

TORCH OF REASON.

"TRUTH BEARS THE TORCH IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH."—*Lucretius*.

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HARK! through the waking earth
Hark! through the echoing sky,
Herald of freedom's birth,
There comes a glorious cry.

The triple chains that bind
Fall from the weary limb,
Fall from the down-crushed mind,
As rolls that noble hymn.

Unto man's waiting heart
It saith, "Arise, be strong!
Bear thou an earnest part
Against all forms of wrong.

"Bid fear give place to love;
Bid crime and passion cease;
Be every word of hate
For ever hushed in peace."

Selected.

Don't Read Pernicious Books.

BY KERSEY GRAVES.

THE Quaker Church have a clause in their discipline forbidding their members to read pernicious books, which are defined by one of the founders of the Church (William Penn) to be "such books and publications as contain language which appears to sanction crime or wrong practices, or teach bad morals." And hundreds of cases prove that the Christian Bible may be ranked with works of this character.

If the advice of the Hindu editor had been complied with many years ago—to "revise all Bibles, and leave out their bad precepts and examples," and change their obscene language,—the Christian Bible might now be a very useful and instructive book. But we are willing to leave it to the conscience of every honest reader, who places truth and morality above Bibles and creeds, to decide, whether the Bible, with all its ennobling precepts, does not contain to strong an admixture of bad morality to make it a safe or suitable book to be relied on as a guide in morals and religion. According to Archbishop Tillotson, Bibles shape the morals and religion of the people in all religious countries,—they are derived from the examples and precepts of these "Holy Books." If this be true, we most solemnly and seriously put the question to every Bible reader. What must be the effect upon the morals and religion of Christian countries of such moral examples as Abraham, Moses, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, and nearly all the prophets, with their long string of crimes. Let us not be guilty of the folly of suffering our inherited, stereotyped predilections, an exalted veneration for "the Holy Book," to rule our moral sense, and control our judgment in this matter, but muster the moral cour-

age to look at the thing in its true light. Let us be independent moralists and philanthropists, rather than slaves to Bibles and creeds. "Every book," says a writer, "has a spirit which it breathes into the minds of its readers;" and, if it contains bad morals or bad language, the habitual reading of it will gradually reconcile the mind to those immoral lessons, and finally cause them to be looked upon as God-given truths. Such is the omnipotent force of habit. And we appeal to all Bible readers to testify if this has not been their experience. All Christian professors, when they first commenced reading the Bible, doubtless found many things in it which shocked their moral sense, did violence to their reasoning faculties, and mortified their love of decorum. But a perseverance in reading it, through the force of habit and education, has finally reconciled their minds to those immoral lessons, and blinded the judgment, so that they are not now conscious of their real character and deleterious influence upon the mind.

Confession, That Golden Mine for The Priests, Has Destroyed The True Principles of Morality.

By Jean Meslier.

HE who first proclaimed to the nations that, when man had wronged man, he must ask God's pardon, appease his wrath by presents, and offer him sacrifices, obviously subverted the true principles of morality. According to these ideas, men imagine that they can obtain from the King of Heaven, as well as from the kings of earth, permission to be unjust and wicked, or at least pardon for the evil which they might commit.

Morality is founded upon the relations, the needs, and the constant interests of the inhabitants of the earth; the relations which subsist between men and God are either entirely unknown or imaginary. The religion associating God with men has visibly weakened or destroyed the ties which unite men.

Mortals imagine that they can, with impunity, injure each other by making a suitable reparation to the Almighty Being, who is supposed to have the right to remit all the injuries done to his creatures. Is there anything more liable to encourage wickedness and to embolden to crimes than to persuade

men that there exists an invisible being who has the right to pardon injustice, rapine, perfidy, and all the outrages they can inflict upon society? Encouraged by these fatal ideas, we see the most perverse men abandon themselves to the greatest crimes, and expect to repair them by imploring Divine mercy; their conscience rests in peace when a priest assures them that Heaven is quieted by sincere repentance, which is very useless to the world; this priest consoles them in the name of the Deity, if they consent in reparation of their faults to divide with his ministers the fruits of their plunderings, of their frauds, and of their wickedness. Morality united to religion, becomes necessarily subordinate to it. In the mind of a religious person, God must be preferred to his Creatures; "It is better to obey him than men!" The interests of the Celestial Monarch must be above those of weak mortals. But the interests of Heaven are evidently the interests of the ministers of Heaven; from which it follows evidently, that in all religions, the priests, under pretext of Heaven's interests, or of God's glory, will be able to dispense with the duties of human morals when they do not agree with the duties which God is entitled to impose.

Besides, he who has power to pardon crimes, has he not the right to order them committed?

Common Sense.

Has Man a Soul?

BY CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

WHAT do you mean by soul? What is the soul? Is it I? Is it the body? Is it apart from the body? Is it an attribute of the body? Has it a separate and distinct existence from the body? What is the soul? If I ask one of those who claim to be orthodox men, they will tell me that the soul is a spirit—that the soul lives after the body is dead. They will tell me that the soul is immortal and that the body is mortal; that the soul has nothing whatever in common with the body; that it has an existence entirely independent of the body. They will tell me that after the body has decayed—after the body has become re-absorbed in the universe, of which it is but a part, that the soul exists. Is there any proof of the existence of the same individual soul apart from all material

conditions? I have endeavored to examine this subject, and, up to the present time, I have not found one iota of proof in support of the positions thus put forward. I have no idea of any existence except that of which I am a part. I AM. Of my own existence I am certain. I think. I am. But what is it that thinks? Is it my soul? Is it "me," and yet distinct from me? I am but a mode of existence. I am only part of the great universe. The elements of which I am composed are indissolubly connected with that great existence which is around me and within me, and which I help to make up. If men tell me I am a compound, and not a compound—a mixture and not a mixture—a joining together and not a joining together—of two entirely different existences, which they call "matter" and "spirit," I am compelled to doubt those men. The ability to think is but an attribute of a certain modification of existence. Intelligence is a word by which we express the sum of certain abilities, always attending a certain mode of existence. I find intelligence manifested so far as organization is developed. I never find intelligence without animal organization. I find intelligence manifested in degree, only so far as I find a higher or lower type of organization—that is, I find man's intellectual faculties limited by his organization.

But the orthodox tell me that my soul has an immaterial existence, independent of all organization—independent of all climatic conditions—independent of all education. Is that so? When does the soul come into man? When does it go out of man? If the soul is immortal, why is it that standing here, in the prime of health and strength, if part of that roof should fall fracturing my skull, and pressing upon my brain—how is it, if my soul is not subject to material conditions, that it then ceases to act? Is the plaster roof more powerful than my immortal soul? Or is it that intelligence is the necessary condition of existence, and that the moment you destroy that condition—the moment you destroy that organization—the result ceases to be realizable?

By the course of reasoning you adopt (says the orthodox objector) you reduce man to the same level as the beasts. And why not? I stand on the river's bank, I see there a man full grown, possessed of the physical figure of a man, but