

dreamers start by establishing an absolute chaos, out of which is to be constructed or, for all we know, which is identical with a sort of Arcadian felicity, to the perfect enjoyment of which it is essential that every one should be inexpressibly good; and that this result will be attained by abolishing all existing laws ethical, moral and political, seems to rest on no surer foundation than the undeniable fact that, under the existence of such laws, that height of inexpressible goodness has not been universally attained. As an evidence of its cosmopolite desire to upset all governments—not because they happen to be bad or unjust, but mostly because they are governments—the congress passes a resolution of sympathy with all who have shared, or who may hereafter share, in any revolution or revolt against constitutional authority. Under the new system all are to be happy because they are equal; as soon as equality ceases unhappiness begins; a man can only be contented with his lot as long as there is no one else in the world better off than himself.

No place is, perhaps, more identified with Communism than the quarter of Paris called Belleville, of which M. Gambetta is the trusted representative. Perhaps it is not quite fair to judge of the true effects of the system until it has the world to itself, and has no such obnoxious things as government, religion and authority to contend with. But it may not be beside the mark to quote some information which a priest who has labored for six years in Belleville gave concerning the morals of the inhabitants to the French correspondent of the *Guardian*: “Nothing could well be more deplorable than the account he gave me of the spiritual condition of that quarter of the city. The population is well enough off physically; wages are high, and they earn a great deal of money. But, contrary to what is usual amongst the French laboring classes, they are neither economical nor sober. The men drink, and, what is far more rare, even the women. Religious feelings seem to be almost extinct among them. I asked the priest, of whom I speak, whether he had made any progress during the six years he had been among them, and his answer was, ‘None, absolutely none.’ Nothing can induce the men to enter a church. ‘But the women?’ I said. ‘Not even the women,’ or very few of them.’ The Communist feeling, and all the burning hatred and thirst for vengeance it has left behind it, were represented as being as strong as ever, and always hoping for and hiding their time.”

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

BOTH in the Epistle and in the Gospel for this day the subject of Christian rejoicing is illustrated and enforced. In the epistle, taken from Ephesians v. 16–21, it is contrasted with the religious ceremonies of paganism, which required for their due celebration, not only absolute drunkenness but several other crimes against the moral law. In urging upon Christians the duty of circum-

spection and diligence in redeeming the time, the Apostle does not here allude particularly to the shortness of its duration, but to the fact that the days are pregnant with evil, exceedingly dangerous to the soul's best interests and full of tribulation and affliction. Since St. Paul's time, the dangers have not diminished, but they have somewhat changed their character; the persecutions then to be endured having given place to the hardening and deadening influence of worldly-mindedness. In opposition to the impure songs to which they as heathens had been accustomed the Apostle exhorts to the use of the Psalms of David, of hymns composed by worthy and pious men, and songs which were inspired by the Divine Spirit. The expression used no doubt refers to antiphonal singing or recitation. In fact its peculiar form cannot well be referred to anything else; for in no other way could they speak or sing (as the word also sometimes means) to themselves. The form of speech is different from that employed a little further on, where those to whom St. Paul wrote were exhorted to submit themselves “one to another;” and they could not mutually obey each other. This latter mode of expression will serve to explain St. James' admonition, “Confess your faults one to another,” where the mode of speech is precisely the same, and indicates that the confession as well as the submission should be made to the proper authorities. The speaking or singing, however, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs is to be made by them to themselves, and therefore would naturally be antiphonal, as we recite our psalms in the public service of the Church. The command, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess,” would perhaps be more forcibly brought before us if the last word were translated “profligacy,” “abandonment,” or “loss,” to indicate the utter ruin which attends a life spent in luxury.

The parable of the Wedding Garment is referred by our Church, in the second exhortation for the Holy Communion, to the blessed Eucharist, than which nothing can be more appropriate, especially as shown by the different kind of festivals in the Christian course from those used in the times of their pagan living; and so it suitably follows the Scripture selected for the Epistle. Whether or not the parable refers to the Jewish nation, and if it does, whether it refers to the kingdom of God then set up, there is an affecting admonition connected with the punishment of the man who was found unprepared for the enjoyments to which he would have been welcomed, if his own negligence had not prevented it. Considerable discussion has been made as to what our Lord meant by the “wedding garment.” Some have understood it to mean faith; but it has been replied that the man evidently had faith, and not merely an historical faith, but to some extent a practical one, for he actually went to the feast. Others have understood charity to be meant; but perhaps consulting the analogy of Holy Scripture we shall more nearly approach our Saviour's meaning, if we take it to mean holiness both of heart and life, for the two are most intimately connected. In reference to

the last remark of the Lord's: “Many are called but few are chosen,” Theophylact remarks: “This parable respects the Jews who were called but not elected, as not hearkening to God's call;” whence he infers that “our calling is of God, but that whether we are elect or not is from ourselves;” thus understanding that there is a tremendous responsibility attaching itself to all the actions of mankind.

THE ABSURDITIES OF SCEPTICISM.

THE revelation we have in the Divine Scriptures is disbelieved by the scoffers of the present age because its statements are supposed to lack evidence, because it requires us to believe what no man has ever seen, what we have never experienced, and what cannot be directly proved by reasoning on the known and daily observed powers and operations of nature. And did we not know something about the inconsistencies of men, and how it often times turns out that *extremes are very apt to meet*, we might pay a certain amount of respect to objections, like those we have mentioned, and expect to find that the principles they involve would be honestly and faithfully applied to everything else. But when we discover that objectors of this stamp are prepared to swallow any amount of inconsistency and absurdity provided only it points in the direction of impiety, when we find that they can admit any number of theories advanced by some noted scientific authority, without the smallest particle of evidence whether sufficient or insufficient, that they are prepared to credit what no man has ever seen or experienced, and what cannot be proved by any kind or amount of reasoning, we are very much inclined to apply the principle contained in the Psalmist's observation: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;” and to think that sceptics throw aside the Bible, not at all from want of evidence, but simply because they do not wish to believe; they have no heart for the devotion it requires, for the self-denial and large heartedness it teaches, or for a belief in the doctrine that Almighty God is the unalterable hater, and will be the punisher of sin against His holy law.

The eternity or self-existence of matter is one of the absurdities which scepticism requires us to believe—that everything which now exists always did exist in some form or other, and that, like Topsy, it *grow'd*. They allege that the idea of a self-existent Creator is, utterly unthinkable. But it is not the idea of a self-existent universe more unthinkable. It is an idea not only beyond, but absolutely contrary to all the intuitions of our nature, as well as to all the reasonings in which we are apt to indulge. There is no intuition of the human mind more certainly manifested than that every compound has been put together by some one; which is the same thing as saying that every construction has been made by a constructor. Every grain of sand on the shore is a piece of architecture compared with which the temple of Minerva Parthenon is an “indigested mass” of unsightliness. And it might