

San Francisco News Letter
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Confessions of a Weak-Minded Man—No. 2

ED. NEWS LETTER—In my letter to you last week your printer, who should have known better—these printers are such stupid fellows—gave the public my real name, which the public had no right to know. But really, it looked quite astonishing, did it not? I mean my name, Phineas Tuttle, printed in full ad spelled correctly; but these printers are so wonderfully clever. As I am told that I can no longer conceal my identity⁰which I never before know I possessed—I have determined to make a clean breast of it, and lay all my weaknesses before the eyes of a public which I hope to find as lenient in its judgment of me as I always try to be myself. (It is singular how these capital I's *will* get into my most carefully constructed sentences.)

Having learned from my former letter that in regard to things local and familiar, my ideas are hopelessly muddled, you will not be surprised when I state that matters here are equally beyond my comprehension. For example, when Elder Knapp tells us that all men will be damned—pardon me—who do not believe in our Savior, I always work myself into a most distracted frame of mind, trying to realize the justice of it. Now the Elder assures us that a position in Hell is no sinecure, and it seems strange that God should condemn to eternal pain all but a small proportion of his creatures. Geology, which I revere, tells me the earth has existed for millions of ages. Genesis, which I revere also, says it has not existed quite so long. But taking either statement as the true one—and for my part I believe both—it is evident that several more people have been burnt than saved. If I were learned and profound, like members of Congress and such people, so that I could read the scriptures in the original tongues, I might doubtless understand all this. I have always regarded the confounding of language at the building of the Tower of Babel as a most unfortunate event. Had it not been for that, we should all have spoken one tongue, as is evident from the fact that language is not subject to the slightest changes or modifications. That which each bricklayer carried away with him from Babel, his descendants speak to this day, exactly as he spoke it. Well, then, having but one language in the world, God would probably have consented to give us his law in that tongue, and we should not now be compelled to rely for our belief on translations which are necessarily imperfect, and on commentators who never agree.

I do not complain that the Scriptures were written by Jews, since it was necessary that the greater part of them should be written in Hebrew. The ancient Jews seem to have been better versed in Hebrew than other nations. Besides I have always entertained the highest opinion of Jewish veracity—although I must admit that I have sometimes known the to be mistaken in regard to the quality of clothing. But whatever a Jew writes, especially if he be an ancient Jew and I do not know his name, I respect What puzzles me is that it should have been necessary for the Scriptures to have been written in Hebrew at all My minister assures me that God was obliged to give his laws in *some* language; but how does he expect me to understand that an omnipotent being can be *obliged* to do anything? He ought to know me better Dear me! how can

I ever learn to comprehend these things? That Tower of Babel seems to have dispersed m understanding It always does. I can never think of it for three consecutive minutes without getting hopelessly bewildered.

Plato believed that those human souls which in their former state of existence had caught the clearest glimpses of Eternal Truth now animated the bodies of persons addicted to Philosophy. (Plato himself was addicted to Philosophy). The souls who had seen the least of Truth inhabited the bodies of despots and usurpers. Plat had evidently found time to think of Dionysus I, tyrant of Syracuse, who at one time expressed an intention to decapitate the broad-browed philosopher. I mention this to show that philosophy is sometimes used as an instrument to laud one's self and condemn one's enemies I esteem it particularly fortunate that theology can be made to serve the same purpose; thus effectually silencing the scoffers who assert that it is of no account in the world. If the Unitarians attack Elder Knapp's doctrine with spiritual arguments, and sinners assail his body with ovate ones, what redress has he if he may not consign them all fo eternal punishment? But I must admit that on this subject, as on mot others, I can do little more than wonder. I don't know who go to Hell and who do not. That some do I know from the well-authenticated story of Dives; and that some do not is equally clear—to the Church; nothing is clear to me from the case of Lazarus. Enoch also went to Heaven in a chariot of fire. Chariots of fire were much in fashion about that time. The Grecian deities and heroes used them a long time before Elijah got one.

I hope it will not be thought that I speak lightly of these sacred things. I try never to speak lightly of anything, and I never doubt anything which the Church teaches. I religiously believe all the wonderful things related in the Scriptures, without at all understanding them. I learn that those who *disbelieve* them understand them thoroughly, but heaven forbid that I should ever purchase knowledge by sacrificing faith. A large amount of faith is absolutely necessary to a weak intellect, and fortunately always accompanies it. I often wonder, and am torn with distracting ideas and contradictory beliefs; I am frequently sunk in the most abject melancholy and despair, at not being able to comprehend the most common doctrines; but, thank heaven I never doubted, nor ever shall doubt. And I here record my unswerving adherence to all that Elder Knapp and the Church shall say during the course of my natural life.

GWINNETT

(Source: California State Library, Sacramento, microfilm collection)