

Original Communications.

SIN AND SUFFERING IN THE UNIVERSE.

Letters addressed to the Hon. Gerritt Smith, of Peterboro, New York. BY ALBERT BARNES.

LETTER V.

HON. GERRITT SMITH: DEAR SIR: In my last two letters to you, I have considered your solution of the difficulties involved in the existence of sin and suffering in the universe...

What I do find on the subject in your letter is embraced in the following items: (a.) That Christ did not pretend to know all the future...

According to this representation, we have no evidence that we possess any thing that he spoke. It is true that you say that "we have satisfactory evidence that he spoke substantially as the New Testament says he did..."

"In this connection let me say how infinitely absurd is the doctrine, that a religion so simple and so obviously true as is the Christian religion, needs to be proved by miracles..."

"He must, therefore, either have remained in the grave, or, if he rose from the dead, he must have died again at some time, and in some place, and in some manner..."

"Your views on that subject are very unequivocally expressed in the following language: 'It is, indeed the best of books...'

"I have now only to add, that, according to your view of God, he is either absolutely unable, or indisposed, to interfere in any case in the affairs of the universe by an act of intervention that could be properly called a 'miracle'..."

"It is entirely unreasonable to expect that our science-enlightened age shall hold to the Theologies, constructed in an age of darkness..."

"From the power of God, therefore, there can be no hope for the sinner and the sufferer in the future world, and as you admit that man may sin and suffer there (page 7), it follows that so far as God is concerned, the sinner and the sufferer there must be absolutely helpless..."

"perile Theologies" with which the world can not "much longer continue to have patience. If this is a correct view of God, then it will become the duty of the Christian world...

"I do not find in your letter any distinct statement, that you regard the salvation of men, either from sin in the present world, or from suffering in the world to come, as in any respect dependent on the work of Christ, or as in any way connected with an atonement for sin..."

"But how far it is from certain, that he spoke it, and, especially, that he spoke it, intending it to have the meaning given to it in our translation, and by our ecclesiastical standard?"

"The Bible is, according to your view, full of falsehoods. It undoubtedly affirms that Christ, after his resurrection from the dead, ascended to heaven..."

"There is nothing certain about it. Thus you say, (p. 9.) of the Saviour, 'That it is far from certain that he spoke what is recorded of him.'"

"The Bible is full of miracles. They are its very warp and woof. They enter into its very structure. They are found on almost every page. Yet, according to your view, all these, from beginning to end, are falsehoods..."

"Such, then, are your views of man, of God, of Christ, of the Bible. I do not now say that they are erroneous views—for that is not the point before us; I only say that they are your views."

"I have now gone over the main points in your letter, and have finished what I intended to say. I have endeavored to be courteous, but, at the same time, I have desired to write you such a letter that you would not be likely to write me another."

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for those who believe in such a God, to have just minds and loving hearts. In its own words: 'And what shall I say more?—for the time would fail me to tell of all the foolish and abominable things in this book, which ecclesiastical authority commands us to gulp down, or, without picking and culling, as one of my good old ministers required. I said the Bible was the best of books.'

"There are several particulars here that deserve special attention. My object in noticing them, will not be at all to inquire into the truth or correctness of your representations of the Bible..."

"(a.) It is the best of books—a repository of the sublimest inspirations, principles, and precepts." (b.) It is abundant in foolish, false, and exceedingly pernicious things."

"(c.) It has been the cause of all the wrongs done to Africa—in your estimation, and in mine, not trivial or small."

"(d.) It has been the main support and cause of all the persecutions against witchcraft, and of the crimes connected with such persecution."

"(e.) It has revealed a 'MONSTROUS GOD.' Thus you say, (p. 8.) of certain things which occurred among the Hebrew people, 'Their enormities grew largely out of their belief in that vindictive, bloody, and MONSTROUS GOD, who, unhappily, became the God of the Christian nations also.'"

"(f.) It prevents men, by its instructions and doctrines, from 'having just minds and loving hearts.' (g.) There is nothing certain about it. Thus you say, (p. 9.) of the Saviour, 'That it is far from certain that he spoke what is recorded of him.'"

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in other words, can do nothing to effect this without violating his freedom; and that all this is essential to just views of moral agency, and must exist in the future world as well as in this, and consequently, that there can never be a state in which man can be secure from sin, and therefore from suffering..."

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REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTERS—VIII. (AUSTIN, NEVADA.)

As we live in a land of magnificent distances, and are wital an unsettled people; no marvel need be felt that my present communication is dated at this place—so far inland, that it is neither in the East nor yet in the West.

OCCASIONS OF MY COMING.

After my arrival in the Golden City, the Capital of the West, a week was spent very pleasantly. During this time various jottings were made for the Presbyterian; all of which will answer months hence as well as now."

THE JOURNEY.

Leaving San Francisco at 4 P. M., June 1st, on a commodious inland steamer, we were steamed across bays, through channels, and up the Sacramento River, which was pouring down a flood-tide of waters from the melting snows of the Sierras."

RAILROAD.

From Sacramento next morning, we took the cars; on the western end of the great Central Pacific Road, for the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, one hundred and five miles. As on an Atlantic road, we were whirled away over the long wide valley of the Sacramento, now in all the gorgeous beauty of early California summer—on to the conical hills at the base of the great mountain range, covered with a beautiful growth of tall, straight pines, with limpid streams running around their base from the still melting snow above."

SLEIGHTS.

With some difficulty ourselves and baggage were transferred from cars to immense sleds, each drawn by six horses and we are thus conveyed across the immediate summit of the mountain, and over snow banks, how deep none seemed able to tell. To complete the winter scene, it snowed heavily upon us during the time of our sleigh ride, and this on the 2d of June. When over the highest ridge we were transferred to large stage wagons, and thundered down the slopes of the great mountain to Donner Lake, with a rapidity and seeming recklessness eminently western."

RAILROAD AGAIN.

From Donner Lake the railroad is completed forty miles eastward down the Truckee River. No full sized cars can be gotten over the mountains until the completion of the railroad. Small truck cars have been constructed for temporary use. To these we were transferred and run down the little river with its sublime scenery, in face style to Reno, the present terminus of the road—quite a bustling town all constructed within the past few months."

AGAIN STAGES.

At Reno we again took stage, and were conveyed in the night to Virginia City, Nevada, a distance of twenty-one miles. Here we were allowed to rest the remainder of the night. About Virginia city more anon."

ACROSS THE DESERT.

From Virginia city, Nevada, to Austin is two hundred miles. Forty hours of constant staging took us across the long, lone, dreary intervening space. The immense territory comprising the new State of Nevada, is a portion of that great interior of our continent fitly called 'Basin'; because surrounded by vast mountain ranges from which numerous streams of water flow down into this widely extended region. None of them, however, find their way to the ocean, but terminate in sinks or lakes, which present a wide extent of muddy, saltish water after heavy rains; yet in the dry seasons nothing but wide beds of cracked mud covered with a white alkaline efflorescence, preventing all vegetable growth. The region through which we passed is one of the most uninteresting on the earth's surface; cut up by ridges of bare rocky mountains with intervening valleys of sand and volcanic scoriae."

For what purpose has the Lord left so vast a region without seeming hope of human tillage? The Atlantic and Pacific sides when fully settled and developed will have ample space across which to shake hands on which to hold some grand Jubilee, without infringing upon the landed rights of any save a few harmless Shoshonee Indians. A. M. STEWART.