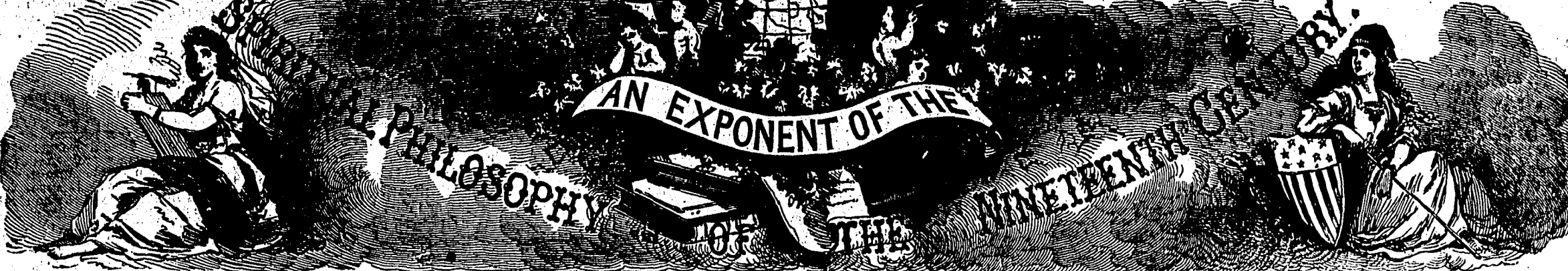


BANNER OF LIGHT.



VOL. LX.

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Free Thought.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

This question was recently asked in your columns by a veteran correspondent, but no answer was given. It seems to me desirable to endeavor to attain some definite ideas on a subject so much talked about, but respecting which such vague and confused notions often prevail. In my view, an important distinction exists between Religion and a religion. Of course, it would be very presumptuous for one so young as myself to think of teaching your venerable correspondent on this or any other subject. But since Spiritualists have not yet elected a Pope to tell them just what is true and what is not, it may be allowable, with your permission, that I should "show mine opinion," with the reasons for it; and these reasons, if well founded, may possibly be of some use to readers who are still younger than myself. I am not anxious for "the last word," and have no fears of being "bushed"; but I am anxious to arrive at the truth, even if it requires the whole of life here and hereafter to attain it, and the giving up of all cherished notions to accept it. I have, at present, but little time for writing, and must be as brief as possible.

Let me premise, in order to correct misapprehensions that seem to exist, that I am not a wholesale advocate or defender of Christianity, either modern or primitive. I have never assumed the name of "Christian Spiritualist"; nor even that of "Christian," since I withdrew from the church, and the church from me, more than thirty years ago. I do not undertake to judge all other religions by Christianity, but I am an earnest student of all religions as I have opportunity, and judge all in the light of spiritual truth in its latest and highest revelations, as I am able to understand them. I recognize in all religious systems the earnest endeavors of the human mind, in various stages of growth and enlightenment, to solve the great problems of existence and of Deity, Duty and Destiny; and regard these endeavors as worthy of respectful study and sympathetic appreciation, with cordial recognition of all the truths attained, rather than mere contempt and ridicule for mistakes and errors not perceived. As to Christianity, there are many things taught as such which I utterly repudiate and abhor; I have only urged that what is clearly true in it (that is, true to enlightened spiritual perceptions) should be recognized and respected as eternal truth, instead of being rejected, caricatured and ridiculed, because misconceived and perverted by unspiritual minds. And this seems to be the "head and front of my offending" in the eyes of some persons, on whom the bare mention of Christianity appears to have a similar effect to that produced by the sight of a red flag on an irascible bovine!

I urge the same hospitality and catholic spirit toward all other religious systems, and find much of truth in all, so far as I have investigated. I may be poorly qualified to judge between them, as has been kindly intimated; but I am unaware of any partiality, and it seems to me that a disposition and ability to find good in all is a much better qualification for just judgment than is a life-long habit of hostility against any one of them. And I do not think it necessary or wise for me to wait for "the other world" to decide between the various systems of religion, or what I shall believe in regard to any of them—since I find "the other world" no more agreed in the matter than is this world—nor likely to be at present. It is for me, here and now, to rid myself of all prejudices for or against, and to cultivate my own spiritual perceptions till I can see and know for myself what is true and good—thankfully accepting any aid which wiser ones in or out of the body can bring me.

I would further premise—as I have repeatedly declared for years, but which declaration seems to have been overlooked—that I am not in favor of any attempt to "fix up a creed, or frame articles of belief, or even a moral standard, for Spiritualists," as such, or with a view to uniting them in one organized body—believing such an undertaking to be utterly impracticable and impossible, even if for any reason desirable. What I am in favor of is the formation of local societies for objects of practical utility—not alone for the promulgation of Spiritualism merely as a doctrine or theory, but for the comprehensive promotion of human welfare as a Brotherhood, or the application of spiritual truth to life in all its varied interests; which of course includes all-sided culture of the human faculties—the religious as well as the intellectual, moral, social and spiritual. The religious, I have urged, should not be ignored, any more than any other department of human nature; and hence the societies should be in part religious, as men are. As a matter of course, those persons only can unite in such a work who are agreed in certain fundamental truths or principles, and a statement of these is necessary as a basis of union—not to be "imposed" on anybody, but to be freely accepted by such as see it to be "true, and wish to work for its furtherance." When a number of such local societies exist, and in good working order, if they find that certain objects of common interest can be better promoted by a general union, then, in my opinion, will be the time to form such a union; but it should have nothing to do with determining articles of faith or doctrine. These should be decided by each individual for himself, before entering a local society; and those who cannot agree with others, or do not wish to engage in any such work, would be

at perfect liberty to stay outside, and should do so. This, I am sure, is good common sense, and will one day be acted upon by common sense people.

Now I think we are ready for the question, WHAT IS RELIGION? Your correspondent affirms, and I believe, that "man is by nature a religious being," which is an important common ground to start from. Now let us try to find out what it is to be religious, or in what the essence of Religion consists. If I recollect rightly, he has said somewhere (though not in the article referred to,) that "Religion is devotion to truth." This is very well, as far as it goes, but in my view it does not cover the whole ground. Religion undoubtedly includes, or should include, devotion to truth, but this is not the whole of it. The only thing like a definition of religion in the primitive Christian writings is that given by James, who says (1: 27): "Pure religion and undefiled... is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unstained from the world." This, no doubt, is "pure religion," but not by any means the whole of it, at least as the term is modernly used.

Worcester defines Religion as: "1. An acknowledgment of our obligation to God as our Creator, with a feeling of reverence and love, and consequent duty or obedience to him; duty to God and to his creatures; practical piety, godliness, devotion; devoutness; holiness. 2. A particular system of faith or worship. 3. Religious rites." Webster defines it as, "1. The recognition of God as an object of worship, love, obedience; right feelings toward God as rightly apprehended; piety." These definitions sufficiently show that, in ordinary modern usage, Religion includes a good deal more than either devotion to truth, or the practice of benevolence to a special class of afflicted persons, with unspottedness from the world, whatever that may mean. It includes at least, 1. A recognition of God, in some way (not necessarily any particular conception of God); 2. A feeling of obligation or duty; 3. A feeling of reverence or worship; 4. A feeling of love. It is partly intellectual, but mainly emotional.

Now, how far are these definitions in accord with the derivation of the word and with the facts of human nature?

The word Religion we find to be of Roman or Latin origin. By one ancient authority (Lactantius) it was derived from the words *re* and *ligo*, to bind again, or to bind anew—the essential idea being the recognition of obligation or duty. By another and probably more correct authority (Cicero, the orator), it is compounded of *re* and *lego*, meaning to re-read or re-consider—the main idea being consideration or thoughtfulness. Both of these qualities—that is, the sense of duty, or conscience, and consideration, or thoughtfulness—are surely essential elements of a worthy and well-rounded character, indispensable to a true man or woman. But, whatever the primitive source of the word, it seems plain that, in the form of *religions*, it came in time to include the feeling of reverence and regard for the gods, or for whatever was deemed superior, mysterious or powerful. "It was applied by the Romans," says Chambers's Encyclopedia, "to all actions in which men are guided, not by motives deducible from the ordinary course of nature, but by regard to some unseen power or mysterious influence."

Such was the ancient significance of the term. Now is there anything in the known constitution of the universe or of man to justify the continued use of this term?

The best modern thought recognizes the fact that even "the ordinary course of nature" is impelled and sustained by "an unseen Power or mysterious influence," which has been termed by philosophic scientists "the Supreme Energy," "the Cosmic Life," etc. These are only philosophic terms for what is popularly called "God," or anciently "the gods." And there can be no question but that, in all well-constituted or well-balanced minds, the thoughtful contemplation of this Supreme Energy, which has wrought and is ever working such stupendous effects as are seen in the world around and within us—a Power which is not only ever evolving and sustaining the material universe on the grandest conceivable scale, but is also evidently working for improvement, or "making for righteousness" on the moral plane—the thoughtful contemplation of this Power, however imperfectly comprehended, tends to produce feelings of veneration, or profound reverence.

More than this: enlightened contemplation of and reverence for the "Supreme Energy" usually and naturally begets more or less of trust or faith in that Power—that is, trust in its superior wisdom, its goodness, and unvariableness. This trust, again, generates hope, or expectation of good; and these several emotions naturally result in love, or ardent admiration and affection toward this inscrutable source of Life, which has in some way brought us into existence, and hence is in a real sense our Great Parent. Moreover, this love, once awakened, naturally flows out toward all offspring of the same infinite Parental Source, and thus becomes Universal Benevolence.

Hence we find, in well-developed human nature, a group of normal faculties, sentiments or emotions closely allied to each other, manifesting themselves, like all other faculties, through the brain, and affirmed by students of phrenology or oratology to have special organs of manifestation. These have been termed the "Religious Group," and specifically named as follows: 1. "Conscientiousness"—love of right, sense of duty or obligation. 2. "Veneration"—reverence, devotion, respect. 3. "Hope"—expectation of good. 4. "Spirituality"—intuition, "inner light," faith or trust, etc. (This was by the early phrenologists called "marvelousness," or credulity; but marvelousness is plainly its excess or perversion.) 5. "Benevolence"—kindness, philanthropy, or universal love.

Moreover, these alleged cerebral organs, with one exception, are by phrenologists located in the front top head, where, when well developed, they impart a symmetry, nobleness and dignity to the human physiognomy which are its crowning glory. They are thought to be the latest and highest characteristics evolved in man as he has slowly risen above the animal. The lack of them, or either of them, is a physical deformity, visible at a glance by a practiced eye. Whatever may be thought of phrenology as a science, it is undeniable that some human beings do exhibit these qualities, and that where they are well-balanced and not in excess they impart an excellence, beauty and loveliness of character not seen in those who are lacking in either of them. In fact, the lack of either of these qualities—as shown in want of conscience, irreverence, habits of disrespect or boorishness, despondency, habitual distrust, stolid unbelief in anything spiritual, selfishness or cruelty—is an actual moral deformity, unlovely and repulsive to every cultivated mind.

The faculties or qualities named as the "Religious Group," may be exercised toward either our human fellow-beings, or any beings of higher grade that may be believed to exist (as "the gods," once generally recognized and revered, and not without reason, by the most intelligent of mankind), or toward the Infinite Source of Being, however conceived of or named, whose existence is a necessity to the well-constituted and enlightened modern mind. As exercised toward our fellow-mortals, the action of these faculties belongs to the sphere of Morals; but when such action has any reference to supposed superior beings, or to a Supreme Being or Power, it is termed RELIGION. Its essence is feeling or emotion—namely, the feelings of obligation, reverence, trust, hope and love. But these feelings are powerful incentives to action, which action will be beneficent and joy-giving (or right) in proportion as it is directed by worthy or right conceptions of the Infinite Life.

These conceptions of Deity are formed in the intellect, which is quite a distinct department of the mental constitution; and hence they will be worthy or unworthy, grand or ignoble, true or false, according as the individual intellect is expanded and enlightened, or narrow and ignorant. It is these intellectual conceptions of God, or what men imagine and believe that he is and requires, that constitute "a particular system of faith or worship"—that is, a religion. Hence the clear distinction that exists, and should ever be made, between Religion and a religion. The former, as has been shown, consists of certain spontaneous feelings or emotions that arise in view of certain facts or supposed facts of the universe, and are common to all well developed minds—the same everywhere and in all; while the latter is a series of ideas or beliefs which vary with every type of mind and grade of intelligence.

If I have succeeded in making clear what Religion is, as distinguished from any religious theory or set of ideas, then it seems hardly necessary to add that the culture and exercise of the religious faculties and emotions has much to do with human happiness or misery, whether in this life or any other. Their excessive action, on the one hand—as in morbid conscientiousness, extreme and blind devotion, illusive hope, unreasoning credulity, and unwise benevolence—may be a source of intense suffering to one's self and of great annoyance or harm to others. On the other hand, their deficiency—as manifested in profligacy, injustice, irreverence, coarseness, hopelessness, extreme incredulity, distrust, unspirituality and malevolence—is the source of most if not all of the wretchedness and crime in the world. Between these two extremes, a due and proper activity of these qualities is not only essential to the welfare of human society, and to a well-balanced and admirable personal character, but is also a source of the highest and most exquisite happiness of which human nature is capable, while it disposes the possessor to distribute this happiness as far as possible to all about him.

Hence the need of religious culture, or such training of this department of human nature as shall curb excesses, bring up deficiencies, and secure a full and even activity of the several capabilities referred to, for the highest individual welfare, and for the best progress of the race. It is this kind of religious culture in which I would like to see Spiritualists intelligently and earnestly engage—that is, the proper training of conscience, of reverence, of hope, of trust, of the spiritual perceptions and graces, and of universal love or practical Brotherhood. And this should be done on the basis, not of antiquated dogmas or speculative theories, but of demonstrated or demonstrable facts. In my view, there are sufficient plain and established facts observable in the universe around us and in human experience, if properly considered, to call into healthful exercise and rightly cultivate all the religious faculties, without appealing to anything doubtful or questionable in the alleged revelations or beliefs of the past or the present.

And the chief motive to such culture and exercise is not that which has been commonly urged by dogmatic religionists in the past—namely, that "God requires us to reverence, love and obey Him"—but, instead, that the highest human welfare and happiness flow from

true Religion. Those who lack the best exercise of any of the faculties named, by so much fall of enjoying the highest boon of existence. This may be questioned by such as have neglected the culture and exercise of this department of their natures; but their case is like that of the color-blind and musically deficient, who find no delight in the painter's art or in music. The latest, highest and crowning faculties brought out in human evolution surely should be expected to confer the most exquisite enjoyments—and they do.

Many persons—some Spiritualists included, I regret to say—who have outgrown their childish misconceptions of Deity as a personal potentate sitting on a throne somewhere up aloft, have, with this childish idea, thrown aside all habits of reverence, all disposition to worship, and have lapsed into a condition of irreverence and uncharitableness in which they can hardly show decent respect or deference to anybody or anything. In this they often imagine that they have wonderfully "progressed." Such progress is plainly downward and backward toward the animal. But when they shall really advance to a true conception of the Immanent Deity, the Infinite Energy, ever present in the stupendous operations of nature, as also in the highest and noblest impulses of their own souls and the souls of all finite beings, then will they feel themselves in the constant presence of a Deity far greater and worthier than they before imagined—worthy of their profoundest worship (worship), their highest adoration, their deepest love. Then they will become habitually reverent in spirit, and consequently respectful and kind to each other, with good-will toward all, and will find it easier to be hopeful and trustful under all circumstances. And since "reverence is the master-key to knowledge," in that it makes the mind receptive and teachable, those who cultivate a reverent spirit will be far more likely to attain the truth, or the true solution of life's problems, than are the self-conceited and contemptuous.

Such, Mr. Editor, hastily and imperfectly sketched, are the ideas of Religion and of Religious Culture which I entertain, and which, in substance, have been imparted to me from advanced spirit teachers. I am confident they will commend themselves to thoughtful and well-balanced minds, whether in this world or the other. If there is a portion of "the spirit-world" that is opposed to such views, and hostile to their inculcation (which is very probable), I must think that such spirits are poorly qualified to teach or elevate humanity.

It seems a pity that Spiritualists should spend their main energies in combatting the petty errors and misconceptions of what is called Christianity, to the neglect of its ever-living truths, and a practical application of their own professed convictions. If we have anything superior to the past, let us apply it in daily life, and in superior institutions for human improvement. In this way will Spiritualism be best commended to the world, and saved from being "swamped."

A. E. NEWTON.
Arlington, Mass., Oct. 21st, 1886.

It sounds like an echo of the voices of the past to hear talk of trying men up at Andover because they are suspected of not believing that all the heathen who have died without accepting the Christian religion are now roasting in eternal hell. Does it not suggest the times of witch-killing, of the stake and the scourge for unbelievers? Most people who read of the latest New England controversy will smile half incredulously, and wonder if there is anybody left in this century to entertain such serious, and, to say the least, blasphemous hypotheses. It is a shocking idea that there are still minds so plunged in medieval darkness. Unfortunately, the revelations from Andover leave no doubt that such there are. Once in every five years, we learn from Andover reports, the members of the Faculty of that astounding institution have to make affirmation that they still absolutely and wholly believe in certain doctrines prescribed in a past century. Think of it! Think of a man solemnly swearing that in five years of life his mind had not broadened, his thoughts had not grown deeper, his ideas had not become wiser, truer, more wholesome and more charitable and hopeful—that in five years he had learned nothing! And think of making such a man a teacher of youth!—Puck (New York).

"One thing is clear: that is, that Psychography must be ascribed to a transcendental origin. We shall find: (1.) That the hypotheses of prepared spirits is inadmissible. (2.) The place upon which the writing is found is quite inaccessible to the hands of the medium. In some cases the double slate is securely locked, leaving only room inside for the tiny morsel of slate-pencil. (3.) That the writing is actually done at the time. (4.) That the medium is not writing. (5.) The writing must be actually done with the morsel of slate or lead pencil. (6.) The writing is done by an intelligent being, since the answers are exactly pertinent to the questions. (7.) This being can read, write, and understand the language of human beings, frequently such as is unknown to the medium. (8.) It strongly resembles a human being, as well in the degree of its intelligence as in the mistakes sometimes made. These beings are therefore, although invisible, of human nature or species. It is no use whatever to fight against this proposition. (9.) If these beings speak, they do so in human language. (10.) If they are asked who they are, they answer that they are beings who have left this world. (11.) When these appearances become partly visible, perhaps only their hands, the hands seen are of human form. (12.) When these things become entirely visible, they show the human form and countenance. ... Spiritualism must be investigated by science. I should look upon myself as coward if I did not openly express my convictions."—Baron Carl Dupret, (Hutchinson) in Nord und Süd.

THE GREAT EASTERN A COAL CELLAR.—The Saturday Evening Post of Philadelphia says the uses to which the Great Eastern has just been put are doubtless such as her designer and builder never dreamed of. She is engaged to fill out the remainder of her days as a coal bulk; and, meanwhile, she has been sent from Millford Haven, where she has lain for a dozen years, to Liverpool, in order to have her engines lifted out. According to an entertaining local establishment of the latter town has hired her during her stay. A circus is to be put into one of her big cable tanks, which is seventy-five feet in diameter; a menagerie in one of her bunkers; while for a few days, a theatre is to be put into one of her masts. The last days of the unfortunate monster, as a humble but respectable coal cellar, will be less gaudy than its impending employment as a floating board.

Who mocks at love in anywise,
 As deeming it a thing untrue,
 Shuts out the light of longing eyes
 By which the world of truth to view.
 Deny to love its supreme place,
 Its calm content to rule and guide,
 And darkness hides the earth's fair face,
 And caves and quagmires open wide;
 There is no hope that glids the gloom,
 No strength whereby our faith can stand;
 Dark desolation is our doom,
 And time and death a barren land!
 God shelter such as missed their hope,
 And walled the loss with bitter tears,
 And gave to grief the fullest scope
 Through days and weeks and months and years;
 But never yet may doubt deny
 The golden gift love held in palm;
 The very star that left the sky
 Sheds yet its rays of blessing warm;
 And love remains forevermore
 The sun of light and peace above;
 Its glory shines from shore to shore;
 The only light of life is Love!
W. B.

2 do anything violent, but that they will be more pr
3 caland more just than the aristocratic governm
4 that we have had
5 6 But this sort of democracy makes great chan
7 in a government, more substantial than
8 9 10 I don't think it will affect the constitution, w

money to be paid off completely in about fifty years, and then the State will become absolute possessor of the revenue of the land; and other taxes will be to a great extent unnecessary, a vast improvement upon the present system.

There is another source of increased revenue to the State which exists in England, and that is agricultural improvement in management, so that

Male's Honey, the great cough cure, 25c, 50c, and
Gleason's Sulphur Soap Balls and Castiles, 25
German Corn Remover, Kilt's Cream and Balm
Kilt's Hair and Whisker Dye—Black and Brown,
Kilt's Toilet Cream, Kilt's Cure for Old Man's
Beard's Rheumatism, Kilt's and a cure cure.

What did they mean by matter? They could not define it other wise than by saying, all that exists. All others were unsatisfactory and mystical. There was imponderable matter, the most perfect vacuum, or Chinese silk, or radiant matter.

oolle, fed on the most durable more than any other heavy work, and a work who can do the most lot of work in the most modern of the modern.

Banner Correspondence.

Texas.

GALVESTON.—Sue J. Finck writes: "We are in need of a good lecturer, and such could profitably pass the winter months here, as much interest has been aroused, and many are seeking to know more of these new truths. Mrs. A. H. Talbot, our former lecturer, has left the city, as has also our former President, Mr. Richard Talbot, whose place has been supplied by the appointment of A. A. Finck. We are striving by our utmost to hold our organization together until the good spirits influence some lecturer to minister to our wants."

So much has been said and written of fraudulent manifestations, I am impressed to state a few facts in regard to the fraud that is frequently being practiced upon mediums, of which we hear but little. The enormity of the crime of deception in an investigator seems to be regarded as a pleasant and innocent ruse, yet from falsehood they would evoke truth. I have been sorely tried and made indignant by such proceedings during the past week. Many who do these things would scorn the idea of being called dishonest. A short time ago two of our so-called best ladies called for a sitting; one, I am pained to state, professed to be a Spiritualist, and introduced her companion by a fictitious name in place of her real one. We were to hold a séance for independent slate-writing, and the first message obtained was: "This is Mrs. —." Through pity I withheld the name, although it should be made public. She blushed, and smilingly acknowledged the deception. Now, had I practiced such fraud upon her, or had some deceiving spirit been attracted through her aura and made false statements, I suppose I should have been ejected from our little city, or it would have been made too uncomfortable for me to remain. Other means of deception are resorted to: ladies come arrayed in widow's garb, and widows attire themselves in gaudy colors, that the medium may be in ignorance of their identity; but, thanks to the kind and truth-loving immortals, all such, so far, have been put to shame. What the difference is between a dishonest medium and a dishonest investigator, is more than I can determine. Both are a disgrace to true manhood and womanhood."

Massachusetts.

HAMILTON.—"A. W." writes: "Is it more wonderful that man should exist as an intelligent entity and power when freed from his material body, than the most powerful forces in nature, equally invisible to the material eye? The wind, which sometimes uproots large trees and destroys villages, is invisible. A current of electricity strong enough to produce death is invisible. Granite and ice, it is well known, can be made invisible. The vapor arising from the melted cake of ice is soon lost to view; but with proper apparatus the viewless substance can be collected and frozen into the solid mass it was before heating. The skeptic asks the clairvoyant, 'When I look across the room why is not my sight impeded by the spirits you profess to describe?' Is it when one reads a newspaper through a goblet of water containing animal and vegetable life?"

Partial darkness is generally required for the best physical manifestations. Intelligent spirits say that light produces motion among the refined particles used, and therefore they can manifest better where light is mostly excluded. This seems reasonable, when we see the photographer throw a dark cloth over his camera as soon as he gets the impress of the sitter, developing the picture in a dark closet, to prevent a disturbance of the image on the sensitive plate. Seeds are placed in the dark to germinate, and vegetables sprout sooner in darkness.

Spirits inform us that they are as tangible to each other as we mortals in earth-life. This is not difficult to imagine, knowing how substantial persons and things look to us in our dreams, when unconscious of earthly existence.

Why should it be so much harder to believe in form-manifestations than it is to believe that the grass grows, or that the flowers bloom, but that we have become accustomed to the latter manifestations from childhood? Does the chemist know any more about the how in one case than in the others? Are not all the manifestations of nature, the cause of which we are ignorant, equally wonderful?"

Kansas.

NEWTON.—Charles R. Minger writes, Oct. 26th: "We have an organization here, and many of our members are subscribers to the BANNER OF LIGHT. Mr. A. B. French gave six lectures, commencing Sept. 29th, which many members of the churches attended, and were well pleased. It is needless to say that the Spiritualists were pleased; they were delighted with his remarks. The Association has now procured the services of C. W. Stewart, who will stay with us until Dec. 1st, when Mr. J. Clegg Wright will begin his labors, continuing until May 1st, 1887. Mr. Knight, the slate-writing medium, has visited our city, and has made some converts to the truth. We have a membership of one hundred and seventeen male members, and expect to increase the number to two hundred before the season is over. So far we have only enrolled as members those paying a monthly subscription. We are not asking the ladies to pay. We shall at our next meeting enroll them as honorary members, with all the rights of membership."

We have an excellent trance and clairvoyant medium, Mrs. E. E. Phillips, who resides here, and gives excellent satisfaction. She is an intelligent and pure-minded lady, and an honor to the cause. She would be well sustained in a business point of view, but on account of her health will not act for all who come."

Newton is a young, thriving city of eight thousand population, two hundred miles from Kansas City, on the A. T. and S. F. R. R. It is situated on high level prairie, excellent for invalids. Many have entirely regained their health in this pure atmosphere. It is an excellent place for a sanitarium and magnetic healing institution. Such an institution would be offered aid from our citizens, and by its location would be filled with patients from abroad as soon as ready."

Iowa.

OTTUMWA.—Mrs. Mary M. McCarrroll, Secretary, writes October 29th: "Whenever we wish to speak to the general liberal minds of the State there is no channel equal to the BANNER OF LIGHT, which has withstood the storms of ignorance, bigotry and superstition, still occupying the position within the hearts of the people intended from its beginning. I wish to say to the Spiritualists of our State that we are anxious to have Mrs. A. H. Colby with us in as many different localities as possible during the fall and winter of 1887."

Mrs. Colby first came to us as speaker at our Mt. Pleasant Park Camp Meeting in August, 1885. Her lectures created so great an interest that the friends enthusiastically wished for more. Hence at that time she was engaged to return to our Camp last August, and also to speak in our State the fall months, speaking in Ottumwa, October and November, with the exception of the last Sunday. Our speakers have all given general satisfaction to us as Spiritualists, but Mrs. Colby strikes the materialistic unbelievers in quite a different manner, attracting their attention not only with a good deal of thought, but some conceptions. Her lectures thus far with us have called together rather unusual audiences, considering this is the month used by our citizens to try every possible means to get ready for the coming year. We need the hard frosts yielded by the influences of Mrs. Colby; whose reasoning, philosophy and common sense can but help assist us in removing the rubbish which so nearly covers all classes in power at present. I wish engagements could be made with Mrs. C. while here, if possible, for the time specified above. She is engaged at our next camp meeting and at Maquoketa next September."

Tennessee.

MEMPHIS.—Mr. B. E. Randall writes: "A clairvoyant physician of good power and true manhood or womanhood will find this place a remunerative field of labor. A remarkable medium, who has lived here until this fall, has gone to Chattanooga. I refer to Mrs. C. G. Clendy. She has for years been the trance medium here at the Spiritualist meetings. Mrs. Clendy is advanced in life, and with a very good medium for

the platform is, besides, one of the very best for private sittings I have ever seen of at least a hundred trials. Her peculiar phase is new to me; she sits at the table without being entranced and reads from the top of it what would appear to be a manuscript, as the spirits write it. The different spirits take turns, write what they have to say, commonly as long as an ordinary letter, sign their name to it, go, and another follows. To me it is the most satisfying, not to say convincing of anything I have yet experienced in my search for intelligence from the other life."

Connecticut.

NEW HAVEN.—Of the signature of "Stranger" a correspondent writes: "Materialists claim that it is absurd to believe in a future life, and say that although Christians and Spiritualists seem to feel confident of it, there is nothing in nature to justify such a belief. In order to prove the soundness of the materialistic faith and at the same time show the absurdity of those who differ with them on this point, they set forth that, as we had no life previous to the formation of our bodies, we shall have no life after our bodies have gone to decay. In my opinion, the life that animates our bodies must have existed before the bodies, and upon that life, call it by what name you choose, spirit or otherwise, the germination and subsequent growth and development of the body depended. The doctrine of evolution implies this, for from nothing something cannot be evolved. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to conclude that a life or spirit that existed prior to the existence of these bodies should continue to exist after their dissolution."

Indiana.

EVANSVILLE.—A correspondent, "C.," writes: "Evansville is a prosperous city of forty thousand inhabitants. It is filled with churches, almost every denomination being represented, yet there are many persons whose views of religion flow in other channels. I believe Robert Barnes was one of the first men who dared to advocate Spiritualism. He passed over twelve or thirteen years ago. There have been many private circles in this city, and we have at last got some of the friends to organize a mediums' meeting, with the following officers: W. H. Woods, Chairman, Phil Sommers, Secretary and Treasurer, Frank Thorn, Conductor. Our meetings are increasing; at our last, the third session, we had about fifty members; so you see these mediums have friends who believe in the phenomena and are helping to advance the cause."

Rhode Island.

NEWPORT.—John C. Peckham writes that so far as he has studied the Bible there is in it no evidence that Christ preached the resurrection of the material body. Some say that Spiritualism is not in the Bible; our correspondent claims that if it had not been for Spiritualism there would not have been a Bible, for it is all based upon spirit-manifestations, inspirations and revelations. He considers Christ to have been a medium, and that he did all within his power to make known the truths of Spiritualism.

New York.

CATTARAUGUS.—Hiram Ramsey writes, in renewing his subscription: "I had rather, though an old man, go with but one meal a day than be deprived of the BANNER, which furnishes so much spiritual food. I take great pleasure especially in reading the contents of the Message Department—questions and answers and communications alike."

The Reviewer.

"Flatland."

In many a day we have not been so instructed through amusement seriously undertaken as by the reading of a satirical brochure with the above suggestive title,* whose partially disguised purpose is to bring timely and deserved ridicule on those otherwise persons who assume to hold the limitation of all knowledge in their own feeble hands respecting the number and name of existing space dimensions. One of these small wise-a-cres has made haste to assert that this little travesty on their lilliputian single-wits is directed against Prof. Zöllner's new theory of a fourth dimension in space, with a view to bring it into contempt by the disparaging weapons of satirical ridicule. But it is as plain as it can well be made to any intelligent apprehension that the object of the writer was just the reverse; if there is any significance and point to this little book, it is to the effect that none are so blind as those who will not see, and none are so foolish as those who insist that all knowledge is bounded by the little limits of their own.

"Flatland" is sub-titled "A Romance of Many Dimensions," and the satire thus crops out on the threshold. The "cute author" of this "romance" appropriately assumes the cognomen of "A Square." He dedicates his work "to the inhabitants of space in general and H. C. in particular," and he does it "in the hope that, even as he was initiated into the mysteries of three dimensions, having been previously conversant with only two, so the citizens of that celestial region may aspire yet higher and higher to the secrets of four, five, and even six dimensions, thereby contributing to the enlargement of the imagination and the possible development of that most rare and excellent gift of modesty among the superior races of solid humanity." The person who could discover the most remote intent to fire a shot at Zöllner and his new theory, after reading such an inscription of the book as that, deserves to be presented with a corner-lot in "Flatland," with length and breadth but without thickness, for the location of his permanent residence. The satirical thrust at just such as he is sticks out like a spear from the forward-reaching hand of the writer.

A description of "Flatland" is as essentially humorous as it is essentially mathematical. The author descends on the nature of the country; on the climate and houses; on the inhabitants, from whom Jonathan Swift himself never conceived a people more dimensionally ludicrous in his immortal "Lilliput"; on the women, who are compared to needles, inasmuch as they possess but one of the two recognized dimensions; on the methods of mutual recognition, including that of sight; on irregular figures in "Flatland"; on the ancient practice of painting there; on the bill establishing a universal color; on the suppression of the chromatic section; and on the priests of the country and the doctrines they teach. This complex description is made to subordinate itself to the conditions of existence in "this world," alias "Flatland." Where other dimensions besides those of length and breadth are described and discussed, the treatment is classified as applicable to "other worlds," such as "Linealand" and "Spacealand," whose (to us) commonplace mysteries are taught him in a vision by "A Sphere," to the extent of conceiving of the existence of a third dimension.

The full grown inhabitants of "Flatland" are twelve inches in length and breadth at the most. The women are straight lines. The soldiers and lowest classes of workmen are Triangles, with two equal sides, each about eleven inches long, the base, or third side, being so short (often not more than half an inch) that they form at their vertices a very sharp and formidable angle. In the most degraded type the bases are not more than an eighth of an inch in size. These Triangles are distinguished from others by being called Isosceles. The middle class consists of Equilateral Triangles, or equal-sided. The professional men and gentlemen are Squares, of which kind is the author, and Pentagons, or five-sided figures. Next comes the nobility, of whom there are several degrees, beginning with Hexagons, or six-sided figures, and rising to the rank of Polygonal, or many-sided. Finally, when the number of the sides become so numerous, and the sides themselves so small, that the figures cannot be distinguished from a circle, the person thus represented is included in the Circular or Priestly order, which is the highest class of all in "Flatland." A male child, always has one more side than his father, so that, again, generation rises in the scale of development. The rule, however, does not always apply to the tradesmen; and, less often to the soldiers and the workmen.

The descriptions of life and the conceptions of duty, virtue, etc., in "Flatland," are ingenious to the last degree. "Flatland" is a romance of many dimensions. A Square. Boston: Robert Barnes.

degree, but all in strict conformity to mathematical rule. But the reader's interest heightens when, in the second part, which contains an account of "Other Worlds," the author relates a wonderful dream which he had after retiring to rest one night, having amused himself until a late hour with his favorite recreation of geometry. We shall not undertake to sketch the outline of that wonderful dream of A Square. It was a dream of "Linealand" and "Spacealand," where were gradually disclosed to him the mysteries of the third dimension, an entirely new one in the experience of the people of "Flatland." The king of "Linealand" asserted himself the monarch of the world; and was persuaded that the Straight Line which he called his kingdom, and in which he passed his existence, constituted the whole of space. Outside his world or line, all was a blank to him, a blank implying space. His subjects were all alike confined in their motion and vision to the single straight line which was their world. Their horizon was limited to a point. A man, woman, child or thing was nothing but a point to the eye of a Linealander. Sex and age were distinguishable only by the voice. No Linealander could ever pass another, hence, once neighbors, always neighbors.

The minute description of life there is grotesque in the extreme, considered even geometrically. A Square tried in vain to explain to the monarch the nature of "Flatland." The accompanying diagrams ludicrously illustrate the odd incongruity of the hereditary conceptions of a Flatlander and a Linealander. They are as laughable in themselves as the text. From dreams he proceeded to facts. These are even more grotesque still, both in their conception and combination. We cannot follow our highly ingenious author along in his description and narrative, but must leave his story for the study of the reader. If it teaches any lesson whatever, it is the contemptible nature of a conceit of knowledge. Those who know so little of the surrounding universe are invariably most positive in regard to the ignorance of those who present suggestions of fresh knowledge to them. That is a rule of nature in all matters over which ignorance maintains the supremacy. The whole thing convinces an intelligent mind that it does not follow, because mortals are already cognizant of three dimensions in space, that there may not be four. It ridicules conceit, and satirizes self-sufficiency without mercy. Obliquely, too, it conveys much scientific information in the most effective manner.

THE HIGHWAY COW.

The hue of her hide is dusky brown,
Her body is lean and her neck is am,
One horn turns up and the other down,
She is keen of vision and long of limb;
With a Roman nose and a short stump tail,
And ribs like the hoops of a home-made pall.
Many a mark does her body bear;
She has been a target for all things known;
On many a squire the dusky hair
Will grow up and she will grow old once has grown;
Many a passionate, parting shot
Has left on her a lasting spot.
Many and many a well-aimed stone,
Many a brick-bat of goodly size,
And many a cudgel swiftly thrown,
Has brought the tears to her loving eyes,
Or bounded off her head and left her
With a noise like the sound of a rifle crack.
Many a day she has passed in the pound
For helping herself to her neighbor's corn;
Many a cowardly cur and hound
Has been transfixed on her crumpled horn;
Many a tea-pot and old tin pail
Have the farm-boys tied to her time-worn tail.
At the farmer's homestead she loves to call,
Lifting his bars with crumpled horn,
Nimbly scaling the garden wall,
Helping herself to his standing corn,
Eating his cabbages one by one,
Hurrying home when her work is done.
His human passions are quick to rise,
And striding forth with a savage cry,
With fury blazing from both his eyes,
As lightning flashes from the summer sky;
Reader and reader, his face will grow,
And after the creature he will go.
Over the garden, round and round,
Breaking his pear and apple trees,
Trampling his melons into the ground,
Overturning his hive of bees,
Leaving him angry and badly stung,
Wishing the old cow's neck was hung.
The mosses grow on the garden wall,
The years go by with their work and play,
The boys and girls grow old and tall,
And the gray-haired farmers pass away,
One by one as the red leaves fall—
But the highway cow outlives them all.
—Chicago Ledger.

The God-Idea.

How and when the idea of God originated, by what slow stages it grew to the form of a conception, and what processes of accretion have enlarged it until it has finally become the problem and despair of theology, would be one of the most interesting, if not instructive, of subjects to consider as an essential part of human development and progress.

In the recent lecture of the always instructive and habitually fervent Rabbi Schindler, one of the most advanced and enlarged thinkers of the Israelites of Boston, he treated this subject in a profoundly thoughtful manner, and made it contribute a great deal of valuable material to that which engages the current reflections of men. His aim professedly was to discover the real origin of the God-Idea. Remarkable on the excitement aroused by the ideas advanced by Darwin in his famous study of the origin of species, which, he said, inaugurated a revolution the dimensions of which are yet to be ascertained, he confessed the pleasure it gave him to repeat that Judaism has never suffered from any new philosophy, but, on the contrary, has profited by them all. He claimed for it that its vital force lay in its elasticity and its ability to accommodate itself to new thoughts; that in early times it detached itself from polytheism, its one God growing from a household into a tribal god, then into a national divinity, and finally into the God of the universe.

As far back as the human memory will carry us, said the Rabbi, we behold people acknowledging a supreme being; it matters little whether they called it by one name or another, or whether they expressed their reverence, adoration and gratitude by bloody sacrifices, by artful dances, or by songs and prayers; the fact remains that the God-Idea must not only have been consistent with the human mind, but that it has ever coexisted with the human race. "We have come into the possession of this idea without any conscious effort on our part; we have obtained it by inheritance; and the same thing, and nothing more, is to be said of the unevolved and unsophisticated Fiji Islander. He therefore concludes that there is truth in the statement that man could never have become imbued with the God-Idea unless God had first revealed it to him. And he believes that such a revelation must have been made in the remote past, and that it has been undergoing a process of development in human minds ever since.

He enters upon an elaborate argument to establish the fact of the growth of this universal prevalent idea. The mind comes in contact with the external world through the five senses. No object has for us an existence until it has passed through one of them, and been verified by one of them. A thing does not exist for us unless we can touch, taste, smell, see, or hear it. Lacking any single one of these channels, we lack the fifth part of the universe; lacking them all, creation would not exist for us. An object, therefore, becomes manifest to us only when we can verify its existence; and he described touch as the most important of the means for doing it. Hence objects are classed as tangible, semi-tangible, and intangible.

Having been verified by at least one of our senses, it becomes what is called a percept, and as such a part of our experience. It is stored away in the memory, and recalled at will even after the object itself has been removed.

But besides these perceptions, which circumscribe the finite, through the same channels have come into our minds glimpses of the infinite—of something which he calls supernatural, but which we designate as supramundane. For an illustration: we see a human being change from youth to manhood and old age, today full of motion, and to-morrow cold, without look, or speech, or expression; what is called dead. Here are different percepts formed at different times; we have registered a sequence of conditions merely; but we have never observed the change itself. We nevertheless perceive the life that was hidden in them all, and this is that infinite which presses upon us from all sides. We cannot, says Rabbi Schindler, exclude the infinite when the finite passes through the gates of our senses; we cannot draw the line where the finite ceases and the infinite begins; the finite covers the infinite like a veil, and, taking hold of the one, we take hold of the other.

Now when the primitive man became aware of the force and the action of the life in the universe surrounding him, it was to him a revelation of the divine; not such a revelation as is at present understood by that term, but he felt that something was playing hide-and-go-seek with him which was not to be classified among natural objects. He therefore began to look for its presence everywhere, among all objects, and sights, and sounds, and to endeavor to find a name for what was to him unutterable. And, unable to detach the finite from the infinite, he often mistook one for the other, adoring and worshipping tangible objects, next those that are semi-tangible, and finally those which are intangible altogether.

This portion of the Rabbi's argument which relates to the discovery of the spirit and God through a sensuous percept of something whose existence we are nevertheless unable to treat as the senses do all other things perceived, applies with singular fitness and force to those materialists and sense-mongers who are all the time harping on the intellectual faculties, and asserting that the action of those faculties is only a secretion of the brain as a gland, precisely as the liver secretes bile. How would these people begin to explain the universal fact of a revelation of the divine through the same channels to the mind that admit the entrance of percepts arising from external objects? The materialists and sense-men may deceive themselves, but they never can include this infinite within their tangible finite.

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I have been obliged to cancel all my engagements for the winter.

As soon as my health will permit I shall leave Massachusetts for Florida where I shall remain during the winter.

My correspondence must now all be sent to me for the present.

Yours truly,
GEO. A. BURNETT

