth not shall be damned. It shall be worse for you that doubt my words than for Sodom and Gomorrah." And he shook off the dust of his feet against them, and went his way.

And in those days when work was disagreeable and alms were hard to get, Jesus and his disciples went a-fishing; but Jesus himself remained upon the shore. And, behold, as they rowed and toiled the fish would not enter into their net, and the disciples knew not what to do, being sore perplexed. Then Jesus, who was skilled in magic, waved his hands over the sea, and the spirit of God descended upon the fishes like a mighty rushing wind; and the disciples caught three thousand of them in the twinkling of an eye. And when they drew the net to land the fishes fell down before him and worshipped him, saying, "Verily, thou art the Son of God."*

Then Jesus began to say unto the twelve, "Whosoever he

* One version reads, "Verily, thou art a son of a gun." But this is most probably spurious; for guns were unknown in those days.

third part of the sea became blood; and a third of all fishes and ships were destroyed. Then he smote the sun, moon, and stars, and darkened one third of them. And he opened the door of the bottomless pit, and let out the fiery locusts which were shut up there; and they destroyed one-third of mankind.

Then he mounted a white horse which came from heaven, and called himself King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and he led his armies to war, all riding upon white horses, and there was an exceedingly great slaughter, so that the blood rose even unto the horse-bridles for the space of 200 miles! Then did he invite the beasts and birds of prey to come and feast themselves upon the flesh of the millions who had fallen in battle, for he refused them decent burial because of his hatred of them.

It came to pass after these things that Judas, one of his disciples, betrayed him into the hands of his enemies. He did it on this wise. Finding his master asleep, he took away his magic wand, and cut off his hair, wherein resided his great power. Then he became powerless and like another man. Then did Judas conduct his enemies to him, and they caught him and bound him, and led him away captive, and they carried him to Egypt and there crucified him (Rev. xi., 8).

Then one of his followers, Mary by name, whose character was not the best, and out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils, pretended to have seen him after his death. But even his disciples treated the tale as a ghost story. They, however, believed that, like Hercules and Adonis and Osiris, he had been raised to heaven; and some there are who believe it even unto this day.

He that testifieth these things saith true. And if he had written all that Jesus said and did, the world itself would be too small to hold the books that would be written. **HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL BE TAKEN INTO THE HEAVENLY ASYLUM, EVEN THE NEW JERUSALEM; he that believeth not shall be condemned to wander with the wise ones of the earth, and be at large and at liberty all the days of his life. Amen!**