

FREE THOUGHT LECTURES, FOR 1878.

By B. F. UNDERWOOD.

POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE LECTURES.

1. The Demands of Liberalism.
 2. The Positive Side of Free Thought.
 3. The Genesis and Nature of Religion considered as an element of Human Nature.
 4. A Scientific and Philosophical View of Religious Revivals.
 5. The Influence of Christianity on Civilization.
 6. The Triumphs of Liberalism.
 7. What Liberalism offers as a Substitute for the Christian Theology.
 8. A True Man Better than a True Christian.
 9. Judaism and Christianity, Outgrowths of Pre-Existent Hea-thenism.
 10. Origin and History of the Bible. (From one to six lectures.)
 11. Buddha and Buddhism.
 12. Ancient Egypt: Her Laws, Morality, and Religion.
 13. The Theory of Evolution.
 14. Darwinism: Its Principles Stated and Defended.
 15. Natural Selection *versus* Design in Nature.
 16. The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer.
 17. Modern Scientific Materialism.
 18. Instinct and Intuition: organized experiences of the Race.
 19. Woman: Her Past and Present, Her Rights and Wrongs.
 20. Paine: The Pioneer of Free Thought in America.
 21. The French Revolution: Its Cause and Consequence.
- CRITICAL LECTURES.
22. The Fallacies of Rev. Joseph Cook regarding the Personality and Being of God.
 23. Cook's Criticism of Scientific Materialism Examined.
 24. Why I am an Unbeliever.
 25. Christianity and Intellectual Progress.
 26. The Four Gospels Unhistorical and Unreliable.
 27. The Evidences for the Divinity of the Bible Examined.
 28. Popular Assumptions Regarding the Bible and Christianity.
 29. Popular Objections to Infidelity Answered.
 30. The Crimes and Cruelties of Catholic and Protestant Christianity.
 31. Bible Prophecies Falsified by the Facts of History.
 32. The Proofs of a Personal, Intelligent Deity Examined.
 33. The Pros and Cons of a Future State.

For terms, &c., address

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The People's Telephone, on ultra orthodox sheet, published at Red Oak, Iowa, speaking of Mr. B. F. Underwood's lecture in that place says:—

In the Saturday night discussion, the only one we have attended up to this time, Prof. Underwood had the affirmative and introduced the nebulous theory of creation, of Kant or La Place, and backed it up with eighteen distinct arguments in its support. The Prof. is certainly a strong reasoner, a pleasing speaker and fair, square debater. Although we are not a believer in the theory he advanced, we were strongly impressed by the ability of the man and the wide range his study of the subject has taken, and his close examination of the laws of nature. He introduced nothing of an extraneous character, nothing not pertinent to the question under consideration, and he put his alleged facts into such good shape, wove them together with such a strong chain of cogent reasoning, as commanded the respect and close attention of those who differ with him. He is certainly a man of honest convictions, an able, fair debater and entitled to the respectful attention he receives.

COMMUNICATIONS.

For the Free Thought Journal.

In No. 2 first article is an answer by Mr. Underwood to the "Dominion Churchman," who asks, what Secpticism has to offer in the place of the Bible and Christianity.

Mr. Underwood says:—"All that is good and true in the Christian system we would retain."

This is an admission that there is something true or good in it. Now I have held for years, that the Christian system is utterly false, from beginning to end. That there is not one single redeeming feature in it. Now if I have been calling the thing worse than it is I should be heartily sorry. Will Mr. Underwood be so good as to point out what he conceives to be good or true in the Christian system?

He says in another place:—"While we regard Jesus as a brother

and benefactor—as we do Paine and Parker." This is an admission that Jesus was as real a person as Paine or Parker. Does Mr. Underwood really believe in the "Ghost-story" in the 1st chapter of Matthew? It is not claimed for Paine or Parker that a ghost was their father, and where such an origin is claimed for Jesus, it ought to be proof positive to any rational person that Jesus never existed at all but, was a mere myth like all the God-begotten heroes of antiquity.

SARNIA.

JAMES THOMSON.

NEW SARUM, December 5th.

For the Freethought Journal.

While there is going on so much discussion on the question of Christianity, would it not be pertinent to go back to the Old Testament, and to enquire into those legends which, taken as history, form the basis on which are built a priori reasons why there should be a revelation.

The keystone of the Christian scheme as related in Genesis, is the "Fall of Man." Man is placed in paradise—is forbidden to eat of a certain fruit—Adam eats, tempted by Eve—Eve eats, tempted by the serpent—this serpent, according to church interpretation, is the devil—and the devil is a fallen angel. Now on what ground is the serpent said to be the devil? The Jews, who ought to know the meaning of their own books say that it was a serpent, and the whole story an allegory. Nothing can be more arbitrary than to say without proof, and in spite of the Jews, that the serpent is the Christian devil; besides, it is against all rules of interpretation to take one part of a narrative literally, and another part to suit circumstances, figuratively.

Then, again, whence do we get the devil? He is a fallen angel—but whence comes the legend of the fall of the angels? It is not in the Bible at all. Jude in his Epistle alludes to the fall of the angels, quoting the book of Enoch; but Papias says that the epistle of Jude was from the first considered spurious;—and the "Book of Enoch" is not in the Bible at all. The devil then comes to us from the fall of the angels, and we learn the fable of the fall of the angels by an extract in a spurious gospel from an unknown book.

Whence, then, came the fable of the fall of the angels? It is to be found only in the sacred books of the Hindoos, the "Shastah"—five thousand years old—coming apparently to the Jews through Babylon at the time of the captivity. The first chapter is so remarkable that an extract may be worth making. It begins with these words:—"God is one, he has created all things; God conducts the whole creation by a general providence—resulting from a fixed principle." Here then, we have contradicted the popular teaching that the Jews were a people specially set apart to preserve the knowledge of the "one true God." We see that a thousand years before Abraham, taking the chronology of the Bible itself, the Brahmins had, unaided, arrived at the knowledge of the Divine Unity.

I saw in the "Bible Index" of the Disciple community some time ago, that Mr. Underwood is represented as supporting atheism, but this is an old trick of the "church party." The term infidel has ceased, except among the uneducated classes, to be a term of reproach; but "atheist" is still for a time at least, a term of obloquy; it is the old plan of trying to destroy by vilification the man whose arguments you cannot answer.

Until the Church has refuted the conclusions of the scientific Biblical critics of the last thirty years, most of them too, as Strauss, Schleiermacher DeWitt and others, themselves theologians, every one capable of understanding an argument, ought, as a reasoning man, to be an infidel.

Neither atheism or theism are provable. The East has for thousands of years believed in Supremo Intelligence pervading the universe. That is conceivable; but the idea of the personal God of popular Christianity—Infinite as conceived, limited by personality—a limited Infinite—is a contradiction in the terms, and is not conceivable. These matters belong to the unknowable, in the meantime, our experience is that nothing in nature or history has ever been proved to have been brought about by a departure from the fixed laws of the universe, or of any will superior to that of man.

G. H.

Truth comes to mortals gently, tenderly and sweetly, filling them with a peace that passeth understanding. Error clouds, affrights, angers and debases the soul. By their respective fruits we may know them.—*Jarvis*.

The liberal religionists say we recognize these rare exceptions among womankind—the George Sands and Harriet Martineaus—but the masses of the sex are in such absolute bondage to the church that their votes would swamp any republic. So would the votes of unthinking men when the above mentioned questions come up for general consideration. The remedy is the same in both cases, education, freedom to think.—*E. Cady Stanton*.