

# THE FREETHINKER

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SAINTS IN HARNESS.

And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.—EXODUS XIII, 18.

## SPURGEON AND THE BAPTISTS.

MR. SPURGEON has withdrawn from the Baptist Union. Such is the tremendous news which at present agitates the Nonconformist world. Among certain pious assemblies it takes rank with, or even above, the arrest of Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, Mr. O'Brien's imprisonment, Mr. Chamberlain's diplomatic mission to America, or the threatened resignation of President Grevy. But, after all, the thunderous event is pretty much a storm in a tea-pot. Far more important things have happened without any serious dislocation of society, to say nothing of the universe at large. Business and pleasure will go on as before, and even in religious circles there will soon be a fresh nine-days' wonder. Mr. Spurgeon's secession from the Baptist Union will soon be a common-place fact, and will be regarded with as much real feeling as last summer's great gooseberry or last autumn's sea-serpent.

Still, there is something worth looking at behind the fact itself. Mr. Spurgeon has assigned his reasons in the *Sword and Trowel*, and they affect a considerable number of persons as well as the pastor of the Tabernacle. Heresy, it appears, is not simply creeping into the Baptist Union, but it has actually raised its infamous head with the most unblushing impudence. The tares and the wheat might be allowed to grow together, for they are much alike, and only Omniscience can separate them exactly; but when thorns and thistles spring up everywhere, God's pastors

must either root them out or retire to another field. Mr. Spurgeon has elected the latter course. He declines to form a new denomination, for there are denominations enough already; besides, as he plaintively and not too politely remarks, "if there were a new denomination formed the thieves and robbers who have entered other 'gardens walled around' would climb into this also, and so nothing would be gained." No, Mr. Spurgeon will not run that risk. Henceforth he intends to confine himself to his own particular church, and vigilantly guard it against the inroads of heretics of every description, be they howling wolves or wolves in sheeps' clothing.

Mr. Spurgeon puts his theological reasons with his usual terseness, for "there is no use in employing circumlocutions and polite terms of expression."

"Believers in Christ's Atonement are now in declared religious union with those who make light of it; believers in Holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold Evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the Fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death, and a future restitution for the lost."

Evidently the issue between Mr. Spurgeon and the "thieves and robbers" is perfectly clear, at least to himself. They teach new-fangled notions, and he keeps to the old theology; they are making a compromise with the spirit of the age, and he stands by the Bible; they put all sorts of accommodating interpretations on vital texts, and he sticks to

the plain meaning of the words. Morally speaking, he has the best of it; but according to the rules of prudence they are in the right. The younger generation of ministers see that the public mind is in revolt against the old theology, and that the sentiment must be humored or they and their churches will be deserted. But Mr. Spurgeon is too old, and perhaps too honest to take this view of the case. "We go to our pulpits," he says, "to save a fallen race." The Gospel is not of human invention; it comes from God, it is to be preached as God delivered it, and whoever tampers with it deludes his hearers to their damnation, besides being himself like Uzzah when he dared to put his profane hands on the Ark of the Covenant.

Mr. Spurgeon's stiffness is a more pleasant spectacle than the shuffling of his opponents, but the antics of the "thieves and robbers" show what is the irresistible tendency of the age. Christianity must stoop to conquer; it must bend or break, change or perish. The Fall, the Atonement, and the full inspiration of the Bible, have to be explained away. Nor is the task a difficult one, for the ordinary Christian never did, never does, and never will "search the Scriptures" for himself. He just takes the minister's interpretation, and if the sky-pilots come to some general agreement as to a fresh departure they may continue for a good while to bamboozle a few millions of laymen, whose easy credulity or pitiable stupidity marks them out as natural victims of the theological confidence-trick.

Probably, however, as is usual in such cases, the sting of Mr. Spurgeon's complaint is in the tail. He is appalled at the new doctrine, which is spreading so in the churches, of "another probation after death, and a future restitution for the lost." The people we preach to, he exclaims, "must be saved in this life or perish for ever." Certainly no other conclusion is consistent with the words of Jesus Christ. Yet the more ductile Vicars of Bray are resolved to preach the contrary. They mean to tone down Hell into Hades, and cut short its duration; in other words, they intend to set up a Protestant purgatory, only with this difference, that all will finally reach heaven, unless some of them—the incurable rubbish of creation—are quietly extinguished out of existence. These trimmers see quite plainly that people will not stand being damned in the downright, old-fashioned style; and so, as the Rev. Dr. Clifford says—and he is one of them—"the temper in which they think of 'man after death' has wholly changed to one of passionate pity and overflowing tenderness." Cunning dogs! When hectoring is played out they begin wooing; when they can no longer terrorise they cajole. Anything is better than giving up their easy and pleasant way of earning an excellent living.

Any man who sees through their craft will naturally ask what on earth *their* "passionate pity and overflowing tenderness" has to do with our lot hereafter. Whatever our fate may be in any future life, it is decided by a greater power than theirs. Their sentiments cannot affect our destiny; nor is their personal opinion on what lies "behind the veil" of any greater moment than that of the meanest of their listeners. If the Bible is the fallible word of ancient men, neither is its dictum of any greater authority. If, however, it is the infallible word of God, the only question is, What does it say? What it *does* say is obvious to any one who will read with his own eyes and mind; and if the sky-pilots break away from it—as they assuredly will—they will simply be taking a big stride towards the final rejection of the great Protestant fetish. Religions do not die a sudden death. Like icebergs floating south, they gradually dissolve. Little by little the huge mass of superstition thaws under the sun of science; little by little the brutal legacy of barbarous ages disappears before the higher conscience of civilisation.

P.S.—As we are going to press we learn that the Pastors' College, Stoke Newington—an institution, we believe, connected with the Tabernacle—has unanimously repelled the insinuation that its members have any tendencies towards "a loose theological belief." According to the *Daily News*, the students of the College also "express warm sympathy with their president, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, in the bold stand he has taken for the truth of God against the evil which goes by the name of 'modern thought.'" How these young cubs have caught the trick of the elder bigots who used to speak so witheringly of "so-called science!" Poor "modern thought" will probably survive their juvenile impudence.

G. W. FOOTE.

## A PROPHETICAL CHAPTER EXAMINED.—II.

(ISAIAH LIII.)

NINTH VERSE (*continued*).—In clauses 3 and 4 the reason assigned for the sufferer's death is stupidly irrelevant. Why should Christ be buried with thieves because he had done no violence, or die with the wealthy because he was not deceitful? But the alleged prediction is false as well as irrelevant. It is untrue that Christ had done no violence. He had led a riot in the sacred precincts of the Temple. Scourge in hand, he had personally driven lawfully established tradesmen headlong from the Temple, and had overthrown their seats and the tables of the money-changers, and had scattered their money upon the ground (John ii., 15; Mark xi., 15). If this is not violence, what is? It is also untrue to say that Christ never employed deceit. I have not space to mention and expose his many equivocations and falsehoods. When he told the Jews he would raise the Temple in three days, while secretly he referred only to the "temple" of his body, he used deceit. When he quickened the zeal of his disciples by telling them that the end of the world and his own triumphant return to judge all men should occur before the generation then living had passed away, he used deceit. And if the modern Christians who reduce hell-fire to a mere figment of speech are correct, Christ used diabolical deceit in terrifying the masses with such a horrible and debasing doctrine.

TENTH VERSE.—(1) Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; (2) he hath put him to grief: \* (3) when thou shalt make his soul, an offering for sin, (4) he shall see his seed, (5) he shall prolong his days, (6) and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

Clause 1 and 2 I will class as fulfilled; but they are mere repetitions of the idea which has already been repeated several times. Clause 3 is falsified; for Christ's *soul* was never made an offering for sin, but only his *body*. The original may equally mean "when his soul shall make an offering for sin."† Clauses 4 and 5 are falsified, for Christ had no children, and his days were cut short. Clause 6 is so general as to apply to any expected Messiah or religious reformer. The change of tense in this verse seems to indicate that the sufferings are past or present, and that the prosperity is future. Isaiah was probably talking of the ideal or personified Israel, whose grievous troubles should end when he became truly penitent and righteous through the self-sacrificing earnestness of prophets and others. If Isaiah had really been describing a Messiah who was not to come till 700 years afterwards, would he have prophesied his martyrdom in the past tense and his successes in the future? Why, indeed, are the tenses so curiously intermingled throughout this chapter if, as Christians allege, it is a straightforward prophecy and description of the expected Messiah?

ELEVENTH VERSE.—(1) He shall see of the travail of his soul, and (2) shall be satisfied: (3) by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; (4) for he shall bear their iniquities.

Clauses 1, 2, and 4 I will for the moment accept as fulfilled. But they can only be so regarded while we accept Christian fiction as truth. Whether God really saw Christ's "bloody sweat" and was satisfied thereby, the non-Christian has no evidence. Clause 3 conflicts both with Christian doctrine and with actual fact. It is not by knowledge that Christ justifies many, but by blood and faith. Knowledge is despised as vain babbling, leading men astray from Christ. The idea, too, of Isaiah speaking of his redeeming God as "my righteous servant" is too profanely presumptuous for belief. Even if the phrase means *God's* righteous servant, then the prophet misunderstood and misrepresented the relationship between God and God. One part of God is not the "servant" of the other part, but all are co-equal.

TWELFTH VERSE.—(1) Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, (2) and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; (3) because he hath poured out his soul unto death: (4) and he was numbered with the transgressors; (5) and he bare the sin of many, (6) and made intercession for the transgressors.

Clauses 1 and 2 I classify as falsified rather than as confirmed by the Gospel narrative. Of course, if prophecies of Christ are extended to his Church a thousand years after his death; if Christians arbitrarily decide at

\* In the original "made him sick." (Rev. Ver., note.)  
† See Revised Version, marginal note.

their pleasure whether the prophecy refers to Jesus or to the Roman Catholic or Protestant Churches, according as they think it best fits, this prophecy (or any other indeed) can be represented as fulfilled. Clauses 3, 4, and 5 may perhaps be put down as fulfilled, with reservations such as I have already mentioned. The last clause I classify as neutral. Admitting that Christ was numbered with the transgressors (the two thieves), it is not recorded that he interceded for both of them, but only for one. If it be said that the transgressors he forgave are altogether different from the transgressors with whom he was numbered, I answer that the prophet draws no such distinction, and that Christ was certainly not numbered with the crucifiers. I also deny that those who put Christ to death were rightly to be regarded as transgressors. They obeyed the Mosaic law, which Christ as God had inspired. It was Jesus who broke the Jewish law as well as the Roman, and who suffered under his own enactments and his own folly. It was Jesus who was the transgressor, not his executioners.

W. P. BALL.

(To be concluded.)

## ACID DROPS.

At Doncaster, the Rev. Christopher Hodgson, Vicar of Braithwell, was fined for assaulting a lad, named Bailey, attending his school. The defendant held that as he was "manager" he had the right to inflict corporal punishment.

THE boy is eleven years of age. He was ten minutes late through having to wait for his younger sister. For this offence the reverend gentleman ordered the pupil to hold out his hand to be caned. As the boy withdrew his hand when about to be struck by the cane, the meek and mild rector—every Christian is meek and mild as a matter of course—seized the boy by the wrist, struck him severely seven or eight times over the knuckles and on the hand, boxed his ears, and beat him about the head, shoulders, and thighs, until he was covered all over with weals. In consequence of the assault the boy had been ill three or four days. The defence was that the boy was late, that he was rough in his manner (as if the clergyman were not infinitely rougher!) and that he did not go through the proper bowing and scraping on entering. After careful consideration of the evidence, Lord Auckland said the bench were of opinion that defendant had lost his temper and beat the boy in a severe manner. They imposed a penalty of £2 19s. 6d., including costs, or in default one month's imprisonment. This State-paid teacher of a high-flown religion of love will be forced to show some practical respect for commonplace human rights in future.

A MONTREAL priest, whose last name is Diteasson, was sentenced at the last session of the Court of the Queen's Bench to twenty-three months' imprisonment and to receive twenty lashes for outraging a young girl. The flogging was a mere burlesque, and at the end the reverend rascal thanked the whipper for his tenderness.

IN the shocking case of wholesale immorality between boys and girls at Uxbridge, it transpired that the boys met the girls on their coming out of Sunday-school. Elizabeth Heather, who was under thirteen, was the principal witness to the facts of her own shocking depravity. She was in the habit of attending the Sunday-school, but it is evident that the result was not much to boast of. As the law only punishes males in such cases, the girls were only prosecutors and witnesses instead of being joint criminals.

AN extraordinary sensation was created in Shrewsbury and throughout Shropshire on Saturday by the publication in the local papers of particulars of a scandal implicating a clergyman well known in the county, who occupies a high position and discharges the religious functions at one of the public local philanthropic institutions. Not long ago several young girls, the domestic servants of residents in Shrewsbury, began to receive letters of highly questionable character. Suggestions were made in these epistles that if acceptable to the recipients further information would be conveyed to them. If a reply was received other and worse letters followed, the design of the writer being evidently to gradually and deliberately demoralise the minds of young persons. The earlier letters were the pretended production of a girl who signed herself a fellow servant and in other ways, and when communication had been established the signature became "your friend Lizzie." At a later stage the writer avowed himself a man, representing himself to be a young clerk and signing himself "your loving Harry." In many instances pen-and-ink sketches were enclosed. Eventually the proceedings came to the knowledge of the police. Thereupon the letters were critically examined, and although they were all apparently written in a disguised hand, the authorities came to the conclusion that they had emanated from the clergyman referred to. A watch was set upon his premises. The letters it was alleged he had written and the replies thereto were usually secreted in

the wall. Towards this place it is reported he was seen to go. The matter having been made known to the National Vigilance Society, the question of prosecution came under consideration, and it terminated in a resolution to place the matter before the Home Secretary and also before the Bishop of Lichfield on his return from the Continent.—*Daily News*.

MR. ORAM, of Manchester, whose wife has obtained a judicial separation on the ground of her husband's cruelty, was stated to be a captain of the Salvation Army. He strongly held to Paul's position that the wife should be in all things in subjection to her husband.

THE floods in China are reported to be the most appalling in history. The Yellow river has overflowed a large extent of country, and many thousands of lives have been lost. This is how God manages affairs, or rather how he mismanages them. The Emperor has given two million taels for the benefit of the sufferers. But God is the responsible party. What does he give?

IT is not always safe to take part in agitation against the Church. Mr. Owen, postmaster at Bodfan in Wales, has found this out to his cost. He addressed an open-air meeting on the tithe question, and has been dismissed by the Postmaster General in consequence.

ALDERMAN POTTS, of Sunderland, cannot be very much of a Christian. When a respectable applicant stated at the police-court, that a Baptist missionary was staying in his house, who owed him money and could not be got out, although he had received notice to quit, Alderman Potts advised the applicant to "put him out and lock the door." Alderman Potts ought to know that the Baptist Missionary is following the command of Jesus, to take neither bread nor money and whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide until ye depart from that place. We expect the missionary will now cast off the dust of his feet as a testimony against Sunderland, and it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

CHRIST prophesied that not one stone of Jerusalem should be left on another. Stones, however, are still left on each other sufficiently to enable explorers to find "the remains of the ancient town wall," and to ascertain the position of the gates through which the excavators conclude that Christ passed on his way to Golgotha. The Palestine Society appeals to "all true Christians" for funds to enable it to preserve "those sacred relics."

"THE deceased committed suicide while of unsound mind and suffering from religious mania." Such was the verdict of the coroner's jury on the case of Amelia Jane Southcott, of Wilberforce Road, Finsbury Park, who committed suicide by jumping out of a window. We should fancy that the relatives of this unfortunate young woman are likely to think religion of doubtful value. What does Talmage say? According to the evidence of her sister, Miss Southcott believed she was an angel and could take people with her to heaven.

"DR. HIBBERT certified that he was suffering from religious mania." This appears in the Bow Street police report. The prisoner, John Donovan, of Southsea, was apprehended at Marlborough House, where he desired a personal interview with Princess Beatrice.

AT Paddington, Sarah Coltman threw herself from a window. A few years ago she suffered from religious melancholia, and had to be sent to a lunatic asylum. Whether the religion helped to make her commit suicide is not known, but it is certain that it did not prevent her from committing the fatal act.

ANYBODY would think that Christians would like to die in a church. What better time could there be for starting for heaven than when you are engaged in devotions inside an edifice impregnated with the Holy Ghost? Strange to say, however, the worshippers at the Catholic church, Athy, Co. Kildare, were of a different opinion when a bit of plaster fell and broke a pane of glass. They all took to their heels and flew from Kingdom-come. Some said the gallery was falling, others shouted "Fire!" and there was a general panic. Several persons were crushed, and one poor woman had five ribs broken and died. Verdict—accidental death.

A panic also occurred at Sidbury Congregational Chapel. An alarm of fire having been raised, the congregation rushed for the exits. A block occurred on the staircase. There was no fire in the chapel, however, the alarm being occasioned by a fire at a neighboring farmhouse. Religion evidently has no practical effect in calming people, or in rendering them unselfish and superior to unreasoning fright and panic.

THE Bishop of Liverpool says that the two black clouds overhanging the Church are "want of discipline" and the "poverty of modern preaching." To remedy the first he asks for legislation. The cure for the other, we suppose, is more Holy Ghost—an article which seems rather scarce at the present day.

LORD SELBOURNE, in his Birmingham speech in support of Church defence, adopted a very cut-throat argument in favor of maintaining the Establishment. He asked how we could strip the Church of England of its endowments, while in India we permit endowments in favor of Mohammedanism, Hindooism, and Buddhism. But every one knows that such endowments are kept up solely from motives of political expediency, and would be withdrawn whenever it was safe to do so. What is the political expediency which demands the support of a church which has ceased to be the church of the majority of the nation?

THE Queen has sent the Pope a Jubilee present in the form of a magnificent carpet. Perhaps the Pope will let his pilgrims kneel on it when they stoop to kiss his toe.

SOME Wolverhampton bigots have advertised Mr. Carnegie's *Triumphant Democracy* by getting the grand jury to present it as "a false, scandalous, defamatory, seditious, and treasonable libel against the Queen." The Recorder did not see his way to direct a prosecution, but thought there were authorities who might take the matter up. Apparently the recent visit of the Church Congress has done something to stir up the spirit of persecution in Wolverhampton.

THE "Most Rev. the Lord Archbishop of Dublin," has been advocating Christian unity. He wishes Christians to fraternise. He says: "We can all acknowledge one another as brethren even now. It is time for us, is it not, to resolve even now that we shall not stand apart glaring at one another from a distance, snarling and snapping, biting and devouring one another? Nor must we be satisfied with merely desisting from such animosities. . . . No, we must rise up, each one of us, and go forth to meet our brother half-way. We must take each other by the hand, we must look one another in the face, we must hear one another speak; and if we cannot have fusion, or even federation, we can thus at least have that fraternisation which prepares the way for both!"

As a practical commentary on this pretty kind of talk the Bishop of London has inhibited the Rev. T. Greenland, late rector of Laithbury, from further preaching in Christ Church, Harlesden. The "Reformed" Episcopal Church is thus to be boycotted. It was by a combination of the two methods of pretty theory and despotic practice that Christianity enslaved the souls and bodies of its dupes and victims in the past.

THE Archbishop owns that there is a deep conviction in the hearts of Christians throughout the world, that the divisions of Christendom are the disgrace of Christendom, but there is also a craving for unity, and he cries out with the poet—

The ways of man are narrow,  
But the gates of God are wide!

This is exactly the reverse of Christ's Christianity. God the Son said that it was the road to destruction that was wide, while the road that led to life was narrow. But modern Christianity is good at these summersaults. It turns Christ's doctrines upside down and swears they are still the genuine article as set forth by the founder of Christianity.

FATHER IGNATIUS is either a gentleman with a fine imagination or he is very easily imposed upon by other possessors of that useful faculty. Preaching in London last Sunday, he told a "true story" of a Belgravia nobleman who, on leaving his house one day, encountered a sweep who had been doctoring his chimneys. This sweep was an amateur missionary, so he asked the nobleman, "Have you the wealth of Christ's salvation?" Two months later the nobleman was dying, and he sent for that very sweep to tell him all about the Holy Ghost. The result was that the nobleman "fell asleep in the Ark of the Covenant." But we presume that is a Father-Ignatian metaphor, for the actual Ark of the Covenant was three feet nine by two feet three, and it could hardly accommodate a Belgravian nobleman unless he was a dwarf.

THE late Lord Shaftesbury was not a very brilliant thinker, but he had his occasional flashes, and in one of these he asked, in reference to the orthodox objections to cremation, "What has become of the Blessed Martyrs?" Aye, what? Those unfortunate persons—many of whom, by the way, were perfectly fabulous—were cremated alive in some cases, and in others digested by lions. Yet they are all supposed to be sure of a bodily resurrection at the last day. What nonsense it is then for Christians to oppose cremation on the ground they usually take up!

THE religious question has cropped up again in the Southampton School Board. According to the report in the local paper, the Rev. G. C. White desired to make the religious instruction more systematic, and to have a periodical examination thereon. This immediately raised the question who should be the examiners, and the motion was stoutly opposed by Mr. Burbage, who thought it best to let sleeping dogs lie, and by Canon Scannell, on behalf of the Catholics, who contended that the Bible could not be taught without teaching something in the shape of doctrine as well. He would propose the Rev. Canon Gunn, of

Winchester, a Roman Catholic, as examiner. The Rev. H. H. Pereira appealed to Canon Scannell not to oppose: it was a choice between Agnosticism and some religious instruction. Mr. Domoney frankly declared there was much in the Bible that was unfit for reading by children. His opinion was that as a rule Agnostics understood the Bible better than Christians. The matter was ultimately referred to a committee of the whole board.

AT the annual meeting of the Parochial Missions to the Jews' Fund held at Sion College, the Bishop of Bedford, who presided, admitted "We have done very little yet, and I think we may say that the Church of Christ in this land has done very little for our Jewish fellow countrymen and emigrants." Of course more money is needed. Bishop Blyth the new Bishop of Jerusalem, pitched a yarn about the increase in the number of Jews in Palestine. He says there are over 42,000. Why don't he stay at Jerusalem and oversee his bishopric? He prefers merry England to the fleas and Jews of the holy city, even though he is classed with the number of colonial bishops as "returned empties."

CANON ISAAC TAYLOR writes to the *Daily News* defending his startling paper on Mohammedanism against the strictures of the *Spectator*. The doctrines of Islam, says the worthy Canon, are not falsehoods, but half-truths, and they will gradually lead up to Christianity; and "except by a miracle cannibals cannot pass at one bound from the adoration of lizards to an intelligent comprehension of the Athanasian Creed."

AN intelligent comprehension of the Athanasian Creed! Surely Canon Taylor is joking. Did anybody in the world, or out of it, ever understand that blasphemous rigmarole, which was never heard of till long after the time of Athanasius, and which so amazed Gennadius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, that he pronounced it to be the work of a drunken man? On the whole—and we say it very deliberately—the African tribes had far better go on worshipping lizards than adding their brains and debasing their hearts with a theological mystery, the only clear part of which is that God Almighty will damn everybody to everlasting hell for disbelieving a single particle of it whether he understands or not.

FURTHER, we beg to remind Canon Taylor of his own words; namely, that no tribe which embraces Mohammedanism is ever converted to Christianity. His own language effectually disposes of his half-way house theory. History, indeed, shows that wherever Christianity and Mohammedanism meet the latter triumphs.

MANY proofs of this are given by Canon Taylor himself in a long letter which appeared in the *Times* for Oct. 31. He believes that in India the progress of Mohammedanism is ten times that of Christianity, notwithstanding the prestige of a Christian governing Power and the expenditure of vast sums of money on proselytism. In Central Africa its progress is even more rapid. Canon Taylor cites many authorities, such as Sir Richard Burton, who affirms that "the Mohammedans alone make proselytes in Africa." Mr. Bosworth Smith confesses that "At this day Mohammedan missions are meeting everywhere with a marked success which is denied our own." Nice testimony this to the divinity of a religion which had a longer time even than Mohammedanism in which to subdue the world.

CANON TAYLOR further cites from the recent book on *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, by Dr. Blyden, who is himself a Christian negro. Dr. Blyden says, "West Africa has been in contact with Christianity for three hundred years, and not one single tribe as a tribe has yet become Christian. Nor has any influential chief adopted the religion brought by the European missionary." Of the natives of Cape Palmas he says, "Upwards of forty years of untiring mission effort has made them to hate rather than to admire Christian civilisation." To this may be added the testimony of Mr. Joseph Thomson, that "for every African who is influenced for good by Christianity a thousand are driven into deeper degradation by the gin trade," which everywhere accompanies the gospel, although denounced by Mohammedanism. Yet over a million a year, some of it extorted from school children, is annually wasted on attempts to introduce Christianity to those who do not want it, while English men and women are starving at home.

MR. JOHNSTON, who writes in the November number of the *Nineteenth Century* on British Missions in Africa, does much to confirm Canon Taylor's strictures upon missionary efforts in the Dark Continent. Says Mr. Johnston: "In many important districts, where they have been at work for twenty years, the missionaries can scarcely number, in lowest statistics, twenty sincere Christians. That is to say, twenty natives understanding in any degree the doctrines or dogmas they have been taught, and striving to shape their conduct to their new principles. In other parts of Africa, principally British possessions, where large numbers of nominal Christians exist, their religion is discredited by numbering among their adherents all the drunkards, liars, rogues, and unclean livers of the continent."

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

## MR. FOOTE'S LECTURES.

Sunday, November 6, Baskerville Hall, The Crescent, Birmingham; at 11, "Thus Saith the Lord"; at 3, "The Cooling of Hell"; at 7, "The Blood of Christ."

NOV. 13, Liverpool; 20, Camberwell; 27, Sunderland.

DEC. 4, Nottingham; 11 and 18, Hall of Science, London.

JAN. 1, Milton Hall, London; 8, Manchester; 15, Hall of Science, London.

FEB. 5, Camberwell; 12, Milton Hall, London.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LITERARY communications to be addressed to the Editor, 14 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C. All business communications to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

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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.

L. BOWERS.—Pleased to hear from so young a Freethinker. The joke may serve as a suggestion.

C. J. RUSE.—The report was circulated without Mr. Foote's authority. Had he gone to Peckham it would only have been to help in keeping order. He would certainly not have been able to lecture, as he had to lecture miles away at seven o'clock.

BUSY BEE.—Thanks for cuttings. Many things in the press must escape our attention, and our readers greatly assist us in the conduct of this journal by sending us scraps from the local newspapers. Mr. Foote is in excellent health and Mr. Wheeler is better than we remember seeing him for years.

E. B. ROSE.—Thanks for your prompt account of Sunday's success at Peckham.

H. HISCOCK.—You have done a splendid work for the Finsbury Branch, and we trust you will meet with the reward we are sure you most covet in the continued prosperity of the cause in your district.

E. M. (Manchester).—(1) All religions claim to be genuine. (2) Buddha lived some centuries before Christ. Different authorities place him at various dates between the fourth and the sixth centuries. (3) No, see *Freethinker* for Sept. 25. (4) No, a sheer absurdity. We never heard the nonsense before. (5) There is a good Free Library in your city. Doubtless you will find "extreme" works in the Library of the N. S. S. Branch.

G. L. sends us a skit on Noah's Flood from the Brighton *Argus*, and remarks: "If it had appeared in the *Freethinker* it would have been regarded as blasphemous by the same people who now look upon it as a harmless joke."

DELTA.—It has good points, but your versification is halting.

R. MAYOR.—Mr. Foote's Liverpool lectures are already fixed.

E. STIFFEN.—You say that we cannot conceive of annihilation. Yes we can; not of substance of course, but of form, and that is all our individuality is. The substance of a knife cannot be annihilated, but does that prove that knives are immortal?

J. M.—All orders for literature should be sent direct to Mr. Forder. Glad to hear you are "pleased beyond measure with the clear ideas in the *Freethinker*."

H. ROBERTS.—You rightly call it "absurd." It is quite beneath notice.

W. H. MORRISH.—Always glad to hear from you.

J. WILLIAMS.—If you want to know what John Morley's opinions are you should read his writings. He is certainly not a Christian, and he writes as one without any positive belief in God. Joseph Chamberlain, we believe, calls himself a Unitarian, but we fancy his religious cargo could be carried in a paper boat. Pleased to have your good opinion of our Bible Handbook.

J. MCLEAN.—Too late for a paragraph last week.

AN EX-ROMAN CATHOLIC writes: "I cannot resist writing and congratulating you on your splendid production, the *Crimes of Christianity*. I am reading it with mingled feelings. It is an astounding revelation, and certainly should be in the hands of every thinking man and woman. I shall anxiously await the appearance of the remaining volumes, and have no doubt they will be as fascinating a study as the first is." Our correspondent adds, "I have recently become a regular subscriber to the *Freethinker*, which I consider an admirable paper for popular propaganda."

LARA.—We know nothing of Mr. Bradbury "the notorious Atheist" of Burton-on-Trent. What is he "converted" to, and how was it done?

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Western Figaro—Le Journal du Peuple—Jus—L'Union Democratique—La Semaine Anticlericale—Church Reformer—Le Reveil Matin—Weekly Dispatch—South Wales Daily News—Liberator—Thinker—Stratford Calendar.

CORRESPONDENCE should reach us not later than Tuesday if a reply is desired in the current issue. Otherwise the reply stands over till the following week.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

DURING the summer the Freethought meetings on Peckham Rye have been repeatedly disturbed and once or twice broken up. On Sunday, Oct. 23, Mr. E. B. Rose lectured, and there was the usual riot of well-dressed rowdies, conspicuous among whom was a very pious member of the Young Men's Christian Association. Fortunately Mr. Rose stood his ground, and being a man of some physical courage he walked up to that particular

rowdy and castigated him. Immediately there were cries of "bravo Rose!" and from that moment the meeting was more orderly. Last Sunday afternoon Mr. A. B. Moss lectured. The Peckham Branch consulted Mr. Foote on the subject, and he, assisted by Mr. Standing, Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Rose, sent out a whip to all the London Branches, the result being a strong muster of Freethinkers from all parts of the metropolis; so strong, indeed, that the Christian rowdies thought it prudent to keep silence. The meeting was very large, Mr. Moss gave a capital lecture and sat heavily upon a buffoonish opponent, and a good collection was made for the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

THIS shows what can be done by co-operation among the London Branches. Mr. Foote would have gone down to Peckham himself had his presence seemed really necessary, but he felt confident that Mr. Moss would be adequately supported, and the result has justified his confidence. As it is, the Peckham bigots have been ignominiously beaten, without being able to say, "Ah, you had to bring down the editor of the *Freethinker* and all his friends."

Mr. HISCOCK, the energetic secretary of the Finsbury Branch, informs us that the open-air lectures on Clerkenwell Green have doubled their list of members, and that the work will be carried on indoors during the winter at the Patriotic Club, where a large room is available for Sunday evening lectures.

THE concert in aid of the Open-Air Lecture Fund was well attended. There was an excellent array of talent, and Mr. Foote made a brief speech. His remarks on the contemplated federation of the London Branches were warmly cheered.

THE Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* is in active preparation. Next week we expect to announce a very early date on which it will be published. A special new cover has been designed, which is far more artistic than any previous one; and there will be a number of "profane" illustrations, including a large cartoon, and two sets of small sketches, one dealing with the creation of Mr. Adam, and the other with the career of Old Nick. We flatter ourselves that, on the whole, this will be our best special number up to date. As a "pill to purge melancholy" it will lick any one of the nostrums so extensively advertised in the daily press. To adopt the style of the patent-pill-men, we recommend our special as "worth a guinea a number."

WE believe the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund is almost if not quite the only charitable fund which is administered so gratuitously that not a single farthing is ever deducted for "expenses." That it deserves the universal support of the Freethought party goes without saying. But there are times when its claims need a little pressing. At present, owing to bad trade, which diminishes the donations and increases the applications for relief, the Fund is lower than it has been for years, and unfortunately the winter is striding upon us. Surely, then, those who can at all afford to give will send in their subscriptions at once. Freethinkers who are overtaken by misfortune have a hard time of it if they seek assistance through the ordinary channels of charity. They are brow-beaten, insulted, and turned away helpless. Their only reliance is on their Freethought brethren; and let those on whom fortune is still smiling, or at least not frowning, reflect a little of her light on the darkened faces of those who suffer want. Subscriptions should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, secretary of the N. S. S., 28 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.

ONCE upon a time the newspapers used to comment on "the villainous head" of Mr. Bradlaugh, who was said to be a mixture of prize-fighter, burglar, and ape. But what a change has come over the scene now! Recently the *Pall Mall Gazette* wrote: "There is no more remarkable head in the House of Commons than Mr. Gladstone's own—excepting perhaps the dome-of-St. Paul-like head of Mr. Bradlaugh."

A CAPITAL portrait of the late Major Evans Bell appears in the *Illustrated London News* for Oct. 29. In the accompanying biographical sketch no mention is made of the fact that Major Bell was a Freethinker and for many years a constant contributor to the *Reasoner*.

Mr. A. B. Moss has produced a drama, or rather a part of one, for he has a collaborator, Mr. Witton, who is also a Freethinker. The piece is to be staged soon in a suburban theatre, and particulars will be found in the advertisement on our last page. Mr. Moss's friends in the neighborhood of New Cross will probably drop in to see what his bantling is like.

THE Glasgow Freethinkers have got up a good orchestra, and musical selections will be given every Sunday afternoon and evening for half-an-hour before the lecture. We shall be glad to hear that other Branches have followed suit.

MONS. ABEL HOVELACQUE, the eminent philologist and openly declared Atheist has been re-elected president of the Municipal Council of Paris. The vice-presidents are M. M. Chassaing, and Alphonse Humbert.

THE *Sydney Daily Telegraph* publishes statistics showing th

condition of church and chapel attendance in New South Wales. Since 1883, while the population has increased by 144,222, church attendance has decreased by 19,800. Evidently the church is ceasing to draw in the colony. The same paper sets up a pious wail because the Christian rubbish so rife in children's books has been expunged from the reading-books for State schools in Victoria.

### GNOSTIC CHRISTIANITY.<sup>1</sup>

Now that historical criticism has made it clear that in the four Gospels we have not the statements of eye-witnesses, but compilations of second century traditions, which partake of the character of romances, fresh attention is being given to those so-called heretics of the apostolic age, the Gnostics, whose writings have been destroyed, but who can be seen, even under the veil of misrepresentation used by their orthodox opponents, to have taught a somewhat more reasonable Christianity than that God had descended to be born of a virgin, and to die on a cross to save his own created world, or a portion of its people, from eternal perdition.

The Gnostics, says Gibbon, "were distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christian name." They boasted the knowledge (*gnosis*) of the true philosophy which was revealed only to initiates. They are admitted by Bishop Lightfoot to have existed at the time of Paul's writing his epistle to the Colossians. So numerous are the allusions in the New Testament to the terminology of the Gnostics that Dr. Tulloch was constrained to admit that Gnosticism was "in the air" in apostolic times. The Gnostics are traced by Irenæus and Eusebius to Simon, who, we read in Acts viii., 9, had "beforetime bewitched the people of Samaria." This was within a year after the crucifixion. But Hippolytus enumerates five distinct sects of Gnostics prior to Simon. Hence it is clear Gnosticism was no offshoot from historic Christianity, but an anterior system. It appears from Hippolytus that Simon, like Philo, taught a doctrine of the Logos, or Word of Truth, which, according to Mr. Massey, was the Makheru of the Egyptians.

But this Logos or Gnostic Christ was no more a personal being than is Justice, Truth, or Wisdom. Its Christ was purely an Ideal, and existed within each one of its worshippers. The Gnostics did not admit that Christ had a real body; they also called in question all the historical character of Christianity, and were therefore denounced by the orthodox as Antichrists. This earliest and most intelligent sect of Christians held that Christ could never be born or die. Their Word was not made flesh. The second epistle of John alludes to them when it declares that "many deceivers are come into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and antichrist." The second epistle of Peter also protests that "we have not followed cunningly devised fables" or sophistical myths, as they were evidently charged with doing; but all the writer brings by way of proof is an assertion that he was present at the evidently mythical transfiguration, and he then passes to "a more sure word of prophecy."

Now, Mr. Massey holds that the claim of Christianity to possess Divine authority rests on the ignorant belief that the mystical Christ of the Gnostic could and did become a person; whereas the bodily Christ was only the counterfeit presentment of the ideal Christ. He contends that the original mythos and *gnosis* of Christianity were primarily derived from Egypt on various lines of descent—Hebrew, Persian, and Greek, Alexandrian, Essenian, and Nazarene, and that these converged in Rome, where the history was manufactured mainly from the identifiable matter of the mythos recorded in the ancient books of wisdom, illustrated by Gnostic art, and orally preserved amongst the secrets of the mysteries.

Instead of looking on the Roman Church as a crucible for purging the truth from the dross of error to give it forth pure gold, he regards it rather as the melting pot in which the beautiful and noble mental coinage of Greece and Egypt was fused down and made featureless, to be run into another mould, stamped with a newer name, and re-issued under a later date.

<sup>1</sup> "Gnostic and Historic Christianity," a lecture by Gerald Massey. Price one shilling. Villa Bordighiera, New Southgate, London, N.

Mr. Massey says:

"It may be said more justly of Historic Christianity, than of anything else within the compass of my knowledge, that what is true in it was not new, and that which was new in it is not true! It is not new, because it represents the ancient Mythos under an intended disguise. It is not true, because it is not a genuine history. The supposed human original, set forth in the Gospels, is but the mundane shadow of the Gnostic Christ."

The canonical Gospels may be compared to a palimpsest, with one writing so elaborated over others that the first is almost crossed out, and the rest are thoroughly confused. Some fancy they discern beneath the supernatural elements the outlines of an historic Jesus, but their many efforts and diverse conclusions suggest that the materials are too scant and confused to reconstruct any complete life or character. Mr. Massey thinks that by holding the palimpsest up to the light and looking at it long and closely we can trace the water-mark of the Egyptian mythos, with its virgin mother, its child Christ of twelve years, and the virile adult of thirty years, who was Horus, the anointed Son of the Father in Heaven whom he came to reveal. This is the earliest germ of the Gospels. Next we find a collection of the sayings of the Lord as the nucleus of the Gospel of Matthew, but this Lord is not a Jewish peasant, for the title is not once applied to Jesus by Matthew till after the resurrection.

Gerald Massey contends, with Schwegler, Baur, and the author of *Supernatural Religion*, that the Gospel of the Lord used by Marcion was not, as various of the Fathers urged and as Mr. Sanday yet urges, a mutilated copy of Luke's Gospel, but an earlier one. Certainly it did not contain the two first chapters, with their historic blunder of making the taxing under Cyrenius contemporary with the days of King Herod. The canonical Luke, after making Jesus vanish out of the apostles' sight, makes him appear again without any *entrée*, to refute the idea that he is a spirit by asking for something to eat, and then he is carried up to heaven with a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb inside him, although Paul says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Marcion's version reads "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, and ye see that I have *not*."

The only historical Jesus admitted by Mr. Massey is the Joshua ben Pandera of the Talmud, whose adventures are more fully given in the *Jewish Life of Jesus*. We would, however, put it to him that it is at least possible that the legends have been mixed up with the story of the Jesus mentioned by Josephus, who prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, or even with some expected temporal deliverer such as Judas of Galilee who, Origen tells us, was hailed by some as the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Joshua ben Pandera, Mr. Massey thinks, was an Essene or, at any rate, a Nazarite. James, "the brother of the Lord" as described by Hegesippus, was certainly of that sect, and Mr. Massey considers the Epistle of James as of prime importance, because it contains no single sign of historic Christianity. "It recognises no Jesus of Nazareth, and it announces no salvation through the atoning blood, the death, resurrection, and ascension of a personal Christ."

Mr. Massey thinks there is no necessity to go to India to trace the historic antecedents of Christianity. We know Mr. Massey is well versed in Egyptology, but the question whether Buddhist missionaries reached Syria and Alexandria is one which will have to be settled on its own merits. Mr. Massey also, it seems to us, takes too much for granted that his readers are able to follow him into the very abstruse questions connected with Gnosticism and the rise of Christianity. But I fear that I am myself an instance that this is a fault not easily avoided.

J. M. WHEELER.

THE Minnesota legislature was recently opened with an extempore prayer, composed by a reverend member, from which the following is said to be an extract: "And now, dear Lord, bless the reporters, whose nimble pens catch every word almost before it is uttered. Like thyself, they are omnipresent, and almost omnipotent. If we take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth they are there. They meet us in the jungles of Africa, they waylay us in the solitary cañons of Colorado, and when at length we find the latitude of the magnetic pole, behold, they are there! May their light and goodness be equal to their power, and in the general assembly of heaven let no reporter be excluded."

<sup>2</sup> See "Josephus and the Gospels" in the current number of *Progress*.

## BIBLE READING AND FREETHOUGHT.

HAVING carefully considered Mr. Foote's article concerning Mr. Bradlaugh's attitude on the question of religious instruction in Board Schools, the thought has occurred to me that there is one aspect of this question which has not yet received so large a measure of consideration as it deserves. It is well known that hundreds, if not thousands of Freethinkers in England send their children to State-supported schools. Yet comparatively few have their children withdrawn from what is vaguely, and in my view inaccurately, called "religious instruction." Why is this? Surely there must be some other and better reason than sheer cowardice on the part of freethinking parents for the adoption of this course? For my part I am disposed to believe that there is. Recently I have taken the trouble to make inquiries into the matter, and I propose in this brief article to explain some of the reasons why Freethinkers do not regard it always as the best policy to withdraw their children from Bible lessons in Board schools.

When the Education Act was passed the question whether any religious instruction, and if any how much, should be given in State-aided schools, caused considerable discussion. Some were in favor of teaching the doctrines of the English Church as well as reading the Bible; to this the Catholics and Dissenters demurred, and vigorously protested, urging that their doctrines should at least be treated with respect; while the Unitarians and Secularists held that their views should be taken into account before a final decision was given.

We know that all Government is in the nature of a compromise; and the decision of the Government on this point in my opinion was a wise one. The Education Act provided—to meet the views of the majority—that the Bible should be read in Board schools, but, in consideration of the views of the minority, it declared that there should be no denominational teaching. It further promised that any Freethinker who did not wish his children to receive "religious instruction" could have them withdrawn.

Now all this seems fair enough. But how does it work in practice? Let us see. I know one Board school in London where one master is a member of the Church of England, another a Catholic, a third is a Baptist, and still another a "nothingarian." In another school the head master is a Freethinker and the assistants belong to various denominations. Every morning three quarters of an hour are devoted to Bible reading. As a general rule the selected readings are from the New Testament—often from the parables of Jesus, but at intervals passages from the Old Testament are chosen for reading, and after the reading the teacher gives his explanation of the meaning of the lesson, and the children are allowed to put questions, with a view to further elucidation of the subject.

It strikes me that teachers holding all sorts of opinions are likely, under such a system as this, to promote Freethought by the contradictory character of their teachings; and such I find in reality to be the case in many instances.

I have heard many funny stories of questions that were asked "teacher" by the children of Christians as well as of Freethinkers, the profanity of which would shock some of the goody-goody people who attend church or chapel regularly. Many Freethinkers, I find, too, think it is necessary for their offspring to have a fair knowledge of the contents of the Bible in order to make them good Freethinkers. "The more one knows of the Bible, the less one believes in it," seems to be the principle upon which they act, and there is much to be said in support of this view. The child who grows up without the slightest knowledge of the contents of the Bible does not, as a rule, strengthen the Freethought cause. Often he is utterly indifferent to all the questions in dispute between the Freethinker and the Christian. I have in my mind's eye a case in point. I knew a family of Freethinkers who never allowed their children to read the Bible until they were over twelve years of age. Three of them became Secularists after a study of the various subjects dealing with theology and religion; but one of them, who had no taste for such subjects, and cared as little for reading the Bible as the Koran, became a Catholic. I could give a good many instances of the same kind.

The usual road by which individuals in this country become Secularists is, first, scepticism in regard to the alleged truth of some of the Bible statements; second, doubt in regard to all alleged revelations; third, doubt as to the existence of the Bible God; fourth, doubt as to the existence of a personal god at all; fifth, disbelief in all of the above; and belief in the eternity of the universe; in its power to produce all phenomena "without the meddling of the gods;" in the inviolability of nature's laws; and in human progress on a purely natural basis.

Mr. Bradlaugh, in his *Autobiography*, records the fact that even when he doubted and denied the truth of some biblical declarations he revolted at the idea of ever becoming an Atheist. But once the Bible is discarded, the inquiring mind goes on searching after truth, and truth is accepted at last, no matter how unpleasant it appeared at first sight or how unpalatable it seemed when the first attempt was made to assimilate it with other apparently conflicting ideas.

The first Freethought work I ever read was Paine's *Age of Reason*. It unsettled my mind. After reading it I could get no rest night nor day, until I had decided that, at all events, some parts of the Bible were not true. But if it was not all true, how

did I know that any of it was true? A train of ideas was started in a certain direction, and on and on I went until I became a Secularist.

It is the hardest thing in the world to convert a "nothingarian" to Freethought. A much easier task is to convert a sincere believer in Christianity, or, for a matter of that, a sincere believer in any religion—to Freethought. Is it not true that all the leading Freethinkers of the world were at one time ardent Christians? Ingersoll in America, Symes in Australia, Collins in New Zealand, Bradlaugh in England, Mrs. Besant—of whom it must always be remembered that she was not only an earnest Christian but the wife of an English clergyman, and consequently for the largest portion of her life under strong Christian influence, and yet she had the courage to come over to Freethought; Mr. Foote, and others too numerous to mention, were all believers in the Bible, and became Freethinkers only on account of a thorough knowledge of its contents.

If the Freethinker's child reads the Bible in the Board school and gets a wrong view of it, the Freethought parent can put it right; at worst he can present the other side of the case. By this method the Freethinker's child is made to *think* at a very early period of its life, and that is a disposition that is worth cultivating. The child is taught not only to think, but to ask questions which may teach others to think also. For my part I would vote in favor of reading the Koran or other religious books in the Board schools, always providing that it did not encroach too much upon the time laid down for purely secular instruction.

Moreover, there is another point to which attention should be drawn. If a child is withdrawn from the Bible lesson at the Board school, such child has to be put in a room by itself and is set a task in arithmetic, such as a simple sum or two, according to the standard of the child. I know a Board school in Lambeth where only one child is withdrawn, and that child sits by himself for three quarters of an hour, until the Bible lesson is over. Obviously a master could not be appointed to teach one child.

If the child does not go to school till after the Bible lesson is over a black mark is recorded against its name instead of a red one, and the child is not entitled to a prize for regular attendance even though the child attends with undeviating regularity. Now this I regard as a cruel punishment for the child. The child is too often shunned by the other children, and parents frequently send them to the Bible lesson rather than permit the child to suffer an undeserved punishment.

Last week I asked a Freethinker, who sends his children to a Board school in the Old Kent Road, whether he withdraws any of them from the "Bible Lesson." "Not now," he said, "my daughter likes the Bible Lessons because she feels interested in the subject from what she hears at home." At the last examination she won a prize for her "knowledge of Scripture."

Well, these are the views of Freethinkers into whose cases I have inquired, and I now submit them for the criticism of your numerous readers.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

AN American exchange says that Jewish women have petitioned that the following words may be expurgated from the Jewish prayer-book: "Blessed art thou O Eternal our God, that thou hast not made me a woman."

CENSORSHIP of the theatre used to be very strict in Austria. It is recorded that in one play where a character called "Waiter, bring me a chicken," the pious censor wrote that when played on Friday the words must be substituted, "Waiter, bring me some fish."

A NEW sect has started who call themselves Christian Positivists. The only thing they seem positive about is their own individual immortality. The one resemblance to the followers of Auguste Comte which we have noted is that they put out a calendar with a very inclusive list of names, from Albert Durer to Erasmus Darwin, and from Wordsworth to Alaric A. Watts.

THE orthodox have reason to be disquieted by the fact that the Prayer Book contains errors and unauthorised alterations. Some of these are "especially serious" in the eyes of Evangelicals as tending in the direction of Ritualism. The *Rock* quotes with evident approval the declaration made by the late Dr. Stephens that "if the Attorney-General strictly discharged his duty he would file an information against the Queen's printers for their breach of trust."

WE extract the following from the *Weekly Dispatch* of last Saturday. We offer the paragraph without comment, but should like to inquire of the one person forming the congregation whether he considered (in the words of the French proverb) that the game was worth the candle?—"Canterbury Cathedral supports a dean with £2,000 a year and a palace, six resident canons with £1,000 a year each, four minor canons with £300 a year each, and a number of preachers who are paid by the piece, besides precentors, choristers, and numerous officers who are more or less handsomely remunerated. The liberal provision thus made for the good people of the city of Thomas A'Becket does not appear to be greatly appreciated by them. The congregation at the morning service on Monday last consisted of one person. He must have felt as happy as the late king of Bavaria, who used to engage opera companies to perform before him as he sat in his theatre alone."

## PROFANE JOKES.

LITTLE CARL, aged four, had been severely bitten by mosquitoes at night. The following evening, after saying the usual, "Now I lay me," he asked his mamma if he might pray for himself. She readily consented, and Carl began, "God, please don't let your flies, bugs, mosquitoes, and hornets bite me any more. 'cause you know I'm only a little boy, not half grown. Amen."

"No; Mr. Smith is not in, unfortunately. Do you know sir, it is very kind of you to call so often? I trust that in time you will bring my husband to a realising sense of his condition." "I certainly trust I shall." "Where do you preach, please? I will endeavor to get Mr. Smith to go and hear you next Sunday." "There seems to be some mistake here. I'm not a minister, but an insurance agent. I'm in the life business; have nothing to do with fire risks, ma'am."

## REVIEWS.

*Life and Writings of T. R. Malthus.* By C. R. DRYSDALE, M.D. London: G. Sandring (Is.)—This is a very excellent compendium of the teachings of Malthus. Dr. Drysdale quotes largely from Malthus's writings, but he adds frequent remarks of his own, as well as recent statistics, so as to bring the work up to date. The first chapter contains a brief biography of Malthus, and the last a succinct account of the Malthusian propaganda in England. The cover bears what is said to be a faithful likeness of the author of the famous Essay on Population.

*More Sabbaticæ*; or an attempt to correct certain superstitious and vulgar errors respecting the Sabbath. By GODFREY HIGGINS. Dublin: Hodges Figgis and Co., 104 Grafton Street. London: Simpkins Marshall and Co., 1887.—This is a reprint of a somewhat scarce work by the author of *Anacalypsis*, from the original edition of 1826. It is addressed to Christians, and is well calculated to divest them of the superstitious regard paid to "the Lord's day." We hope the work will circulate in Scotland where it is more required than in Ireland, and we should have preferred to see a reprint of the second edition of 1833, as that contains an appendix with some valuable antiquarian notes on the celebration of the Sabbath.

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