

## Torch of Reason

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THURSDAY, JAN. 24, E. M. 301.

### Our Legislature Luckily Short of Clergy.

"Salem, Ore., Jan. 16.—"Is there a minister present?" asked Speaker Reeder, after roll-call of the House this morning. The inquiry was made in conformity with the resolution passed the previous day that the daily sessions of the house be opened with prayer; but for some reason no clerical gentleman could be found; and Sergeant-at-Arms Allen announcing that he had been unable to discover one, the regular business was proceeded with." So says the Oregonian of Jan. 17.

If Oregon is really a republic, this old practice of the legislature's hiring a Sky-pilot to pray as their first act every day that a "King of kings" and "Lord of lords" should bring down from Heaven "thy kingdom" to take the place of our republic, would be much better honored by the "breach than the observance." Our legislators are sent to Salem to look after the public secular affairs in and for this world. There is nothing in our constitution to authorize them to try to break up or replace our republic by any "kingdom" whatsoever. Those who have recovered from "religious hypnotism" cannot help but see that all of this praying business is either silly hypocrisy or rank treason; and in either case is wholly out of place.

Of course, no legislator expects a prayer to be answered; that, as

science now shows, would be sheer idiocy. What is expected by this genuflection is that the political support of the Theocratic Theologs and their subjects may be cheaply obtained by pledging the state to their demands that as to them. Now this is a fraud—no such promise can be or is expected to be kept. If the "kingdom of Heaven" should come down today, as the New Testament and the Christian religion says it is to come "some day", and all there is of that religion is staked on that fact, for which it daily prays (Matthew xxiv, 33—51, Mark xiii, 30—37, 1 Thessalians chaps. iv and x, Revelation xxii, 7, 11, 12, 16—20 and references)—then what? Why is it not then, the sworn duty of every legislator and of every citizen of Oregon, under the constitution, to chuck that kingdom into the Pacific, and hang its supporters by the neck as traitors? Is not that just what will happen if those prayers get answered?

As Ingersoll used to say: "Honest, now!" If you are men of sense, the time to show it is when in your legislative seats; and the way to show it, is to repeal that unsecular resolution, or else instruct Sergeant Allen never to be able to find a clergyman. The State of Oregon is not a Theocratic Dependency, in word or fact. It requires a sound, pure and common sense Legislature, and the present one was supposed to be that. Are we to be disappointed?

### Judge Waite and "Jesus."

We have delayed the notice of Judge Waite's history until we had time to read it and become able to express what we hope is an intelligent opinion. And now, we have no hesitation in saying that this "History of Christianity up to the Year 200" ought to work an epoch, not only among Liberals, but throughout the general public upon the subject. The origin of Christianity is the corner stone of History, and of all that has been built upon it since, in the way of religion, politics or morals. If we are mistaken about that, we are mistaken and will have to make a change as to the fundamental opinions which govern human conduct and happiness. But of all that important period in the history of religion and of the world, there never has been heretofore one plain, truth-telling statement.

Judge Waite has conferred a great favor upon the world at large, by giving us at last such a statement. As to the details of its excellence, this general expression, that they are worked out with ability, learning, distinctness and evident truthfulness, must suffice.

We have noticed but one or two matters which seem not to have been sufficiently regarded and im-

pressed, although they are surely mentioned. One of these is the fact that the first three Gospels, and especially the first two, must always be read as paragraph writings. That is, they are books made up of paragraphs which originated from various sources and are largely independent of each other, and which were written at various times during a comparatively long period, and then collected in and as though they were but one book. This method makes it misleading to speak of any of those books as though they were composed and compiled within one year, or by the visions, composition and memory of one author. This remark applies to the first three Gospels more especially, for the fourth Gospel, that of John, seems to have been the result, on the contrary, of one individual purpose and the expression of one individual character, and therefore is more like one book.

Judge Waite, apparently by not giving effect to this consideration, has supposed that the Gospel of Matthew may be even later than that of John, but on readjustment we think it will be plain that though certain portions of Matthew to which he refers, may be as old, or even older, than the Fourth Gospel, yet the bulk of the visions and traditions contained in Matthew and Mark long preceded the state of mind and the purpose which the Fourth Gospel was written to express.

Another more important and much grander consideration is the view he has taken in regard to the origin of Jesus Christ, which is now one of the most important questions in all history. Judge Waite has adhered to the position taken in the first edition of his work, and in his first appendix has given his reasons therefor, to wit:—that there was such an actual man as Jesus Christ, and that the Epistles and Gospels of the New Testament historically refer to such a person, who had as much a real single individuality as Julius Caesar or George Washington. We have in the Free Thought Magazine and on other occasions, expressed a conviction that this is an entire mistake, and that the true "Jesus the Christ" was originally one, and then many, Messianic visions, around which were gradually collected the prophecies, the addition of other visions, the attributing to him of miracles, wonderful sayings, and still more wonderful hopes which were ultimately built up out of the ideal vision who thus becomes "the Son of Man," the "Son of God," and the "Saviour of the world." The way in which this view is brushed aside and almost practically ignored in Judge Waite's book seems to us as a great defect; and we believe the utility of his work cannot be realized unless this deficiency is to some extent, at least, supplied. Accordingly, we

will take occasion to present in the Torch as concisely as possible, the ideal, visional and evolutionary view of the origin of Christianity and its Jesus.

Judge Waite has promised to take this attempt, to present this contrasting view, in good part; and not only that, but he has agreed to help, and has already aided us by furnishing some material that was beyond our reach where the Torch is published. He has also indicated that he would be pleased to present in the Torch, a further statement of his own view, after ours has been presented; and more astonishing still, that he believes that since both of us are equally desirous of ascertaining and accepting the truth, that the result of this comparison of views may be an agreement in regard to this important subject. Whether such agreement may be attained or not, the discussion may be of great value to all the students of history, and aid the attempts to get a true and clear idea of the origin of the great Christian beliefs by which the religions and the progress of the world are still chiefly controlled.

[In the meantime send to us \$2.25 for Judge Waite's history, so as to prepare by reading it, and we will send you free copies of the Torch containing the discussion.—Editor Torch.]

### Anchoring Heaven.

As evolutionists, we must be very grateful to the past as to the bridge which brought us over, though much of it was illusory and rough enough. Among those illusions floats now and first of all, the Christian Heaven which seems to have become loosened from the earth and to have been bumping around among the stars indefinitely for some Eighteen Hundred years. The description of it in the New Testament has been felt by many believers, to be wanting in fullness and to be a reflected revelation as far as it goes, of the good and pleasant things of earth. The reason of this deficiency was that in the earlier period of Christianity, it was believed that this world was nearing its end, and that during the lifetime of those then living, the earth itself would be fitted up as the Kingdom of Heaven, or rather that the Kingdom of Heaven would come down and occupy the Earth. That is the reason of all their prayers, "thy kingdom come"; and that is stated as the great motive and joy of life in the Epistles and in the Gospels, and so beautifully in the closing part of the Revelation, which concludes the New Testament. The early Christians never thought of going to Heaven, but they did think most longingly of Heaven as coming down and including them on this earth. But come it never did, though the de-