

the Bible, when it is a fact that as far back as the twelve tables of Pagan Rome we find principles clearly stated upon which a large portion of the structure of universal modern law is based. Instead of tracing modern law to the Bible, we trace it back to Roman law, as codified under Justinian, and that is traceable to the Decemviral code, four centuries and a half before Christ. Licky justly says: "The Augustan age of Roman law was Pagan, not Christian."

The Bible has morally great merits and great defects. It is unquestionable that scattered through the book there is a vast amount of moral wisdom, but while it has no moral principles beyond the power of the human mind to discover, and more that were not known and taught by the ancient Pagans, there is much in both the Old and New Testaments plainly in conflict with the highest ethical teaching of to-day. Portions of the book are offensive to common decency, equal in voluptuousness of thought and nakedness of expression to Don Juan or La Pucelle. The old Jewish rabbi advised their young people not to read the Songs of Solomon until they were thirty years old.

Some of the proverbs of the Bible are indeed replete with simplicity and moral beauty, but certainly not superior to an equal number of modern proverbs that could be collected from the literature of any of the great nations of modern times.

The New Testament, although it contains no atrocities like those of the Old Testament, is inferior to it in practical sense and moral wisdom. Many of the New Testament precepts form no part of a perfect moral system. Its moral teachings are fragmentary, incomplete, often acetic and sometimes absurd. "To extract from it," says John Stuart Mill, "a body of ethical doctrines has never been possible without eking it out from the Old Testament, that is from a system elaborate indeed, but in many respects barbarous, and intended only for a barbarous people."

"Its ideal (that of Christian morality) is negative rather than positive, innocence rather than nobleness, abstinence from evil rather than energetic pursuit of good. \* \* It holds out the hope of heaven and the threat of hell as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life; in this falling far below the best of the ancients, and doing what lies in it to give to human morality an essentially selfish character by disconnecting each man's feeling of duty from the interests of his fellow creature, except so far as a self-interested inducement is offered to him for consulting them. It is essentially a doctrine of passive obedience; it inculcates submission to all authorities found established, who indeed are not to be actively obeyed when they command what religion forbids, but who are not to be resisted, far less rebelled against for any amount of wrong to ourselves. And while, in morality of the best Pagan nations, duty to the state holds, even a disproportionate place, infringing on the just liberty of the individual, in purely Christian ethics, that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged. It is in the Koran, not in the New Testament, that we read the maxim: 'A ruler who appoints any man to an office when there is in his dominion another man better qualified for it, sins against God and against the State.'"

"What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian, as even in the morality of private life whatever exists of magnanimity, high mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honor is derived from the purely human not the religious part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth professedly recognized is that of obedience." (Mill on Liberty, p. 94-97.)

"If we open our eyes," says Strauss, "and are honest enough to avow what they show us, we must acknowledge that the entire activity and aspiration of the civilized nations of our time is based on views of life which run directly counter to those entertained by Christ." (The Old Faith and the New, p. 86.)

Although the New Testament contains no moral teachings that were not known, taught and practiced centuries before any portion of the book was written, and many of its characteristic doctrines and precepts are practically obsolete, for some time yet we

shall bear that its moral teachings alone are sufficient to establish its superhuman origin.

The hackneyed statement that a work equal in worth to the Bible could not be produced by the wisdom of man is a foolish statement by whoever made. The Old Testament, as before remarked, is the literature of a nation. The man must be insane, or at least blinded by bigotry, who declares that a volume of the same size and equal to it in excellence could not be collected from modern literature.

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

The following reference to the oldest Freethought paper in the world is from the speech of Mr. B. F. Underwood at the laying of the corner-stone of Paine Hall, Boston:

"The old ship INVESTIGATOR has, since she was launched, experienced much rough weather, and more than once have the waves of bigotry and hatred threatened to overwhelm and destroy her; but proudly and defiantly she has kept on her course, her colors, through sunshine and storm, streaming from its masthead, with the motto "Universal Mental Liberty"—prophecy of the future and hope of the nations—inscribed thereon."

"Other barks, with commanders as hopeful, with prospects as fair, have been stranded and wrecked or suddenly sunk and never been heard of more. Of all the ships of the Liberal line, built a generation ago, the INVESTIGATOR is the only one that now rides the sea. The past few years smoother waters and sunnier skies have brought out several stately ships, additions to the Liberal line, and as the dangers disappear and the prospects brighten, handsome crafts from time to time push out from shore, some speedily to disappear, others to ride the waves gracefully for many years to come we hope. It must be very pleasant for the officers of this veteran ship, having sailed so many voyages alone, avoided by other crafts as a plague-ship filled with contagion and death, to have the company now of fine-looking, friendly barks, sailed by genial, gentlemanly captains and manned by intelligent and friendly crews."

We, the youngest ship of that line, have just launched our craft upon the waves of public opinion and spread its canvas to the breeze; and we salute with a broadside our eldest sister ship, that still staunch, still seaworthy Boston Investigator.—Ed. Journal.

Mrs. ANNIE BESANT.—It is rumored that this noted English lecturer, who is associated with Mr. Bradlaugh in editing the London National Reformer, and who was sentenced with him to imprisonment for selling Dr. Knowlton's pamphlet, may visit this country before long. She would be very kindly welcomed by Liberals, and no doubt listened to with great pleasure, for her superior abilities have placed her among the first intellectual female orators of the time.—Boston Investigator.

We hope the above rumor will turn out to be a fact, and that when that gifted woman does cross the Atlantic she will not forget to pay Toronto a visit, where she would be received with a heartiness amounting to enthusiasm.—Ed. Journal.

The *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, published at Chicago, and devoted to the advocacy of modern Spiritualism, appears to be as much interested in exposing the fraudulent claims and practices of mediums, like Bliss and the Holmes, as in defending the philosophy of which it is the representative for the West. Its course in this respect has made it many friends, not only among the better class of Spiritualists, but among those who are not Spiritualists, yet who welcome the exposure of trickery and fraud in whatever cause they are employed.