

Swearing.

Theodore Parker once shocked orthodox christians by saying in one of his sermons that ordinary profanity was not necessarily wicked, but, at worst, was merely an exhibition of bad taste in the use of language. He said men swore without any thought of disrespect to God, merely to emphasize their expressions, but that oaths lose their force and effect by too frequent use in ordinary unimpassioned conversation. When Washington, cool, self-possessed, and unaccustomed to use superfluous words gave vent to his emotions, under strong excitement, with an oath, or when Andrew Jackson, as firm as a rock in resisting wrong, swears "by the Eternal" that he will never recede from his position, there is something in the rhetoric which challenges admiration and increases respect for the man.

For presenting this view of profanity, Parker was detested and denounced in unmeasured terms by the clergy as a blasphemer and an infidel.

Some years afterwards, a professor read a paper before the American Scientific Association at Saratoga on "Consonantal Expressions of Emotion," in which he said that the words employed to express strong emotions contain strong consonantal sounds—those known as palatals, sibilants, and aspirates. He inferred that there was some profound and subtle connection between emotion and these sounds, and that words commonly used in profanity having for the most part consonant sounds, are but natural expressions of deep emotion. According to this view a man who, under the pressure of strong excitement, indulges in what is called profane language, merely gives consonantal expression to his emotion.

A point to be remembered is that the frequent repetition of these expressions from mere habit, when they are prompted by no corresponding feeling, weakens speech instead of giving it force, and such profanity detracts from the dignity of the speaker and at the same time offends the good taste of the hearer. The force of language is, like physical force, along the line of least resistance, and profanity impairs the effectiveness of an exclamation or declaration unless there is a state of mind, a tone of voice and some exigency that fits the words to the occasion. Ordinary, habitual profanity is folly.

The teaching of the clergy that swearing (except by themselves and in their pious, clerical way) is an insult to God and a damning sin, is in keeping with their foolish preaching about the great sin of "Sabbath breaking"—working or playing on the "Lord's day"—on which they do most of the work

for which they receive pay. It seems as though the orthodox preachers wished the people to recognize their exclusive right to do what cursing and swearing is done—only for emphasis and effect, probably—and to have the monopoly of all the paid work done on Sunday, except such work as conveying them and the people to and from church, providing meals, etc.

I protest that no class should be privileged to do all the swearing, to have the whole advantage of employing a certain kind of rhetoric to give force to their language, nor be exempt from compulsory Sabbath observance, if such observance is imposed by law upon other classes. But we must remember that there was a time when the church and its clergy did whatever they chose, and obedience to them was demanded on penalty of imprisonment, torture and death. The privileges which they now have or expect are few and small in comparison, and they are still "growing smaller by degrees and beautifully less."

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

Religious Experience.

[BY M. J. OLDS.]

To the Editor: I have heretofore spoken of my good old grandmother having a great influence over me while I was quite young. It proves to me how a child's mind can be bent for good or evil, while very young and the great necessity of instilling into it the laws of nature in order that they may escape the penalty of violated law, which is causing so much suffering and unhappiness now in the world. Nature says, if we sin, we must suffer the penalty of violated law. So it stands us in hand to search the scriptures of nature (not the orthodox bible) that we may learn to be happy. Now as we have our hereditary tendencies to contend with, and also the influences which are thrown around us day by day which are perhaps all against the laws of nature and have a powerful tendency to warp the young mind, and get it so deeply impregnated with wrong ideas, that if continued until the child arrives at mature age, it is very hard to counteract the false education it has received for so many years. If one has large firmness and perhaps large self-esteem, it makes him feel a great deal of confidence in himself and in his opinion of things; while firmness being large would make him stick to his opinions and the way he had been raised. It is very hard to get new ideas into the mind provided it has small causality and if this is small, it's hard to reason from cause to effect and from effect back to the cause and the mind will still persist in staying in the old rut.

So we can see that some are out of balance in their organization, they are unlucky, shut up as it were in a

shell, with but little chance to change them; they are bound as with an iron band to their organization, therefore progression to them comes very slowly; now my grandmother (not meaning to speak irreverently of her, for she was conscientious and well developed morally, but had one of the organizations I have described, with large firmness and self esteem, and small causality) was educated to have a superstitious idea of things, not having a chance to even hear a word about the laws of nature. A preacher once said he wished there was no such thing as the laws of nature, when a friend of mine was arguing with him; so my grandmother, not knowing anything about these laws, instilled her feelings and aspirations into her son, my dear father, and having instilled her religious sentiments so thoroughly into him, he naturally followed the example she had set, and, being a very conscientious, honest man, with large sympathies, he felt it to be his duty to do all in his power to save his dear family and friends from that everlasting punishment, which awaits those who do not and cannot believe the Bible to be divinely inspired and do not live up to its teachings. He thought that unbelievers must go down into everlasting punishment, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. He therefore became a minister of the gospel and labored very hard to save all the souls from this eternal punishment. But think of the words, he that believeth not shall be damned eternally, and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up day and night, forever and ever. Only think, for ever and ever! A just, loving and merciful God; a God who had all knowledge and all power; knew the weakness and frailty of the children he had made yet did his work so imperfectly. A perfect God, think of it, to make such a botch of his work; then when he saw what a bad job he had done, it grieved him to the heart; and possessing all power to save all his dear children, he does not do it. Dear me, I think he must be terribly out of balance in his organization.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Infallible Bible.

Dr. J. M. Buckley, editor of the New York Christian Advocate, the official organ of the Methodist Church, created a sensation at a meeting of Methodist ministers by asking the question: "Is the English version of the bible infallible?" and answering it in the negative. The 300 clergymen present were indignant at his position and angered still more by his declaring the great majority of them agreed with him.

Dr. Buckley said: "I am sorry to disagree with my friend Curtis. I don't believe in the infallibility of the English version of the bible, and I think there are scarcely four men in this meeting who do."

There was a gasp, a groan, a confused hum of voices and then a chorus of protests, but Dr. Buckley waited for quiet and then went on to point out what he declared to be the many glaring inconsistencies in the English translation even in its revised form. When he sat down the storm broke.

Clergyman after clergyman arose and in somewhat unclerical heat denounced the views of Dr. Buckley and Dr. Lyman Abbot. Dr. Shaffer of Newburg and Dr. Leonard of this city were the leaders in the discussion. Dr. Buckley declined fervent appeals to retract his words and demand a vote on the question of the infallibility of the bible.

"If you doubt the infallibility of the bible," cried Dr. Shaffer "we can very well get along without you and all like you."

"You're afraid to have a vote taken," responded Dr. Buckley. "I do not pretend by this to question the infallibility of the bible as it was written in the Hebrew and the Greek, but I do question parts of it as it was written in English, and I want a vote taken."

Those who believed in the infallibility of the English version of the bible were to rise and be counted. Only one man arose, Dr. Shaffer. The other clergymen, however, said they did not consider such a vote authorized.

It may well be doubted whether there is a single intelligent, well-informed individual, minister or layman, who really believes in the infallibility of any English version of the Bible. The most they can aver is, like Dr. Buckley: "I do not pretend to question the infallibility of the Bible as it was written in Hebrew and Greek."

But this leads to a peculiar predicament. Where will they find a copy of that "Bible as it was written in Hebrew and the Greek?" The books that have been copied and recopied, transcribed and retranscribed and retranscriptions retranscribed, ad libitum, by careless or willfully erroneous copyists, who amended, revised, altered and interpolated, until nobody knows what remains as it was "originally written in Hebrew and the Greek"—are these to be taken, and believed in as infallible? But, if not, where is the infallible Bible to be found? Echo answers: Where?

There is no known infallible Bible in existence—whether Hebrew, Greek, English, or in any other language or tongue—and if the ministers were as honest and fearless as they are learned, they would admit the fact. Not even the famed Polychrome Bible, with all the trained and fearless scholarship engaged in its preparation, can claim to be infallible. Nor is there any Bible that is known to be "as it was originally written."—Ex.