

reason to say, with Theodore Parker, one of the greatest of modern Free-thinkers—the direct antipodes of Faber—strange that the hands of these two opposites, the American Rationalist and the English Romanist, should thus unite in weaving a chaplet for our English Bible:

"The sun never set on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholars and colours the talk of the street. The barque of the merchant cannot sail the sea without it. No ship of war can go to the conflict, but the Bible is there. It enters men's closets, mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays God in Scripture for strength in her new duties; men are married by Scripture. The Bible attends them in their sickness, when the fever of the world is on them. The aching head finds a softer pillow when the Bible lies underneath. The mariner escaping from shipwreck clutches this first of his treasures and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the pedlar in his crowded pack, cheers him at eventide when he sits down dusty and fatigued, brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born, gives names to half Christendom, rejoices with us, has sympathy for our mourning, and tempers our grief to filial issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself. Our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith the patriarchs and our fathers prayed. The timid man, about awakening from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture and his eye grows bright. He does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the Death Angel by the hand, and bid farewell to wife and home!"

#### A DIFFICULTY.

MR. EDITOR,—You have unquestionably exhibited a spirit of liberality in allowing Mr. Mordy to state through your valuable columns his difficulty on the subject of the creative period. You will manifest still greater liberality and forbearance if you will allow a reply of sufficient length to even approximate a satisfactory solution.

Indeed, to take the smallest possible nucleus of vitality which permeates every volume of the extensive literature which has been already created on this particular point, would furnish an article the length of which (apart altogether from the nature of the subject) would put it far beyond the possibility of its finding a place in any journal such as yours, whose great aim is, and ever must be, to combine the best and broadest instruction, which shall accomplish the greatest good and command the widest, healthiest, and deepest interest.

I am also persuaded that the most successful attempt of our most learned and gifted men pursuing this line of argument, through the medium of your journal would be very barren of results, if not a decided failure.

However, having also lived many years among honest sceptics and never having been afraid to take the platform against the most noted infidels, of both England and Scotland, I here confess my deepest sympathy with Mr. Mordy in his earnest yearnings after sure defences and eternal truth. If I could only impart the experience I have thus gained by passing through these public contests, I am satisfied that considerable satisfaction would accrue. As I cannot here enter into the harmonizing theory of scientific knowledge with Scripture, permit me in my own rambling unclassic way to make an honest attempt to help your correspondent to means and methods of meeting so-called dangerous infidel attacks. At the outset let him be careful never to allow his sceptic friend to confound things that differ, and in return exercise the same care himself. This is often done when least expected and rarely noticed by the unskilled disputant. Take the present statement of your correspondent's own difficulty. To the uninitiated it seems very clearly and plainly expressed. But read it with an experienced discrimination, and you will discover that it blends at least, if it does not confound, two things that ought to be kept widely apart and conspicuously distinct, because they involve the necessity of a totally different class of evidence as well as an entirely different line of argument. The two things blended are 1. The question how scholars explain the two days that follow the appointment of the sun and moon conjointly, to rule the day and night, as being *periods of*

*time of long duration.* 2. The men who were the occasion of raising this difficulty—the infidels in the place.

Notice why we must deal differently with these two classes. The first believe in the inspiration of the Bible, but have a theory of interpretation which they consider more or less satisfactory for harmonizing the Mosaic account of the creation with the geological discoveries of the present century. Meeting on this high platform, which is common to both opponents, evidence is adduced and accepted which could not be justly offered to, and certainly would not be accepted by any intelligent disbeliever in divine inspiration.

With the second class the infidels it is entirely different. If an infidel agrees to raise himself to the Christian platform and accepts the Bible as the unerring infallible word of Jehovah, he at once places a deadly weapon in the hand of his opponent, and puts himself into a position that he cannot refuse certain evidence, the logical conclusion of which over turns, and sweeps away every known barrier that infidelity can raise. But few sceptics, and no infidel (unless he is making experiments or playing with an unskilled opponent) will take such a platform. What must be done then? Only one of two things. Either lower your standard to his, and defend your Bible as a consistent human production, or else let the infidel alone. If you would rather come down to his platform than lose the hope of doing him good, you must not feel aggrieved at having also to bring down your argument to the plane of human reason, and remember that you stunt yourself if ever you try to adduce evidence that is not in harmony with the standard adopted.

Your statements of facts as contained in your Bible will then be submitted to the same tests and treated in the same manner and spirit, and only allowed the same value, as Christians and people generally allow, to the alleged facts in the Bibles of other religions, such as the Veda, Zend-Avesta, Tripitaka and Koran.

Having passed through many a polemical contest, and having stood many an infidel shock, besides having tested many elaborately prepared theories of interpretation, our experience suggests that perhaps the best, the most satisfactory, and the most intelligent way to treat the Mosaic account of the creation (as well as all other Biblical difficulties to accept it as it stands recorded in Genesis. Nowhere are you required to harmonize it with any man's theory, or to take it as your scientific text book, but you are commanded to believe it as well as many other things that you can neither explain nor understand, and which all men, infidel and Christian alike, unanimously accept without questioning. Read that account carefully, meditate upon it earnestly, compare it with other passages diligently, and accept it unquestioningly. True this ground is not *free* from difficulties, but it contains fewer than any position which I at present know. Every sceptic and honest infidel will at once confess that they lay no claim to freedom from difficulties, or that they are able to explain one tithe of what exists everywhere around them. No champion of any harmonizing theory, however, learned, experienced and gifted he may be, will tell you that he has no difficulties. Nay, with all his rare abilities and wonderful genius, he humbly confesses that there are points which defy solution. There may be degrees of difficulty. Some small, some great, some which sit lightly and are borne easily, or press heavily and wound badly. Entire exemption from difficulty there is none.

In meeting the infidel I have always taken my stand upon that ground, and have never required to decline any comparison, or claim any immunity that I am not prepared cheerfully to allow to my opponent. He sometimes charges me with ignorance because I have not made geology a study, and advises me to know my God through the living book of nature and not through an effete and corrupt Bible. I kindly thank him for his advice, and unhesitatingly admit my ignorance, but plead as an excuse that the book of the wonderful cosmos is so vast, and my life so short, and other duties so urgent that I find it impossible to read up all the different departments which people are kind enough to request me to do. I, however, never forget to tell him that he has no right to blame me for being no geologist until he corrects himself. I never found a doubting, *scaffing* infidel yet who had read the rocks in *propria persona*. They had invariably taken the results of the investigations of other

men and wedded themselves to their opinions and beliefs. And surely I have the same right to take my Bible on simple faith and trust as he has his notions of geology. But I press the matter further. If I am not to believe in the purity and integrity of the Bible until I can read the record back to its very source, then the objector has no right to step on board any ship or trust any captain until he has personally mastered the laws of contraction, expansion, displacement, resistance, strength and motion, and until he has examined the captain and found him qualified. Nor has he any right to sit down to any meal until he has subjected all the elements to a process of chemistry in order to discover whether there may not be poison concealed in them. But he does nothing of the kind. He has implicit confidence in the ship, captain, men and cooks. Why then should I not, even in my ignorance, receive my Bible in simple faith? And so forth *ad infinitum*. Lastly, I prefer my platform to the harmonizing theory because the former never requires changing or adjusting, while the latter continually does. Harmonizing theories depend entirely for their completeness on scientific discovery, and as science is now intensely progressive theories of interpretation invented to meet them must also be changed. After I had weighed the evidence about the great age of the earth, I studied carefully the harmonizing theory propounded by the celebrated Free Church divine, the late Dr. Chalmers, which was very simple. He pointed out that the Bible merely said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and suggested that that *beginning* might have been untold ages before the creation of vegetable or animal life. I had almost concluded to modify my platform, but before I quite decided I discovered that continued hammering at the rocks had revealed (unfortunately for Dr. Chalmers' theory) fossil remains belonging to a period many thousand years prior to the accepted date of the creation. Then came a more extended theory which regarded each day, not as twenty-four hours but as a *period of time of very long duration*. So I came to the conclusion that I would wait, for they are still hammering away, and if I require to make a change I would like to adopt the very latest edition.

But that is not my weightiest reason for clinging to the integrity of the Mosaic account. It would not take much persuasion to make me adopt the great Hugh Miller's remarkable and ingenious theory on this subject. But what about other points. The infidel tells me that the sun stood (or rather the earth) until the Jews killed a few more Amalekites. He will shew me that science has revealed data to prove that if the earth stood but one minute, the heat generated and collected would utterly destroy every species of life. Then what about the Trinity, the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, and the conception and birth of the blessed Jesus. He would want me to explain, reconcile and understand all this before I believed it. Now, I never heard any explanation or saw any harmonizing theory that would satisfy any sceptic or infidel who took his stand on the platform of human reason. I have purposely refrained from trying to remove the harmonizing theory difficulty, preferring to leave this to those who have adopted it. I have rather endeavoured to give a hint as to how your correspondent should deal with sceptics and infidels. I beseech him to deal with them gently, speak to them kindly, associate with them freely, debate with them honestly, and he will reach both their heart and head.

Portsmouth, Ont., June 27th, 1881.

A. J.

#### SOME FEATURES OF THE ASSEMBLY.

MR. EDITOR,—The late Assembly did not promise to be one of exceptional interest. There was no question of overshadowing importance to be discussed, nor any matter specially vital to the Church to be legislated upon, and yet it is doubtful if any previous Assembly has given the same evidence of the power and vitality of the Church. The words of Dr. Jenkins found a ready response in the minds of many when, on taking leave before the close, he said he felt compelled to give expression to his feelings, especially to the assurance he had of the presence of the Spirit in the Church. I venture to think that for harmony, earnestness, I had almost said fervour, this Assembly has been remarkable. No Assembly has given such clear evidence of the oneness of the Church. Hitherto the mention of certain questions summoned the warm flush quickly to its accustomed