

# THE FREETHINKER.

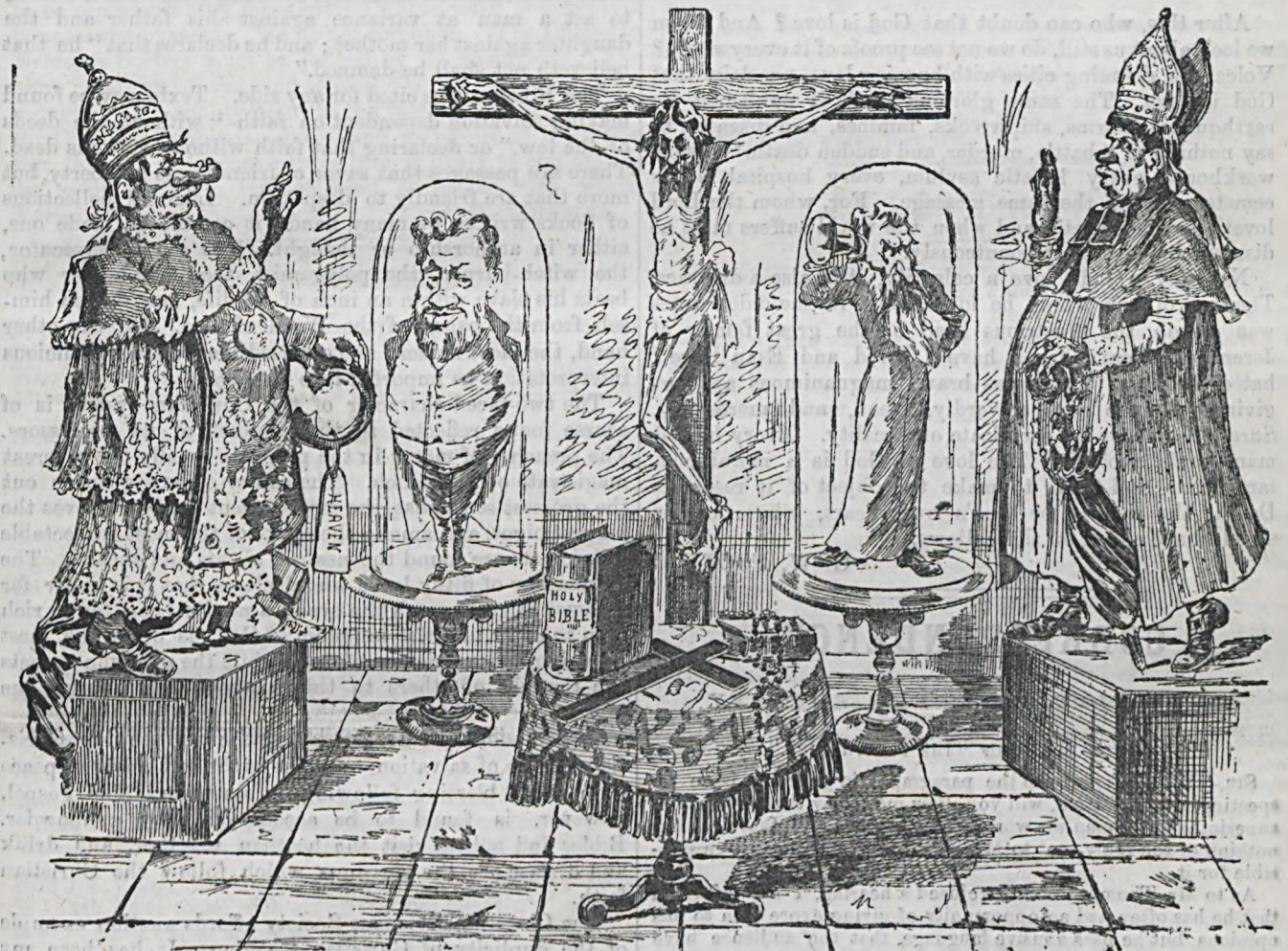
EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

Sub-Editor—J. M. WHEELER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE RELIGIOUS MUSEUM (1886).

## GOD IS LOVE.

God is love, says John, or whoever wrote the first epistle bearing his name. Being inspired, the man who penned this sentence ought to be an excellent authority; and if he also composed the book of Revelation, he evidently thought so, for he threatens everybody with damnation who presumes to tamper with a word of his text. Still, the sceptical mind is indisposed to take things on trust. It may be as well, therefore, to look into the subject more closely. When John speaks he is only the Lord's mouth-piece, and when he says that God is love, it is really the Almighty giving himself a good character. Naturally he would not give himself a bad one; yet, as the proverb says, self-praise is no recommendation. Hamlet asks, if every man had his deserts who would escape whipping? But, on the other hand, if every man (or ghost) were his own judge, who would ever be whipped at all?

There is unquestionably a mighty prattle about love in the Bible, and if fine words could butter parsnips it would be a very pretty volume indeed. A glance at the Concordance, if your memory is short, will show you that love is "all over the shop." And if you read the Song of Songs which is Solomon's, you will find that the verses reek of love. Christ speaketh unto his bride the Church, as the grave divines express it who settled the headings of the chapters, in a remarkably amorous strain. Sometimes he sails very close to the wind, and scholars inform us that the erotic original is occasionally warm enough to raise a

blush on bearded faces. Yes, if you read nothing but the Song of Songs which is Solomon's, you would quite believe that God is love, or at least *in* love, and very far gone too.

Further excursions in Holy Scripture, however, correct this impression. Jehovah's love-fits were very transient. He was generally boiling with rage, and ready to fling about his thunderbolts on the slightest provocation. He is well called "a consuming fire," not because his mistresses (for he had none) met the fate of Semele when she was visited by Jove in his fire-suit, but because his vengeance was always hot. Of course that may have been his way of showing his love. Perhaps he went about, like the gentleman in the play, saying "I must dissemble." This is quite possible, yet it does not look very probable, and the Lord must really be held, according to a well known principle of law, to intend the natural consequences of his acts.

God's love was shown in Eden, when he cursed two people for eating a pippin. It was shown at the Flood, when he drowned all the descendants of this unfortunate couple except eight, as well as multitudes of the lower animals whose progenitors had never robbed orchards. It was shown at Sodom and Gomorrah, when he gave thousands of citizens tremendous doses of brimstone without treacle, and turned a respectable matron into a milestone for turning round to see if her dress-improver was properly fixed. It was shown in Egypt, when he plagued the king for believing that Abraham could speak the truth. It was shown in the same country again, when he set Moses and Pharaoh playing at brag, plagued the people with blood



potions, frogs, flies and lice, and wound up by assassinating every mother's first-born child. It was shown in the wilderness, when he sent the poor Jews rattlesnakes for requesting a change in his bill of fare. It was shown in Canaan, when he ordered his bandits to murder men, women and children, and exterminate whole populations. It was shown in the same country again, when he decimated his chosen people with famine and pestilence for flirting with other deities. It was shown in a later age, when he was incarnated in Palestine and threatened those who couldn't understand him with everlasting fire. And it will be shown in the next world, when he makes up

"that immortal fry  
Of almost everybody born to die."

After this, who can doubt that God is love? And when we look about us still, do we not see proofs of it everywhere? Volcanoes, deluging cities with burning lava, proclaim that God is love. The same glorious truth is published by earthquakes, storms, shipwrecks, famines, and diseases, to say nothing of "battle, murder, and sudden death." Every workhouse, every lunatic asylum, every hospital, every cemetery, utters the same message. For, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and when the world suffers most he displays his love most bounteously.

Not only is God's love a calamity, it is also a disgrace. The man of men whom he loved most in the olden times was Jacob, the illustrious head of the great family of Jeremy Diddlers. Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated, he says. Esau was brave, magnanimous and forgiving. Jacob was cowardly, mean, and mercenary. Surely God's love is a certificate of rascality. Every honest man should avoid it. The love of God is a moral contamination, and tends to make the object of it resemble David, the man after God's own heart, whose career should have ended on the gallows.

G. W. FOOTE.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to the paragraphs in your last issue respecting Mr. Engstrom, will you allow me to say that he does not superintend the open-air work of this society, and that he knew nothing of the reply sent to Mr. Thompson; I alone am responsible for it.

As to Mr. Thompson being refused a hearing, I am informed that he has often had an opportunity of giving expression to his opinions, but he uses abusive language, that the audience have sometimes by vote expressed their unwillingness to hear him and complained because he has been allowed to speak, and that he has threatened to throw the chairman off the stand.

Mr. Thompson seems to claim a right to speak when he "thinks fit." Now although discussion is allowed, and permission to speak from our platform is given to any one who will behave properly, we cannot allow that there is any absolute right which can be claimed. The order of the meeting must in the last resort be left in the hands of the chairman.

With regard to remarks made by the lecturers of the Society, they alone are responsible for them. At the same time, they are strongly cautioned against saying anything which would be offensive to others; and if there be any complaint against them it is always made the subject of investigation. For instance, a statement that "the dicitte fruits are beastliness, cowardice, bullying, slandering and lying" (*Secular Review*, August 21, p. 123) emanating from the lecturers themselves, would be severely censured; but if it were quoted as used by the Secularists of each other, the hearers should not misunderstand and deal with it as if it were an original remark of a lecturer. That there is the misunderstanding I have little doubt. On the other hand, I have also little doubt, from what I have seen and heard myself, that our lecturers are subject to such provocations that they sometimes say things which had better be left unsaid; should they, however, say them without provocation I do not know any one who would excuse them, much less approve them, or shield them from the condemnation they would deserve.—Yours faithfully,

T. T. WATERMAN.

[We saw Mr. Thompson about a fortnight ago for the first time. He is moderately short, slim, and pale; and we should say that the idea of his threatening to "throw the chairman off the stand" is simply absurd. Mr. Waterman's talk about "provocation" is equally ludicrous. Some of his open-air lecturers (there are exceptions) systematically spend all their time in uttering the vilest abuse of every leading Freethinker. Not to check this is to connive at it.—Ed.]

### DOUBLE-FACED CHRISTIANITY.

CHRISTIANITY has two aspects—the one attractive, the other repellant, corresponding to its Heaven and its Hell. On the one side it is all benevolence, inculcating meekness, humility and love to enemies. On the other it breathes forth persecution and threatens eternal damnation to all unbelievers. Its God is now represented as a God of love, slow to anger, of great kindness and of infinite mercy; anon he is a consuming fire, consigning the majority of his creatures to a doom so terrible that, did men but credit it, they must regard their heavenly Creator as an Almighty fiend. Jesus is extolled as the pattern of meekness and gentleness, yet he says he came not to bring peace but a sword, to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother; and he declares that "he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Bible can be cited for any side. Texts may be found making salvation dependent on faith "without the deeds of the law," or declaring that faith without works is dead. There are passages that savor of friendliness to liberty, but more that are friendly to despotism. Like all collections of books written by many hands, it cannot be made one, either in authorship or thought. The vilest persecutor, the witch-burner, the polygamist, the slave-holder who beats his slave within an inch of his life, may defend himself from the pages of the Word of God. On the other hand, the most modern and civilised ideas may by judicious interpretation be imported into its pages.

The two-faced character of the Christian system is of course found reflected in the conduct of its professors. The preacher of mercy in the pulpit is usually the severest magistrate on the bench. The canter of purity turns out the grossest sensualist, the most ardent believer proves the biggest bigot, and among the ranks of the most respectable religionists are found the meanest cheats and sneaks. The stigmatiser of filthy lucre who declares that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, is often the most grasping and avaricious of men, while the one who directs the thought of others to things above has himself the keenest eye to things beneath.

The missionary who sets before the heathen the Christian chance of salvation, extols it as the messenger of peace with every blessing following in its train. The gospel, however, is found to be accompanied by gunpowder. Bibles and bullets visit the heathen together, and drink and disease are the blessings which follow the Christian faith.

The Christian Evidence Society affords another example of the duplicity of Christian teaching. It has been my fortune to attend several of its annual meetings at Exeter Hall and elsewhere, and I have been touched by the amount of tender pity and loving sympathy for poor erring brethren who have wandered into the paths of scepticism, that has been lavishly exhibited by the gentlemen who solicit subscriptions for the purpose of meeting and reclaiming unbelievers. For those whose livings depend on belief to speak kindly of sceptics was generous. It was as if doctors should speak well of anti-vaccinators, or publicans of Sir Wilfrid Lawson. They made one fancy that Christians might rise above their dogmas, and feel that Humanity lies deeper than any differences of creed. But, alas, it has also been my fortune to visit the out-door stations of the Christian Evidence Society. What a change! Instead of charitable commiseration, there is foul-mouthed vituperation of Freethinkers and all their works. No longer "misguided sceptics," they are "lying infidels" or "shameless Secularists," who reject Christianity simply that they may indulge in every filthy lust. I do not say every agent of the Society adopts this attitude, but most of them that I have heard are infected by the same spirit.

One lecturer in particular—the person who occupied the C. E. S. platform at the Midland Railway Arches last Sunday (Aug. 22)—is abusive almost beyond belief. An old copy of the *Freethinker* containing a cut of Jacob wrestling with the angel (which, after a diatribe on the sensuality of Secularists, is held up, so that at a little distance only two apparently nude struggling figures are seen, with the exclamation, "This is what they put before your sons and daughters"), a scurrilous work, attacking Mr. Bradlaugh for his supposed complete endorsement of *The Elements of Social Science*, a glib tongue and reckless



imputations and insinuations against all whose names are known as devoted to the Freethought cause, constitute the stock-in-trade of this Christian Evidence advocate. Not a shred of argument is offered. The Christian Evidence Society pretends to grapple with the scepticism of the age by an appeal to reasonable evidence. When a capable and courteous gentleman like the Rev. Dr. James McCann comes forward—a gentleman who can hit hard, but who hits out straight from the shoulder—the Christian Evidence Society refuses to endorse his championship, because they know the proceedings will be reported, and they fear lest they should be deemed to suffer by their champion being worsted in the encounter. Yet they permit their cause out of doors to be represented by blackguards whose chief qualification is unscrupulousness. We do not complain. The Christian Evidence Society must be judged by its champions. The more creatures of the kind it employs, the better for Freethought. We simply point to the facts as an instance of the Christian double-facedness, and we rejoice in them as a sign that the pernicious superstition is likely to end among the same ignorant, bigoted kind of people with whom it originated.

J. M. WHEELER.

### THE LAST CHALLENGE.

If you're blessed in sporting matters, perhaps you may have read, Or heard, about the doings of a very noted "ped," Who was known in sporting circles as the Antelope of Bow, Although in private gatherings he was simply known as "Joe."

Now Joe through out his long career full many a race had won At Manchester, and Lillie Bridge, and Hall of Islington; But now a swifter runner far comes up poor Joe to greet, For death makes all the running, in the last and final heat.

Said Joe unto his loving spouse, "It's plain that I must go, To one place or the other—to heaven, or hell below; I'd like to be an angel and with the angels stand, So you must fetch a gospel cove, to coach me for that band."

The Devil-dodger soon arrived and loudly he did pray, That Joseph might be guided in the straight and narrow way; And when he'd done Joe cried "Amen!" and tipped the chap a wink, And said, "You've made a good appeal, my hearty, take a drink."

The parson was a templar good, as everybody knew, And in his button-hole he wore the Army ribbon blue: "Dear brother, you should never tempt me to commit this sin," He said; then turned his eyeballs up and—tipped down his gin.

Said Joe, "Now can you tell me if I'll fetch up square in heaven, If I shall be an angel, with my earthly sins forgiven; And if, when I'm an angel, far off up in the sky, If I shall sport a pair of wings, and be able for to fly?"

God's messenger, he smiled and groaned, and took another drink; He said, "You'll make the running there in 2-10 time, I think; Also you'll be an angel with gorgeous wings I swear, And when my earthly mission's done I trust to meet you there."

"Well, mate," said Joe, "if that's the case I'll tell you what I'll do,

I gives you my Last Challenge, and I trust you'll take it too, When you and I are angels, and have forded Jordan's tide, I'll fly you on a level course, for fifty pounds a side."

E. BUTLER.

### WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS NOT BE STONED IF THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

JESUS is reported to have said that he came not to destroy the ancient laws of the Jews (Matthew v., 17). He likewise told his followers "to keep the commandments" (Matthew xix., 17), amongst which there is none of more importance than the third, which says, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work," etc. (Exodus xx., 8-11). There is none more important than this one, for the breach of it was thought to be worthy of death. We are told that a man was found gathering sticks upon the sabbath day, for which he was brought before Moses who inquired of the Lord what should be done to him. "And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp . . . and they stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses" (Numbers xv., 32-36). And yet the breaking of this commandment, which God considers to be worthy of death, Christians are guilty of every week, not those particularly who work on Sunday, which is only the first day of the week, but the mass of them who work on Saturday, which is the seventh day, and "the sabbath of the Lord thy God." Christians have no biblical authority whatever

for changing the sabbath to the first day of the week, for the reason assigned for keeping the sabbath (God having rested on that day) must be changed before the day can be altered. It was Pope Sylvester, in the fourth century, who changed the days. Jesus said the *Sabbath* (Saturday) was made for man (Mark ii., 27), and is mentioned as having observed the day himself (Luke iv., 16) as are the apostles (Acts xvii., 2). The sabbath—the seventh day—is the *only* day the Bible calls "Lord's day," or commands to be observed. Smith, in his Bible Dictionary, on the article *Sabbath*, says that the observance of Sunday, instead of the Sabbath, would have been impossible to the Christians of the first ages. Now here is a "sin" which the Bible has adjudged to be worthy of death (that of breaking the Sabbath day) which Christians, who pretend to believe the Bible, commit every week. All this is very important, as showing the blind inconsistency of the majority of Christians. They keep Sunday as a holy day, instead of the Sabbath, without the slightest reason, and in direct defiance of the Bible, simply because they were brought up to do so. This is a good example of the unreasoning manner in which they accept all their tenets of faith, when a very little research would show them the lies and gross superstition on which they rest.

J. E. R.

### ACID DROPS.

A SALVATION ARMY girl, who was at the wash-tub, said to a companion: "We have one day a week set apart for washing our dirty linen; and, thank God, he has set apart one day a week wherein we can wash our dirty souls." As the dirty souls are only washed once a week, and then in the blood of Christ, the cleanliness of the articles cannot be of a very remarkable or desirable character.

A HAND-BILL of the Stoke Newington Corps of the Salvation Army is headed thus: "Mighty Crashes! Tragic Scenes of Life and Death! Splendid Slaughter! The Terrible Cat-eater! Seventeen Nights of Overwhelming Struggles." On Saturday there is announced "a great Brass Band from the deserted Devil's Den. Instruments played by eagles." On Sunday the programme is: "Floods all day. Oceans, mighty oceans of Power and Glory. 11 a.m., Purity. 3 p.m., Mixed Pickles. 7 p.m., The Roaring Torrent. The great International Group of many European and Asiatic nations in national costumes, with flags and banners, led by the saved Chinaman, will form an enchanting spectacle." On Monday there are to appear "gallant Banditti, and the lad who swallowed a Ton of Coals." Tuesday is sacred to "The Terrible Cat-eater and his fearful disclosures. The Rope! The Knife! The Pie!" On Wednesday "Garibaldi, raised from the dead, will relate his struggle in the Grave with the Chucker-out." This is how religion brings about the moral elevation of the people. Sensational rubbish and lying claptrap for the sake of Christ are highly praiseworthy, but Shelley's *Queen Mab* is rank blasphemy.

THE Rev. Henry Curwen, rector of Workington, draws his salary and does no work. A curate, paid for by subscriptions, which are fast falling off, has to carry on the services. There has been an inquiry into the matter, and the rector, who for years has been in such "delicate" health as to be unable to assist in the church, met the commission with a vigorous fire of protests, contradictions, and continual interruptions that could hardly have been expected from so "delicate" an invalid. He refused, however, to commit his loud protests against the legality of the commission to writing. When the surveyor gave his evidence as to the population of the place, the rector told him he should "have a crow to pick" with him. When the representative of the church council testified that a second curate was necessary, the rector called out to him, "We don't give a button for your opinion." Ordinary people would ask why the rector does not resign his salary, seeing that he cannot or will not do the work. But such a question is worse than blasphemy.

IN the course of the inquiry, the Rev. A. F. Curwen urged that it was the duty of the churchwardens to compel people to come to church and to prosecute them if they refused. The rector complained bitterly of the Salvationists, or "these fellows," as he styled them, beating drums and shouting and collecting great mobs on the Sunday, disturbing everybody, and interrupting the administration of the sacrament in church. At one point where the curate said he supposed he must take the Bible as his guide, the rector exclaimed: "No, no; we don't take the Bible as our guide." He took the prayer-book, he explained, and he wanted to know if the witness followed the Bible why he did not have burnt offerings.

FOR some time past we had observed with regret that a section of the Freethinkers at the Freethought community at Liberal, Missouri, have shown a predilection for the alleged wonders of spiritism. A person calling himself Dr. J. B. Bouton, gave slate-writing and materialisation séances, which considerably astonished the natives and enabled him to live on the fat of the land. Dr. Bouton, however, has had a fire at his house, and despite his urging the people to let it go, they persisted in saving the dwelling and ruining the doctor by discovering a neatly-fitted



adjustable door in what seemed the solid partition where the ghosts were evolved, and a carefully-arranged trap-door, lined with cloth, over the closet where the slates were put. The doctor has owned up and departed for fresh fields. We trust the people of Liberal will profit by the experience.

A VAGRANT describing himself as the Rev. Matthew Bennett Biggins, has been charged and remanded at the Axminster Petty Sessions with obtaining money from the Rev. T. H. Newman, Vicar of Axminster, who, it seems, gave him 5s. 6d. for a night's lodging and then set the police on his track for travelling about in the manner prescribed by Jesus Christ, without taking either gold, silver, or brass in his purse.

WE cut the following advertisement from the *Church Times*, as a fair sample of what may be found any week in papers patronised by the clergy: "Harvest Sermon, etc. Five entirely new and original MSS. Sermons, including striking Harvest MSS., for 4s.—Address Rev. M.A., Prestolee, Stoneclough, Manchester." Sky-piloting is an excellent trade. All the investment needed is a few shillings monthly for some one else's sermons, by which, if only fairly read, one may acquire a reputation for profound thought, eloquent composition, and striking and original ideas.

IN Newcastle, Australia, a girl on returning from Sunday-school took strychnine, and exclaimed, "Oh, Lizzie, I'm going to heaven!" Shortly afterwards she expired. If the girl had committed suicide on leaving the Hall of Science most Christians would see in the sad event a shocking example of the evil influence of infidel lectures. As Mr. Symes observes, it's a bad rule that will not work both ways.

THE Holy Office in Rome has decided that a Catholic judge cannot pronounce a divorce forbidden by the Church, and that a mayor cannot pronounce the dissolution of marriage in such a case or officiate at the marriage of such divorced persons. Thus the Church obstinately resists the law and the sense of the French nation. This decision is said to be a great disappointment to poor Catholics who are unhappy in their matrimonial relations. The rich ones can always get rid of their chain by paying 6,000 francs at the Vatican, where causes for divorce are admitted.

A PROTESTANT correspondent in the *Rock* is horribly alarmed at the appointment of a Roman Catholic as Home Secretary. He says: "This is a ghastly and portentous fact: a thrice dismal and appalling reality. . . . Words fail to reach the awfulness of this fact. . . . That any Premier should appoint a Papist to govern the home affairs of England is so monstrous, so unreasonable, so insulting, that it would scarcely be more startling or mischievous if Lord Salisbury were to bring in a bill for the establishment of the infernal Inquisition in Great Britain with the pervert Manning as Inquisitor-General." Religious bigotry so runs away with people's judgments and sense of justice that this Christian sees in the admission of another Christian to the cabinet "a strange, ghastly imagination, terrible as the wildest fiction, that the heel of Antichrist has been placed upon the neck of England by the action of unscrupulous politicians, and with the consent of the Crown."

ANOTHER pious story, headed "A Blasphemer's Fate," comes from America. A farmer in Ohio, while cursing because of the drought, was struck by lightning and turned to stone. Barnum should secure this curiosity. If, however, all the farmers who swear at the weather should be turned into stone, there would soon be a dearth of farmers. Barnum's museum would never be large enough to hold them all.

THIS story is rather an improvement on the old one of Lot's wife. A pillar of salt would soon vanish, while a petrified man should remain a solid proof of divine vengeance.

THE *Church Times*, alluding to the proceedings some years ago against the late Rev. W. J. Early Bennett, for Ritualism, says "strong efforts were made by the Archbishop of York to bring about a miscarriage of justice, as in two previous cases, *Martin v. Mackonochie* and *Hebbert v. Purchas*, wherein he was a member of the Court." This is a nice specimen of the respect with which Churchmen treat their spiritual overseers.

THERE is nothing the High Church party object to more than to any laudation of Church reformers. They not only abstained from any participation in the Luther and Wiclif centenaries, but they persistently disparage the early reform movements of the Waldenses, Albigenses and Lollards. Of the former, the *Guardian* says these so-called revivers of primitive Christianity were "unlike all Apostolic Christians save, perhaps, such specimens as Ananias and Sapphira."

BY the way, what a pity it is we have not the version of Ananias and Sapphira as to the little transaction in which they were so fatally involved. Probably we should learn that they gave what they considered an adequate sum for the support of the Church. Perhaps they suspected embezzlement of the funds. Any way it would have gone hard with Peter had any inquiry

been instituted as to the cause of those sudden deaths in the early Christian Church.

It is reported that a Belfast priest named O'Brien is in the habit of having a slate with him at confession upon which he sets down every sin with the price opposite. A notorious "patriot" recently entered the confessional. "Ah, Father, I was so busy at Springfield I forgot to come to mass." "That's a shilling," and down it went on the slate. "And then I cut off the tail of Larry Kelley's cow." "That's ninepence." "I've blacked my wife Biddy's eye." "That's threepence." "I kilt an Orangeman." "Whoo," says the priest, rubbing out the score, "that clanes away all the rest."

ANOTHER worshipper fallen dead in a church! A big moral must be lying about somewhere if anyone would patiently dig it out.

THE Congregational Church of West Croydon have put up a peal of bells. The High Churchmen, vexed at this aping of Anglican fashion, have threatened to prosecute the church for instituting a nuisance. They were however brought to their senses by a threat of retaliation.

A LETTER in the *Church Review* states that many clergymen are grateful to receive parcels of old clothing. Surely the bishops who divide £163,000 among them yearly might provide poor curates with cast-off toggery without the necessity of their making a public appeal.

ANOTHER good Christian has been jerked to Jesus at Missouri. The murderer was accompanied to the gallows by the Rev. W. W. Buchanan, who said, "As far as spiritual counsel is concerned, the condemned man does not need that now. I have already prepared him to meet his Maker." Before starting heavenward the condemned man sung "Washed in the Blood of the Lamb." After the song "the spiritual adviser" offered a prayer for the murderer's soul. The murdered man, of course, was forgotten. According to the Christian scheme of salvation, the criminal having repented, been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and made his peace with God, is now comfortably settled in Abraham's bosom, while his victim, not enjoying these advantages, is roasting in an orthodox hell. God's ways are not our ways.

THE Belfast Board of Guardians have had a nice little problem before them. A child about five years old was sent over from America with a label on his arm addressed to parties in Belfast who cannot be found. The guardians wished to decide in which of the rival religions which divide their pious town the child should be instructed. All inquiries of the child failed to elicit any symptoms of religious knowledge, and the guardians have had to adjourn the matter for further inquiries.

THE Rev. T. H. B. Fearon, rector of Norton-in-the-Moors, has issued a pastoral letter against "kiss in the ring." Perhaps the reverend gentleman is unable to participate in the game. Yet we can quite understand that in a ring of Christian lads and lasses the osculation might be carried a trifle too far.

THE Rev. J. Harford-Battersby, of 18 Cheyne Gardens, Chelsea, has issued an extraordinary circular. It appears that a terrible accident occurred in Collingwood Street, in which one little girl was killed, and eight other children were seriously injured. The sky-pilot in question asks the inhabitants of the district to attend the Oakley Mission Room, to "unite in commending the dear children who were injured and their parents to God, and in thanking God that others were mercifully saved." Nothing is said about the poor little creature who lost her life. What was God doing when he let her perish? If he saved the others, the natural conclusion is that he is responsible for her death. This is a view of the case which ought to be ventilated in the Oakley Mission Room, and we should be very glad of an opportunity of doing it ourselves.

WHAT a selfish thing this Christianity is! An accident occurs, one life is lost, and eight others narrowly escape. Thereupon the eight thank God that they are spared, without a thought for the fate of the ninth.

WILLIAM BOOTH and Catherine Booth are trying a new game to raise the wind. They have issued subscription sheets, to be filled up and posted in an envelope already addressed to the "General"—with the cash, of course. It is proposed to raise the money during the Self-Denial-Week, which is to end on the 11th of September. During the holy interval the pious idiots who believe in the "General" are asked to "give up some article of food or clothing." It is to be hoped that some of the more fervent dupes will not strip themselves too extensively, otherwise we may find naked Salvationists in the streets who have "given up" all their "clothing" for "the salvation of souls and the conquest of the world" as the Booths very modestly describe their designs.

FOR our part, we shall accept "the General's" invitation by "denying" ourselves the pleasure of sending him a subscription.



## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

Sunday, Aug. 29, at 7.30, at the Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C.; subject, "Mansions in the Skies."

SEPT. 5, Liverpool; 12, Milton Hall; 19 and 26, Hall of Science.  
OCT. 3, Ball's Pond; 10, Birmingham; 24, Manchester; 31, Leeds.

## CORRESPONDENTS.

- LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. W. J. Ramsey, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the office, post free to any part of Europe, America, Canada and Egypt, at the following rates, prepaid:—One Year, 6s. 6d.; Half Year, 3s. 3d.; Three Months, 1s. 7½d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 3s.; Half Column, 15s.; Column, £1 10s. Special terms for repetitions.
- R. FOX.—The joke has appeared before in a slightly different form.
- J. T. HILLER congratulates us on the "deserved confidence and respect which the liberal subscription list implies." We thank our correspondent for the cuttings.
- G. E. C. NEWIGER.—Shall appear.
- J. H. W. understands our disbelief in the Bible and in Heaven and Hell, but he cannot understand our "being an Atheist in the face of Design as it is seen everywhere." Our friend sees Design because he believes in a Designer. We only see Adaptation, and that can be explained by the laws of evolution. But the subject is too big to dispose of in a paragraph. Our correspondent should read Darwin, Hæckel, and Büchner, who will afford him much better information than we can give.
- J. K. SYKES writes: "By a common error most modern writers speak of Charles Dickens's Bill Sikes as 'Sykes.' A reference to Oliver Twist will satisfy you that I am right as to the spelling. I value your writings much, and you might kindly spell Sikes correctly another time."
- A. POOLER.—Lord Salisbury's agent denies that he has refused the Wesleyans at Hatfield a site for a chapel, and says he has offered them two. No doubt he is literally correct. But the explanation appears to be that both sites are miles from where they are wanted, and, as a matter of fact, the Hatfield Wesleyans go on worshipping Lord Salisbury's God in a sort of cow-shed.
- H. T. B. writes: "Last Sunday I was at Milton Hall, when you gave your lecture on "Mansions in the Sky." I need hardly say I spent a delightful evening. But what I want to call your attention to is this. I had my note-book with me, and I was taking down the lecture in Pitman's shorthand. In your very first sentence you used the words "the Lord's Day." When I returned home, in looking through the notes, this phrase caught my eye. It is written in shorthand £ s. d., and it struck me as being so appropriate that I think I need not apologise in drawing attention to it."
- A. JONES.—"Sympathy's" sympathy is fortunately practical.
- G. BARNES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- G. WACKERBARTH informs us that the revival we spoke of at Milton Hall still continues. Last Sunday's excursion to Buckhurst Hill was a great success, and members of the North West London Branch distributed copies of the *Freethinker* and *National Reformer* on the road. The party numbered nearly eighty.
- E. POLLARD.—Kindly thank the members and friends of the Hackney Branch on our behalf.
- W. FARLEY, Winton Cottage, Chester Place, Southsea, an experienced University tutor, nearly blind, gives oral lessons gratuitously to Secularists, adult or otherwise.
- G. C. COOK.—Cuttings are always welcome.
- F. LOCK.—Much obliged.
- YOUNG DEVON.—We fully recognise your generous spirit.
- C. W. W. asks us to tell him how many Bible trees there are. We are really up a tree. Our correspondent had better hunt through Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*. Meanwhile, there is the tree of life, which we trust C. W. W. will discover, and the forbidden tree, which he had better flight shy of.
- YOUNG JUNIUS.—Perhaps after all it would be best to leave the C. E. S. lecturers severely alone. Still, as you say, it is impossible to hold the chief secretaries guiltless.
- G. A.—As you object to your name being printed in connection with the matter we can scarcely deal with the squabble between the vicar and his curate. It is only when such things get into the public papers that we can dispense with a correspondent's authority.
- YOUNG FREETHINKER.—Glad to hear you think this journal "a necessary organ." Thousands of others evidently share your opinion.
- M. DAVIES.—All orders for literature should be sent to 28 Stonecutter Street.
- W. BROADBELL (New York) writes: "I read of your heavy loss in the *Freethinker* of Aug. 1, and I felt as though it were my own. I am sure your friends at home will rally around you. I consider the mite I am sending as a debt I owe you."
- R. MCINTYRE, Glasgow, wishes to discuss with us our position in one of our *Bible Romances*, entitled *A Rising God*. He denies our right to call the disciples of J. C. "ignorant or stupid" because "by their wisdom, eloquence, and unsurpassed reasoning they astonished and silenced the learned." We quite agree with our correspondent that such wisdom and eloquence as they displayed was calculated to astonish the learned. We also agree with him that their reasoning was unsurpassed. The judges who tried some of them "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts iv., 13). We perceive the same. Our correspondent raises another point, but the reader will probably think this one sufficient.
- S. THOMPSON.—We know that the times are hard, and in the circumstances the party is supporting us very handsomely.

- W. REYNOLDS (Utah).—We have read your letter on the Mormons with great interest. The other matter is attended to.
- D. W., in sending subscription "as a slight acknowledgment of the instruction and amusement" afforded him in the *Freethinker*, hopes we shall "soon rise triumphant" over our difficulties. We have not the slightest doubt of it.
- C. K. LAPORTE.—Milman was not one of the worst of the tribe. He was a man of great ability, and, for a priest, remarkably fair-minded. In fact his intellectual candor hindered his rise in the Church.
- W. H. BROWN desires us to point out that in his pamphlet on the House of Lords he does refer to the abolition of that body in 1649. He refers to it out of the historical order: that is why we missed it.
- F. A.—It was held over through pressure of matter.
- H. W. K.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."
- COLNE.—Many thanks.
- J. S. W.—Of course it is unnecessary for your child to be christened. Registration is compulsory, and that is all that is required.
- ARGUS.—Your batches of cuttings are always thankfully received.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Manchester Examiner—Lucifer—Glasgow Evening News—West Cumberland Times—Devon Evening Express—Liberator—Liberal—Ironclad Age
- CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current number. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.
- A CATALOGUE of the Progressive Publishing Company's Works can be obtained at 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

THIS evening (Aug. 29) Mr. Foote delivers at the London Hall of Science his new lecture on "Mansions in the Sky."

WE are happy to state that the August number of *Progress* has been a decided success, the circulation having nearly trebled. We apprehend therefore that the change in its editorial policy is generally approved, and we shall continue to make it "the Freethinker's Magazine." The September number will be ready in a day or two, and unless we are mistaken it will be as well appreciated as its immediate predecessor. It would have been issued a few days earlier had not our printing arrangements been disordered through the fire.

MR. WHEELER commences in the September number of *Progress* a series of short biographies of Freethought worthies, giving briefly the facts of their lives and their services to the cause. The names are arranged in alphabetical order and when finished will form a complete Dictionary of Freethinkers with a bibliography of their works.

MR. FOOTE'S lecture at Battersea Park Gates last Sunday morning drew an immense audience. There was only the nucleus of a meeting when he mounted the stand, but the crowd swelled and swelled as he proceeded until he was obliged to strain his voice to make himself heard on the outskirts. There was some discussion after the lecture, the opponent being an old gentleman, evidently in the gospel line, who began very mildly, and ended like a true Christian by calling Freethought lecturers and all who applauded them "asses." The Freethinkers present took the insult in good part, and resented it only by laughing at the old gentleman. In leaving he offered to shake hands with the lecturer, who stretched out what ought to have been his hoof.

GERALD MASSEY lectures in St. George's Hall, Langham Place, on Tuesday, August 31, 8 p.m.; subject: "The man Shakespeare himself." On Friday, September 3, his subject will be "Robert Burns: Poet and Freethinker."

MR. MONCURE D. CONWAY is announced as having in the press a new volume with the title *Adam's Third Wife*. It is understood that it will deal with the woman question from the times of antiquity to the present.

THE Mahomedans of British Guiana have petitioned the government of the colony for a grant in aid of the erection of a temple. The discussion thereupon is likely to lead to the general disendowment of religion. Our friends in India should take the hint.

THE New York *Truthseeker* contains a smart article on "Theological Jugglery" by Mr. A. B. Moss, who evidently finds one world not large enough for his vigorous talents.

No. 14 Clerkenwell Green is being rebuilt, but it will be several weeks before we can settle down in the old premises. Meanwhile we are very much hampered, and the consequence is an annoying delay of our publications. *Infidel Death-beds*, which was promised for this week, cannot be ready for sale until next week, when the execution of all orders may be relied on. We may take this opportunity of stating that the little volume, for such it is, is full of interest as well as information. Not only are the most authentic details procurable given as to the deaths of a large number of modern Freethinkers, a list of whom will be found in the advertisement, but brief biographies are also given, the largest space being allotted to those of whom the reader will be most likely to require information. A small edition of *Infidel Death-beds* will be printed on superfine paper and



bound in cloth. The price of this *édition de luxe* will be one shilling.

THE Rev. C. J. Whitmore asks, in his much reprinted tract, "What becomes of the Infidel leaders?" He and all his tribe will find a complete answer in *Infidel Death-beds*. Most of the Freethinkers whose latter ends are recorded in this little volume were men of high mark in the history of thought; not peddling lecturers and journalists, so unknown to fame that their initials give no clue to their recognition, but great poets, great philosophers, great historians, and great wits, to withdraw whom from the world's history would rob it of much of its glory.

THERE is excellent news from Rome. The Pope has issued a Brief reinstating the Jesuits. This evidently means that the Church is preparing to array itself in war against the State, and the action of the Pope in appointing a nuncio to China confirms this. The *Times* correspondent devotes a column to the comments made upon the Brief and says, "Day by day the Italian nation is drifting away from the Church." The *Times* itself in a leader (August 3) says, "The current belief is that the Pope's illness has been due to poison administered by the Jesuits, and that his Brief in their favor has been issued as the price at which the antidote is to be had which they alone can supply. If we are unwilling to credit the current report at Rome, it is not because it reflects on the Jesuits, but rather because it reflects on the Pope." The Brief was issued by the Pope after three days of severe and prostrating illness.

COLONEL INGERSOLL is of opinion that Mr. Jarvis, the clerk of the United States Naturalisation Bureau, was not justified in refusing to naturalise Carl Rabitscheck, the Bohemian who declined to take the oath. It is true the Act says that the alien "shall declare on oath," etc., but the very first chapter in the book declares that "the requirement of an oath shall be deemed complied with by making affirmation in official form." The Colonel points out that Mr. Jarvis's reading of the law would deny citizenship of the United States to men like Humboldt, Darwin, Wagner, Haeckel, Spencer and Tyndall.

A "TITHE WAR" has commenced in North Wales. The farmers at Llanarmon refuse to pay tithes unless they are reduced 25 per cent. The rector distrains upon their goods and cattle. But when he sends bailiffs and an auctioneer to effect a sale the colliers of the district assault them and drive them away. The whole population sympathises with the farmers, and the agitation is spreading.

THE vicar complains bitterly of the violence of the anti-tithe agitators, who on visiting him at the rectory shouted "Woe upon you, extortioners and robbers!" and "otherwise insulted him." Their exclamations remarkably resemble those of Christ, and the vicar finds them violent and insulting when applied to himself. He preaches to an average congregation of twenty-five or thirty out of a population of 1,600, but he feels it is his Christian duty to seize the goods of those who won't pay for a religion they detest. This is how Christianity in power teaches gentleness, honesty and brotherly feeling. It professes to give to whosoever asketh, but this is mere hypocrisy or cant.

WE are pleased to note, from a letter in the *Ironclad Age*, that Col. R. G. Ingersoll has promised his services in case the charge of blasphemy brought by the New Jersey Christians against ex-Rev. C. B. Reynolds should come on for trial.

ONE of our readers, happening to be at Brighton, got into a discussion on the parade. Quite a crowd gathered round the disputants, and everything passed off with the utmost good temper. The Brighton *Argus*, however, erroneously states that the Freethinkers "had a bad quarter of an hour at the hands of the mob who threatened to throw them into the sea." Probably the *Argus* reporter described the proceedings as they *should* have happened, judging from the usual run of Christian nature, but he was mistaken for once.

#### "BURNT OUT" FUND.

THE further list of subscriptions acknowledged this week shows that the stream of sympathy with us in our loss is still flowing. Some of the N. S. S. Branches, as well as individual Freethinkers, are collecting subscriptions, and they are retaining their lists until the work is completed. We tender them all our poor thanks.

The list of loans this week is slender, but we have received intimation of others that may be expected shortly. All who desire to assist us in this way should do so as promptly as possible.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.—D. W., 2s. 6d.; J. C. Swinburne-Hanham, £5; F. W. D., 2s. 6d.; J. C., 10s.; E., 1s. 6d.; R. Watkins, 1s.; J. Coles, 6d.; J. King, 6d.; H. Harwood, 5s.; K. B. H., 10s.; G. E. Lupton, £1; C. K., 2s. 6d.; Abroad, £1;

W. F. Searle, £1; Amico, 10s.; Battersea Friend, 4s.; S. Thompson, 2s.; G. Hilton, 1s.; G. Simpson, 5s.; T. Ellis, 1s.; G. Weatherill, 1s.; W. Broadbelt (New York), £1; Young Freethinker, 1s.; Young Devon, 1s. Hackney Branch N. S. S.:—Neate, 1s.; C. J. R., 1s.; G. J. P., 1s.; E. P., 1s.; J. B., 1s.;—Sansom, 6d.; A. Taylor, 1s.; R. Taylor, 1s.; J. G., 6d.; B., 1s.; Clara, 2s. 6d.; Polly, 1s.; Louisa, 1s. T. Evans, 2s. 6d.; Sympathy, per C. Jones, 15s.; Chatham and Rochester Branch N. S. S., 7s.; G. Small, 1s.; J. Wadmore, 1s.; J. G. Fisher, Leeds, collected at Mr. Bradlaugh's lecture, £1; Openshaw and Gorton Friends, per G. Walker, 7s. 6d.; J. Hannah, 2s.; F. Margetson, 2s.; G. S. E., 2s. 6d.; Mr. Harold, 2s. 6d.; E. H., 10s.; John Colquhoun, per Mr. Ferguson, 10s.; E. Gould, 2s.; B. J. Cowell, 2s. 6d.; W. T. O'Leary, 2s. 6d.; R. W. Hearnden, 2s. 6d.; W. Abbott, 1s.; Mr. Knight, 1s.; J. Graham, 3s.; A. Bryce, 2s.; J. Hayes, 2s. 6d.; F. O., 5s.; T. Williams, 2s. 9d.; J. Gray, 1s.; D. Bowden, £1 1s.; W. Bonnett, 2s. 6d.; F. Thornett, 2s. 6d.; W. D. Munroe, 1s.

LOAN.—Abroad, £10 10s.

#### THE "MOSAIC" NARRATIVE.

MOST Christians are taught to believe that the first five books in the Bible are one homogeneous narrative written by the hand of Moses under the direct inspiration of God. This was pardonable perhaps in the days when criticism dared not lift its head, but even at the present day children and ignorant people are calmly assured that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. A very slight examination, however, will show that the so-called "Books of Moses" are not the work of Moses, and not even the production of any one hand. They are a patchwork collection of documents or traditions rudely pieced together. They are *mosaic* only in the punning sense—being a conglomeration of fragments fitted together in a sort of literary mosaic by priestly writers who had some amount of respect for the narratives they collected, but who certainly had no such superstitious reverence for the letter of the crude histories they thus compiled as has since grown up among Jews and Christians.

Some critics think there are traces of five or even seven distinct narratives in the Book of Genesis alone. I do not propose to discuss the finer distinctions and reasonings which lead to this conclusion. The task of satisfactorily unravelling all the roughly-blended threads of narrative is a difficult and perhaps an impossible one. As Christians evade everything but a knock-down blow in argument, I will deal only with the two perfectly distinct and inconsistent narratives with which Genesis commences. The discrepancies and contradictions in these two descriptions of the creation prove conclusively that they are not the outcome of one mind, and therefore are not Mosaic in the sense of having been originally written by Moses.

The first account of the creation (Gen. i. to ii., 3) invariably speaks of the deity as ELOHIM, a plural term which is translated as "God." The second account, commencing with Gen. ii., 4, calls the deity JEHOVAH ELOHIM, which is translated as "the Lord God." From the distinctive use of these terms the first account is known as the Elohist narrative and the second as the Jehovistic.

According to the Elohist writer "the waters" brought forth the birds of the air (Gen. i., 20), but if the Jehovistic writer is to be trusted the Lord God formed the fowls of the air "out of the ground" (Gen. ii., 19). The Jehovist, living apparently in a dry inland district, knew nothing of the waters that were so abundant in the first narrative, or of the systematic order of the six days' work of creation therein described. Things were so dry in the Jehovistic desert land that man himself had to be made out of dust—a fact which may perhaps enable teetallers to understand the persistent thirst for liquid refreshment under which our wrongly-constituted race still appears to suffer. The Holy Ghost guiding the pen of the Elohist represents man and woman as created on the sixth day *after* all the beasts had been made and after the birds and fishes had been created on the fifth day (Gen. i., 27). Guiding the pen of the Jehovist he records that Adam was made *before* the beasts and birds, these having been made subsequently to Adam in order that the lonely bachelor might choose a partner from them (Gen. ii., 18-20). The Elohist knows nothing of the rib story introduced by the Jehovist, and he describes Adam and Eve as being created simultaneously in the image of God. The Elohist inspiration makes vegetation flourish and bear fruit long before man appears on the scene. The Jehovistic revelation delays the growth and fruition of the



plants until *after* man is ready to till the ground\* (Gen. ii., 5-9).

Similarly the two interwoven accounts of the Flood, contradict each other, the Elohist narrative relating that Noah took in two of each animal, clean and unclean (Gen. vi., 19; vii., 8, 9), while the other narrative by a Jehovistic writer represents Noah as taking the clean animals and birds by sevens (Gen. vii., 1-5). These discrepancies and flat contradictions have escaped the rough and not very discriminative editing of the compilers and revisers, who may, however, have omitted or corrected still more glaring contradictions that forced themselves upon their notice. Such uncorrected contradictions as remain, in conjunction with the difference in matter and in style, prove clearly that the narratives have arisen from distinct sources and are not the homogeneous work of a single mind.

The broken nature of the whole narrative of the Pentateuch, the abrupt transitions and evident interpolations, and the occasional repetitions or reduplications of narrative, point also to the same conclusion. The fifth chapter of Genesis for instance begins quite suddenly, "This is the book of the generations of Adam." The inspired writer of Exodus vi., 3, was evidently ignorant of a great part of the inspired narrative in Genesis, for he makes the Lord say that he was not known to the patriarchs by his name Jehovah. Genesis xxii., 14, however, distinctly says that Abraham gave the name of Jehovah-jireh (the Lord will provide) to the mountain where he offered Isaac. Even Eve spoke of God by this name, saying of her first-born that she had gotten a man from Jehovah, or the Lord, as it is of course translated.

The fact that Moses could not very well describe his own death and burial or refer chronologically to a king of Israel (Gen. xxxvi., 31) when Israel had no king till three hundred and fifty years after his own death, also shows, as do many other anachronisms of a less palpable description, that the Mosaic narrative was not written by its alleged author. Yet the headings in our Bible still describe the five books of the Pentateuch as Books of Moses, and any Christian who taught his Sunday-school or Board-school pupils that Moses did not write them would immediately be marked as a heretic, or at least would be suspected and avoided as displaying a very dangerous tendency towards a carnal mode of reasoning that would only too easily lead men into the horrors of Freethought and Atheism. Christian journals and Christian instructors generally continue to teach the customary falsehood wherever they can do so with impunity. Freethinkers must expose the dishonesty of this method and show deluded people the facts of the case so that they may form their own conclusions.

W. P. BALL.

## RANDOM NOTES FROM CHRIST.

### THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

I WAS born—most people are at one period of their lives—but my birth was of an exceptional character; it got somehow mixed up with "stars in the East," wise men from ditto, angels, and other wonderful kickups, as those four old fossils have recorded. But as mother declares nothing occurred on that interesting event, not even the knocker being tied up, why they must either be classed as knights of the long-bow or they wanted to add lustre to their authorship and increase the sale of their books by pandering to the tastes of the times.

My putative father seems not to have been my father at all, the Holy Ghost having some interest in the event. Ah! "it's a wise child that knows its own father," and this initial affair of a wise child of those things "no fellow can understand." Joe, mine is one of those things "no fellow can understand." Joe, poor fellow, was never very clear about this episode; his dream seemed to satisfy him though, even if it was a dream after a very hearty tripe supper.

My infancy had rather poor surroundings; still, there are remembrances very pleasant, and of course the reverse. My earliest recollections are those in connection with dentition, and the fearful leather pad I had to chew to bring those dreadful teeth through. Jehovah might have started me with a complete set already cut. And then that feeding-bottle, filled with a kind of liquid bill-stickers' paste; and then those mishaps and stumbles consequent on my first attempts at the perpendicular. Mother seemed never tired of standing at our shanty door and retailing to her female acquaintances the wonderful progress I was making, having been heard to say "Bubba, bubba," supposed in some occult way to mean "Mother, mother"; how I laughed

\* The plants, or perhaps the dry germs of the plants, appear, however, to have existed previously without growing and without being yet "in the earth" (Gen. ii., 5).

and crew as no other infant could; together with the *penchant* I had for devouring all foreign substances that could be appropriated. The pain and torment Father Joe suffered makes me sad to think of, with my chubby hands holding on tenaciously to his beard, now and then gathering handfuls of it, as if it was my harvest time. But Joe was a very easy fellow, only remarking, "Leave go, you young rascal, will yer?" and threatening me with the stoppage of my sweet supplies. This threat used to make me throw up my rather rotund legs and send a piercing shriek to the sunlit heavens. Mother then would have to soothe me with lacteal comfort, railing at Joe at the same time for being so harsh to a "dear ickle darling booty" (unknown language). When toddling took place, my frequent escapades in my father's workshop must have been simply awful to poor Joe's temper. I blunted his tools, wasted his nails, and perhaps thinking of the pain my dentition had been, I knocked out four of the teeth of his best saw. Joe used wicked adjectives when he found this last crime out, threatening me; but mother went for him, saying, "did his cruel father want to beat him for touching his nasty silly old tools?"

As I grew up to corduroys, held up by one rope-like brace, my delight was to go with other juveniles on fishing excursions to the lake of Tiberias, of course accompanied by the mongrel dog—a low-lived cur, but still very happy and wonderfully knowing, for by no means could you catch him on these excursions. He knew full well that tuition in natation was meant, and he evinced no anxiety about learning to swim. I very seldom caught anything, although armed with complete fishing gear—the impromptu hook, willow twig, purloined cotton for line, and the old damaged potsherd for the captured "tiddlers." When we returned with any spoil, mine was emptied into the family water-butt, causing consternation to mother when she found stray "tiddlers" in her cooking utensils.

Father's board outside his workshop was rather a boastful and misleading affair. Well do I remember the awe with which it was read by me before my mind expanded wide enough to know it was a trade "crammer." "Carpenter and builder. Estimates given for general repairs." Oh, Joe, when did you build anything larger than a shed? when did you repair anything more grand than a wheelbarrow or plough? Joe! Joe! I felt ashamed of that tall talk on your sign-board. The apocryphal books, I know, attribute wonders to Joe's inventive and miraculous genius, but that is purely chimerical.

I had a happy knack of generally winning at infantile games, and my corduroy pockets were always distended to bursting with my (I'm afraid) ill-gotten gains. Scholastic education was rather neglected for rounders, touch, and other childish games. The arguing with the doctors in the temple is all nonsense, although I have propounded to my instructors terrible conundrums, learnt from the corner-men at the booths, and had my raiment well dusted in consequence.

Mother thought of increasing the family income by the sale of sweets and small wares, but Joe could not produce enough capital to purchase the initiatory stock. I was very sorry, and my dear parents noticed with what hungry avidity I listened to the plan, hoping it might become an accomplished fact. I earnestly besought them not to forget to add parched peas and tin pea-shooters. They certainly suspected me of interested motives.

These small details may seem very *caviare*, but my boyhood's days were rather uninteresting—only filled up by such boyish freaks as is ordinary with youths of my class. I chalked on shop-fronts "Ole Hokey is a fool," "Ole Moey makes puppy tarts," and sundry other specimens of juvenile wit—simple, child-like facts, for the edification of the multitude. Mother's domestic cares filled her life with anything but graceful leisure. That flight into Egypt was a subterfuge of Matthew, to account for our leaving Bethlehem; but the real fact was, we had the brokers in, and father had to travel the country, searching for odd jobs. When we did return, Joe seemed to get on better, and added to his sign-board the further intelligence that he "conducted funerals in town or country at reasonable charges," and then followed prices: "A neat walking funeral for one, with use of feathers, crapes, two sober mutes, and strong egg-chest coffin, with metallic furniture, for 25s." How proud I was when employed delivering hand-bills of this new venture, headed: "Why live in this vale of tears, when you can be buried by Joseph and Co. for the ridiculous sum of 25s.?"

Your readers no doubt thought how exciting my juvenile life would be, when they commenced this random note, but now they will see how commonplace it really was, and how those old frauds skipped it, knowing that the childhood of the son of a Bethlehem carpenter had very little in it to recommend it to the notice of historians.

## REVIEW.

Our Corner, September; Freethought Publishing Company, 63 Fleet Street.—Mr. Bradlaugh writes on "Is the French Republic in Danger?" and appears to think the prospect is ominous. Mr. John Robertson defends Mrs. Besant's part of the *Freethinkers' Text Book* against Professor Sanday. Mrs. Bonner publishes some further letters from James Thomson. Mrs. Besant explains why she is a Socialist. There are the usual political and miscellaneous notes.



**PROFANE JOKES.**

"Why did the sons of God come after Noah's daughters? Because they thought them angels."

"How shall we stop the great evil of lying?" asks a religious journal in a leading article; and it winds up thusly: "It is a habit we ought never to have fallen into."

THE editor of a Christian contemporary wrote an article entitled "An Evening with Satan," and it came out in the paper "An Evening with Satan." It was mighty rough; but the foreman said it was the work of the "devil"—the printer's devil we suppose.

DURING the Sunday dinner the family were discussing the unusually fine sermon of the morning, when little Freda, aged five, declared that she remembered the text. Upon being asked to repeat it, she electrified the table by triumphantly quoting, with marked emphasis on the first word, "Hang all the law and the prophets!"

A RACING man was having rather a warm theological argument with a parson. The reverend gentleman, dilating on the terrors of the last judgment, remarked that at the close of that awful day the world would be burned up. "Yes," replied our sporting friend, "I suppose you will call that the 'final heat.'"

A SAILOR went to hear Talmage preach one day when the Brooklyn mountebank took for his text "Nothing is impossible with God." After it was over Jack went up to the preacher and looking him squarely in the face said, "I can't believe, Mr. Talmage, that it would be possible for God to make your mouth any wider without setting your ears further back."

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