

breaking an ink well over his evil head.

This chief agent of the mystic, the angel Satan, ruler of the darkness and keeper of the nether world, came greatly into prominence during the eighth and ninth centuries. Baptism was the favorite exorcism in which the devil was driven from the soul. The famous synod of Leptinæ, in 743 A. D., thought it necessary to add to the confession of faith an "abrenunciation" of the devil. Roskoff tells us that the Low-German formula includes, as well, the renunciation of the three great German deities along with the devil. It was given as follows:

"Forsake thou the devil?"
 "I forsake the devil."
 "And all devil works?"
 "I forsake all devil works."
 "And all devil guilds?"

"I forsake all devil guilds, works and words, Thor nor, and Woden, and Saxnot, and all the evil ones that are his companions."

The truth cannot be disputed that Christianity was regarded as a kind of magic. The sacrament was a kind of sacred sorcery and the literal flesh and blood idea of the bread and wine clings to human minds today with great tenacity.

As a sample of the mysticism which satisfied the people from the 8th to the 15th century I refer you to that wonderful book, "Dialogus Miraculorum," by Casarius von Heisterbach who died in 1245. This book became very popular. It is not to be wondered at, for in it we read of many mysterious things. It states at the hour of death, pious people will see the portals of heaven open for them, while infidels will be tortured by black men and vultures, and for the special edification of the faithful rasomed through the damned are thrown one by one into the crater of a volcano.

What a woe is this terrible power of mysticism! What a sorrow to a race that might have been thousands of years in advance of its present status but for it. What a crime against nature that the mind of man should have been thus befogged. Yet it is easily realized how helpless we have been under the spell, when I tell you that persons in this very audience hear with a strange sense of fear the words I speak to you. It takes courage to be free, especially to free one's mind from this great enemy—mysticism.

With this brief reference to the relation of mysticism to religion we leave it with very gentle handling, for it is realized how such a free discussion shocks the minds of those who have long hugged to their hearts what they are pleased to call "the religion of my mother."

We will next discuss for a moment the mysticism in science.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.)

NOTE.—Address the "Old Doctor," care of C. Elton Blanchard, editor Current Thought, 802 Ansel Ave., Cleveland, O.

For the Torch of Reason.

Bible Lessons.

The combined ecclesiastical churches have started a new series of bible lessons. They pick out scraps and patches here and there, and give what they call explanations. This shows that God Almighty, when he wrote his book, did not have time to arrange it properly. Singular that he should stake his reputation on a book, gotten up like Salmagundi, which might properly be furnished with the proem which Coleridge prefixed to one of his:

"This book must sure immortal be,
 Kind sir, it cannot fail,
 For 'tis incomprehensible,
 And without head or tail."

These lessons are to begin with the life of Jesus. Now if they would give an honest lesson on this subject, all the succeeding lessons would become superfluous and there would be a great saving of "labor." But this is not what the manipulators of churches and Sunday schools are after. Religion has never been an industry in the pursuit of which honesty is the best policy.

The gospels according to Matthew and Luke begin with a man, Joseph, who had two fathers. The infallible Matthew says, "Jacob begat Joseph." The infallible Luke says Jesus, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph the son of Heli. Here we have an account of a man with two fathers. And this wonderful man with two fathers was the supposed father of a man, Jesus, who really and truly did not have any. Or shall we suppose, to make a harmony of the gospels, that Jesus also had two fathers, viz., Joseph and a ghost?

Jesus was fond of calling himself the son of man, which he was not if the ghost alone was his father. This case of a man without a father is most emphatically one to which Hume's experience argument is applicable. According to Christians themselves this is a sole, isolated instance. All other cases of the begetting of men by gods or ghosts are fabulous. There is not another case in the history of the world like it or analagous to it. Each individual of the one billion three hundred millions of living inhabitants of this globe had a father. Each one of the countless billions which history and archæology give account of had a father, with this one exception. What, then, would be the evidence to substantiate such a

story? There could, in the nature of the case, be but one witness—Mary. Would we accept her testimony to such a monstrous story if she had declared it, under her own hand, certified by a notary? Have we her testimony? What have we? Joseph, the man with two fathers, is alleged to have had a dream which quieted what was supposed to be his mind about the paternity of Jesus. He was a great dreamer. I suppose men with two fathers usually are. He used dreams to find out what was going on in the world, as we moderns use the telephone and telegraph. But how can we know that he dreamed out the right theory? Dreams, even among the ancients, were not the infallible source of certitude in matters of fact and history, that our christian brethren suppose them to have been.

There was a Jesus, the son of Sirach, the reputed author of Ecclesiasticus, who wisely said, "Who-so regardeth dreams is like one who pursueth a shadow and followeth after the wind."

It is the shadow of this shadowy dream which we find ourselves chasing when in pursuit of the central "fact" of Christian history. How do we know that Joseph had any dream? We have not his testimony. The gospel according to Matthew says he had a dream, but who was Matthew?

Rev. J. R. Miller D. D. in the current number of The Record of Christian Work says, "We do not know where he was born. . . . He breaks into the story of the gospel suddenly, without any previous intimation of his existence.

. . . Only three incidents of his life are recorded. . . . His name appears in the first chapter of Acts—his name only—and that is the last glimpse we have of him."

Such is the comprehensive biography of the man who is supposed to have told us of this dream, which stands alone to confirm the most monstrous and improbable story that was ever told. But there is also the additional difficulty that Matthew must have written his gospel, mediumistically, some generations after he was dead; for the gospel did not appear until near the beginning of the third century. We have "wise men from the east" following after "his star", which star "went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was." We have a flock of angels flying about in the night, praising god and saying "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." That is what the revised version says the angels said, but tell us that many ancient authorities say that they said something else. Angels are hard to report. You have to catch them on the fly. You can see them better with your eyes shut and hear them

most distinctly when you are asleep and dreaming.

Such is a brief outline of the first lesson in the life of Jesus, "Who was begotten of the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, crucified, dead, buried, and descended into hell", where he met the thief who was to be with him in Paradise. He also ascended into heaven.

Where is heaven? Robert Burdette said that Molly Garfield was a witch who could fly over the highest church steeple in Hartford on a broomstick. He had not seen Molly Garfield, nor did he see her fly, but he had seen the church steeple and the broomstick. So baron Munchausen threw his hatchet to the moon. The moon is there and there are marks on it; but where is heaven?

D. PRIESTLEY.

LITTLE TORCHES.

By W. E. Johnson

The wise Christian looks backward and forward and all around him.—[Nashville Christian Advocate.

'Fraid some other Christian will pick his pocket.

Two needed revivals—praying and paying —[The Christian Standard.

The priest never depends on praying to God to collect his salary. He passes the hat and calls upon the faithful to "dig up".

The devil was fairly well acquainted with the Scriptures and could quote them on occasion, but his heart was filled with enmity toward God.—[Methodist Recorder.

We go still farther. We broadly suspect that the Devil even wrote some of the Scriptures. Many passages are smutty enough to have been written in a sewer.

It is the folly of skepticism that it shuts its eyes to the truth and then complains that it cannot see.—[Nashville Christian Advocate.

Your religion doesn't ask us to see. You demand that we shall "live by faith" and warn us not to see. You can depend on skeptics to fail to see what does not exist—only priests and inel-riates see double.

Until Nov. 10 last, a young couple could not get legally married in Peru unless the ceremony was performed by a Catholic priest. It was only by listening to the jibberish of some monk that a legal wife could be obtained. On that date the Peruvian congress passed a bill legalizing marriages performed by the civil authorities. Of course the priests fought desperately, but had to give way to modern ideas. Gradually the priesthood is losing its grip, even in South America.