

# The Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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## WRIGGLING.

WE recently printed a long letter from the Rev. C. L. Engström, Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society. Our reply to it appeared in the same number of the *Freethinker*, and in the following number there appeared a supplementary reply by Mr. S. P. Putnam, whose lecture at the Hall of Science had been brought under discussion. Mr. Engström now reprints his letter in the form of a pamphlet, under the title of *Christianity and Secularism*. He does not reprint our reply and Mr. Putnam's, and let the controversy tell its own story. That is too much to expect from even the most plausible Christian. Yet it is the course we prefer, and always endeavor to follow. During our controversy with the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes with regard to the "Atheist Shoemaker" we gave both sides of the case, leaving our readers to form their judgment upon the facts; while our opponent studiously kept every word of our side of the case from appearing in the *Methodist Times*.

Mr. Engström has chosen his own method. In front of his reprinted letter to the *Freethinker* he puts some "Last Words" on Mr. Putnam's reply, and after it some "Notes" on our own article. Thus his letter is neatly sandwiched between two slices of vindication.

Mr. Engström wastes a whole page over a trifle, and the way in which he wastes it throws a strong light upon his theory of evidence. He stated in his letter that, as chairman at Mr. Putnam's lecture, we discouraged discussion. This we denied, and Mr. Putnam denies it too. Mr. Engström adduces the corroboration of an anonymous friend of his who was present, and with two against two he thinks he has proved his assertion "up to the hilt." We quite understand, after this, how Mr. Engström is satisfied with the evidences of Christianity. What we do not quite understand is why he conceals the fact that questions were asked after Mr. Putnam's lecture, and that two persons *did* speak in opposition. It is true that five minutes was offered to each speaker, and perhaps true that this is not enough for a man of Mr. Engström's "representative position." But it is customary to extend the time for a representative opponent, and if Mr. Engström had risen he would have had a sufficient opportunity.

We said that Mr. Engström was constitutionally inaccurate, and his "Notes" confirm our opinion. He states that at the Christian Evidence lectures at the Hall of Science (very ancient history this!) my followers—whoever they are—have "never been satisfied with less than half an hour for their criticisms." An ingenuous reader would conclude that they had half an hour *each*, whereas they had half an hour *altogether*. And if there were five or six of them, as there might be, it did not amount to many minutes apiece. But, after all, this is skimble-skamble stuff for a deliberate pamphlet.

Mr. Engström is still unsatisfied, and works in another paragraph on the same topic. He has a curious way of insinuating his own merits in tones of humility. He does it often in a kind of aside, as though his fine qualities could not be suppressed; and the self-eulogy falls unobtrusively like a casual feather from a rich plumage. Mr. Engström complains of the "inadequate time" allowed him in replying to Mr. Putnam at Camberwell, which was "accentuated by the extreme latitude I had allowed that very afternoon in Regent's Park to a *Freethinker*, who had not even heard my lecture!" This is more than a

profession of fair-play. It is a confession of folly. There is absolutely no sense in letting a man answer you who has not heard you.

In his letter to the *Freethinker* the Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society charged Mr. Putnam with having said that "faith was for Christians everything, and conduct and character nothing." This we thought it necessary to deny immediately. Mr. Putnam's assertion was not about *Christians*, but about *Christianity*. He took the ground that Christianity, as such, was a creed, and not an ethical system; that morality was only "tacked on to it," because no creed could get along without something of that kind. Mr. Engström was guilty of a gross misrepresentation, but he does not apologise for it. He affirms that Mr. Putnam "did not say it *in his lecture*." Well, we affirm that he did, and more than once. And when Mr. Engström's anonymous friend says that "the qualification which Mr. Foote makes in the *Freethinker* about there being some good things taught by Jesus, only came out after opposition"—we can only reply that there was no such qualification, and that there were no such words, in our article. If there were, let Mr. Engström produce them. Until he does so, we must regard his anonymous friend as being about as accurate as himself.

Mr. Engström used much vague language about certain Atheists standing a better chance than certain Christians in the hereafter, and we ventured to ask him this plain question: "If an honest unbeliever may go to heaven, what is the use of taking the trouble to be a Christian?" Mr. Engström replies that "the believer in Christ has an inestimable advantage over the (intellectual) unbeliever, however moral he may be, in regard to the capacity of growth in goodness." How justly did South observe that, if Judaism died out of Christendom, Pharisaism never would! There is nothing more nauseous and detestable than comparing the "goodness" of the devotees of rival systems. "We are holier than you" never came from the lips of self-respect. But since Mr. Engström issues a sort of challenge, we beg to tell him that Atheists experience as much "growth in goodness" as Christians. We will not imitate his example, and say *more*. How many Christians does Mr. Engström know who are morally superior to Jeremy Bentham, Robert Owen, or John Stuart Mill? How many morally superior to William Kingdon Clifford? How many morally superior to Charles Darwin, who combined the intellect of a Newton with the tenderness of a woman and the innocence of a child?

With regard to Dr. Pusey, we never said that his views were "in the main opposed to those of Dean Farrar," since it is impossible for any man to say what Dean Farrar's views really are. What we said was that Dr. Pusey wrote in opposition to Dean Farrar's argument that "everlasting punishment" means something short of "everlasting punishment." We quoted Dr. Pusey's own words, which are far more to the point than Mr. Engström's inferences.

Mr. Engström notices what we said as to the legal disabilities of Secularism. "I think," he remarks, "there is a good deal in what he says, and I am glad to take this opportunity of stating very publicly [why *very*?] that I think those *inabilities* are very unjust, and that they ought to be at once removed." Good! though they are not *inabilities*, but *disabilities*. But fine words butter no parsnips, and pleasant sentences redress no wrongs. We shall expect Mr. Engström to translate this language into deeds. Will he induce the Christian Evidence Society to send in a petition in favor of the Bill which is now before Parlia-

ment? Probably not, for he guards himself by a reference to the "methods of Freethinkers of the N.S.S. type," which make it so "difficult for the Legislature to deal fairly with their principles"—as though the Legislature had shown a great anxiety in this direction!

Our party ought to have endowments, if it can get them. Mr. Engström makes us that concession. But he denies that the Church of England subsists on the revenues of national property. Does he mean that tithes, the payment of which is enforced by the law, are not national property? Does he mean the same of Church Rates where they are still collected? Has he the coolness to say that the sum levied on the *Freethinker* publishing office every year is a voluntary offering to his Church? Anyhow, we beg to tell him that when the Church of England gets disestablished, like the Church of Ireland, it will not matter a straw whether he believes its revenues arise from national property or not. Disendowment will settle the question in a terribly *practical* manner.

Mr. Engström is good enough to say that the "greater part" of his comments on the "hopeless failure of Secularism as a system of doing good" is "utterly unaffected" by our strictures. Christians always say that; it is a stereotyped expression. But with respect to "doing good" it is just possible that Mr. Engström does not understand us. He "sincerely hopes" that our leaders are "paragons of goodness"—which is the language of cant; but he is sure that Secularism does not abound in good works, like Christianity. "When Atheism is reached," he says, "it is an historical fact that the spring ceases to flow, the life of philanthropy is dead." Is it? Well, it all depends on what you mean by "philanthropy." We hear a lot about the reclamation of drunkards and the rescue of "fallen sisters," but it makes no appreciable difference to the sum-total of drink and prostitution. The *causes* of these evils remain untouched. And it is just here that the Secularist parts company with the Christian. "Rescue" those you call "fallen sisters" if you will; but what if, when you rescue one, another takes her place? What permanent good have you effected? Sensuality is not the cause of prostitution, as you imagine; the one is natural, however lamentable—the other is artificial. The cause of prostitution is the difficulty of earning an honest livelihood. And unless the economical conditions of society are changed for the better, your "reclamations" and "rescues" are like the wail of an infant against the roar of the northern blast.

Mr. Engström concludes his "Notes" on our reply to his letter by stating what *he* believes, and what *he* teaches. But this is extremely unimportant. Mr. Engström is only a man, and only one man. Christianity is a great historical system. It cannot be defined, any more than it can be judged, except in the light of history. It is interesting, of course, though not important, to learn that Mr. Engström believes our "position in eternity will depend on our loving or unloving life"—though it seems to us that the loving lives have the best of it *here*, apart from any hereafter. But when Mr. Engström seeks to pass this off as pure and simple Christianity, he is flying in the face of the Bible, of history, and of the teaching of his own Church. And this brings me to his "Last Words" in answer to Mr. Putnam, who is well able to reply for himself, only he is away in Scotland, and the matter is scarcely worth another article.

Mr. Putnam said that Mr. Engström had a right to "dodge the question by confining the definition of Christianity to the Apostles' Creed." Mr. Engström replies that if he adds the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds it makes little difference, except against Mr. Putnam; for one of them distinctly states that "they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire"—which, according to Mr. Engström, proves that Christianity is essentially a moral system. That is, Mr. Engström takes the sentence about evil and good as though it were the whole of the Creed, without the slightest reference to the sentences which declare that those who do not hold all the "incomprehensible" doctrines "cannot be saved." And this is what Mr. Engström regards as honest argument.

But the most curious part of his "Last Words" is the one relating to the Thirty-nine Articles. Subscription to them, he says, is not required of laymen. Quite true. But what the clergy are required to teach the laymen are expected to believe; at any rate, it is the doctrine of the Church. Mr. Engström further observes that the Thirty-

nine Articles have "existed only a few centuries." But what of that? They ought to be true to exist so long. Besides, Mr. Engström is bound by them, whether they are ancient or modern. It is likewise urged that these Articles might be "increased, decreased, or abolished." But they have *not* been; and what is the use of "might be's" in a serious discussion? Mr. Engström is quite right in saying that "the only persons they can possibly bind are members of the Anglican Communion." But then he belongs to that Communion, and he is a party to this controversy.

It is idle for Mr. Engström to attempt to ride off on the old quibble that "good works" are the fruit of "faith." Nor is that the point at issue. The point is this—Is there salvation in honesty without belief? Mr. Engström appears to hold that there is. But we repeat that he is only Mr. Engström. He says that he was brought up in a theological school, which he hopes he will never depart from—the school of Hooker, Butler, Barrow, and Pearson. Very well then; we will appeal to these divines against the Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society.

The real doctrine of historic Christianity is taught with great plainness by Thomas Watson, a seventeenth-century divine of considerable fame, known by his *Body of Practical Divinity*. "A man may go to hell," he says, "as well for heresy as adultery." Mr. Spurgeon took this text and amplified it into a famous passage, declaring that adultery and murder might be forgiven, but there was no forgiveness, in this world or in the next, for unbelief.

The Church of England, in the old days of Elizabeth, issued a Book of Homilies, which is still printed and annotated, and published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The Homilies are mentioned in the Church Articles as containing "godly and wholesome doctrine." They were meant to be read aloud by ministers who could not write their own sermons. Let us listen to these Homilies:—

"If a heathen man clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and do such other like works; yet, because he doth them not in faith for the honor and love of God, they be but dead, vain, and fruitless works to him. . . . All the life of them that lack the true faith is sin, and nothing is good without him that is the author of goodness; where he is not, there is but feigned virtue, although it be in the best works. . . . Jews, heretics, and pagans do good works; they clothe the naked, feed the poor, and do other good works of mercy; but because they be not done in the true faith, therefore the birds be lost."

Now let us take the great Hooker. This is from the eleventh chapter of the twelfth book of his *Ecclesiastical Polity*:—

"Not that God doth require nothing unto happiness at the hands of men saving only a naked belief (for hope and charity we may not exclude); but that *without belief all other things are as nothing.*"

Butler, so far as we are aware, has no express declaration on this point. Barrow, however, has a whole sermon on infidelity, which he sets down as the "chief" cause of "all the sin and all the mischief in the world." It is not a mistake of the head, but "a sinful distemper of the heart." A divine law says that *we should believe*, and unbelief is disobedience to God. Barrow points out that Scripture gives "unbelievers" a "first place" in the "lake burning with fire and brimstone."

Pearson, in his famous book on the Creed, rejects the opinions which Mr. Engström rejoices to see entertained by Dean Farrar. Not for a moment will he shorten "the eternity of hell's hot jurisdiction." With diabolical callousness—feeling sure of heaven himself—he remarks that "it were not perfect hell, if any hope could lodge in it." Dean Farrar does not believe that "every form of retribution beyond the grave is necessarily endless." Bishop Pearson expressly says that it is. He is equally emphatic as to there being no salvation outside Christianity. In his chapter on the second Article about Jesus Christ, he writes: "The necessity of belief in this part of the Article is not only certain, but evident: because there is no end of faith without a Savior, and no other name but this by which we can be saved, and *no way to be saved by him but by believing in him.*"

Mr. Engström will probably indulge in more controversial wriggling, and quote passages from his favorite divines about our being judged "according to the works done in the flesh." But he cannot get over the fact that, elsewhere,

they distinctly couple *belief* with *works*, as necessary to salvation. Nor can he find so much as a hint in any one of them that an honest Atheist may go to heaven. On the contrary, they do not so much as allow the *existence* of an honest Atheist. When they speak of "works" generically, they include belief. They are blind to the great truth that belief is entirely intellectual, and absolutely independent of volition. They regard faith as an act of the will; and, if it be so, we are as justly punishable for a wrong belief as for theft, adultery, or murder. On their own principles they are strictly logical. Mr. Engström is only a sentimentalist. He is a fair specimen of the smooth and plausible Christian apologist of the present age. Such men are always wriggling away from the logical consequences of distinctive Christianity. Their definitions are born of exigency, and not of principle. They seek to make Christianity respectable in the eyes of people who are ignorant of its history. The venomous old serpent that once devoured its holocausts of victims, now wreathes and glances alluringly, like the tempter in *Paradise Lost*. Those to whom history began yesterday may be deceived; many of them *are* deceived. But those who know history, understand principles, and appreciate logic, will be on their guard. The fangs are there, though concealed; the cruel jaws are ready to gape; the ravenous *maw* still yearns for prey. Fools may play with it, till their hour comes. Wise men will beware.

G. W. FOOTE.

### WITCHCRAFT.

THE trial of Irish peasants for burning Bridget Cleary as a witch should bring home to everyone the horrible character of this Bible superstition. There is every appearance that ignorance and superstition are alone to blame for the atrocity. Had the accused persons believed that the poor woman was really herself, and not in the possession of some evil spirit, they would never have thought of injuring her. Under such circumstances, it seems as if to condemn to death the victims of ignorance and superstition is but to add a legal atrocity to that already perpetrated. What is needed is, that such instruction shall be given as shall remove the causes of superstition. These causes are to be found in the popular religion. The belief in witchcraft is a legitimate and logical outcome of that religion, and it may be doubted if it will be wholly extirpated while that retains unquestioning belief.

The delusion of witchcraft is the natural result of a religion that rests on terrorism, for, as Lecky remarks, the panic which its teachings create overbalance the faculties of the multitude. The belief in a devil who is the head of an organised kingdom of evil spirits (Matthew xii. 24-26), and who goes about seeking whom he may devour, contains in itself the essence of witchcraft. The theory is founded on, and supported by, the Bible, as I have fully shown in my recent pamphlet on *Satan, Witchcraft, and the Bible*. Fear is at the foundation of all religion. One of its chief manifestations is fear of the dead, fear that they may return to plague the living, and the belief that all hurtful phenomena are the result of such action by evil spirits. Animism, the belief in spirits, is, in the words of the renowned anthropologist, Dr. E. B. Tylor, the groundwork of the philosophy of religion, from that of savages up to that of civilised man.

In his article on "Demonology," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Dr. Tylor says: "No record shows the ancient theory more clearly than the New Testament, from the explicit way in which the symptoms of the various affections are described, culminating in the patient declaring the name of his possessing demon, and answering in his person when addressed. The similarity of the symptoms with those which in barbarous countries are still accounted for in the ancient way may be seen from such statements as the following, by a well-known missionary (Rev. J. L. Wilson, *Western Africa*, p. 217): 'Demoniacal possessions are common, and the feats performed by those who are supposed to be under such influence are certainly not unlike those described in the New Testament. Frantic gestures, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, feats of supernatural strength, furious ravings, bodily lacerations, gnashing of teeth, and other things of a similar character may be witnessed in most of the cases.'

"Among the early Christians," continues Dr. Tylor, "the demoniacs or energumens formed a special class under the control of a clerical order of exorcists; and a mass of evidence drawn from such writers as Cyril, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Minutius Felix shows that the symptoms of those possessed were such as modern physicians would class under hysteria, epilepsy, lunacy, etc." (See their works, and references in Bingham, *Antiquities of the Christian Church*; Maury, *La Magie et l'Astrologie*, part ii., chap. ii., etc.).

Though the belief in sorcery has existed from the earliest times, its palmiest days were those of credulous Christianity. Sorcery and saints, miracles and magic, grew and flourished together. If unanimity could turn fancy into fact, witchcraft was a stern reality. Divided on so many other points, here Christians were at one. Possession by devils, one of the chief features of the Gospels, gave occasion for the display of that prime token of orthodoxy, the power of exorcism. So the thunders of the Vatican against witchcraft were re-echoed from Lambeth and Geneva. Indeed, the spread of the Bible in the sixteenth century vastly contributed to the renewed persecution of alleged witches. The Puritan was as bad as the Inquisitor, and in godly Scotland and pious New England some of the latest and most horrid atrocities took place. The men of God constantly preached about the devil and his agencies of evil, and, as a consequence, nervous terrors of witchcraft abounded. The accusation was, moreover, a specious plea for getting rid of all sorts of objectionable people. The witches of the Middle Ages were but the votaries of the ancient proscribed religion. There is abundant evidence that Paganism survived in Europe until close upon the time of the Reformation. The witches' Sabbaths were the orgies of Sabazios, a development of Dionysius or Bacchus. In stamping out witchcraft the Church was really suppressing the remnants of a rival faith. The charge was afterwards levelled at heretics, political and religious opponents, and was also a means of extracting the property of the wealthy. Mr. James Russell Lowell, in his essay on "Witchcraft" (*Among My Books*, First Series, p. 128), remarks:—

"I have already said that it was religious antipathy or clerical interest that first made heresy and witchcraft identical, and cast them into the same expiatory fire. The invention was a Catholic one, but it is plain that Protestants soon learned its value, and were not slow in making it a plague to the inventor. It was not till after the Reformation that there was any systematic hunting out of witches in England. Then, no doubt, the innocent charms and rhyming prayers of the old religion were regarded as incantations and twisted-out evidence against miserable beldames who mumbled over in their dotage what they had learned at their mother's knee."

It has been computed that the witchcraft mania cost the lives of over nine millions of people, mostly women. The Bible text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus xxii. 18), has truly been written in blood and fire.

The case in Tipperary may, in some measure, enable us to realise the horrors connected with this Scripture-warranted belief. We may be sure, however, that all the cruelties inflicted by witch-torturers were thrown into the background by the inner agony of those victims of credulity and hysteria who were looked on as sold to the devil, and who often themselves believed that they had entered unwittingly into a contract whereby they would be eternally lost. Mr. Lecky, in an eloquent passage, points out that no class of victims endured sufferings so unalloyed and intense.

"Not for them the wild fanaticism that nerves the soul against danger, and almost steels the body against torments. Not for them the assurance of a glorious eternity, that has made the martyr look with exultation on the rising flame as on the Elijah's chariot that is to bear his soul to heaven. Not for them the solace of lamenting friends, or the consciousness that their memories would be cherished and honored by posterity. They died alone, hated and unpitied. They were deemed by all mankind the worst of criminals. Their very kinsmen shrank from them as tainted and accursed. The superstitions they had imbibed in childhood, blending with the illusions of age, and with the horrors of their position, persuaded them in many cases that they were indeed the bond slaves of Satan, and were about to exchange their torments on earth for an agony that was as excruciating, and was as eternal."

How was it that men could, without pity or compunction, see their fellows writhing amidst blazing fagots for an imaginary crime? The case of Bridget Cleary helps us to see that it was their religious belief, their Bible-supported superstition, which made them regard these as agents of an evil spirit. Is it not an anomaly that a Government which authorises the Bible as the word of God should yet try for the crime of murder, and perhaps condemn to death, the poor fanatics whom it has left in ignorance, and who read in the Bible the awful words, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"?

J. M. WHEELER.

### DID CHRIST WORK MIRACLES?

In asking the above question, it must not be inferred that we believe in the reality of miracles. Neither must it be assumed that we for one moment believe that Christ did perform any of the wonderful things recorded of him in the New Testament. Further, whether what is termed a miracle was ever performed or not does not concern us at present. We prefer the more practical inquiry: Are the miracles, as ascribed to Christ, true? and, if they are, what is their value as evidence of the truth of the claims set up on his behalf by his enthusiastic devotees? It is not here overlooked that the belief in miracles, as evidence of the validity of such claims, is now to a great extent abandoned by the modern school of Christian exponents. They have discovered that, like many other arguments that were once regarded as being indispensable to the Church, the one based upon miracles has to be given up. As Professor Huxley says, "every new discovery in science pushes the supernatural further from us, by enlarging the boundary of human knowledge."

Still, no doubt there are many Christians who retain the belief that the miracles ascribed to Christ prove him to have been more than man, and that they establish the truth of Christianity. We hope to show that this belief is not supported by fact. The latter assumption is false upon the very face of it, inasmuch as, if it were true that Christ raised the dead, it would not therefore follow that he was correct in denying the facts of physiology, or in making poverty a test of perfection. The New Testament being right in advising children to honor their parents is no proof that it is equally right in saying Christ was in two places at one time, or that he was born without a human father. Neither does it corroborate the statement that Christ the son was as old as God the father, and that the Devil was more potent than either of them. The most that miracles can prove, supposing them to be true, is that those who worked them possessed what is called miraculous power. But this is no evidence of the divinity of the whole of the Christian doctrines and precepts.

Against the alleged truth of Christ's miracles is the admitted fact of the "stability of nature," and the observed law of cause and effect. We only know of existence as it is, and we judge of its nature and power from experience and investigation. From these sources of knowledge we learn that at certain degrees heat will burn, water will drown, and poison in given quantities will destroy life. To believe otherwise is for man to leave facts and reason, and to revel in fancy and credulity. The forces in nature, so far as we have discovered them, are regular in their order, and "constancy of succession marks their operations." It has been truly observed: "Look upon any class of phenomena in the world, and what do you see? You see certain phenomena always followed under the same circumstances or conditions by certain other phenomena, without the least variation. . . . This constancy of following—of sequence—is called a law; and when the constancy of following embraces a great number of phenomena, possessing very different characteristics, it is called a general law. But all we know is, and all we mean is, when we speak of the constant order of nature, that all the facts or phenomena we have examined are always found following the same order of succession." These are truths that science has made known in modern times, and, if they were always relied upon, the reality of miracles would not be perceptible.

It is alleged that Christ's miracles are superior to any others, and are supported by better testimony. This is not true; and, if it were, it would deteriorate their value.

For then they would be subordinate to reason and judgment, whereas, theologically, they are intended to command absolute subjection. But have we any trustworthy evidence at all for Christ's miracles? Paley's famous proposition upon this point is, that we are bound to believe the testimony of twelve men of good character, who could not possibly have been deceived as to any supernatural event, and who changed their lives in consequence of their belief, and suffered, or were content to suffer, torture and death in attestation of their sincerity. What special pleading! Where is the testimony of "twelve men of good character" to vouch for the Christian miracles? Where are the eye-witnesses who are supposed to have seen the miracles? The argument of martyrdom is worthless in this case. Many instances may be given of men being content to suffer death and torture in attestation of their belief of the wildest superstitions.

F. J. Foxton meets Paley on his own ground, and tests his argument thus: "I will simply apply the terms of the proposition to actual circumstances in real life. I will imagine that a report that a man was raised from the dead yesterday, at Hampstead or at Highgate, was circulated to-day in the City of London. I will suppose the exact testimony assumed by Paley (though such, I believe, never was produced in attestation of a miracle) was really at hand in verification of the event—i.e., twelve honest witnesses who changed their lives from the moment they witnessed it, and who, rather than confess themselves deceived, were content to suffer torture and death. I will suppose this testimony and these witnesses fairly produced to twenty indifferent persons of sound minds taken indiscriminately from the streets of London, between Hyde Park Corner and Whitechapel, and I contend that not one of them would believe the miracle on the evidence produced, or on any other evidence whatsoever; and this simply for the reason assigned by Hume, that every one of these persons would at once conclude that, as a question of probability, it was more likely that the witnesses should be deceivers or deceived than that the miracle should be true; and this natural conclusion would be founded on the general principle laid down by the philosopher that, whilst miracles are contrary to experience, the falsehood and the perversion of testimony are matters of almost daily occurrence. A frivolous attempt to fasten upon Hume a logical inaccuracy in the use of the word 'experience' will not succeed in mystifying the common sense of mankind."

If the miracles of the New Testament were true, they would destroy the attributes of an omnipotent, good, all-wise, and impartial God. Further, they would render the perfection of his government impossible. A miracle, as understood by the Church, implies a special act upon the part of God, and his interference with natural sequences. Now, all acts of God, supposing him to be the being Christians regard him, must be good acts. If, therefore, it were wise for God to perform certain acts eighteen hundred years ago, it would have been equally wise for him to have done so four thousand years previously. So long, therefore, as he abstained from performing those acts, so long did he withhold advantages from his children, and thereby deal unjustly towards them. To urge that an act of God may be good and necessary at one time and not at another is to reduce the government of God to a level with that of man, and to admit that the "divine" economy is neither uniform nor perfect. Again, granting the existence of God, all sequences were arranged by that God. If arranged by him, they were so arranged from eternity. Anything which acted contrary to that arrangement was either the result of an after plan on God's part, in which case he is not all-wise and immutable, or the arrangement took place in spite of God, and in that case God is not all-powerful.

It should be borne in mind that events which are termed "miraculous" may be superhuman, but it does not therefore follow they are supernatural. All forces in nature that are more powerful than those possessed by man are superhuman; still, they are natural. If it is urged that Christ's power to perform miracles proved him to be divine, how is it that the Bible records that miracles were worked through an agency the very opposite to that termed "divine"? In Deuteronomy (xiii. 1-3) we read: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass," etc. Here the children of

Israel are warned against the miraculous power, though the sign and wonder came to pass. In Matthew (xxiv. 24) we also read: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Further: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matthew vii. 22). In the Acts of the Apostles we have an instance given of a "child of the devil" commanding the attention of the multitude, through his supposed miraculous power, to a far greater extent than Christ is reported to have done. The record is: "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest" (Acts viii. 9, 10). Is not this evidence sufficient that, according to the Bible, the working of miracles was not confined to "divine" influence? The New Testament admits that devils could be cast out by the children of the Pharisees (Matthew xii. 24-27). Does that prove their "divinity"? If not, why is Christ casting out devils cited to prove him more than man? Well might Archbishop Trenchard say that "a miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass." Before the miracles of Jesus can be of any evidential value, it must be shown, not only that they took place, but that such events could not have occurred without the aid of "divine" influence.

However extensive the belief in Christ's power to work miracles may be at the present day, it appears from the New Testament that many of the people, before whom it is said the miracles were performed, did not believe in them. It is clear that even in those days much faith was necessary to the belief in miraculous power. Where Scepticism existed Christ's occupation as a thaumaturgus was gone. Matthew (xiii. 58) informs us that in one place Christ "did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." But had the object of miracles been to prove the divine mission of Christ, it was in the midst of unbelief that they should have been wrought. It is a noteworthy fact that Jesus seems to have succeeded tolerably well with his wonders among the ignorant, the insane, and deaf and dumb people. When, however, he came in contact with thoughtful unbelievers, his prestige was gone. Hence we read in Matthew (xi. 20): "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not"; and in John (xii. 37) it is said: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him." Here, then, is a clear admission that in Christ's time his miracles were disbelieved and rejected. Is it expected that to-day we are to be more credulous than were our predecessors eighteen hundred years ago?

It now remains to be ascertained, supposing Christ did perform the miracles ascribed to him, what was their nature, and did they substantiate the claims set up for the supernatural character of Christ?

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

## THE CHARACTER OF "GOD."

It has often occurred to me, when reading articles or listening to debates or addresses on the greatest subject which civilised mankind has ever had to consider—viz., the belief or non-belief in the Christian doctrines—that the arguments adduced are of too learned a character to be thoroughly understood by the majority of people. The simpler the argument the better, say I. Of course, such a state of affairs has been entirely brought about by the "believers." Your Christian is as slippery as an eel; you never know when you have got him; he dodges about from one corner to another, and, of course, the Freethinker has to patiently follow him, and, by common-sense argument, drive him from his latest position. The Freethinker knows perfectly well that it is not at all necessary for him to enter into a lot of abstruse verbosity in order to prove his opinions. Two or three, aye, even one of his arguments, are quite sufficient. But naturally, as he is the

attacking party, he is compelled to fight his opponent on the latter's own ground, and consequently has frequently to argue about matters which have but very little to do with the question at issue. In fact, it is remarkable how loth a Christian is to enter into any discussion whatever on the vital theories of his belief; he prefers to beat about the bush, as it were.

To those who are in doubt I would say: Listen not to the voice of the charmer, but close your eyes to all superstition; reason with yourself in a sensible and practical manner, and abide by whatever your own common sense dictates. There is no necessity whatever to go very profoundly into the subject, for if the principles will not bear close examination, one need not bother oneself very much about the mere details.

It is quite unnecessary for me to say anything particular *re* the Biblical account of the miraculous birth of Christ, the various miracles which he wrought in his ministry, and the various other extraordinary events—far more extraordinary than any contained in the *Arabian Nights*, which the "Book of Books" tells us of, because all this absurdity has long ago been fully exposed in all its nakedness by those who refuse "to become as little children." This absurdity has evidently been long apparent to some of the branches of the Christian Church, for they have once more been asking themselves whether the story of Mary's virginity is correct, or whether, in their "little understanding," they have not been mistaking the allegorical for the real.

There is, however, one great principle of Christianity which is most glaringly false, and which I wish to once more point out to the readers of this journal, for I am fully aware that far abler pens than mine have previously dwelt upon this particular subject. I refer to the character of the God we are asked to worship.

We are told that God is almighty, just, merciful, meek, gentle, and everything else that is noble. Let us see what truth there is in all this.

If God is *almighty*, he has absolute control over the whole universe, and everything that happens must therefore be entirely brought about by *his will*. An individual's mind is part of the universe, and therefore he controls *that*, putting every thought therein, good, bad, and indifferent. For, if he does not do so, he is not omnipotent. God, therefore, puts the thoughts of theft or murder into the minds of some of his children, and then, because they do as he tells them, plunges them into eternal torment and damnation. Is this just or merciful? But I have frequently been told, in answer to this, that it is the Devil (or, in other words, man's own evil thoughts), and not God, that does the tempting. But then God made the Devil, and therefore he made sin. And if it is the Devil who tempts us, then the Devil is merely a servant of God, who does all his master's dirty work. No Christian would ever acknowledge that God is not stronger than the Devil, for God is almighty; therefore the truth, even from the Christian point of view, must be one of two things—viz., that God either tempts us directly himself, or else is coward enough to stand by and look on while the Devil pummels poor weak mortals to his heart's content. Again I ask, Is this justice or mercy? The good God, the gentle God, he to whom we are beholden for such tremendous gifts and mercies, brings us into the world with a natural tendency to do evil, sets traps of temptation all along our Path of Life, and then, should we transgress, as is more than probable, visits upon us a punishment so great that we, in our poor intellects, are scarcely able to comprehend it.

We are told that this deplorable state of affairs has been brought about by the sin of our first human parents. But that is a poor consolation to us. What have we to do with our first parents? Why should we have to pay the penalty of their sin? When this question is asked of a Christian, he generally replies by quoting that infamous text, "The sins of the father shall descend upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." This is one of nature's most unjust laws, but it is certainly not a law which any just God would ever have created.

Again, what satisfactory explanation can be given of the fact that one man is born in the purple, endowed very highly with intellectual and physical advantages, whereas another is born in some den of filth, neglected and ill-treated in his childhood, learns nothing but vice, associates with nobody but drunkards, thieves, and harlots, and

whose whole life is one long struggle for existence? What justice is there in this? Christ said, "Blessed be ye poor"; but where the blessedness of their state comes in I, for one, am not able to divine. I suppose the explanation is that in "the world to come" they will receive far more favors than the unfortunate inheritors of wealth, who are doomed, on account of their wealth, to perdition. Therefore it is perfectly evident that if we do not suffer the most dreadful misfortune and cruelty in this world, we are certain to do so in the next; and *vice versa*. And all this, forsooth, because of the transgression of our first parents. Again I ask, Where is the hand of reason or mercy to be found here?

Another thing, flattery is not at all compatible with meekness or gentleness. One would imagine that a good God would have been quite satisfied in seeing a man lead an honest and unselfish life. But no. The Christian's God "is a jealous God," whom it is absolutely necessary to bow down to and worship, and to metaphorically grovel in the mud before, if anything but damnation is to be expected. Is not the whole business disgusting? Is not the idea of cringing, fawning, and flattering opposed to all the better feelings of our nature? Yet this is what we are told we must do.

How long are people, who boast of their practical common sense, going to continue professing belief in a religion whose great doctrines are totally opposed to reason? Fortunately there are many signs that the dark cloud of superstition is rising, and will eventually give place to light; that man, looking back through the vistas of nearly two thousand years, seeing that Christianity has brought in its train intolerance, bigotry, nameless cruelty, famine, and bloodshed, and that it is false in practice as well as theory, is eventually awakening to the truth. That Christianity is at variance with the sciences is a notorious fact, and it is almost equally well known that scientists and philosophers—the profoundest of all thinkers—are opposed, almost to a man, to its doctrines. The clergy are no longer taken seriously except by a small minority of the population, and no longer is a sceptic looked upon as a social leper, unfit to be personally known. There is no mistaking these changes; even a straw is sufficient to show the way the tide flows. Christianity is slowly but surely losing its hold of the people, for, to use the words of Pope, they are beginning in earnest to "take nature's path, and mad opinions leave." C. H. S.

## ACID DROPS.

A WEEK or two ago we printed an exclamation of the Queen's to one of her ladies in regard to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Her Majesty was surprised and shocked to learn that such a Society was needed in a country like England. We have now to record a noteworthy declaration by Mr. Rider Haggard, the novelist, who is well acquainted with South Africa and its "heathen" population. Speaking at a meeting of Mr. Waugh's society, Mr. Haggard said that savages practised polygamy and fought in Homeric fashion, but they had their good points. "So far as I am acquainted with them," he said, "and so far as I know, there has never been amongst them any instance of the maltreatment of a child. They love their children, and I think they would rather die than injure them; and I will go further and say this, that if any enemy of the Christian faith could go amongst those savages and could translate to them the record of the cases which come before this Society, could convince them—which I think would be impossible—that these things were true, and that these things were done by the white lords in every class of society—if that could be done, then I say the chances of Christianity, as a religion, among these savages would come to an end; they would reject it; they would have nothing to do with a creed which was followed by the men and women who did such things."

Mr. Rider Haggard then told a pathetic story of a Matabele who was chased by two English scouts. He was a fine fellow in the prime of life, and was carrying a lot of things, all of which he cast away in his flight except a bundle upon his back. At last, seeing escape hopeless, he turned round, as savages do, to be killed. But the scouts re-assured him, and asked him what he had in the bundle, and why he did not throw it away with the other things. He took down the bundle, opened it, and showed them a baby a year old. "It is my daughter's child," he said; "I was taking it to

her." He could have saved himself from what he thought certain death by forsaking the child, but he stuck to it, though it was not his own. —

Just fancy the infamous hypocrisy of Englishmen and women, so many of whom ill-treat their own children, sending out missionaries to "save" savages like that splendid Matabele! It is enough to make honest people vomit.

The Catholic Church does not allow divorce in a general way. Special dispensation for it has to be obtained from the Pope, and only very rich or powerful persons are favored by his Holiness. It is also well known that the Catholic Church, while not forbidding second marriages, has always discountenanced them; and in this respect it is true to the common doctrine of a future life. If a man marries often—say like the Duke of Argyll, who, at the age of seventy-two, is leading a third bride to the altar—how are his domestic affairs to be settled in Kingdom-Come? Which of the women he lived with on earth will be his wife in heaven? And what are the others to do? This dreadful puzzle, the other way about, was put to Jesus Christ, and it was too much for him. He answered it, as he generally did when he was cornered, by a subterfuge. So the puzzle remains to this day. If there be a future life, in which we shall recognise each other and consort together, a second marriage is simply abominable, and sets up a source of bickering and quarrelling for all eternity. How could a man hurry off with a second wife to church if he really believed that his first wife had only emigrated to a country where he would soon have to join her? Second marriages are one of the many proofs that the belief in a future life is more profession than reality.

We find the following definition of the Christian Missionary Society in the columns of the *Behar Times*, India: "An eleemosynary agency for the encouragement of canting hypocrisy amongst low-caste people."

Gambling is a woful vice, according to the Rev. Mr. Barras and his friends of the Anti-Gambling League; but raffling from Bibles in the parish church of St. Ives is quite in accordance with God's will. Did not they fill up the apostleship by drawing lots? As Solomon says (Proverbs xvi. 33): "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

A Jew at Trieste, named Paolo Lipsich, has been accused by the Church of having made a crucifix, and of having afterwards fired a shot at it. For this alleged offence he has been sentenced to fourteen months' imprisonment with hard labor. He is to have no food but what he can pay for; at stated intervals he is to be compelled to fast; he is to be ultimately expelled from Austria; and he is to pay all the expenses of his trial.

This charge is probably as absurd and false as that of spitting on prisoners, or of the Sanhedrim trying Jesus by night and without giving full opportunities of defence, or as the malicious charge everywhere brought against the Jews of using Christian blood at their Passover.

About fifty years ago a number of Jews were put to death on this charge at Damascus. In earlier days it was the constant resort of the Christians when they wanted to plunder the race from whom they obtained their God and Savior. Early in the fourteenth century all the Jews were expelled from France on pretence of having crucified a Christian boy. Dean Milman says: "In one day all the Jews were seized, their property confiscated to the Crown, and the race expelled the realm. The clergy, in their zeal for the faith and the hope that their own burthen might be lightened, approved this pious robbery."

A cloudburst in the Wurtemberg Black Forest district last week destroyed whole villages and drowned at least one hundred persons. In Northern Hungary and Galicia also upwards of a hundred persons have been killed by a water-spout, and hundreds of houses were swept away.

Three lives were lost on a boating expedition in connection with the Bible-class excursion from St. Margaret's Church, Rochester. Of a party of twelve only two of these Bible students had the practical knowledge of swimming. The curates of the church made a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to recover the missing bodies.

In the Punjab alone as many as 1,037 deaths from snakes occurred last year. In every province, except Bombay, mortality from this cause is on the increase. The people are apathetic, and the superstitious respect in which the snake is held is a part of the religion of a great many of them. All their gods do for them is to allow their superstition to destroy them.

"Providence" has drowned a lot of persons by floods in Germany, and terrified Florence with a fresh earthquake. Mr. Gladstone says that "Providence" fitted up the earth for man's habitation. Nothing of the kind, says Mr. Herbert Spencer; man has to accommodate himself to his environment as best he could. The facts are with Mr. Spencer.

Moody's congregation were singing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," at Fort Worth, when the roof fell. They were rejoicing that their prayer for rain had been answered. One woman was killed as a result of the power of Jesus' name.

God is no respecter of persons. The Rev. W. B. Shepherd, of Hartburn, near Morpeth, went shooting in the vicarage grounds. He shot a rook, but did not kill it. However, he killed himself. In going after the rook he fell over a precipice. There is a moral in this somewhere, only we haven't time to dig it out.

George Owen Orpet has been sentenced at the West London Police-court to six months' imprisonment with hard labor. He was a very religious man, and preached on Sundays. His firm found him £30 wrong last June, but forgave him and raised his salary. But he went wrong again, and this time he has to pay the penalty. Wallace Brothers will probably fight shy of preaching employees in future.

Rev. J. R. Capps, of Mt. Vernon, Kentucky, who slings hell-fire and brimstone according to the Baptist creed, on last Sunday murdered his wife by shooting her five times, because, he said, she gave more pie to her own children than to his, the two having raised separate crops of children, before they became partners in the baby-raising business.

Is it true that a Christian Evidence lecturer at Liverpool is in the habit of asking opponents their names and addresses? Is it true that an opponent gave his name and address a few Sundays ago? Is it true that on the following Tuesday he was dismissed from his employment on a certain railway?

A way in which the public are taxed to support religion was indicated at the Horwich District Council, where the secretary of the Anon Baptist Chapel claimed that land belonging to the trustees should be exempt from street-making expenses, as it was intended for the erection of a chapel. It was resolved that the application be entertained when the building was erected.

The officials of the Printing Trades Federation have given instances of sweating by the Salvation Army. They say: "Repeated efforts have been made to get you to pay the rotary hands in the machine department the union rate during the last twelve months, but you have declined each time. That you do not and never have, in the warehouse department, paid the union rate; and we challenge you to produce your books to refute this. We do know that you have paid 2s. for a full night's work; and we ask, 'Is this union rate?' They give further instances of persons who have been discharged and replaced by others, to whom are given less than half the rate of wages. They say: "We defy you to point to another case in which a newspaper is produced on such low conditions as your *War Cry*, *Gazette*, and *Little Soldier* are now produced by you."

The truth seems to be that the Salvation Army is a large business firm, which utilises religion in order to buy cheaper and sell dearer than other firms whose business it absorbs. The blood and fire, bands and banners, are the advertisements for Booth & Co.'s S.A. tea and S.A. clothing.

The *Blue Grass Blade*, edited by an Atheist tectotaler, has some lines on "The Sin of the Sacrament." Here is the first verse:—

If Jesus, whom the pious ones believe to be divine,  
Had never made His thaumaturgical blunder  
Of turning *aqua pura* into poison-tainted wine,  
While the people stood agape with awe and wonder,  
But had taught that holy banquets, with sacramental toasts,  
Paved the way for making drunkards in His name,  
He might have made the lesson more impressive to the hosts,  
By proclaiming wine the leading-string of shame.

The Rev. G. L. Perin has been picturing Jesus as a newspaper man. He asks what would Christ have done had he been an editor? Possibly he would have accepted crucifixion with relief.

There are no liars in the world like Christian liars. In the first place, they take to it naturally; in the second place, they have had such a lot of practice. Take that "Atheist Shoemaker" story, by way of illustration. Although it has been thoroughly exposed, so that its pious

author has apparently withdrawn it from circulation for ever, the Christians go on declaring that it is as true as Gospel. Opening the Nottingham *Argus*, we notice a letter from a pretentious, ungrammatical individual, called William Lewin, who writes himself down as secretary of the local Christian Evidence Society. This person "begs to state," as though he knew *all* about it, that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes "placed the whole of the proofs in the hands of Mr. George Jacob Holyoake," who has "entirely supported Mr. Hughes." Now the "proofs" were not placed in Mr. Holyoake's hands, nor did he take the trouble to discover them. Mr. Hughes simply produced *his own witnesses*. It was subsequent to Mr. Holyoake's investigation that Mr. Foote discovered the Atheist Shoemaker's father and brothers and shopmates, and the house where he last lived in London; and it was this fresh evidence that proved the falsity of Mr. Hughes's story.

The *Islamic World* has an article on "The European Liquor Traffic with Africa," which it shows has developed to an enormous extent. The Muslims preach temperance to the natives, but the Christians bring gin, rum, and ruin in their train. The writer says: "No wonder the late Captain Burton preferred for Africa a repetition of the slave trade in its worst form to the liquor traffic and its terribly blighting influence, if we must choose the lesser of two evils."

In 1665 the Bible Society published, for the benefit of the Pequot Indians, located in Massachusetts, a translation of the Bible into their tongue, by Rev. John Elliot, known as the "Apostle to the Indians." The *Sunday at Home* says: "The book has lasted longer than the people for whom it was made; the tribes to which Elliot preached have vanished, and their language is extinct."

Savages and semi-civilised nations can always understand the Bible to the extent of knowing that it countenances polygamy and drink. They can appreciate such texts as "Bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after: for oxen or for sheep or for wine or for strong drink," and they understand Christianity just well enough to know that it promises to wipe out all their sins.

Duguid, the "mejum," produced a spirit photograph, which turned out to be a reproduction of a continental picture. Now an apologist says: "A medium may, on passing through a picture gallery, become impressed by some picture which, although forgotten soon after, may yet make a persistent appearance on his negative on subsequent occasions." This is almost as good as the explanation of the medium's hands being black when the spirit pulled the hair of a sitter, who, aware of the spirit's proclivities that way, mixed lampblack with his hair-oil. So intimate is the contact between mejum and spirit that what happens to one affects the other.

The *Daily Chronicle* (June 8) notes a case of belief in witchcraft in Lincolnshire. The witch is a quiet, harmless old lady who lives in an almshouse. One of her neighbors had pigs who wouldn't fatten, hens that would not lay, and cows who gave little milk. Evidently the fault was with the witch, who had been seen to cast an evil eye over byre and poultry-yard. The farmer and his wife took counsel how to allay the malign influence. It was believed that if a bone could be broken or blood drawn all would be well; and it is affirmed that this was done by the woman, who fell on the old lady, pushed her over a fence, and broke her arm. The *D. C.* says "it seems almost incredible in these days of Board schools." It would be strange, however, if the belief in witchcraft did not survive while the fetish book which countenances it is so absurdly revered.

The *Liverpool Courier* asks, How many Agnostics and Atheists have we in the House of Commons? It says: "This question is exercising the minds of some excellent Churchmen and leaders of religious thought. Their idea is that the number is not less than seventy. Of course there is no accurate information on the point, because the professors of Agnosticism and Atheism are generally careful to conceal their opinions. However, it is doubtful whether concealment will be possible in the future, for with a view to the general election these Christian gentlemen are organising themselves into a body whose purpose it will be to give the electorate information as to the religious opinions of every candidate." We expect a number of candidates will be simply members of the Church of England, which there is high authority for saying that every member of the English nation legally is.

There is a deal of method in most madness. The most enthusiastic preacher of hell-fire will eat, drink, and grow fat; and revivalists, who are so preoccupied with the next world, generally manage to rake in the shekels in this world. We are not surprised, therefore, that the mad fellow who went to Balmoral (with a revolver) to take the

place of the Queen had written a letter to Vanderbilt, the American millionaire, offering to marry his daughter.

"Canterbury" is no fool, nor is his brother Archbishop of York. The report of their Committee upon the new Scheme for the Relief of Voluntary Schools is well summarised by the *Westminster Gazette* as "How to Dip into the Public Funds while Dodging Public Control." England, however, is not blind enough to fall into such a trap.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has among its functions the determination of some Church questions here. It also determines the rights of property in Indian idols, and is, on that said account, said to be worshipped in some parts of India as a supernatural agency.

There was a nice little quarrel over the gods at Buddha Gaya, the Jerusalem of the Buddhists, where Gautama Buddha is said to have meditated under a fig tree, not cursing it. The temple erected there is in the hands of the Brahmans, and those in custody removed the statue of Buddha, substituting their own idols instead. The Viceroy, however, visited the temple, and made the Mahout produce the statue of Buddha, which he had hidden. The Maha Bodhi Society are now going to restore the sacred temple, and to found a college there to be the centre for the propaganda of Buddhism all over the world.

The real Christian spirit is not extinct. It burst out in something like its old force at the celebration of the eighth centenary of the first crusade held in Clermont, Ferraud. A famous Dominican preacher, Father Montfabre, broke into a fury of speech. He declared that France must once more undertake a crusade, this time against the godless, the usurers, and the Freemasons. He made a vehement appeal to undertake the work to the two Cardinals and forty Bishops present. The congregation received his utterances with loud applause, clapping their hands, and crying out "God wills it!"

No doubt there are plenty of fanatics who would dearly like to see a crusade against the enemies of the Church. To lop off the heads of the leading Freethinkers would be a work of merit like that of Elijah slaying the four hundred priests of Baal. Kill but the boldest scientists, thinkers, writers, and speakers, and the Church might once more dominate and bring back the Middle Ages.

Prebendary Harry Jones, in his reminiscences, entitled *Fifty Years*, tells of some interesting communicants. He says as one instance of many: "On the first occasion of my officiating as rector at St. George's, a string of tottering old people ostentatiously filed up to the altar rails and received the Holy Communion. Next morning they presented themselves in a body at the vestry door, asking that their names and addresses might be put down, obviously expecting to be paid for their devout attendance the previous day. On my declining to recognise this claim of these poor old folk, the party never presented itself again at the Table of the Lord; but one morning a crippled leader among them came to me and said confidentially that he had lately gone to St. Peter's, but that if I would occasionally give him something he would communicate at St. George's."

The requisition of a dole for taking the sacrament is a striking contrast to the good old times, when the magical efficacy of the Savior's body and blood, and the fear of being debarred from the holy table, brought much grist to the priestly mill. Now the very paupers want to be paid to act as communicants. The darkey loved his Jesus for the sake of the wine, but they think such a slender meal requires a little cash along with it.

In the ancient Thargalia of the Athenians a man was annually sacrificed to expiate the sins of the nation. The man was not, as in the Christian scheme of atonement, the worthiest and most innocent person, but the most worthless person known, and the custom was to reserve certain of the criminal classes, who, in case of plague, famine, or other supposed visitations from angry deities, were thrown into the sea in the belief that the sacrifice of their lives would cleanse or wipe off the guilt of the nation.

Mrs. Besant has adopted the Swedenborgian method of making an allegory of the Christian atonement. This is putting new wine into old bottles with a vengeance. The historic facts are that the doctrine arose from savage belief in the efficacy of blood, and savage customs of paying for crimes committed.

The *Daily News* of Friday, June 7, in reviewing an important sociological work by the Vicomte G. D'Avenel, writes as follows with respect to slavery and its abolition in France: "M. D'Avenel convincingly proves that the oft-cited edicts of Louis le Hutin effected little with regard to

the emancipation of serfs. What really, though very slowly and partially, did liberate these bondsmen of Church and noble was, firstly, the influence of the communes, the contagion of municipal liberties; secondly, and chiefly, the condition of the country. Wars had depopulated and devastated entire regions. The problem was to get corn sowed, harvest reaped. Thus, towards the close of the thirteenth century the most precious commodity in France, the source of all wealth and power, was the husbandman—the laborer. Scarcity of hands had so much increased a man's value that he was haggled for, was enabled to make a good bargain for himself, to acquire not only his freedom, but a concession of land. Sentiment, benevolence, Christian charity, had little or nothing to do with the movement. Thus, neither the clergy nor the monastic orders showed any alacrity in manumitting their serfs. Even in 1376 the austere monks of St. Bruno, a brotherhood vowed to poverty and penance, sold a number of these white slaves, as they might have done a flock of sheep, to the Duke of Burgundy. Nevertheless, here and there we come upon manumissions of favorite serfs made by individual owners 'in the name of Christ.'"

The whole subject of Christianity and Slavery should be treated by a first-rate historian. It is not too much to say that the real facts have been obscured or suppressed by orthodox historians. Slavery existed in Europe right down to the fifteenth century; not *serfdom*, but complete *slavery*, and the Church owned slaves just like other proprietors. Vicomte D'Avenel shows that Languedoc and Gascony, for instance, swarmed with slaves little more than four hundred years ago—Turks, Egyptians, and negroes. A "black Saracen" sold for about £25, and a little negro fetched twice the price of a parrot. This was fifteen centuries after the advent of Jesus Christ.

In an article on "Ancient Egyptian Ideas of Immortality," Mr. Boscawen says: "The Ancient Egyptian thought the dead composed of four parts—viz., Sah, the mummy; Ba, the soul; Khu, intelligence; and Ka, the double."

The Ka, or spirit, could not exist without its rations of bread, beer, wine, meat, oxen, and geese, which were supplied for its sustenance. When a person died it was considered that he became absorbed into the spiritual body of the chief deity—Osiris. The body could exist without the Ka, but the latter could not exist without the body. Hence the Ancient Egyptians went to so much trouble and expense to preserve their carcasses.

Rudyard Kipling's new poem, "Mulholland's Contract," is an amusing production. Mulholland gets in a dangerous position among the cattle that had broken loose on the lower deck in a gale of wind; so he makes a "Contract with God," something like Jacob in the old Jew Book.

An' by the terms of the Contract, as I have read the same,  
If He got me to port alive I would exalt his name,  
And praise His Holy Majesty till further orders came.

Mulholland gets his orders from "God" to go back to the cattle-boats, after his recovery in hospital, and preach the Gospel to his drinking, swearing, and fighting pals. Then comes this delicious verse:—

I have been smit and bruised, as warned would be the case,  
An' turned my cheek to the smiter exactly as Scripture says;  
But following that, I knocked him down an' led him up to Grace.

Mr. Hall Caine, the novelist, has written a *Life of Christ*. Could anything be more appropriate? Those other novelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, wrote a long time ago, and are somewhat behind the taste of the present age. Mr. Hall Caine has taken their material, which is all that exists, and worked it up in a more *fin de siècle* fashion. No doubt it will pay him as well as *The Manxman*.

We read that Mr. Hall Caine will re-write his *Jesus Christ* now after a prolonged stay in the one-horse country which is facetiously called the Holy Land. Perhaps he wishes to put in the necessary local color; perhaps he hopes to receive an infusion of the Holy Ghost.

Poor Lord Rosebery! He has had his chance and lost it. Keeping race-horses, and winning the Derby, have been his ruin. The editor of the *Methodist Times* says so, and he ought to know. In funereal tones, and with an expression of an undertaker, Mr. Hughes deploras "the moral downfall of that unfortunate man." But while the lamp holds out to burn the vilest sinner may return. It is to be earnestly hoped, therefore, that his lordship will repent before it is too late, and "give his heart to God" on an early Sunday in St. James's Hall. By doing so he will secure the premiership for a whole generation. Still, we trust that Mr. Price Hughes will not write a book about his "turdite" convert. That would be a greater punishment than he could bear.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 16, Hall of Science, 142 Old-street, London, E.C. :  
"Mrs. Besant's New Views of Christianity."

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—June 23 and 30, Hall of Science, London. July 28, August 4 and 11, Camberwell.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him (if a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed) at 81 Effra-road, Brixton, London, S. W.

S. HOWARD.—We rank with the admirers of Robert Browning as a poet, but his Christianity seems to us but little above the level of common Methodism. Its redeeming feature was its Universalism. Browning thought that all would be saved somehow and at some time. Of course we say this in view of his published work. In private, according to Robert Buchanan, he declined to be called a Christian at all. Perhaps the truth is that he grew out of Christianity in later years. We know the poem you refer to—"Gold Hairs." It is fine in its way, and is complete without the last two verses. The "lie" referred to in the fourth line of the last verse is, of course, the doctrine of natural human goodness, which Christianity has always combated, and *must* combat to the end of the chapter.

SUBSCRIBER.—Thanks for cuttings.

T. MILLAR (Belfast).—It is a Christian trick to call Joseph Barker "*late* infidel lecturer and co-editor of the *National Reformer* with Charles Bradlaugh." People who read it are led to believe that they are reading recent history. Joseph Barker started the *National Reformer* with Charles Bradlaugh *thirty-five* years ago. They soon parted, and Joseph Barker, finding he could not "boss" the Freethought movement in England, went back to Christianity. He was a most unstable man—everything by turns and nothing long.

E. SWADLEY.—(1) Christianity is nothing without reference to a future life. Secularism has nothing at all to do with a future life. Hence the sanctions of the two systems are entirely different. Christians never talk about making the best of this life until they are shaky about the next life. Christianity does not mean doing the best for humanity; it means saving your soul through the blood of Christ. Take that away, and its ethical teaching, so far as it is true, belongs to humanity at large, having existed before Christianity was born. (2) If the God of the Bible meant to recommend teetotalism, he could have said so plainly, like the God of the Koran.

J. LITTLE.—Your order handed to Mr. Forder. We regret to hear of the prolonged depression at West Auckland. These industrial problems are vastly more important than the problems of kingdom-come.

J. M. HEADLEY (Yarmouth).—Freethinkers certainly ought to deal with newsagents who are liberal enough to supply Secular literature. We thank you for displaying our contents-sheet, which is a help to our circulation.

T. BIRTLEY has again accepted the secretaryship of the Chester-street Branch. There are scores, perhaps hundreds, of Freethinkers in the district, and we hope they will rally round Mr. Birtley and the Branch.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Collected at Bristol Conference, £2 12s.; J. Withoy, 5s.; J. Proctor, 5s.; A Friend, 5s.; Mrs. Henderson, £1; Huddersfield Branch, 7s. 6d.; I. Tapp, 6s.

W. CARROLL points out, with reference to Mr. Engström's letter, that Jesus Christ appears to have known nothing about the doctrine of original sin, which is a speciality of Paul's. Jesus Christ spoke of "ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance"—an expression which is opposed to all the teaching of the Churches.

B. BEDELL.—Thanks. See paragraph.

C. DOEG.—Mr. Putnam would probably not enter into a public debate in this country except after consultation with Messrs. Foote and Watts. It is scarcely fair to leave him at the mercy of every Christian Evidence lecturer who wants an advertisement.

J. P. GILMOUR.—Glad to hear you were all so pleased with Mr. Putnam at Glasgow. The American Secularists will prize the hospitality you showed their representative.

E. D. H. DALY.—Thanks for cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker—Boston Investigator—Liberal—Open Court—Liberator—Twentieth Century—Freidenker—Isle of Man Times—Liberty—Two Worlds—Progressive Thinker—Light—Horwich Advertiser—Liverpool Courier—Harbinger of Light—Echo—Morning Leader—Essex Telegraph—Crescent—Secular Thought—Islamic World—Birmingham Daily Mail—Western Figaro—Manchester Courier—Nottingham Guardian—Jerusalem Star—Reading Observer—Blue Grass Blade.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish to call our attention.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

## AFTER THE CONFERENCE.

CONFERENCES are very useful gatherings. They enable workers in various parts of the country to meet and get acquainted. They excite a certain amount of moral enthusiasm. They also lead to the comparison of ideas as to the best way of promoting the success of the movement; and although these ideas are sometimes very crude, and more imaginative than practical, there is sure to be some advantage in their open ventilation and discussion.

At the Bristol Conference one or two Branches desired to add to the N.S.S. Immediate Practical Objects, but the proposal was negated. We have already a pretty extensive program, about which there is, in the main, practical unanimity. But if we go on adding planks, after controversy and division, we shall weaken rather than strengthen our Society. It should never be forgotten that our primary bond is Freethought, and that our chief object is to fight Theology, which, in education, politics, and social life, still exercises an oppressive and reactionary influence.

Mr. Watts's proposal, which was adopted, seems to me a very useful one, if it is carried out with sufficient thought and care. A little volume, plainly written, and showing how Freethought conflicts with Theology in public and private life—in politics, sociology, and ethics—would be of inestimable value. It is not enough to offer inquirers a catalogue of Principles and Objects. The skeleton must be clothed with flesh, or it will not be attractive.

Mr. George Ward's proposal, on behalf of the Finsbury Park Branch, was also good intrinsically, though the Conference did not think the time had arrived for carrying it into effect. It would involve a heavy expense to send an organising secretary through the country to do what was contemplated. The proposal, however, being remitted as a recommendation to the Executive, can be taken up without further discussion at the psychological moment.

Mr. Cohen's proposal was also excellent, but it has been carried before. It is a capital idea to send lecturers into the country, but the difficulty is how to do it. Personally, I do not believe it can be done by our present organisation; and I am reluctantly and painfully driven to the belief that our organisation cannot be much improved while we lie under legal disabilities. Brains and energy cannot work without means. Enthusiasts may think otherwise, but they soon get undeceived if they condescend to practice. The bigoted Christian law is the secret of all our difficulties. We have lost thousands of pounds during the brief term of my presidency, and we shall go on losing until the law is altered. Meanwhile, we may dodge the law, but we have no real security; for even if property itself is secure, there is no guarantee that it will not be alienated from its original purposes. Mr. Joseph Symes built a hall at Melbourne, and other people are in possession. He denounces them as tricksters and thieves—as they are from a moral point of view—but they laugh at him, for the law is on their side. Yes, we shall never do great things, as an organisation, *until property can be dedicated to, and held in trust for, our special objects*—that is, until we enjoy the advantages of endowment like other bodies.

While our organisation remains as it is, in consequence of our disabilities, I see little use in the means by which Mr. Cohen's proposal is sought to be carried out. A committee must sit somewhere, and if it sits in London what does it really know (as things now are) of the provinces? Only a person who goes all over the country is in a position to know what is wanted. Accordingly I told the Conference that I had resolved to take this matter in hand myself. I have worked out my plans, and in a month or so I shall put them into a circular. All the lecturers I have spoken to believe in my idea as the only one that is practicable in the circumstances, and I shall be happy if I can utilise their services, as they should be utilised, in the propaganda of our principles.

I have no doubt that the Committee appointed to report to the Executive will fall in with my scheme when they come to talk it over with me. I have given the matter much thought; I have taken it to bed with me and got up with it in the morning; and so far as our lecturing system is concerned, I see no alternative between my plan and chaos.

G. W. FOOTE.

## SUGAR PLUMS.

MR. FOOTE occupies the London Hall of Science platform again this evening (June 16). His subject will be "Mrs. Besant's New Views of Christianity." After the lecture Mr. Foote will announce the decision of the Directors of the National Secular Hall Society with respect to the institution.

Mr. Putnam lectured at Glasgow last Sunday, and, in spite of the midsummer weather, to capital audiences, the evening meeting being phenomenal for the time of the year. His lectures were highly appreciated, and a general hope was expressed that he would soon revisit the "tight little island." A collection for the Glasgow Infirmary realised £3 15s.

The day before his Glasgow lectures, Messrs. Gilmour and Black took Mr. Putnam down the Clyde, and he was enchanted with the spectacle, first of human industry, and then of natural beauty. Mr. Putnam was in good hands that day, and, as the Yankees say, he had a good time all through. To day (June 16) he lectures at Edinburgh, and of course the "saints" will give him a first-rate welcome.

We have received the New York *Truthseeker* containing the first of Mr. Putnam's letters after his reception in England. Our American guest is very warm-hearted, and it is with considerable hesitation that we decide to reproduce some portions of his letter for the benefit of our own readers, who will not be able to see the blushes of those he eulogises. The extracts will appear in our next issue.

Mr. A. B. Moss was very busy on Sunday. Three open-air lectures make a big day's work. His afternoon meeting in Victoria Park was a very large one. A certain Christian rowdy was tugging with his lambs, intending to create a disturbance. His interruptions, however, were dealt with by Mr. Moss with good humor. After the lecture, however, there was a very ugly rush for the platform; but the members around it stood firm, and they were supported by six stalwart policemen, who meant to stop the little game of those

Who prove their doctrine orthodox  
By apostolic blows and knocks.

Thanks are due to the County Council police for their prompt action in stopping disorder.

Bristol Christians are annoyed. They went about saying that Secularism was dead, and lo! the N.S.S. held its Conference at Bristol, and reports appeared in the local newspapers. This was too much for Christian flesh and blood to bear with equanimity. Accordingly, a Christian Evidence lecturer, named Grinstead, went to Eastville Park to lecture on Secularism—the thing that was dead; and gravely informed his hearers that all Freethinkers were pot-house men. It is a wonder he did not say he had met them there. On the following Sunday, the N.S.S. Branch secretary, Mr. Keast, lectured on the same subject, taking the precaution to have a police officer handy, much to the surprise and disgust of a few Christians who came for a row. Mr. Keast put some questions which the Grinsteadites could not answer. They could answer in one way, but they feared that policeman.

In mentioning the Bristol papers that reported the N.S.S. Conference, we overlooked the *Times and Mirror*. A correspondent who sends us the cutting writes: "When I saw it I thought the days of miracles had returned. So orthodox has the *Times and Mirror* been hitherto, that for several years it would not notice, except by inserting their advertisements, such mild heretics as the Bristol Sunday Society. Secularism is clearly becoming respectable even in Bristol."

The Wood Green Branch is doing good work at its open-air station. Unfortunately it has to meet unscrupulous opposition. We hope the local Freethinkers will rally round the platform and support the lecturers. It will never do to have any of our meetings broken up by bigots.

The International Congress of Freethinkers will be held this year at Brussels on September 22, 23, and 24. All the arrangements are being undertaken by the Belgian Rationalist Federation. Four subjects are definitely placed on the agenda for discussion: (1) The Abolition of War, (2) The Relations between Church and State, (3) The Equality of Men and Women, (4) The Religious Emancipation of Women. Some groups also propose to discuss the Attitude of Freethought towards Christian Democracy. The circular will be laid before the National Secular Society's Executive at its next meeting, when a delegation to the Congress will no doubt be decided upon.

"A Freethinker" protests in the London *Star* against the narrow sectarianism of the Anti-Vivisection Society. Its annual meeting opened with "prayer," and most of the speakers talked a great deal about "religion." The *Star* correspondent says that all this is in spite of the fact that "the modern humanitarian movement is largely the work of Freethinkers, while on the other hand many vivisectionists are unimpeachably orthodox in their creed." We may add, for our own part, that the noblest denunciation of the vivisectionists came from the pen of Colonel Ingersoll.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has had to decline the Prussian Royal Order "Pour le Mérite," as he holds that certain opinions of his, often repeated and strongly expressed, debar him from accepting it. After all, he can afford to dispense with orders and decorations. It is better to remain plain Mr. Herbert Spencer. That name will be enough on his tombstone.

The Manchester Branch desires us to announce that its Annual Picnic will take place on Sunday, July 14, at Chester. Friends intending to join the party are requested to apply for tickets at once, so that the necessary arrangements may be made without delay. Full particulars will be given later on. Address—Joseph Seddon, 83 Upper Lloyd-street, Moss Side.

The *Boston Investigator*, now in its 65th volume, copies Mr. Stephenson's poem, "Fiend or Fool," from our pages, to the first position in its own.

The 24th Judicial District Court of Kansas, in Barber County, has just decided that the reading of the Bible is not compulsory in the public schools of that State. A Freethinking father, whose son was expelled for refusing to take part in devotional exercises, obtained a mandamus compelling the board to reinstate his son as a member of the school.

"Christ is the Head of this House; He is the unseen guest at meals," is a motto inscribed on the walls of a temperance restaurant at Bristol. It is quite usual for the head of the house to put in an appearance at meal-times; but at this particular restaurant the provender was not of the savory character expected when so distinguished a guest puts in his appearance. The Bishop of Bristol would probably have elevated his nose at the meals.

## A CABINET COUNCIL IN HEAVEN.

TIME: The beginning of our era. One Sabbath morning. Eleven o'clock by the celestial chronometer. The Holy Ghost flaps its wings and coos aloud. Yaveh, waking, rubs his eyes: "What's up?"

Holy Ghost: "News from the earth."

Yaveh: "What news? Si je conçois comment on s'y comporte Je veux bien que le diable m'emporte. How is my only begotten Son getting on below?"

Holy Ghost: "He has become a D.D."

Yaveh: "What's that?"

Holy Ghost: "Devil Dodger."

Yaveh: "Don't understand Latin turned into bad English."

Holy Ghost: "Well, Yaveh, you are the boss of the show, and created everything (Yaveh nods), devils included."

Yaveh: "Certes—to plague mankind. Pour notre bon plaisir."

Holy Ghost: "You sent devils into men, and your dutiful son—*enfant terrible*—is having some rare fun, ha! ha! He is driving them out. A pack of poor devils has just entered the bellies of pigs!"

Yaveh (in a rage): "Sacré nom de la Trinité! My lightning apparatus! I'll smash the damned coon!"

The apparatus is set up, but the Holy Ghost gives it a slight turn, and the lightning strikes an island, yclept Santorin, which disappears with thousands of innocent people. There was joy in heaven! Chorus: "The heavens are telling."

CHARLES KRÖLL LAPORTE.

The church doors throughout the capital of Madagascar have been covered with placards inciting the people to kill the Queen and her husband, and welcome the French. This is the effect of the new Catholic crusade.

Evangelist Wharton says: "I believe in a free country, the freedom of the press, and free speech; but I am in favor of shutting the mouth and gagging the tongue of every person who goes around defaming God and undermining the teachings of God's Church." Brother Wharton is living a century or so behind his time.

### MAN'S DUAL NATURE.

THEOSOPHY, I think, is now the only system which teaches that man's nature is of a sevenfold character. So far it is universally apprehended that human nature is divided in two phases. The metaphysician's terms are "mundane and supermundane," or "natural and transcendental." The Spiritists call it "material and spiritual." The Christian employs the expression, "body and soul." The newest of new Spiritualists divide our nature in three; they distinguish between "soul" and "spirit," or the ethereal and the intellectual plane. Leaving the unquestionable material element out, however, we have undoubtedly still a twofold nature left. We have the sentiment or emotion, and the intellect or reason. The former is the animal instinct refined, our motive power, the incentive stimulus to action; the latter is the second thought or reflection, the guiding power of utility. Each has its own function to perform, and where the line is not drawn in its proper place, there mischief is the result. Where the sentiment is unguided by reason, it assumes the form of superstition, and where misplaced it culminates in frantic passion.

Hence it is that we stand, as it were, kicking with one foot on the moist soil of superstition, and the other on the dry land of reason. The former draws us back towards religion, as the latter pulls us up towards common sense. As the one prevails, so the other recedes; as the first is neglected, so the last flourishes. We are referred to statesmen. These believe in Christianity. Why cannot you? The nearest and simplest answer to this question, which is the very embodiment of absurdity both in form and spirit, would be, first, because my brain is differently constructed, of course; besides, my education and experience have been different from theirs. But I should further like to ask, Has their religion anything to do with their statesmanship? Does the statesman, in his capacity as such, live out his Christianity? Does he refrain from contributing to the maintenance of the army, or the furtherance of implements of war? If not, he does not assist to keep the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Or does the Christian physician pray over the sick or exorcise devils, like Jesus did, instead of giving them medicine? Or does the Christian Judge sanction the commandment, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"? Nay, only recently, in Ireland, a poor woman who was suspected of witchcraft was held over fire and otherwise maltreated in order to effect a cure; but the ultra-religious bigots were secured, and an inquiry was opened. Or do great Christian judges believe in the Bible, when it teaches the art of anointing as a remedy for illness? Nay, last year two parents in London were imprisoned for that offence. Why, by the argument of greatness we might prove anything. We might as well say there are great preachers who believe in Roman Catholicism, therefore that is right; or there are great Freethinkers who disbelieve in Christianity, therefore Christianity is wrong. The fact is, statesmen are politicians when in Parliament on week-days, and on Sundays they are Christians and go to church. They are politicians when dealing with politics, and Christians when writing in religious magazines.

Here again, then, are we confronted with another phase of the duplicity of human nature. And what is the cause of it? It may be said, not without valid grounds, that human kind is only just emerging out of its infancy. The coat of the ape is worn off, but the animal instincts are not yet outgrown. Again, there have been more centuries of natural, or rather unnatural, selection, in which all those who exhibited even the slightest symptoms of mental independence were killed off, and only the religious and half-developed were permitted to survive, than there have been years of religious freedom. But is there not another reason near at hand? Could a clearer and more logical way of thinking not be established in one generation?

The facts are, that the plastic, susceptible mind of the child is muddled and crippled in the school by the mixing together of irreconcilable theories—scientific facts and theological errors, facts and fancies, knowledge and guess-work; science and superstition. In one hour the pupil is taught that our earth is the centre of the universe, and that the sun, moon, and stars were put in the heavens to give light to its inhabitants; in the next hour he is taught,

with as much fervor and gravity, that the globe itself is only an infinitesimal part of the universe, an insignificant speck in the heavens, moving through space with an inconceivable rapidity, its movements depending upon the sun, and, in turn, compelling the moon to follow it. In one hour he learns that man was once created perfect, but fell, and that he is now a depraved, corrupt being, who is helplessly lost to an irrevocable doom, unless he gets someone else to atone for him; and, in the next, he learns from history that man has gradually developed from a lower type, working out his own salvation, and he knows from experience that there are good qualities in the worst, and bad in the best men, and that everybody has to face his own guilt, suffer for his own transgressions, and bear his own responsibility, and that no personal sin can be atoned for by another. At one time he is told that maladies are the result of the possession of devils, at another that they arise through natural causes. In one lesson he is brought to believe that witchcraft is a crime to be punished by death; in another, that it does not exist. One day he is taught to rely on prayer; another, to help himself. One day that killing is a crime; another, that he who will not risk his life to exterminate the heathen, in order to convert them, is kindling the wrath of God.

Is it a wonder, then, that reason is impeded, the intellect stifled, and judgment perverted? Is it a wonder that passion is fostered, that superstition and bigotry flourish, and that the instincts are sustained? The time thus spent is wasted, and so is the longer time which is required to unlearn these pernicious errors. When we consider that these precious years—the years that should be utilised to give the child a foundation for a lifetime—are thus lost, never to return, and that the energy which should be given in the service of mankind is thus swallowed up in the quibbling of theological controversy, we must admit that it is a scandal and a disgrace, and it is enough to raise the indignation of any right-minded philanthropist. Stealing money is a crime, but thieving time and energy from the weak and unprotected child is the most abominable theft of all; and I would fling back into the teeth of those who are responsible for this state of affairs the saying: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

But I look forward to a time when this sort of thing shall have ceased; when the Unknowable shall be left out of the field of education till the child has a mind of its own to judge for him or herself; when he or she is able to sift the chaff from the wheat and discern the truth from falsehood; when the little minds shall no longer be tortured by the fear of hell, and charged with the impossible task of uniting the incompatible; and when the time of learning shall be wholly devoted to the sphere of the realm of science. Then, and not till then, will spring up a noble race to bless humanity, which has long enough been held in bondage by the cursed and baneful influence of religious strife and tyranny, and to establish a paradise upon earth, which has too long been the scene of all the horrors of a hideous hell. Then, and not till then, shall bigotry, tyranny, and irrational brute-passion subside, and Reason, with her train of noble servants, reign supreme.

J. K. MAAGAARD.

### Obituary.

OUR London friends will hear with regret of the death of Mrs. Mary Hartmann, wife of the much-respected Vice-President, Mr. S. Hartmann. It was my painful duty to conduct the last offices for the deceased at the Crematorium, at Brookwood, on Sunday last. The sad event was accentuated by the fact that Mr. Hartmann was away in Germany, just recovering from a severe illness after undergoing operations for an internal complaint; and he was prevented, by distance, from arriving home until a few hours after his wife's death. Several friends were present from the Camberwell Branch who, after the cremation, visited the ground where the ashes are to be buried, which is immediately behind the grave of Mr. Bradlaugh. This spot is becoming quite a "Freethinkers' corner." One inscription on a very old lady simply says: "She led a good life without hope of reward or fear of punishment." In the name of the whole of the Executive and of the many members who know our good friend Hartmann, I tender our sympathy and respect to him and the only daughter in their bereavement.—ROBERT FORDER.

## BOOK CHAT.

*A Life's Experience* is a good title for a treatise on Hydraulics and many other matters, by James Emerson, of Willimansett, Massachusetts, who, besides much pertaining to his business of testing water wheels, has some plain speaking directed against law, doctors, and priestcraft.

*The Essentials of Logic*, by Bernard Bosanquet (Macmillan & Co.), consists of ten lectures given under the Oxford University Extension system. Beyond the technical instructions on the art of judgment and inference, some sound advice is given; for instance, the following: "Determine always to know the truth; welcome all information and all suggestion; but remember that truth is always systematic, and that every judgment, when you scrutinise it, demands a fuller and fuller connection with the structure of life. It is not cleverness or learning that makes the philosopher; it is a certain spirit, openness of mind, thoroughness of work, and hatred of superficiality."

It is a reproach to European histories of philosophies that hitherto they have overlooked the profound systems of thought long current in the East, and which ages ago anticipated nearly all that the Germans have advanced in a transcendental direction. This reproach Dr. Paul Deussen removes in his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*. Professor Deussen begins by discussing Indian philosophy, with which he is thoroughly at home, before proceeding to that of Greece, that of the Bible, that of the Middle Ages, and Modern Philosophy.

Perhaps, when the Germans find that transcendentalism has been tried and found wanting in India, they may fall back on practical experience. Some sign of this may be seen in the publication of *Immanente Philosophie*, by Max Kauffmann. The immanent philosophy is a German form of Positivism regarding ontology and all metaphysical hypotheses, and concerning itself alone with the demonstrable and real.

Dr. Allan Menzies has issued through Murray a sketch of primitive religious beliefs and practices, and of the origin of the Great Systems, under the bold title of *A History of Religion*. It goes somewhat on the lines of C. P. Tiele's work, and gives a useful list of authorities.

Joseph Jacobs, noticing in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* Dr. James Drummond's Hibbert Lecture on "Christianity in its Most Intelligible Forms," says: "The Christian scheme is Individualistic in tendency; the Jewish was largely Socialistic. The primary care of the Christian is his own soul; that of the Jew, his own nation."

Mr. Jacobs says, further: "The ideal personality of a mystic Christ is the real differentia of Christianity from other religions. A real personality, like the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels [?], could not be made into an ideal for all humanity. He himself was conditioned by the historic circumstances of his time, and those who would follow him would be limited to his authentic acts and utterances. But in the ideal figure of the Christ, as created by Paul and John, each generation of men could read their own ideals, and have done so. The historic problem of Christianity is to trace how this purely ideal figure of Christ became attached to the name and life of the Jewish peasant of Galilee."

*Thomas Paine in a New Light* is an address by M. M. Mangasarian, who is a lecturer of the Chicago Society for Ethical Culture. The new light is not at all new to Free-thinkers, nor on the whole do we think it a very true one. M. Mangasarian, like some other Ethical Culturists, seems very fastidious, and objects to pioneer work that it was not done in kid gloves.

*When Did Paul Live?* by "Scholasticus," is another American pamphlet, sent us by Mr. L. Levine, to whose courtesy we are indebted for many American papers. "Scholasticus" argues that, as Josephus knew nothing of Paul or other Apostles, the story of the *Jewish Life of Christ* may be incorrect, and Paul antedate the Christian era.

Dr. Hamburger, the head Rabbi in Berlin, has put out a book entitled *Jesus of Nazareth*. His object is to exonerate his race from the charge of crucifying Christ. He urges that the power was in the hands of the Romans, and that he was put to death as a political agitator. That the people of Jerusalem received Jesus with joy was sufficient to rouse the Romans, who were wont to crucify the Jews by hundreds and thousands if they removed the votive tablets and statues of the emperors.

Dr. Hamburger contends that Jesus could only have been put to death by the Jews as a blasphemer, if he had cursed Jehovah, and such a charge or any could only be heard by a full Sanhedrim, and in the day time. Moreover, the verdict could not be given until three full days had passed. All this is inconsistent with the gospel story of the trial of Jesus by night, with grave Jewish judges spitting upon him, and the execution early the next morning.

## THE CRIMES OF CLERGYMEN.

A CORRESPONDENT takes us to task for giving so much prominence to the shortcomings of the clergy, which he characterises as a waste of valuable space and of no earthly importance to the furtherance of the principles of Free-thought. It is quite true that we have not hesitated to place before our readers the delinquencies of this class of people; and for all we can see to the contrary it is in the line of our work to continue to do so.

It is not that we are disposed to rejoice over the evil conduct of our fellow-men, or that we have any taste for the recital of their dishonorable doings, that we open our columns to such news. This class of men occupy an entirely erroneous position in the eyes of the community. They are held in places of esteem and trust, irrespective of their individual merits, and solely on account of their profession; and it is because of this fact that we deem it our duty to expose their crimes whenever and wherever they are committed, so that the public may the more quickly realise the lack of moral force which there is in religion, and the danger lurking in the mawkish sentiments which surround the sacerdotal class with a false halo of purity and honor.

When the public learns that it is not the profession of faith which makes the man; when it truly realises that he, with the high choker and the ministerial air may be, nevertheless, a villain, and is the more to be watched on that account; when Christian wives have the courage of one bright young lady dwelling not a hundred miles from this city, who told one of these pious hypocrites on the occasion of his second or third visit that, if he intended to call again, she would prefer to have him come in the evening when her husband would be at home, then may we be amenable to our correspondent's criticism; but then there will be little to criticise, as we shall have little to report.

The *Investigator* believes that there is nothing higher than a pure moral character, and that nothing is more conducive to this ideal attainment than honest, legitimate, and self-respecting employment. This clergyman lack, as their profession is one of ease, affording opportunities and temptations for wrong-doing, to which the man engaged in daily labor is not subjected. The calling is one of an immoral tendency, and should be painted in its true colors, so that honest men and women may know the wolf even when he is disguised in sheep's clothing. For these reasons we shall continue to expose the crimes of the clergy as one of the highest duties which we owe to society.

— *Boston Investigator*.

## Utilising the Bible.

The saloon-keepers are supplying themselves with mottoes to hang in their bar-rooms, with choice quotations from the Holy Bible, to stimulate the tipping habit. Here are specimens:—

"Give . . . wine unto those that be of heavy heart; let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more" (Proverbs xxxi. 6, 7).

"Thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after . . . for wine or for strong drink" (Deut. xiv. 26).

"Drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy work" (Ecclesiastes xi. 7).

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities" (1 Timothy v. 23).

What other book can equal the Bible in contributions to encourage the drinking element?

It was just at the portal of a church as the congregation were coming out. Two nice-looking young men were leaving, breathing grand sentiments of piety and sound theology regarding the sermon they had just listened to. One of them slipped on a piece of ice, and his arms and legs flew around in eight or ten different directions at once. As soon as he recovered his equilibrium, he ripped out: "J. C. (not John Collins), a little more and I'd have gone to hell sure." Then a deep and dark-blue silence fell on all the place.

### MR. PUTNAM'S ENGAGEMENTS.

MR. CHARLES WATTS has made the following lecturing engagements for Mr. S. P. Putnam:—

June 16, Edinburgh; 23, Manchester; 24, Derby; 25, Nottingham; 30, Sheffield.

July 6, Chester-le-Street Branch (lecture held at West Pelton Co-operative Hall at 6.30); 7, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 14, Bristol; 16 and 17, Plymouth; 21, Birmingham.

August 11, Failsworth; 18, Leicester; 25, Liverpool.

*Special Note.*—Through an error Mr. Putnam has July 28 at liberty. Any Branch requiring that date should write to Mr. Watts at once.

Mr. Putnam will return to New York on Sept. 7, therefore friends who have not engaged him should communicate with Mr. Watts at once. Societies near any of the above towns requiring week-night lectures should arrange for Mr. Putnam to visit them when he is in their district on the Sunday.

### BALLAD OF THE BOLTED BONES.

MISS SARAH ADELIZA JONES,  
A ritualistic maid devout,  
Possessed a box of holy bones  
She couldn't get along without.

Full many a finger that, for alms,  
Cash down, had erst absolved and blessed;  
Full many a toe whose saintly charms  
Devotion's pious lips had pressed.

Ascetic was the maiden's bent,  
And in her self-devotion vast,  
Vicariously keeping Lent,  
She set her poodle dog to fast,

And bade him live on cold, raw hope,  
The inner dog to mortify.  
Ah! maid devout, 'twas rash to ope  
The relic-chest when he was by!

In vain the blow—the warning tones—  
For ere she bolted down the lid  
The dog had bolted down the bones,  
And bolted down the street and hid.

### Current Christian Creeds.

From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. The blight of birth-sin, with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption, with its vicarious salvation; the incarnation, with its low postulates of the relations between God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead, and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment, are all the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis. And so nearly do these vain imaginations pre-occupy the creeds that not a moral or spiritual element finds entrance there except "the forgiveness of sins." To consecrate and diffuse, under the name of Christianity, a theory of the world's economy thus made up of illusions from obsolete stages of civilisation, immense resources, material and moral, are expended, with effect no less deplorable in the province of religion than would be, in that of science, hierarchies and missions for propagating the Ptolemaic astronomy, and inculcating the rules of necromancy and exorcism.—*Rev. James Martineau, "The Seat of Authority in Religion," p. 650.*

At a recent Salvation Army meeting it was announced that a "tea-meeting" would be held on the following week. A printed circular gave the day and hour of the meeting, and concluded: "Salvation is free, but not the tea."

The minister having finished his talk about the song of creation, and intending to make a climax, turned towards an open window, and, with an appropriate gesture, exclaimed: "Let us pause a moment, and listen to the song of praise that nature is sending up, at this moment, to the throne of the Creator." Everybody listened; but just then an old ass outside of the church rent the air with its "?????!"

### I HAVE SEEN DEATH!

In my strength I denied God; his wisdom, his goodness, I scorned.

In my weakness still I denied him; nor learned I any new thing.

Vaunted believers: "Death's coming will bring thee discernment."

I have seen death, but not the wisdom of God.

Vaunted believers: "Death's coming will bring thee discernment."

I have seen death, but not the goodness of God.

Vaunted believers: "Death's coming will bring thee discernment."

I have seen death, but still I know not God.

Yea, I have seen the blackness of Sheol and feared not.

I have felt the chill of death and was unafraid.

I have lain in the stillness of night with death and darkness.

Alone have I lain near death, with peace at my heart.

I looked into dread Sheol, and Sheol is *Nothingness*.

To the grave went I and listened, and all was still.

Deep darkness is there, and silence unbreakable.

*The quiet of night, immutable, possesses the grave.*

HARRY H.

### Dressing a Saint.

*Pearson's Weekly* (May 11) has an account of a visit to a Saint Manufactory in Paris, which is known as *Paradis*, for they turn out thousands of saints for all parts of the world in plaster, stucco, pasteboard, wood, and metal. The head of the establishment said: "Do you see that great shapeless mass of wood? We are going to make a Saint Rose of Lima out of it. In the face, tinted in a manner which you would look upon as glaring, but which is demanded by the natives of the country, we will insert two enamelled eyes. We will place a wig upon her head, and then dress her in all kinds of rich materials. The red velvet mantle, studded with gold embroidery, which will cover her shoulders, will cost £60. The robe caught in at the waist by a paste girdle will come up to £36, and add to that £15 to £20 extra for the linen undergarments."

"What! under-garments?"

"Why, certainly. This Virgin has underclothing exactly the same as a flesh-and-blood woman. She has a whole trousseau of chemises and chemisettes, and a wardrobe of white skirts, which will be used in profusion on feast days to give amplitude to her dress. Her stockings are of pink silk, and she has some black silk ones also. Her feet will be encased in satin shoes."

### PROFANE JOKES.

"I don't like Willie," said one youngster of another. "Why not?" he was asked. "'Cause every night he goes and blabs everything to God."

Dr. Litany, on the way home from Easter service, remarked: "Ah, Miss Van der Mode, Easter-tide is truly a joyous occasion." "Yes, one does feel so happy in new clothes."

An old chief gave his experience of Indian agents this way: "S'pose agent heap bad man, heap swear, steal half Injun blanket, Injun flour; s'pose agent lovum Jesus, steal all."

A Tennessee Methodist class leader had before him a six months' probationer, whom he was questioning for admission to all the privileges of the Church.

"Well, Sambo," said the class leader, "I hope you are prepared to live a Christian life in accordance with your profession. Have you stolen any chickens during the last six months?"

"No, sah! I done stole no chickens."

"Have you stolen any turkeys or pigs?"

Sambo looked grieved. "No, sah!"

"I am very glad to hear this good report," continued the class leader, "and I trust you will continue to live an honest, Christian life."

After church Sambo hurried home with his wife, who had overheard the catechising. When they were fairly out of everybody's hearing, he drew a long breath of relief and turned a self-approving glance to his better half. "Golly," he said, in a half-cautious whisper, "ef he'd er said ducks I'd be'n a lost niggah, suah."

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

### LONDON.

HALL OF SCIENCE (142 Old-street, E.O.): 7, musical selections; 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Mrs. Besant's New Views of Christianity."  
BATTERSEA SECULAR HALL (back of Battersea Park Station): 8.30, social gathering for N.S.S. members and friends. Tuesday, at 9, dance.  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, St. John, "Are Acquired Characters Inherited?"  
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Princes' Hall, Piccadilly): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Edmund Burke and Law."  
WEST HAM SECULAR ETHICAL SOCIETY (61 West Ham-lane): 7, Miss Vallance, "Future Rewards and Punishments."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. Haslam, "The Fall of Man."  
CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, St. John, "Christianity and Progress."  
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, R. Forder, "Religion and Progress."  
DEPTFORD BROADWAY: 6.30, A. G. Hertfeld, "The Real and the Ideal Jesus." Thursday, at 8, C. James will lecture.  
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, Stanley Jones, "Social Aspects of Christianity."  
FINSBURY PARK (near the band-stand): 11.15, C. Durrant, "The Resurrection"; 3.15, "Heaven and Hell."  
HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE (Middlesex side): 7, Lucretius Keen, "Can we Follow Jesus?" Thursday, at 8.30, Stanley Jones will lecture.  
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Lucretius Keen, "Can we Follow Jesus?" 3.30, "Prophecy." Wednesday, at 8, F. Haslam will lecture.  
ISLINGTON (Prebend-street, Packington-street): 11.30, A. Guest, "Bible Comedy and Tragedy."  
KILBURN (High-road): 7, J. Fagan, "The Apostles' Creed."  
KINGSLAND (Ridley-road, near Dalston Junction): 11.30, W. Heaford, "Why we do Not Believe in Christianity."  
LAMBETH (Kennington Park): 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Gospel Fairy Tales."  
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Antidotes to Superstition."  
OLD PIMLICO PIER: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Fairy Tales from the Bible."  
REGENT'S PARK (near Gloucester Gate): 8, W. Heaford, "Holy Fables."  
TOTTENHAM (corner of Angel-road): 7, Stanley Jones, "Social Aspects of Christianity."  
VICTORIA PARK (near the fountain): 11.15, S. R. Thompson will lecture; 3.15, Stanley Jones will lecture. (Collections in aid of Hospital Sunday Fund.)  
WOOD GREEN (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Christianity and Civilisation"; 7, W. J. Ramsey, "God so Loved the World." Thursday, at 8, Robert Forder, "The Gospels: By Whom and When Written?"

### COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL (Oddfellows' Hall, St. Anne-street): 11, Tontine Society; 7, C. Doeg, "Christianity and Paganism Compared." Adjourned annual meeting after lecture.  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 11, E. Marx Aveling, "The Materialistic Conception of History"; 3, "Child Labor"; 6.30, "Religion and Morality."  
NOTTINGHAM (Woodland Hall, Upper Parliament-street): 7, Business meeting.  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 3, Ernest Evans, "Immortality from a Biological Point of View"; 7, "The High Infantile Death-rate, and How to Prevent it." Tea at 5.  
SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH: 1.15, brakes leave North Shields for picnic at Holywell Dene.

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Grays, Old Pelton): 7, a lecture.  
BARNSELY (May Day Green): 11, W. Dyson, "Religion and Morality"; 7, "A Trinity of Infidels."  
BRISTOL (Eastville Park, lower end): 7, J. Keast, "Is Christianity True?"  
DERBY (Market-place): 11, Mr. Briggs will lecture.  
MIDDLESBRO' (Market-Place): Thursday, at 7, C. Cohen, "The Existence of God." Friday, "Christianity and Morality."  
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Quayside): 11, C. Cohen will lecture.  
STOCKTON (Market Cross): Monday, at 7, C. Cohen, "Christianity: Cah it Last?" Tuesday, "Christ as a Teacher." Wednesday, "The Meaning of Secularism."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London, E.—June 16, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 17 to 21, Stockton-on-Tees; 23, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 27, Wood Green; 30, m. Victoria Park, a. Regent's Park, e. West Ham.

STANLEY JONES, 53 Marlborough-road, Holloway, London.—June 16, m. Wood Green, e. Edmonton; 20, Hammersmith; 23, m. Victoria Park; 26, Hyde Park; 30, m. Battersea, a. Victoria Park, e. Deptford.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, Rotherhithe, London.—June 16, m. Mile End; 23, m. Wood Green, e. Tottenham; 30, m. Clerkenwell, a. Finsbury Park.

T. THURLOW, 350 Old Ford-road, E.—June 23, Chatham. July 17, m. Kingsland.

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