

Notes and Comments.

Editor Torch of Reason:

I have read Paine's "Age of Reason" and a few numbers of the Torch of Reason and I find them to be two of the most reasonable productions that I have ever read.

"Come, now, and let us reason together," is what Isaiah says the Lord told him; but what little reasoning we will have to do, will be of a little different kind from that which the Lord had with Isaiah—that is, there will be a little more truth and reason in it. The Lord tells him, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." There is about as much truth and reason in that statement, we suppose, as there is in the one that he makes to Ahaz, who was then king of Judah, telling him that the kings of Israel and Syria, who were then besieging him, should not be successful, and to assure Ahaz that he was telling him the truth, he gives him a sign. He says, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and before the child shall be old enough to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." Christians and Bible-believers try to make this a prophecy foretelling the miraculous birth of Jesus. This all took place about 740 years before Christ's time, and it has no more reference to Christ than it has to the highlands of Honolulu; because if it was a sign to Ahaz that he should come out victorious in the war then going on, it was a mockery, a lie, for it will be seen that Ahaz was desperately beaten and taken captive, and delivered into the hands of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter, who slew one hundred and twenty thousand in one day. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters. See II Chronicles, 28:1-8.

There is no fact more patent at the present day than that within the last half century there has come over the spirit of the Christian church and is still coming, a great change, with reference to its beliefs and its tolerance of the opinions of others.

The Rev. Dr. Briggs says: "I rejoice at this age of rationalism, investigation must go on. It matters little how many oppose it; it is impossible to stay the tide." The church is beginning to have its doubts about some, at least, of the unreasonable statements made in the Bible, such, for instance, as a finite creature giving birth to an infinite one; the silly story as re-

lated about Jonah and the whale; the doctrine of endless punishment, and a hundred others we could refer to. The ministry has been forced to select subjects to discourse upon more in accord with reason and good sense. It don't take one-tenth part the fire and brimstone to satisfy the people now-a-days that it did fifty years ago; they are ashamed of such silly talk as that. When we read the fathers of the church and see upon what arguments they have built the edifice of religion, we are inexpressibly astonished with their credulity or their knavery. But allegory was the rage of that period. The pagans employed it to explain the actions of their gods, and the Christians acted in the same spirit when they employed it after their fashion. In the first periods of the Christian church not only the most learned of those who have since been denominated heretics, but many of the orthodox conceived Moses to have written neither the law nor the pentateuch, but that the work was a compilation made by the elders of the people and the seventy, who after the death of Moses collected his scattered ordinances, and mixed with them things that were extraneous similar to what happened to the Koran of Mahomet. Then in the assembly at Mecca, giving in their confessions of faith, Volney says: "Then came forward with a look of confidence an Iman of the law of Mahomet, 'Praise be to God, said he, the light shines with full evidence and the truth has no need of examination.' 'Be it so,' replied the lawgivers. But if your statements as to what constitutes the truth disagree, who shall reconcile them? If error has its martyrs; what is the certain mark of truth? If the evil spirit works miracles, what is the distinctive character of God? And what is this luminous doctrine that fears the light? Who is this man, cried all the groups, who thus insults us without a cause? Has not God endowed us, as well as him, with understanding and reason; and have we not an equal right to use them in choosing what to believe and what to neglect? If violence and persecution are the arguments of truth, are gentleness and charity the signs of falsehood?"

JOEL M. BERRY.

The Confidence of Youth.

The young men of some of the Christian associations are trying to snub Dr. Abbott and passing resolutions reading him into outer darkness. There is a smack of old-fashioned orthodoxy in that, including a good deal of its brimstone; and if the doctor doesn't immediately declare that he believes that which he doesn't believe he will find himself surrounded by some very dangerous theological explosives.—Judge.

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