

PROSECUTED FOR BLASPHEMY. THE FREETHINKER.

EDITED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

"COMIC BIBLE" SKETCHES.—XLII.



DIVINE OINTMENT.

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.—JOHN ix., 6.

THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

THERE is scarcely a more melancholy spectacle on earth than a Church Congress. We do not degrade its dignity when we call it the parsons' palaver. Its deliberations never lead to anything. The clergy are tied hand and foot by laws which they cannot break. Yet they meet year by year, according to the modern fashion, and deluge the town in which they assemble with "words, words, words." They are fast losing their hold on the popular mind, and having no power to adapt themselves or their religion to the altered circumstances of the age, they simply meet and chatter over their misfortunes. They recall Carlyle's picture of the Dead Sea apes, grinning and shivering round a dying fire, which they have not the sense to replenish. Dead ashes and smouldering embers are all that is left, and there they sit squeaking and gibbering, in the hope that the fire will flame up again as of old. Vain hope! For the traveller who kindled that fire on his passage through the desert has gone and will never return. The human mind has passed on to fresh scenes. It has reached the verge of the fruitful land of reason, and left the priests of all the creeds to crouch round the dwindling fires in the great desert of faith.

[No. 62.]

The chief figure of the Congress was of course the Archbishop of York, who has lately been singing praise to the God of Battles. He preached the opening sermon. One of its chief features was a patronising criticism of Darwin. He admitted that Darwinism "was leavening the popular belief far and wide," but he urged that there was nothing in it to shake the Christian's faith. The Church would absorb whatever truth it contained as it had absorbed the Copernican astronomy. All this is very plausible, but we venture to say that time will disprove it. Darwin himself did not believe in the Christian or any other revelation, nor had he any positive belief in immortality; and his occasional use of such words as God and Creator, was rather the result of habit than of any intellectual conviction. And it is notorious that nearly all the Evolutionists in England, Germany, France, Italy, and America, are quite outside the pale of all the creeds. Surely the best test of the tendency of Darwinism, is not what the clergy prophesy about it, but what it actually produces in the minds of those who accept it.

The Church has recently executed a strategic movement with respect to Darwinism. At one time it opposed him in front, but finding that he pressed on with the steady irresistible force of an avalanche, and could no longer be withstood, it slipped round by his side, and with an air of easy impudence, said "My dear sir, we did not exactly understand each other, but the truth is we both meant the same thing without knowing it, and now we'll swear eternal friendship." Darwin's corpse is buried in Westminster Abbey, and the Church thinks it has turned the treaty of fear into a bond of amity. But this is a delusion. Darwin's ideas are not buried with his corpse. They are doing their work outside, undermining all the creeds, and crumbling all the Churches into dust.

Archbishop Thomson could not help showing how the clergy hate Darwin after all. He tried to depreciate the great Evolutionist's scientific character. "That he shone more in research," said the preacher, "than in just inference from research, it is competent for all to believe." Quite so. This is a free country, and you may believe anything you please. You may believe that Queen Anne is not dead, that the earth is flat, or that the moon is made of green cheese. In like manner you may believe that Darwin was not a great speculator, but only a plodding Dryasdust. But you must not expect other people, who are better acquainted with the subject, to share your delusion. Darwin's reputation is far above the reach of envy or malice. He is a fixed star in the firmament of fame.

One remark of the Archbishop's shows how little he understands Darwinism, and serves to explain the nature of his criticism. Speaking of Natural Selection, he said that it "was no more a complete account of the present condition of the world of nature than a thunderstorm was the cause of the river whose flood it helped by small degrees to swell." The simile betrays a profound ignorance. There is nothing violent or abrupt in Natural Selection. It works slowly and insensibly generation after generation, not by sudden addition or destruction but by gradual modification, preserving some varieties and extinguishing others. Nor did Darwin ever suppose that Natural Selection accounted for all organic development. He knew that there are other causes at work, and his own writings explain them far



more lucidly than the criticisms of his detractors. Archbishop Thomson either made fun of his clerical brethren at Derby, or he knew nothing of the subject he presumed to discuss.

The Bishop of Liverpool lamented the desertion of the masses. He allowed that "a large number of working men never go either to church or chapel, and to all appearance lived and died without God." He declared, amid great applause, that the Church could not do without the masses. True. But the masses are beginning to find that they can do very well without the Church.

His Grace said there is plenty of infidelity among the upper classes, although they do not read the *Freethinker*, which is highly flavored to suite the taste of the multitude. He is mistaken as to the circulation of this journal. It goes among all sorts and conditions of men. We receive letters from members of every class of society. Our style is lively, as we do not wish to write our readers asleep; but we venture to affirm that there is more play of intelligence in our pages, and a greater knowledge of burning questions, than is to be found in any Christian newspaper. Some people fancy that dulness is profundity, and that every maddy stream is deep.

The Rev. Stanley Leathes read a paper on morality and revelation. He "denied that morality could be accounted for on mere scientific principles, and maintained that revelation is its true basis." This was a very safe position, for there was no one to attack it. Yet any sceptic could easily demolish it by pointing out that there was plenty of good morality in the world long before the date of the Christian or Jewish scriptures. That settles the question unless you hold that the effect precedes the cause, and that the foundation lies on the top of the structure. James Martineau is far more astute in maintaining that revelation is the crown of morality. That at least does not belie history, like the theory of Mr. Leathes.

Dr. Andrew Clark sent the Congress a very funny letter. He doubted the certainty of physical laws; even gravitation had great and growing exceptions. This may comfort the clergy who hold a large depreciated stock of miracles, but we do not suppose it will produce any other effect. Science is stable enough for Dr. Clark to go on physicing his patients without fear of murder, and the law of gravitation is sufficiently certain to prevent him from descending far without the aid of stairs. We do not expect him to disregard physiology and chemistry, or to take a flight from the top of Saint Paul's.

The general feeling of the clergy was that they had better close up their ranks. One of them beautifully illustrated their growing spirit of unity. He had actually preached one Sunday in a black gown, and the next in a surplice with a green stole. How charming! The true temple of peace is in Bond Street, and all dissension shall be laid by the tailor. What a pity Carlyle is dead! He might have added another chapter to the Philosophy of Clothes. Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar, says the proverb. With almost equal truth it might be said, scratch a parson and you find a fool.

G. W. FOOTE.

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY.*

In attempting to prove the supernatural character of Christianity from its success, the author of "Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century" has taken in hand a difficult task. That success has so evidently been accomplished by human and natural means, and after 1800 years of effort is still of a very limited character. Fully three-fourths of the world's inhabitants do not yet even pretend to believe in this divine religion, and show no disposition to accept it. On the other hand, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, can each claim a like success in having been embraced by large numbers, and withstood the influence of time. Buddhism in especial can claim both a longer existence and a larger following. What then are the features which makes the success of Christianity divine, while that of this "false religion" is only human?

In the first place, Principal Cairns infers divine intervention in the history of Christianity from the extent of its diffusion in the old Roman world. This diffusion has

been much exaggerated. Gibbon tells us that at the time of the forcible establishing of Christianity by Constantine after 300 years' existence, its converts only numbered about one-twentieth of the population of the empire, that is probably about twelve millions. In Buddha's own lifetime he spread his doctrine among as large a population as this in India, and within two hundred years of his death missionaries had carried Buddhism to Cashmere, Ceylon, Thibet, Mongolia, China, and the Malay Peninsula. Buddha had himself sent out missionaries, while Jesus is said to have declared himself only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and directed his disciples to go not into the way of the Gentiles. It was only after Paul, the real founder of Christianity, had achieved success with these that the direction, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," got inserted into the end of the Gospels. The human causes of the early spread of Christianity we will examine presently.

Dr. Cairns' second reason for naming it divine is the inward transformation of character which it effected in its early converts. This too is claimed by Buddhism. We should be sorry to think the change in character among early converts no better than that in converts of the present day, and we are ready to allow a certain weight to the good character of early Christians as among the causes of its spread. We must remember, however, if the early Christians were pious, they were superstitious and ignorant. Christianity was accepted by a Clement, believing in the resurrection of the dead because the phoenix rose from its ashes; by a Barnabas, who claims inspiration for what Osburn, in his "Doctrinal Errors of the Fathers," calls "a tissue of obscenity and absurdity which would disgrace the Hindu mythology;" and by a Papias, believing in a coming millenium when every vine would yield 100,000,000,000,000,000,000 grapes, and each grape produce 216 gallons of wine. It was rejected with scorn by the noble-minded Stoic emperor Marcus Antoninus, and the no less elevated Stoic slave Epictetus, and stigmatised as a pernicious superstition by the enlightened Tacitus and the benevolent Pliny.

The third argument is its power of revival and restoration after every declension and decay. Why should a divine religion decline and decay and need reviving? Every religion that contrives to exist can claim the same. The only plausibility of the argument lies in the fact that all Dr. Cairns' readers have heard of Wickliffe, of Luther, and of Wesley; but few indeed of Kabir, of Sankaracharya, of Chaitanya, or of the many other reformers of Hinduism, of Mohammedanism, and of Buddhism. The fact that modern Christians neither believe nor practice the same things as early ones is overlooked.

The fourth argument is based on the resistance which Christianity has been able to offer to successive assaults. Again the student of history and comparative religion finds that every faith that has endured has had to go through as severe trials as Christianity. In India, at one time, death was decreed not only against every Buddhist, but against all who permitted Buddhists to live. One great cause of the success of Christianity is the fact that it was allowed to grow strong before ever it was attacked. Dr. Cairns confesses "we cannot authenticate all the data of martyrology." The fact is, nearly all the stories of the martyrs are frauds. There is abundant evidence from the Christian Fathers themselves that all the so-called persecutions of the Church, before the time of Decius (A.C. 250), are either wholly false or grossly exaggerated. The early Christians were looked on simply as a sect of the Jews. It was against the principles of the Roman Government to persecute any for their faith. That government, by uniting various races and religions under a common rule, prepared the way for the Christian Church to take its place when it fell. It is a notable fact that Christianity has never succeeded, except among those people who were included in the old Roman empire. When once it became possessed of power it persecuted more than any faith known in the annals of the world.

The fifth argument is that Christianity is specially armed with means and motives of self-propagation. If so, why has it not yet propagated itself among more than a quarter of the world's inhabitants? If Christianity was miraculously propagated in the early ages, why has it not yet spread all over the earth? Why is it not directly sustained by the interposition of Providence now? If Christianity

* "The Success of Christianity and Modern Explanations of it," by the Rev. Principal Cairns, D.D., Religious Tract Society.

is divine and Buddhism human, the human is mainly distinguishable from the divine by having the greater success, as far as numbers are concerned. But it may be said Buddhism is dying. Who says so? Its opponents. This is just what we say of Christianity. It is broken into a myriad sects, the chief of which holds superstitions hardly to be distinguished from idolatry, and the intellect of the age has already discarded its characteristic dogmas. Buddhists can boast of at least two recent converts of culture who have embraced its philosophy and repudiated Christianity—Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott. It is, moreover, in various ways, profoundly influencing European thought.

The sixth and last argument is the harmony of this success with its own predictions. Here Dr. Cairns exhibits the Christian apologists' usual disingenuousness. He refers, without giving chapter and verse, to the saying of the Jewish prophets, that the earth should be filled with the knowledge of Jahveh as the waters cover the sea. That prophecy has not come to pass yet; moreover, the Christian Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are very different persons from the Jew-god Jahveh. Such unfulfilled prophecies, together with those which declared that the land of Canaan should be an everlasting possession to the seed of Abraham, and so forth, remain as monuments of the vanity of superstition. If there is one clear prophecy within the covers of the Bible is it that of Jesus, that the world should come to an end immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem and in the lifetime of his own disciples. This prophecy, the fear of which contributed much to the early success of Christianity, stands now in irrefragable evidence of its falsity.

In a succeeding number we shall further examine the true causes of the success of this superstition and Dr. Cairns' account of them. J. M. WHERLER.

PITY THE POOR BEWILDERED CHURCHES.

My heart bleeds—ay! and drinks blood as well, as all hearts should—for the poor churches. They are bewildered, confused, blind as blind-worms, "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever," for their sun, which was only a bon-fire, is gone out long since, they are divided and distraught, agitated by a thousand fears, chiefly lest they should lose their money-boxes. Ages ago the "body of Christ" split up spontaneously, and like a divided hydra, each part still lived and wagged and rejoiced to be free from the other fragments, and the other fragments delighted to be quit of it. Mutual antagonism was the order of the day, mutual hate and persecution. For hundreds of years the different sects have lived and moved and had their being in the sea of mutual detestation and abhorrence, each party sending the rest to Coventry here, to hell hereafter. This delightful occupation has at length edified and enlightened the world, and we have learnt almost universally what the foremost few have always known—viz, that Christianity is one gigantic lie. It is evident to all who think at all that there is no truth amongst these Christians, no settled convictions, though plenty of stubborn prejudices, that no one of them knows true theology from false, that the true Church is as hard to find as ever, that their gods, and christ, their heaven and hell, their whole round of divinity, are but myths and shams; in a word, the world has been shown to a demonstration that revelation, the grace of God, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the new birth, and the whole round of Christian dogma are of a class with the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life! This, I say, is now beyond dispute; and the churches are alarmed to find that the world knows it.

Every year the Church Congress and meetings of a like nature amongst Nonconformists make the truth more clear—they help marvellously to expose their own shams, at the same time that they pour out their Jeremiads over the apostacy of the masses, the growing infidelity of the educated and scientific classes, and the mutual dislike among the churches themselves. Who does not pity them? How are the mighty fallen! In former days they dealt with heresy and freethought vigorously, and fined and ostracised the daring who refused to go to church. Now they have to entreat them to come in! Now they get more music, shorter services, sweeter sermons, all heaven

and no hell in them, to entice the people. They stand in the highways and byways and offer anything and everything, if the masses will only come. They have given up the damning creed, have thrown much of the Bible out of the proper lessons, as very improper stuff to be read before decent people; they have "repaired" the New Testament and are doing the same with the Old. Yet the people don't care a straw. "What more do you wish?" the Bishops and clergy eagerly ask. "We shall be glad to serve you. 'All things to all men' is our motto." They used to laugh at Mahomet, who, as the story has it, was once going to remove a mountain. And finding no disposition to move on the part of the mountain, coolly said he would go to it, if it would not come to him. The Christians have had many a laugh over that incident; and now they are performing just the same miracle themselves. The Mountain of Unbelief the parsons cannot move or diminish; and they have resolved to go *en masse* to it. And they are going. Their faith grows small by degrees and beautifully less; and instead of converting the world to them, the world long since converted them to itself so completely that the world is not more beloved and hugged by any parties than by those whose baptismal vows pledge them to renounce it.

Now it is too late, the churches are crying over spilt milk. Now it is too late, they see and deplore their grievous errors. They have mutually destroyed each other, and now the common enemy is upon them! They are divided, and hopelessly so, in presence of a foe that will give no quarter. Christianity is not the religion to win the world's good graces or to conciliate its foes. While strong this terrible religion revelled in blood, stifled thought, destroyed libraries of literature, racked, tortured, and burned all who were bold enough to utter sentiments opposed to her own. Quarter! As well give quarter to a devouring fire, to a shark, to a pack of wolves, to a tigress robbed of her whelps, to a nest of infuriated hornets. The world never lost so unmerciful a foe as the one now publicly dying in our midst. "Rejoice over her, O earth!" Shout in triumph over her fall, all ye lovers of truth and liberty!

JOSEPH SYMES.

(To be concluded.)

ACID DROPS.

THERE is a report in the society journals that the son of a well-known divine has turned out to be a young lady. This news will not startle people used to the discovery that well-known divines usually turn out old-women.

CANNON FARRAR, in his latest work on "The Early Days of Christianity," follows Luther and Dr. Davidson in considering the Epistle to the Hebrews to have been written by Apollon. Origen, who lived considerably nearer the time of its production, said—God alone knew who wrote that Epistle.

Of course it is only by way of joke that the authorised version of the Bible ascribes that Epistle to Paul. Only it is carrying the joke rather far when it is made blasphemy to deny even that part of the Holy Scriptures.

If Bible readers were aware that all the titles and subscriptions to the New Testament writings are just as spurious, if not all as fraudulent, as the title attached to the Epistle to the Hebrews, they might open their eyes and examine those writings a little more critically.

The annual report of the Wesleyan Missionary Society for 1882 has just been issued. The total deficit is stated at £33,303. The work of giving the heathen a better chance of damnation by rejecting the Gospel is evidently being done on the most approved business principles.

At the Diocesan Conference at Oxford a resolution was passed by a large majority affirming that in the interest of the Church it was desirable to promote the dissolution of the Church Association and the English Church Union. The rancor of Ritualists and anti-Ritualists against each other is only surpassed by their antipathy to Freethinkers, who laugh at both.

The evangelical career of Mr. Henry New, of the Sunbeam Mission Rooms, Croydon, has been cut short. On Saturday he was convicted at the Croydon Sessions of conduct which the chairman described as "disgusting." The complainant was a married woman, whose husband informed the Bench that, were he allowed to take the law in his own hands, he

would screw Mr. Henry New's head off. The profession of evangelising is one which evidently attracts the vilest specimens of poor humanity.

THE *South Eastern Herald* for October 6th, under the head of "Harvest Festival at St. Cyprian's, Brockley," gives an account of the highly æsthetic proceedings in that Ritualistic Church, and goes on to say: "The great Irish drama, *The Shaughraun*, by Dion Boucicault, will be produced here to-morrow and Monday with all the great effects, including the celebrated revolving scene." The correspondent who sends us the paper surmises that the dramatic and church news has got mixed. But why should not the Ritualists add *The Shaughraun* to their histrionic repertoire?

THE long nights are coming in and people are looking about for some amusing reading. We can recommend their attention to the religious journals. Rows are always attractive to depraved human nature, and the religious press being constantly engaged in the evangelical occupation of squabbling, may afford some solace to souls sunk in misery through a sense of their sins.

THERE is the lively *Church Review*, for instance, which continually pitches into the Low Churchmen, "whose ignorance, coarseness, and intolerance we have had so often to bewail; and which are effectively represented by their "weekly organ the *Rock*," as it says this week. The *Church Review* always contains a number of funny letters from Ritualists declaring how highly important God Almighty considers their tricks and toggery; or complaining of restrictions upon their doing the work of the Church of Rome while taking the loaves and fishes of the Church of England.

THE *Rock* is a solid joker. Its editor this week condescends to crib from the *Freethinker* an item in regard to the *Christian Globe*, and says very sarcastic of the latter paper: "We had not hitherto been aware that this journal had any tendency to Atheism." The way in which the *Rock* mangles Popish pretensions, unaware of any difficulties in Protestantism, is excruciatingly "amoosing."

THE *Christian Globe*, *Christian World*, and several other religious papers, cultivate a form of wit rarely manifested in other comic journals. It consists of heading an article with some magniloquent and attractive title; the paragraph begins with some weighty disquisition on the mysteries of life and death, and lures the unsuspecting reader on to a recommendation of the Rev. E. Silverton's cure for deafness, or patent Asthmatic Emulsion. This sort of thing takes a good deal of ingenuity, and readers are said to appreciate it as jolly fun after the twentieth time.

THE *Christian* always contains some entertaining requests for prayer. We cull the following from this week's number: "That I may be cured of a disease and be guided into a business." "That several awakened souls may not go on resisting the Holy Ghost." That one of the Trinity should be resisted by an awakened soul is really almost as funny as the assertion of the *Christian* that the only thing that can elevate the condition of the fellaheen of Egypt is Protestant Christianity, or its saying in an article on the imprecatory Psalms, that David's prayers against his enemies are "the outpourings of a spirit animated by the highest love of truth and righteousness and goodness, zealous for the maintenance of God's honor."

How comic the *Christian Herald* can be, may be judged by the fact that its editor is author of a book proving that Louis Napoleon was the destined monarch of the world. The gravity with which he still gives "prophetic lectures" is excessively laughable. Here are some selections from a recent one, entitled "Signs of the Times, coming great wars, revolutions and calamities foretold in Revelation, and Christ's second advent and translation of Christians without dying, and the great tribulation and persecution for three-and-a-half years between 1887 and 1893."—"As they were now at the end of the sixth vial, they must know that the *afflictions* would be drawn together to war, and that would surely be the case before long, then there would be earthquakes and thunders such as had never been the like before. At that time men would regret they had not attended the Churches and Chapels. He and many others believed there were tens of thousands of persons now living who would never die; he believed it would be the happy lot of many to be carried to Heaven as Elijah was. He believed that the four angels spoken of in the 14th book of Revelations, [*sic*] were just now holding back the four winds of Heaven until the fifth angel had been through the land, and by means of revivals had marked the people in their foreheads as citizens of Heaven." This joker is excessively popular. Shall we laugh or shall we weep at the monstrous imbeciles which Christianity makes of men?

In his recent interesting "Experiences of a Barrister's Life," Serjeant Ballantyne recalls the case of Mrs. Thwaites, a

wealthy lady whose will was put aside on the ground of insanity, because she expected the Messiah's second coming to earth and had handsomely furnished a suite of apartments to receive him. It is difficult to distinguish between this insanity and that preached by the Rev. M. Baxter.

THERE was a large attendance at Clapton Hall, on Thursday, of persons who paid a shilling each to witness the marriage by "General" Booth of his son, and reputed successor, Mr. Bramwell Booth. The shillings, it is said, went to pay for the bride's trousseaux. The "General" described the purpose of marriage as being to people heaven with saints. It is a pity this is not done directly without going through the intermediate process of peopling the earth with humbugs.

It is evident the Salvationists do not receive the recommendation of Jesus in the twelfth verse of the nineteenth chapter of Matthew to make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. By the way, as Jesus said "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it," we wonder if Jesus was able to receive his own advice in this matter. What a pity his biographers omitted to afford us this interesting information.

THE Chairman of the Tottenham Police Court, seems to have very little respect for law and order. After fining Edward Bloomfield a small sum for assulting Mr. George Shore, at one of the recent meetings which the rowdy Christians of Tottenham have tried to suppress, Mr. Latham remarked that "people who came down to Tottenham to agitate burning questions on Sunday, must expect to meet with opposition that might lead to an assault." This is a direct incentive to a repetition of the disorders. Mr. Latham says by implication, "you are fined the small sum of five shillings; do it again."

THE Rev. W. Chippendall, vicar of Tilton, near Leicester, was charged on Monday with assaulting William Wing. A dispute arose respecting the attendance of complainant's grandchild at school, when defendant called Wing a liar, struck him twice, and threw him backwards down some steps. The rev. blackguard got off with a fine of £3. It is to be hoped that magistrates generally have not much sympathy with muscular Christianity of this description.

MOODY AND SANKEY have paid Paris a visit. They preached and sang in the American church. M. Pressensé offered up a prayer in French, and everything passed off with such wonderful decorum that the congregation could scarcely believe their own ears. One old gentleman crowed out "Glory be to God," but as nobody backed him up he sank back into silence.

THE Rev. L. Capel Cure, of Chipping Ongar, is evidently a very nice man, a worthy disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, and a living illustration of the gospel of charity. He gave a sailor in charge for stealing two apples valued at a halfpenny. When Jack was brought up at petty sessions, parson Cure did not put in an appearance, but sent a letter saying that as the man had been in custody for five days he did not care to proceed further. The Bench censured the impudent pulpit Jack, and discharged the sailor Jack with an expression of regret that he had suffered such inconvenience.

THE *Leamington Chronicle* goes on puffing Tracy Turnerelli, and in doing so it displays an idiotic capacity which could scarcely be matched in Colney Hatch. After quoting Farrar's remark that there is never more than a year's food stored up in the world, and that if that were by any mischance exhausted we should all starve, it says that this is a clear proof that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. That is, because men would starve without food, it is perfectly clear that they don't live on it. The editor of the *L. C.* should join Tracy Turnerelli and go in for the revival business. They would make a fortune at it, especially if they devoted most of their time to lunatic asylums.

THE Rev. Jacob Primmer, of Dumferline, entertains the theory that as a minister of the Established Church he has a right to enter any house even against the master's will. This led him into collision with James Beveridge, a rough miner, who turned him out of doors. The reverend intruder went in search of a bobby, and ultimately he took out a summons against his obstreperous parishioner. But the Bench told him that he had no right to go where he wasn't wanted, and he went home a sadder but a wiser man. Poor Primmer!

THE Salvationists report a miracle from Wye Bridge. A lady who had viewed the holy Army with feelings of no favorable kind was taken ill and bed-ridden. The Salvationists assembled outside the afflicted lady's house and commenced praying for her, whereupon she left her bed and came down and thanked them. The persons who believe such stuff as this are fit to believe the tales told in the "Arabian Nights" or the Four Gospels.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

MR. FOOTE lectures three times to-day (Sunday, Oct. 15th), in the Gaiety Theatre, Halifax:—Morning, at 11, "The Gospel of Freethought;" Afternoon, at 3, "Christianity Played Out;" Evening, at 6. 30, "Who are the Blasphemers?"—Monday, the 16th, at 8, in the Secular Hall, Humberston Gate, Leicester, on "Blasphemy and Blasphemers."—Thursday, the 19th, Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C.; on "George Eliot."

MR. FOOTE'S ENGAGEMENTS.

October 15th, Halifax; 16th, Leicester; 19th, Hall of Science; 22nd, Manchester; 23rd, Staleybridge; 26th, Hall of Science; 29th, Portsmouth; October 30th, Southampton.

November 5th, Heckmondwike; 6th and 7th, York; 12th, Liverpool; 19th, Hall of Science, London; 26th, Claremont Hall, London.

December 3rd, Huddersfield; 10th, Bradford; and 17th, Grimsby.

January 7th (1883), Claremont Hall, London; 14th, Manchester; 21st, Hall of Science, London; 28th, Claremont Hall, London.

CORRESPONDENTS.

ALL business communications to be addressed to the Publisher, 28 Stonecutter Street, Farringdon Street, E.C.

LITERARY communications to the Editor, Mr. G. W. FOOTE, No. 9 South Crescent, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

R. BLACKMORE.—The Canon of the New Testament was first fixed at the Council of Laodicea, A.C. 362.

J. WELLS.—If you find the clerical skunk in your house again, our advice is to kick him out if you're strong enough. If not, get some one to help you, but kick him out at any rate.

W. YULE.—Confucius has certainly had a wider influence than any one of the Bible writers.

CORRESPONDENTS who observe press reviews of "Blasphemy No Crime," will confer a favor by forwarding the same to us.

J. S. (Constant Reader).—Your inquiry relative to Mr. Bradlaugh had better be sent to that gentleman himself.

PASSIVE.—Mr. Foote's Bible Romances will perhaps suit your purpose, or the *Freethinker* Tracts. Thanks for cutting.

P. MIDFORD.—There is no proof of the public recognition of Christianity in Britain before A.C. 597.

H. MEESOM earnestly advises all Freethinkers who have been baptised to formally renounce their baptism in writing to the minister of the Church in which they were baptised.

A. B.—The report that Paine turned Christian is false; see Mr. Foote's "Death's Test."

W. H. SPIVEY.—Thanks for good wishes. Cuttings are always welcome.

JAMES GARSIDE reports that a meeting will be held at the "British Workman," Booth Street, Ashton-under Lyne, to-day, for the purpose of electing officers and properly establishing a Branch of the National Secular Society.

B. JACQUES.—Thanks for your good wishes. We have rectified the omission.

W. IRVING.—Your tracts will be of good service to the cause.

W. BANKS.—Don't court martyrdom. It has a way of coming of itself.

REV. E. N. WILLSON, Vicar of St. Paul's, Southwark, is open on Saturday evenings to meet the objections of sceptical working men; or he will be pleased to hear from them or see them at his house, 94 Lambeth Road. We insert his notice to give him a chance of trying a few tough customers.

MR. FOOTE'S lecturing engagements are now all subject to be cancelled in case of his being detained in London by the trial.

C. H. C.—Your story of the dying Atheist who wanted "God is nowhere" painted up for him to gaze on, and of his conversion by the drunken painter muddling the sentence into "God is now here," is excellent. It shall be included in the next edition of "Death's Test."

D. EVANS.—Nothing spreads our views better than distributing the *Freethinker* Tracts. We have fortunately plenty of copy.

J. SMITH.—We know nothing of it. The story is probably a sheer invention.

SOUTH LONDON reports that himself and a friend sold sixty-two copies of the *Freethinker* last Sunday morning, between half-past ten and one, in the neighborhood of Lambeth and Westminster Bridges. A preaching party from Newman Hall's chapel complained to the police, but they were told that Freethinkers had as much right in the street as Christians.

SUGAR PLUMS.

A TREMBLING brother, in the columns of an American journal, wants to know what those sisters who speak out in meetings think of St. Paul's saying, "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience" (1 Cor. xiv., 34). The *Chicago Advance* makes answer:—

They probably think that Corinth was not in the United States, and that Paul was not speaking to the nineteenth century.

THE South London Branch of the National Secular Society has now taken a hall in Mill Street, Lambeth Walk. Meetings and lectures on Sunday evenings at eight o'clock. All Freethinkers in the neighborhood are earnestly requested to join this branch. Freethought in the metropolis is evidently greatly on the increase as several new societies are in course of formation.

THE next number of the *Republican* will contain a portrait of Mr. Henry George, author of "Progress and Poverty," the cheap edition of which is having considerable success. The able "Letters to a Prince" will be continued. We are glad to hear that the *Republican* is increasing its circulation.

THE Calcutta *Anti-Christian* is energetically continuing its good work of exposing Christian pretensions. The August number has a very good paper on our prosecution, and the editor has started a "*Freethinker* Defence Fund."

THE *Thinker*, which is published at Madras under the patronage of the Hindu Freethought Union, has now reached its sixteenth number. We are sorry, however, to see that it devotes so much space to criticising its contemporary edited by M. Mudaliar. They should both fight the enemy a little more.

SOME large precious stones are reported to have fallen from heaven in Japan. The *Thinker* supposes that the floor of heaven is giving way.

WE observe that Moncure D. Conway, Esq., M.A., is going to read a paper on "The Liberty of Printing," in South Place Chapel, on Tuesday next, October 17th. Mr. Conway will doubtless deal with the blasphemy laws. A discussion will follow the paper, which is the first of a series of Tuesday evening papers to be read by different gentlemen.

A NUMBER of Positivists have sent Mr. Gladstone a memorial in favor of Arabi Pasha. This is as it should be. Those who are without God have the most mercy for man. We desire to record our protest against England's playing the jackal to the Khedive of Egypt. If anything happens to Arabi, without English public opinion being satisfied of his guilt in relation to the burning of Alexandria and the previous massacre, his blood will be upon Mr. Gladstone's head. It was very wrong to hand him over to his enemies at all; it will be an infamy to connive at his murder.

A MEMBER of the Central London Branch of the N. S. S. has just gained the freedom of the City of London, and become a member of the Turner's Company. What does the Lord Mayor say to this?

CRUCIFYING THOMAS PAINE.

SOME time since we drew our readers' attention to a Christian criticism on Paine's "Age of Reason." We pointed out the gross unfairness which characterised the whole performance, and the animus against Paine under which Mr. Black, the writer, apparently labored. He seemed bent upon making a case against Paine, and for that purpose pursued a course unworthy anyone pretending to love fair play to the dead. Evidently Mr. Black thinks very little either of Paine or of his works. Yet we venture to think that Paine attained a far higher position in this world than Mr. Black has done at present or will do in the future. As to Paine's writings, they will be read and appreciated when the wearying diatribes of Mr. Black will have been forgotten.

Among the matters to which we particularly referred, was the instance in which Mr. Black had charged upon Paine the blunder of another. This exposure of the critic's carelessness excited his high wrath, and brought from him a letter in which, while a printer's error was certainly pointed out, the absolute truth of our criticism was admitted. Mr. Black was compelled to acknowledge that in the earliest editions of Paine's "Age of Reason," the particular language to which he objected did not exist; that it was in fact caused by an alteration made by some later unknown person, and was not Paine's fault or "blunder" at all! It is true that this admission was followed by a remark which displayed both bitterness of spirit in himself and impertinence to the Freethought party, but we pass it by. It is not usual in critics (Christian or otherwise) to admit mistakes. We must therefore be thankful for what we get.

Thus far all is satisfactory. But to the charge of general unfairness to his author no reply has been made. On the contrary, so far from defending his conduct, or withdrawing his charges, Mr. Black has favored his readers with further samples of Paine's "blunders," as he calls them. To these we now address ourselves, as they furnish a fair sample of the treatment which Freethought works generally receive at the hands of Christian critics. And at the outset we accuse Mr. Black of having throughout these papers persistently changed Paine's words into others of a different signification, of having thus escaped the real question at issue and answered something never asserted by Paine, of confusing and abusing leading terms, of unfair quotation, of perversion of Paine's meaning, and generally of critical carelessness so marked as to be utterly inexplicable except on the supposition of mental confusion or bodily disorder. We proceed to give the reader some proof for our charges by citing a few of the instances to which we allude.

His preliminary canter consists in gravely informing us that Paine's ideas of "Christianity" were "vague" and "confused." This is very possible. But that may have been caused by the fact that Christianity itself is not the clearest thing in the world. No Christian seems to know exactly what it is, and therefore we may well excuse Paine, or anyone else, being "confused" on the point. But Mr. Black's method of proving this alleged confusion is rather peculiar, and will furnish an excellent example of his method of reasoning. He says (rightly enough) that Paine admitted Christ's "existence" and "crucifixion" to have been historically probable, and then tries to fasten a contradiction upon Paine because he elsewhere says "for my own part I do not believe that there is one word of historical truth in the whole book, &c." (p. 179.)

Now this is very careless, grossly unfair to Paine, and altogether unworthy one who pretends to the higher branches of criticism. Mr. Black's fallacies in the above are easily detected. In the first place, he has no right to use the word "Christianity" as convertible with Paine's phrase "existence and crucifixion." The most restricted definition of Christianity must embrace the whole contents of the New Testament, not merely the parts relating to Christ's existence and crucifixion. Besides this, Mr. Black ought to know that a belief in Christ's existence and crucifixion does not imply or demand a belief in Christianity as a whole.

But this is only a careless and misleading use of a leading term. What follows is much worse. Mr. Black has tried to make Paine contradict himself by taking a passage from each of two different works, which were written at different times, and on different subjects. These he places in juxtaposition, and then calls his author's ideas "confused." The confusion however is entirely of Mr. Black's own creation. The passage cited from page 34 is from the "Age of Reason," while that from page 179 is from an entirely different work of Paine's upon Prophecy. The phrase "whole book," which Mr. Black certainly cites as if it meant the whole of the New Testament, and on which his point rests, refers only to the Gospel of Matthew. Any one can see this by turning over a few pages of the work in question. In the edition used by Mr. Black himself the beginning and end of the examination of the alleged prophecies in the several gospels is so clearly marked that he is without excuse.

Mr. Black seems to have a great weakness for changing Paine's terms. For example, he quotes Paine (p. 49) as speaking of the "Christian system of faith," and then opposes to it another passage from page 150, where Paine is speaking of the "study of theology as it stands in Christian Churches." Mr. Black confounds the two phrases, treats them as convertible, and gets into a muddle, which he coolly puts on Paine's shoulders. The blunder is Mr. Black's own, not Paine's.

An exactly similar perversion of Paine's meaning occurs a little lower down in the same paper. Mr. Black says: "In the meantime we shall return to Paine's idea of Christianity. We are told (p. 32) that it 'sprang out of the tail of the heathen mythology.'" Now this statement is not true. The words omitted will show this clearly. We supply Mr. Black's omission. Paine says: "It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian Church sprung out of the tail," etc. A very different thing.

The phrase "Christian Church" is not the same in sense as the word "Christianity," as Mr. Black knows only too well. Why, then, does he thus abuse the confidence of his readers by leading them to understand that Paine uses the one term when he very carefully uses the other?

But altering, confounding, or abusing Paine's precise language is not Mr. Black's only offence.

He has the very peculiar weakness of being generally employed in gravely and learnedly refuting something Paine has never said. We will give a few examples of this wonderful weakness and then conclude our paper. Thus, to Paine's statement that "the statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana," etc., Mr. Black opposes the remark that "there were neither statues nor canonization in the earliest ages of the Church." Paine never said there were. He is not talking of the "earliest ages of the Christian Church" at all. Paine is speaking of the time when the statues of the Virgin replaced or "succeeded" those of certain heathen goddesses. Mr. Black invents his phrase himself, and then proceeds to argue as if Paine had used it. Why is Mr. Black afraid to admit what all Protestant Church historians assert? If he will only read the Christian authority Mosheim, he will see that a large incorporation of pagan elements admittedly took place at the times to which Paine evidently refers.

The same sort of thing is found elsewhere. When Paine truly remarks that "Christ wrote no account of himself," Mr. Black retorts by saying neither did "Socrates or Epictetus." Now what has this to do with the point? Neither Socrates nor Epictetus came down from heaven to do what is alleged of Christ. Therefore, we do not imperatively want histories written by them, but we do want one written by Christ. Mr. Black's answer is an evasion pure and simple. So also is his reply that no "ordinary man" can give the details of his own birth," etc. Paine does not say he can, nor is Paine talking of an "ordinary man," as Mr. Black must have seen. Why then does he talk of an "ordinary man," when he knew perfectly well Paine was talking only of an "extraordinary" man, one who was also God? And why, when Paine is objecting to the miraculous birth of Christ, does Mr. Black very carefully leave out Paine's word "supernatural" and substitute for it the innocent looking words "unusual" and "exceptional"? Does he think, or mean to assert or imply, that either of these words expresses the same idea as Paine's word "supernatural"? If not, why does Mr. Black so carefully omit Paine's real language, and replace it by his own mild form of expression? Is not this the readiest possible way of leading a reader off the scent, and cause him to lose sight of the real question at issue?

But we must pause here. Enough, we trust, has been given to enable the reader to gauge the style of reasoning adopted by Mr. Black in his criticism of Paine. Some may think such matters very trifling. We are sorry for them. We think no man has a right to pursue such a course as that adopted by Mr. Black. Given the right to change your opponent's language, his defeat follows as of course. Mr. Black does this repeatedly. He seldom goes straight to the point, but prefers rather to talk round and round it, enveloping both himself and his reader in a cloud of words leading only to perplexity, at least to the reader. Moreover, he more than once ignores the real difficulty entirely. Mr. Black may think his style of reasoning very learned and profound. We don't. We call it both jesuitical and sophistical. The necessity for employing such methods of criticism against Paine's "Age of Reason" shows only too clearly the impregnable nature of the arguments contained therein, and the utter incapacity of the critic who presumes to sit in judgment thereon.

J. E. GARNER.

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REVIEW.

Blasphemy no Crime. The whole question treated Historically, Legally, Theologically and Morally, with special reference to the Prosecution of the "Freethinker." 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C.

I SHALL not pretend in these columns to give any criticism of Mr. Foote's latest pamphlet, but shall simply state my opinion that Freethinkers cannot at the present time do better service to the cause of freedom of thought and expression than by giving it the widest possible circulation. Among its contents it gives—The History of the Prosecution—Before the Lord Mayor—The Public Prosecutor—Our Indictment—The Incriminated Passages—The Law of Blasphemy—Penalties of Blasphemy—The Hindu Law—Blasphemy Prosecutions—What is Blasphemy?—Ridiculing Religion.—Blasphemy and Priestcraft, and the Law of Freedom. Readers of the *Freethinker* need not to be told that all these sections are dealt with tersely and vigorously, and that the pamphlet is written in a lively and most readable style.—J. M. WHEELER.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CARDINAL MANNING AND BLASPHEMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to Dr. Manning's visit to Northampton, and his delivery there of three sermons, the Roman Catholic paper, the *Weekly Register*, in an article headed "In the Lion's Den," observes: "The now notorious town is not one which would tempt the casual visitor; but the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster went there, not as a seeker for pleasure, but as a witness to the Christianity which one of the members for Northampton has persistently and shrilly set himself to deny." We must have in view also the present prosecution for alleged blasphemy against the Christian religion. Let one for a moment turn the tables on the Cardinal.

I have now before me the 1868 edition of the translation of Liguori's "Glories of Mary," published by Burns, Oates, and Co. (second edition), which has the following approval: "We heartily commend this translation of the 'Glories of Mary' to all the disciples of his divine son.—HENRY E., Archbishop of Westminster, 10 August, 1868." In this the Christianity of Dr. Manning is, to my mind, as blasphemous and even obscene as any statements could be, according to Christian notions.

There is something ludicrous in the following: "If Jesus is irritated against us, Mary immediately appeases him" (p. 367-8).

Is this blasphemous? "The sanctity of Mary was so sublime that no other mother than Mary became a God" (p. 292).

"The Blessed Virgin can do whatever she pleases, both in heaven and earth" (p. 154).

"All power is given to thee in heaven and on earth, and nothing is impossible to thee" (p. 154).

"At the command of Mary all obey, even God" p. 155).

And now for the obscene as well as the blasphemous:—

"The Father crowned the Virgin Mary by imparting his Power to her; the Son his Wisdom; the Holy Ghost his love" (p. 394).

The nature of that love is developed in the following passages:—

"Where on earth could so beautiful a virgin be found who could allure the King of Heaven by her eyes, and by a holy violence lead him captive, bound in the chains of love" (p. 328).

"Hence Saint Thomas, of Villanova, affirms that by her ardent charity the Blessed Virgin became so beautiful, and

so enamored her God, that captivated, as it were, by her love, he descended into her womb" (p. 476).

As the correctness of these extracts can be verified at the British Museum (4410, i., Lond., 1868, 8vo) I need only subscribe myself

VERAX.

FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

INGERSOLL ON GOD.—A personal God sustains the same relation to religion as to politics. The Deity is a master, and man a serf; and this relation is inconsistent with true progress. The Universe ought to be a pure democracy—an infinite republic, without a tyrant and without a chain.—*Col. R. G. Ingersoll*, "Introduction to Dr. Denslow's Modern Thinkers," p. xxix.; Chicago, 1880.

HERESY.—The ignorant call him a heretic whom they cannot refute.—*Tommaso Campanella*, "Discorsi."

THE CHURCH.—Every year, indeed, messengers are sent unto all the world, who under the protection of the Church, in the most shameless manner, and speculating on the basest side of human nature, preach a crusade against, whatever may be called freedom of mind or thought, enlightenment, culture, etc. Yet all these are only the convulsive movements of an antiquated colossus, whose blows even in its death-struggles may indeed be dangerous, but can never gain the victory.—*Dr. F. C. C. L. Buchner*, "Force and Matter," preface, p. lxxii., 1870.

EARLY CHRISTIAN LEGENDS.—That some of the Christian legends were deliberate forgeries can scarcely be questioned; the principle of pious fraud appeared to justify this mode of working on the popular mind; it was admitted and avowed. To deceive unto Christianity was so valuable a service as to hallow deceit itself.—*Dean H. H. Milman, D.D.*, "The History of Christianity," vol. iii., p. 358; 1867.

PROFANE JOKES.

ONE Sunday a sky-pilot, wending his way to the sanctuary, saw a boy carrying a fishing-rod, going in the opposite direction. "Don't you know you're a bad boy?" "No, sir." "Don't your father ever punish you?" "Yes, sir, last summer he made me go to Sunday-school twice.

"I HOPE you continue to read your Bible, m'am," said the parish minister. "Ah, I do; I find great consolation from it of an evening, before I go to bed. Mary, reach him down the Bible off the top shelf— Oh Lord! there's them blessed spectacles in it I've lost ever since little Johnny died, and I thought I had looked everywhere for them."

COUNTRY WOMAN (to parson, who had called to ask why Johnny, the eldest, had not been lately to school): "Why he was thirteen year old last week, sir! I'm sure he've had school enough. He must know a'most everything now!" *Parson*: "Thirteen, Mrs. Napper. Why, that's nothing. I didn't finish my education till I was three-and-twenty!" *Country Woman*: "Lor, sir! You don't mean to say you were such a 'thickhead' as that!"

SAID the teacher: "And it came to pass when the king heard it that he rent his clothes." Now what does that mean children—he rent his clothes?" Up went a tiny hand. "Well, if you know tell us." "Please ma'am," said the child timidly, "I s'pose he hired 'em out."

MR. SPURGEON once complained that his deacons were worse than the devil. "Resist the devil," said he, "and he will fly from you, but resist a deacon and he will fly at you."

AN old Scotchwoman, whose favorite son was in the habit of swearing occasionally, was censured by her minister for not correcting him. "It's vara wrong, minister," she admitted, "but ye maun aloo that it sets aff conversation michtily."

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