

# The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

[Sub-Editor, J. M. WHEELER.

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## THE BIBLE FOR CHILDREN.

OUR recent two articles on "The Bible in Board Schools" were written in full reply to a courteous letter we received from the Rev. Dr. John Clifford, one of the most vigorous leaders of the Congregational Church. Dr. Clifford's letter was occasioned by a former paragraph of ours, pointing out some of the unpleasant and nasty things that must meet a child's eye if an open, unexpurgated Bible is placed in his hands. We also said that the Nonconformists supported "the Compromise" in the Board schools because it served their turn, giving just as much Christianity to the children as was *politic* in existing circumstances. To this Dr. Clifford replied that the children are only introduced to "selections" from the Bible, and that these selections (according to the London School Board syllabus) offered fine poetry, lofty ethics, and inspiring history; also that the present School Board contest was not a struggle between Churchmen and Dissenters, but a fight between priestcraft and citizenship. We answered this at considerable length and with much carefulness, going through the syllabus standard by standard, and showing its monstrous inadequacy from the point of view of history and ethics. Finally, we argued that the Bible was really not introduced in the schools as a book of history, a book of poetry, or a book of ethics, but as the sacred Scriptures of the Christian religion.

Without waiting to read our second article, Dr. Clifford has sent us a letter upon the first, and we gladly give it publicity. We do not shun discussion—we court it; feeling sure that, whoever loses, truth has everything to gain.

Dr. Clifford's letter is as follows:—

*"To the Editor of the 'Free Thinker.'*

"SIR,—May I offer one or two remarks on your interesting article on 'The Bible in Board Schools'?"

"First, I am glad to say the 'unexpurgated Bible' was the companion of my youth, and that in it I found my first lessons in reading, my first stimulus from history and biography, my first appreciation of the charms of English prose; and I (must add that, so far as I know, no harm reached me from its contents. If I were to say what I owe to it—of enlightenment, of ethical stimulus, and altruistic inspiration—you would probably write me down 'a misguided enthusiast.' But I must say that it was not 'the questionable parts of the Bible' that fascinated me as a boy. Indeed, I have no recollection of making the acquaintance of the parts referred to before the period of youth was passed. Mr. Riley's estimate of children is not borne out by my observation or experience.

"Next, let me say, I have given my children an unexpurgated Bible, just as also I have introduced them to an 'unexpurgated' Shakespeare. I often wish I could persuade men to be as fair to the Bible as they are to Shakespeare; and I never ask for any other treatment for the Bible than what sincere students are prepared to give to Shakespeare, and, indeed, must give if they are to understand and enjoy him.

"In answer to your statement, that the 'co-operation of Jews, Agnostics, and Secularists' in the maintenance of the principle of using selections from the Bible in Board schools is impossible, I only have to say that the facts are against you. Such persons do co-operate.

"Permit me to urge your readers to vote for the Progressives on Thursday next, and so help forward the cause of a thoroughly efficient training for London's children.—I am, truly yours,

"Nov. 19, '97.

"JOHN CLIFFORD."

No one can find any fault with the *tone* of this letter.

No. 853.

Dr. Clifford is a courteous disputant, and we hope he will not deny us the same character. What we think of the *substance* of his letter will appear in the following rejoinder.

Dr. Clifford's second letter does not appear to harmonize with the first. At the outset he put it as a favorable point that Board School children were only introduced to "selections" of Scripture "suited to their age and capacity." "I should resist as strongly as yourself," he said, "the reading in our schools of the passages to which you refer." Now, however, he rejoices in having read the Bible, the whole Bible, the unexpurgated Bible, in the days of his childhood. The same unexpurgated Bible he places in the hands of his own children. Well, it is not placed in the hands of curs. There are crude, brutal, and disgusting passages in the Bible which we would not wittingly allow to pollute the minds of our little ones. We cannot help what they hear in the streets, or in other casual ways; but at least we can refrain from giving them dirt with the hand of parental authority. It is idle to say that this dirt is innocuous. Dr. Clifford cites his own experience, but we also spoke from knowledge. Here and there a child is extraordinarily incurious, but it is the average child we have to consider. We know what boys picked out from the Bible when we went to school, and boys must have changed very much if they don't do the same thing now. It is not necessary to regard them as little devils, on this account. We do not share Mr. Riley's ideas of human nature. But boys are boys, and the best of them have "a spice of the devil." It is the old inherited savagery of the race.

The great Bishop of the Goths would not translate the history of the wars of the Jews for his people, lest it should incense their sanguinary passions. Is it strange, then, that other parts of the Bible should be kept from the minds of children? Does not Dr. Clifford know—it has been admitted by Dr. Farrar—that some parts of the Bible are veiled by euphemistic translations. Were they translated literally—that is, honestly—expurgation would be indispensable, or every father would be obliged to keep the Bible under lock and key.

After all, if the unexpurgated Bible is such a blessing, why does Dr. Clifford go in for "selections" in Board Schools? Why not give the children there what he gives to his own children at home? Why does he "resist" the reading of the passages to which we refer? Ought one to give a child to read by himself what it would be a shame for him to read aloud? And is it in an "inspired" book that one should expect to find these difficulties?

Dr. Clifford's remarks about Shakespeare seem to us irrelevant. In the first place, there is no School Board fight over Shakespeare. No one proposes that a classic like the Bible shall not be printed accurately for adults; and we extend the same consideration to other classics. In the second place, Shakespeare is not claimed as an "inspired" author. His works are not authorized by law as a text-book of religion and morality. He stands (and *can* stand) upon his own merits. In the third place, Shakespeare is far from being as unclean as the Bible. He is wonderfully pure in comparison with nearly all his dramatic brethren of the great Elizabethan age. In the last place, Shakespeare is expurgated for school purposes. Very little expurgation is needed in his masterpieces, but where it is needed it is done. This is true even of the "Select Plays" so finely edited by Clark and Wright for the Clarendon Press, and intended for older students than those in elementary schools.

We venture to think that the Bible is not expurgated for school children (though such an edition is published by Cassell) because everybody would see what rents and chasms the process would make in the Word of God.

With regard to Dr. Clifford's statement, that Jews, Agnostics, and Secularists are working for the "Progressives," we know that he is right to a certain extent; indeed, we have already admitted it. Some men stick to their political party through thick and thin, others may choose what they think the less of two evils, and others are deceived by catch phrases and election shibboleths. But it is not true that the majority, or anything like the majority, of Jews, Agnostics, and Secularists are supporting the "Progressives." And the minority who are doing so now would gladly welcome the opportunity of voting for candidates who support Secular Education, wherever there was the smallest chance of making a tolerable impression on the electorate. We have no fear that Dr. Clifford's advice to our readers, even if it were in time, would make them swerve from allegiance to their convictions; and the fact that he gives it only shows that he has not thoroughly grasped the meaning of the issues in this educational struggle. Behind every other objection to the Bible as a text-book of morality lies the supreme objection that its sanctions are all supernatural. The object of the Secularist, at any rate, is to place morality upon a natural basis, guarded by natural sanctions, governed by natural principles, and animated by a natural inspiration. Between him and the Christian there can be no sincere or durable alliance. They are opposed at every point. And even if their battle is carried on without abuse and personalities, it must be fought out to the bitter end. One or the other must be defeated; one or the other must be victorious.

G. W. FOOTE.

#### THE BIBLE AND MODERN THOUGHT.

THE worst of slavery is that it unfits for freedom. Europe was so long chained by the authority of the Catholic Church that, even when the right of private judgment had been proclaimed, the Bible was preserved as an authoritative standard in all disputes, and was erected into an infallible oracle and fetish. It became, as Erasmus said, a veritable nose of wax, moulded to suit all idiosyncrasies. Some found therein salvation by faith, others salvation by works; some monarchy, others democracy, others theocracy. Some made it the charter of freedom; others, of authority. Any and every varied phase of faith could, by some dexterous twisting of texts, find sanction in "the Word of God." For, although each one, exercising his own judgment, came to a different conclusion, it was still agreed that the book, which had come down through the hands of a corrupt Church, was, nevertheless, wholly divine. But the assertion of Protestant freedom did some good. By dividing religionists, it made them less powerful for evil. It stimulated free inquiry in secular affairs, and this, in time, reacted on religion. It was the *renaissance* of pagan learning rather than the reformation of religion which led to progress. Astronomy extended the bounds of the universe beyond the conception of any Bible writer; geology proved a greater antiquity than Bible chronology allowed; biology taught that man was not created, but has evolved; the study of ancient nations and other faiths showed that Christianity was but one of many religions that have gathered up the devotions of men, and that both its ethics and its doctrines can be paralleled in faiths that are older, but not less lofty. In fine, a habit of investigation and criticism, known as the scientific spirit, was brought about, which only has to freely play on religion to dissolve it into its native elements of ignorance and credulity.

Under the influence of scientific criticism a school of compromise has arisen, well represented by the well-paid Farrar. It allows that the Bible has some errors, but it is still God's revelation. The immoralities and incredibilities of the Old Testament are given up, and those of the New glided over. The book is inspired everywhere in general, but nowhere in particular; and it is left to the fallible individual to pick out which is God's divine word, and which the interpolations and errors of the scribes. All sorts of tricks are adopted to get the new wine into the old bottles, that the bottles may remain in clerical custody.

The secret is too apparent. It won't do. The fact is, the Bible was written in days of semi-barbarism, when people did not know what they know now. It was used when people were uneducated, as a means of keeping them in subjection. Once they are free, its pretences as a divine revelation will have to go, whether the sky-pilots like it or not. The fundamental dogmas founded on the book are false. The Fall of Man is a fable. The Redemption is a fiction. There is no more finality in Christianity than in Judaism. The belief in supernaturalism arose in ages of ignorance, and is discredited with the advance of knowledge. With supernaturalism eliminated from its pages, the old collection of not-easily-dateable documents would be like *Hamlet* with the character of the Prince of Denmark omitted.

What, then, remains? Why, the books themselves, with whatever literary and ethical value they possess. No one wishes to destroy them, but only to put aside the absurd reverence which has made their dicta a check upon every advance of human thought, and an appeal to their authority a sufficient excuse for suppressing every free development of the human spirit. There the books are, and anyone with eyes can see they represent various ages, and are of very various values. It is well to have the literature of an ancient people thus collected. The records of their earlier and more barbarous history, their semi-savage laws, their poetry, proverbs, and wild, prophetic aspirations, all are of worth as throwing light on human evolution. But to maintain them as God's word, to impose them upon the minds of little children as an authority which they dare not question, is a tyranny and an abomination against which Freethinkers do well to fight till every vestige of bibliolatry is destroyed.

J. M. WHEELER.

#### THE "FREEWILL" FALLACY.

IN my recent debates with the Rev. A. J. Waldron he charged Secularism with being immoral, because it was opposed to the theological teaching of man's responsibility and "freewill." He repeatedly urged that Secularists consider man to be an irresponsible being, a mere machine destitute of all freedom of volition, and therefore powerless to prefer good to evil. That this is a perversion of the Secular position everyone should know who is acquainted with our philosophy. Secularists most certainly admit man's responsibility, when that term is properly defined and understood. The question, however, is, To whom are we responsible? We cannot say to God, for with him we have no *known* relations. Besides, if he made us, we are not responsible for our nature; and, according to the New Testament, we are denied the right to complain. St. Paul says: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another to dishonor?" (Romans ix. 20, 21). Secularism teaches that our responsibility is to man and to general society, inasmuch as from both of these we receive advantages, and therefore we hold it to be a duty to acknowledge such, and to render in return all possible service for benefits received, with a view of contributing to the welfare of the community.

In my pamphlet, *Morality without Religion*, I have written thus: "Virtue and vice are not mere accidents of the time, but are as much the consequence of the operation of natural laws as the falling of a stone or the growth of a flower." This appeared to trouble Mr. Waldron very much, for he would insist that my statement destroyed all distinctions between man and the stone or flower. But why I failed to see, as I informed him that in each case the act was the result of natural law. If not, I inquired, what other law controlled the acts? Further, I urged that the falling of a stone may be rendered subservient to human advantage by the proper application of the force displayed; but the whole is law, notwithstanding. Laws cannot be put aside, whether in the physical or the intellectual world; but they may be rightly directed in both. We do not, it is urged, call the falling of a stone "a vicious deed." No matter what we call it, we endeavor, as far as we can, to prevent it doing any mischief as it falls, and on the

same principle we adopt means to prevent human actions being so misdirected as to produce harm in society. The course of action that we take in the two cases will differ only in consequence of the difference in the law that is in operation, and the complication of the forces in the one case above those of the other. But in both instances we endeavor to make the forces of nature subservient to human benefit, and to prevent them from effecting mischief to society. Hence punishment can only act as one of the agents in the entire scheme. If we punish a man for a vicious act, and not a stone for falling, it is simply because this course of procedure is considered to have an advantageous effect in the one case, as a motive power or force, which it could not do in the other. To this explanation Mr. Waldron was silent.

The doctrine of "freewill," as taught by certain Churches, appears to me to be an absolute fallacy. It assumes a cause which is not an effect. But we know nothing of final causes. The truth of the matter, as it commends itself to my judgment, is this: The "will" is an effect as well as a cause. It certainly counts for something, indeed for much, in human actions; but then it has itself sprung from, and is conditioned by, organization, environment, and other causes which the individual is powerless to control. Man's motives do not arise from his volition; on the contrary, they govern the will. Man is free, of course, in a sense—that is, he is free to act in accordance with his desires; but these desires act independently of volition. And that is all the freedom that is possible, and it is all that any rational person should demand. No man wants freedom to do that which he has no inclination to do, or to act contrary to his desires. His freedom lies in his capacity to obey his impulses; but these impulses the "will" has no power to create. The "will" is not an originating cause, but itself an effect, the result of a complication of circumstances, such as external surroundings, the condition of the brain, temperament, age, sex, and heredity. To say that the "will" is free, in the sense that Armenians hold it to be, is to state that which is paradoxical. For, if a person has the power to call up a desire by the will, it is certain that some prior desire induced him to do so. What, therefore, caused that desire? Suppose one individual says he wills to do a thing, and he does it; he must have had an inclination, or he would not have thus willed and acted. Some inclination must, therefore, precede the "will," and, clearly, the "will" cannot be the cause of that which precedes itself in point of time, and to which, in fact, it owes its existence. All our thoughts are conditioned, and if the laws of cause and effect apply to man—which they certainly do—then free agency in matters of opinion is a misnomer. The term "will" I do not regard as an entity which enables us to accept or to reject any particular faith. If we choose wrongly, it is our judgment, and not our "will," which is at fault. Volition, I repeat, is a mental condition, depending for its manifestation upon such conditions as birth, climate, education, etc. Even Dr. McCann says: "I acknowledge that man is in some degree necessitated, but he is also in some degree free. . . . I acknowledge that man is in some degree necessitated by the circumstances of his birth, his surroundings, and his education" (*Debate with Mr. Bradlaugh*, p. 21). To this I assent; hence a man is free to accept one thing and to reject another, according to his volition, which has been formed by his moral perceptions, the result of his training. These are factors in his environment.

If it be immoral to reject the orthodox view of "freewill," then such professed Christians as St. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards, also the Churches of England and Scotland, and St. Paul, were and are immoral, for they all reject this "freewill" fallacy. In articles 10 and 17 of the Church of England it is said: "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God—wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ, preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will. Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his councils, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind," etc. And in the "Con-

fession of Faith" we read: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and some angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. . . . As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. . . . The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice" (chapter iii., sections 3, 4, 6, and 7.) St. Paul says of God: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans viii. 29, 30; see also ix. 23). It would be interesting to read Mr. Waldron's answer (which has not yet been given) to these extracts from Christian official sources.

It must not be understood that I regard St. Paul's notion of predestination as being analogous with the fact of philosophical necessity. The doctrine of Predestination assumes that men are born with a certain fate arranged for them by God, and that nothing can change their fixed destiny. Philosophical necessity, on the other hand, alleges that training and general environment will modify and change the proclivities born with the child. It may be that a thoroughly bad character will not be entirely transformed into a good one, but by careful discipline, and by the surroundings of superior conditions, the worst nature can be greatly improved. As Miss C. E. Plumtre aptly puts it: "A stinging-nettle will never be turned into a rose; but the fragrance and size of the rose depend much upon the soil it is in, and the amount of water and sunshine it receives." To my mind, it is the freewill doctrine that is immoral, for it offers a premium to indifference and delay. If "will" can be exercised at any time, repentance for wrong-doing, and the resolve to do right, can be postponed to the death-bed, when it will be too late to compensate society for wrong done towards it. Further, if I am "free" to act as I choose, is it not unjust to punish me for so acting? Besides, is not the very threat of punishment a factor tending to destroy freedom?

CHARLES WATTS.

#### INGERSOLL'S LATEST.

LIKE the most of you, I was raised among people who knew—who were certain. They did not reason or investigate. They had no doubts. They knew that they had the truth. In their creed there was no guess—no perhaps. They had a revelation from God. They knew the beginning of things. They knew that God commenced to create one Monday morning, four thousand and four years before Christ. They knew that in the eternity back of that morning he had done nothing. They knew that it took him six days to make the earth—all plants, all animals, all life, and all the globes that wheel in space. They knew exactly what he did each day, and when he rested. They knew the origin, the cause of evil, of all crime, of all disease and death.

They not only knew the beginning, but they knew the end. They knew that life had one path and one road. They knew that the path, grass-grown and narrow, filled with thorns and nettles, invested with vipers, wet with tears, stained by bleeding feet, led to heaven; and that the road, broad and smooth, bordered with fruits and flowers, filled with laughter and song, and all the happiness of human love, led straight to hell. They knew that God was doing his best to make you take the path, and that the devil used every art to keep you in the road.

They knew that there was a perpetual battle waged between the great powers of good and evil for the possession of human souls. They knew that many centuries ago God had left his throne and had been born a

babe into this poor world; that he had suffered death for the sake of man—for the sake of saving a few. They also knew that the human heart was utterly depraved, so that man by nature was in love with wrong, and hated God with all his might.

All who doubted or denied would be lost. To live a moral and honest life—to keep your contracts, to take care of wife and child—to make a happy home—to be a good citizen, a patriot, a just and thoughtful man—was simply a respectable way of going to hell.

God did not reward men for being honest, generous, and brave, but for the act of faith—without faith, all the so-called virtues were sins, and the men who practised these virtues, without faith, deserved to suffer eternal pain.

All of these comforting and reasonable things were taught by the ministers in their pulpits—by teachers in Sunday-schools, and by parents at home. The children were victims. They were assaulted in the cradle—in their mother's arms. Then, the schoolmaster carried on the war against their natural sense, and all the books they read were filled with the same impossible truths. The poor children were helpless. The atmosphere they breathed was filled with lies—lies that mingled with their blood.

In those days ministers depended on revivals to save souls and reform the world.

In the winter, navigation having closed, business was mostly suspended. There were no railways, and the only means of communication were wagons and boats. Generally the roads were so bad that the wagons were laid up with the boats. There were no operas, no theatres, no amusement except parties and balls. The parties were regarded as worldly, and the balls as wicked. For real and virtuous enjoyment the good people depended on revivals.

The sermons were mostly about the pains and agonies of hell, the joys and ecstasies of heaven, salvation by faith, and the efficacy of the atonement. The little churches in which the services were held were generally small, badly ventilated, and exceedingly warm. The emotional sermons, the sad singing, the hysterical amens, the hope of heaven, the fear of hell, caused many to lose the little sense they had. They became substantially insane. In this condition they flocked to the "mourner's bench," asked for the prayers of the faithful, had strange feelings, prayed and wept, and thought they had been "born again." Then they would tell their experience—how wicked they had been, how evil had been their thoughts, their desires, and how good they had suddenly become.

They used to tell the story of an old woman who, in telling her experience, said: "Before I was converted—before I gave my heart to God—I used to lie and steal; but now, thanks to the grace and blood of Jesus Christ, I have quit 'em both, in a great measure."

Of course, all the people were not exactly of one mind. There were some scoffers, and now and then some man had sense enough to laugh at the threats of the priests and make a jest of hell. Some would tell of unbelievers who had lived and died in peace.

Well, while the cold weather lasted, while the snows fell, the revival went on; but when the winter was over, when the steamboat's whistle was heard, when business started again, most of the converts "backslid" and fell again into their old ways; but the next winter they were on hand, ready to be "born again." They formed a kind of stock company, playing the same parts every winter and backsliding every spring.

The ministers who preached at these revivals were in earnest. They were zealous and sincere. They were not philosophers. To them science was the name of a vague dread—a dangerous enemy. They did not know much, but they believed a great deal. To them hell was a burning reality. They could see the smoke and flames. The Devil was no myth. He was an actual person, a rival of God, an enemy of mankind. They thought that the important business of this life was to save your soul, that all should resist and scorn the pleasures of sense, and keep their eyes steadily fixed on the golden gate of the New Jerusalem. They were unbalanced, emotional, hysterical, bigoted, hateful, loving, and insane. They really believed the Bible to be the actual word of God, a book without mistake or contradiction. They called its cruelties justice, its absurdities mysteries, its miracles facts, and the idiotic passages were regarded as profoundly spiritual. They dwelt on the pangs, the regrets, the infinite agonies of

the lost, and showed how easily they could be avoided, and how cheaply heaven could be obtained. They told their hearers to believe, to have faith, to give their hearts to God, their sins to Christ, who would bear their burdens and make their souls as white as snow.

All this the ministers really believed. They were absolutely certain. In their minds the Devil had tried in vain to sow the seeds of doubt.

I heard hundreds of these evangelical sermons, heard hundreds of the most fearful and vivid descriptions of the tortures inflicted in hell, of the horrible state of the lost. I supposed that what I heard was true, and yet I did not believe it. I said, "It is," and then I thought, "It cannot be."

These sermons made but faint impression on my mind. I was not convinced.

I had no desire to be "converted," did not want a "new heart," and had no wish to be "born again."

But I heard one sermon that touched my heart, that left its mark, like a scar, on my brain.

One Sunday I went with my brother to hear a Free Will Baptist preacher. He was a large man, dressed like a farmer; but he was an orator. He could paint a picture with words.

He took for his text the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus." He described Dives, the rich man, his manner of life, the excesses in which he indulged, his extravagance, his riotous nights, his purple and fine linen, his feasts, his wines, and his beautiful women.

Then he described Lazarus, his poverty, his rags and wretchedness, his poor body eaten by disease, the crusts and crumbs he devoured, the dogs that pitied him. He pictured his lonely life, his friendless death.

Then, changing his tone of pity to one of triumph, leaping from tears to the heights of exultation, from defeat to victory, he described the glorious company of angels who, with white and outspread wings, carried the soul of the despised pauper to Paradise—to the bosom of Abraham.

Then, changing his voice to one of scorn and loathing, he told of the rich man's death. He was in his palace, on his costly couch, the air heavy with perfume, the room filled with servants and physicians. His gold was worthless then. He could not buy another breath. He died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in a torment.

Then, assuming a dramatic attitude, putting his right hand to his ear, he whispered: "Hark! I hear the rich man's voice. What does he say? Hark! 'Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus, that he may dip his finger in water and cool my parched tongue. For I am tormented in this flame.'"

"Ob, my hearers, he has been making that request for more than eighteen hundred years. And millions of ages hence that wail will cross the gulf that lies between the saved and lost, and still will be heard the cry, 'Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.'"

For the first time I understood the dogma of eternal pain—appreciated the "glad tidings of great joy." For the first time my imagination grasped the height and depth of the Christian horror. Then I said: "It is a lie, and I hate your religion. If it is true, I hate your God."

From that day I have had no fear, no doubt. For me, on that day the flames of hell were quenched. From that day I have passionately hated every orthodox creed.

(To be continued.)

## IN THE DEN OF THE CRITICAL LIONS.

(Concluded from page 741.)

We may say at once that if Ecclesiastes were the culprit he is represented as being, then it were useless to attempt to extract any pantheistic essence out of the saying. But is he guilty—this dear, deceased, gentle, mournful, pessimistic anatomist of melancholy of ours? While there is undoubted reason for believing that his liver was out of order, the encouragement of idleness was as far removed from his intention as the encouragement of Atheism from Professor Harnack's. It is as well to remember in this connection that the division of the books of the Bible into chapters and verses is quite arbitrary. It was not a

feature of the original literary form of the document, so that any obscurity or apparent violent tilting against common-sense notions may be attributable to the sudden interruption of the flow of thought, or sequence of ideas, involved in chopping the work up into chapters, and in a modified degree into verses. Bearing this in mind, the tenth chapter of Ecclesiastes becomes a continuation of the matter of the thought of chapter ix. We shall see how this last chapter bears on the matter in hand when a little further attention has been given to chapter x. If Ecclesiastes was recommending a lackadaisical abstention from stone-lifting and wood-chopping on account of their dangers, why does he in verse 10 say that wisdom is profitable to direct "when the iron weapon used is a blunt one"? If the thing is to be abstained from altogether, why this supererogatory advice? Verse 18 says: "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." Could there be a more triumphant vindication of Ecclesiastes than these words? Can you build a house, or rehabilitate a collapsing one, without raising stones and cleaving wood? Does not this verse amount to a distinct injunction to raise stones and cleave wood? Why, of course it does. Oh, Dr. H. Lisco, why did you tempt Professor Harnack to eat of the fruit of your study of Ecclesiastes, when but for that he might still have been sunning himself in the Eden of an undimmed reputation for critical lucidity?

But what does this alleged work-shirking old sinner, Ecclesiastes, say in verses 9 and 10 of chapter ix.? Listen: "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun all the days of thy vanity; for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." Now let us "hear the conclusion of the whole matter" by turning to the thirteenth verse of the last chapter of this blessed book, which is: "Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Is this the man who was advising working men to go in for a universal strike against work, and leave their wives and families to the tender mercies of the Jerusalem workhouse? Whatever your labor may be, do it with a light heart, and joyfully, is the advice offered by Ecclesiastes. Keep the Commandments, says he; and the third of those Commandments is: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." And we are asked to believe that the man who enjoined the working for six days of the week was at the same time advising men to do nothing the whole of the seven! Oh, Messrs. Harnack, Lisco, and Haweis, "perhaps you were right in dissembling your love; but why do you kick him downstairs?"

But if there ever had been the slightest vestige of a case for the interpretation of Harnack and the others, it would have been destroyed by the rendering of Ecclesiastes' words given by Dr. Lisco: "If he breaks stones, he shall be wounded of them; if he splits logs, he shall be in danger of them." Nothing about raising the stone and cleaving the wood here. No room for mysticism, but just a plain statement of facts which brings the scene of the flying fragments of stone and the splinters of the split logs vividly before the imagination. But if one wanted to put the mystical idea of Pantheism in concrete phrase, what could be more arresting than the Logion: "Raise the stone, and there you will find me; cleave the wood, and there am I"? Now, why is it that these unfortunate blunders in criticism have been made by Professor Harnack and other Christian critics of his ilk? This: Because the premises from which they outlook life are unsound and untrustworthy. They have embraced the belief in the historical existence of a Christ who comes into violent collision with the fundamental facts of human experience, and when they are confronted with a document or a tradition claiming authenticity, which is incompatible with their erroneous ideal, they mentally turn themselves inside out to effect a reconciliation. The men who lived, and the conditions which obtained, two thousand years ago were in their broad essentials the same as those of the present generation. There are men who are seized with an uncontrollable impulse to work for the good of the race to-day, as there were then. There were religious and philosophical speculation, and personification, and idealization, then as there are to-day; and the practice of putting formal

literary conversations in the mouths of such personifications obtained then as it obtains now. People do not talk in ordinary life as they are made to do in books. And Jesus Christ, as he is presented to us, never had an historical existence; he was the hypostatized Logos of whom we read so much in connection with Philo and the Gnostics, and into whose imagined and capacious mouth you could put whatever you chose, so long, of course, as you did not violate the unity of the philosophical idea which it personified. This is the key to the situation, and it is for the want of this key that Professor Harnack has wounded Ecclesiastes in the house of his friends. The Book of Ecclesiastes is literature. It is laden with that sense of sadness which, as an element of beauty, as Poe says, is inseparable from every true work of literary art, and in reading it one is conscious of emotions cognate with those inspired by the works of the world's great literary masters, whose function it is to extract sunbeams from moral cucumbers. To judge this work of Ecclesiastes from the ferociously practical standpoint of the moral precisionist (even if there were any just ground for doing so) would constitute a literary outrage, and it is the commission of this outrage which Professor Harnack desires to father upon Jesus Christ. But this must be classed with the other hallucinations of the apologetic mind up to date.

BLOOMFIELD STEVENS.

## RELIGION AND CHARACTER.

RELIGION degrades and debases character, because it ignores the natural and teaches the abnormal and unnatural. It teaches nonsense and despises sense. It turns its attention to an imaginary future life and mythical God, and ignores the facts of this life. It teaches dependence on God, and belittles manhood and self-reliance. It asserts that the natural is not sufficient to explain things, and then invents the unnatural and impossible, and calls on everybody to fall down and worship. It bases happiness on blind, unreasoning faith, and despises facts, science, and reason. It exalts something called the spirit or soul, of which we know nothing, and belittles the mind and body. It says to all, "Believe, or be damned." It teaches that a good, all-wise, all-powerful God creates us, knowing beforehand just what we will think and do. If we sin, it is because God wants us to, as he knew before he made us that he would, and he made us of his own freewill. It teaches that an all-powerful and all-good God allows the Devil to live to seduce and destroy our souls. In this respect the Church is not like God.

According to believers, God is all-powerful, and yet he allows the Devil to live. He creates souls that sin and cause others to sin. He has the power to stop this, but does not. He makes the good and the bad. He creates the dove and the rattlesnake. He causes the sun to shine on the just and the unjust. He does not prevent murder, outrage, or war. He does not silence the liar, the profaner, the blasphemer, or the Atheist. He apparently smiles on swindling and gambling. The Church does not do as it claims God does. It covets power, and when it obtains it, then the power is used to coerce people into observing religion, whether they believe it or not. In all these acts religion is a debaser of character. It weakens the mind by teaching a belief in God, hell, heaven, etc. A mind that has been weakened by such teaching is more apt to believe other lies than a mind that accepts nothing without reason. Religious teaching destroys self-respect and self-confidence. Its doctrine of damnation destroys and blunts human sympathy. That is the reason that most criminals are religious. That explains why preachers, as a class, are more immoral and have less character than any other class of men. Statistics of jails and prisons will prove this. Study them up, and you will see that I am right. More preachers are convicted of crime every year in proportion than any other class of men. The more orthodox furnish the largest numbers, and as they become more liberal, the crime rate decreases. Orthodoxy produces more criminals than heterodoxy; Theism more than Atheism.

I will now mention a few fairly well-known characters who were very pious. To begin with, Adam tried to lay all the blame on the woman, and religious people ever

since that time have followed his example. The common remark now is, "There is a woman in it." Lot was a drunkard and committed incest. Abraham was a liar and an adulterer. He turned his concubine and child out of doors to starve, and showed his willingness to become a murderer of his own son. Isaac was a liar and a foolish dissembler. Jacob was a trickster, a liar, a swindler, a fraud, and a polygamist. Reuben was more or less like his father. Judah was a chip from the same foul stump. Moses was a murderer, a bigamist, a thief, a planner of wholesale robbery, a slaughterer in cold blood of thousands of women and children, and he turned over thirty thousand virgins to the lusts of his brutal soldiers. He also married a negro. Samson was a murderer and a thief. David was like the rest, and in order to get another man's wife he had the man killed. God was so angry at this that he could not keep from giving punishment, but, instead of giving it to David, who was the guilty party, he smote the babe who was the product of David's lecherous acts. Absalom, Solomon, and their brother were more or less like their father David. Remember that these were the ancestors of Jesus. Can we expect good fruit from such a source? Peter was guilty of lying and treachery. Paul lied for the glory of God. Henry VIII. burned men and women at the stake and killed his wives. John Calvin was a tyrant and a murderer. This list could be carried out to great length, but space will not permit.

I wish that all readers of this article would read up the characters of the godly Bible women. If the women will do this, they will be the first to demand its removal from the schools, and instead of having it adorn the centre table they will keep it where the children cannot find it. Eve and Vashti were about the only decent characters. Study these characters, and see what a bad lot they were. Search the Scriptures.

The Freethinker studies nature. He loves truth. He says: Use your own minds and govern yourselves. He preaches self-reliance and self-esteem. He says: Be honest, kind, merciful, loving, upright, cheerful, and moral; not because of any future life of rewards, but because this is the ground-work of happiness here. Reason says that the best possible preparation for a future life, if there be one, is to live properly here. We preach the gospel of one world at a time. Our gospels are five in number. They are "good living," "cheerfulness," "intelligence," "justice," and "liberty." Get these cardinal points well in hand, and the battle against superstition is won. The religion of believe or be damned will vanish, and man will emerge from the slime of superstition and begin to perfect his character.

G. S. LINCOLN.

—Independent Pulpit.

### THE FUTILITY OF PRAYER.

(To the tune of "Vilkins and His Dinah.")

It's really no use for a fellow to pray;  
For Jesus and Mary are both at the play,  
And God and the Holy Ghost playing at bowls—  
So all are too busy for saving of souls.

They've shut up the shutters, they've shut up the shop;  
St. Paul and a cherub have gone on a hop.  
St. Peter is drunk, and the dissolute mob  
Are stealing a watch from his sanctity's fob.

St. Michael has ruddied an archangel's nose,  
And Raphael has stripped off Ichuriel's hose;  
The seraphs are singing a music-hall tune,  
And the band-master's stopping his ears with the moon.

The prayers are all filed on a bit of bent wire  
That once was a chord in Uraniel's lyre;  
And many are torn, for the reprobate crew  
Has used them for marking its winnings at loo.

It's really no use for a fellow to pray;  
For Jesus and Mary are both at the play,  
And God and the Holy Ghost playing at bowls—  
So all are too busy for saving of souls.

W. W. S.

Priests may justly be regarded as an invention of a timorous and abject superstition, which, ever dilident of itself, dares not offer up its own devotions, but ignorantly thinks to recommend itself to the Divinity by the mediation of his supposed friends and servants.—David Hume.

### ACID DROPS.

DR. GUINNESS ROGERS, speaking on behalf of the "Progressive" candidate for the School Board at Battersea, stated that "he had been fighting against priestcraft all his life, and by God's grace would do so not only in the present election, but to the end of his days." This statement elicited loud cheers—which shows how easily the public are gulled. Dr. Rogers fights against one form of priestcraft—namely, that of the Church of England. But he fights for another form of priestcraft—namely, that of his own Non-conformity. We have often asked these Dissenters to answer a simple question. What is the real difference between established religion in State churches and established religion in State schools? We invite Dr. Rogers, Dr. Clifford, Mr. Price Hughes, and all the rest of the Non-conformist fraternity, to give an honest reply.

The Roman Catholic candidate for the Birmingham School Board came in at the top of the poll. The Liberal eight were all returned, but the Trades Council lost their one member on the old Board by running two candidates. We regret this, as the member in question supported Secular Education.

Mr. W. Mansfield, a member of the Orpington School Board, says that the parson-advocated "Orpington Scheme" became ridiculous in its native place. By sending circulars to selected parents the vicar got a number to ask that their children should have religious instruction from their own clergyman. This was allowed. But the highest number he ever got was eighteen, and this soon dwindled to five, and the scheme collapsed.

At a meeting of the Aberdeen School Board the Rev. Alex. Webster, Unitarian, chairman, submitted a motion that a committee be asked to consider the propriety of recommending the use of the Revised Version of the New Testament in Board schools for religious instruction. In the course of a speech in support of his motion, Mr. Webster remarked that much had been said about the manners and morals of young Aberdeen, but there could be no difficulty in attributing the excessive profanity indulged in by boys and girls to the fact that the Authorized Version of the Scriptures was in use in schools, containing as it did frequent repetition of such words as "damnation," "hell," and "Devil." The motion was defeated by twelve votes to three.

A correspondent (the *Daily News* says) sends us a still further example of those terribly Godless Church schools: Teacher—"Now, boys, who was Absalom?" Boy—"The son of David, sir." Teacher—"Can you tell me anything about him?" Boy—"Yes, sir; he wore long hair." Teacher—"Come, come; can't you tell me anything else?" Boy—"Yes, sir; he was a very bad and wicked son, and caused great worry and trouble to his father." Teacher—"Quite right. Now, can you tell me anything very special that David said to him, to turn him from his wicked ways?" Boy—"Yes, sir; he said, 'Get your hair cut.'"

Another child was asked, "Who came after David?" "Solomon," he said. "And who came after Solomon?" No answer. "I know, sir," said a little girl. "Who was it, then?" "Please, sir, the Queen of Sheba."

The Free Churches (heaven save the mark!) are making a fresh appeal on behalf of Sunday closing, in which they refer to "the awful mischiefs arising from the Sunday trade in intoxicating drink." Considering that public-houses are already closed all Sunday morning, and most of the afternoon, besides being open for a shorter time than ordinary in the evening, such language is nothing but hypocritical nonsense. Those who want to stop the liquor traffic altogether have a definite principle, but those who want to stop it on Sunday are mere Sabbatarians.

The Free Church appealers talk about "the observance of the Lord's Day" as "one of the glories of our land." We say it is one of the dishonors of our land. The dull, stupid English Sunday is the chief cause of the brutalization of our lower classes, as it is the chief cause of the stupefaction of our middle classes. The upper classes keep Sunday in a freer and easier fashion, yet they think any restrictions are quite proper for the multitude.

What a lovely world this would be if the preachers could run it according to their will. All the week would be employed to get ready for Sunday, and everybody would go to church to hear what the clergy have to tell about Gaud and his purposes. This would be so much better for them than bicycling, or visiting libraries, museums, and art galleries, that who can wonder at the Lord's Day Rest Association appealing to all the truly religious to stop the growing profanation of the Lord's Day.

Bobadil Wilhelm expounded to his army at Berlin the whole duty of man: "Whoever is not a good Christian is not a good man, nor is he a good Prussian soldier." Wilhelm the Little forgot he numbered among his ancestry one known to history as Frederick the Great. Much mud must have mingled in the line of that veritable descent. But note the ascending scale of the Emperor's dictum. Be a good Christian first, then may you have a chance of becoming that superlative of excellence, a good Prussian soldier. How other?

The question of teaching Scripture in State schools is only half-discussed, while the rights of the teacher are ignored—as in that respect they usually are. Alongside the argument as to the injury which may be done to the child-mind, by forcing or inducing it to listen to erroneous or inefficient explanations, runs the argument that it is unfair to place a teacher where his conscience will be strained to state as an explanation what his own intelligence rejects.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Rev. Rouse, orating at the Baptist Annual Assembly in Sydney, asserted that, as the Hindu woman who becomes a Baptist is thereby cut off from her family, it is doubtful whether, in these circumstances, the converts should be baptized at all. In other words, the alleged divine necessity of baptism to salvation is a patent-reversible contrivance, as all such dogmas are. A dogma must either reverse on occasions—or bust.

In bygone years, when saintly men  
Desired to change the sinners' lives,  
They roped them up in public; then  
They split their ears with holy knives.  
That custom old with us remains,  
For when the pious man appears  
To drive into unwilling brains  
His theories grim—he splits our ears.

We see an announcement that at the West London Theatre the author of *Thy Devil shall be My Devil* will discourse on "The Suicide of a Soul." The names of soloists, duettists, organist, and choir conductor are given. And yet some people prefer to pay to go to the theatre on week-days.

The *Daily News* of Nov. 20 gave the translation of the alleged official report of Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius, on the trial and conviction of Jesus Christ, just produced, for some good reason, from the Archives of the Vatican. In a leader on the subject it says that it has no sign of authenticity, and does not, if the English translation be correct, strike one as even a clever forgery.

The document begins with an absurdity. Pilate says: "I am astonished at the sensation created in Rome by the trial of Jesus Christ." Well he might be had it been true. But what reason is there to suppose that the events alleged in the Gospels did disturb the minds of the authorities at Rome? The tone is modern throughout, and only a modern Roman would make an ancient Roman governor say, as this document does: "After every effort to save the man from the clamors of the crowd, I was forced to submit, and in deference to their religious ideas I condemned him, while at the same time I declined all responsibility, saying it was nothing in which the Government had any part, and the man was sacrificed to the religious principles of the people." Such a confession of incapacity would have meant Pilate's instant recall.

This document betrays itself by merely going over the ground of the Gospel story. It has no more claim to be considered historical evidence than Tennyson's *Idyls of the King* to be a real account of Arthur and his Court. The *Daily News* believes in the Gospel history, which we do not, but it says: "Pilate behaved with miserable weakness, and committed a judicial murder of the most infamous kind. But he would not have addressed the Emperor in a style of didactic criticism upon Liberalism, Conservatism, and Social Democracy. Nor is it conceivable that this document should have been kept for ages at the Vatican without the existence of such a priceless treasure being known."

The new newly-discovered letter has, then, even less claim to being an authentic document than the *Acta Pilati*, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the letter of Publius Lentulus, and the other fraudulent works with which the great Christian Corporation has sought to bolster up its fictions.

The *Chronicle*, too, plucked up courage enough to call the alleged newly-discovered letter from Pontius Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius a foolish forgery, and the *Westminster Gazette* says ditto. This latest Vatican discovery is not nearly so clever as the old forgeries. What could be more absurd than to make Pontius Pilate talk about Conservatives and Liberals and Socialist agitators? Evidently

the composition is quite recent, perhaps not three months old. No doubt it is a kind of "Kite" from the famous ecclesiastical forging-house of Rome.

The Rev. Madison C. Peters pronounces the bicycle to be the chief agent of the Devil in wrecking the Church. "Why is the house of God forsaken?" (Neh. ii. 13) was his text, and he answered the question by saying that Sunday bicycling was doing the business. Mr. Peters can't change the day on which he carries on his preaching business, or he evidently would do so; for, as he found that most of those who were ceasing to attend his Wednesday evening prayer-meeting alleged as an excuse that that day was the chief one for social functions, he announced that in future his prayer-meeting would be held on Friday evening. Then he denounced those "who about nine o'clock on Sunday morning began to be afflicted with a headache that usually lasted until nine o'clock at night." These people, he said, took no pride in their church or their God!

The Lord sent hornets among the Canaanites, and last Sunday he sent bees into the parish church of Bishopstone, Wilts. They made it expedient for the worshippers first to change their seats, and finally to stampede. The vicar, the Rev. Herbert Ault, was stung, and had to retreat from the pulpit; and the service was brought to an abrupt conclusion. These bees may give some people an excuse for staying away from church for the rest of their lives.

The Dean of Norwich says that recently an American called upon him, and, pointing to the Cathedral, asked him how much he would take for "the whole blessed concern." But the Dean was above temptation, and did not try to dispose of the national property. All honor to him!

According to Lord George Hamilton, the triple visitation of famine, plague, and earthquake in India, combined with the victories of the Turks over the Greeks, have roused Moslem and Hindu fanaticism. A writer in the *Madras Review* contends that the Government plan of non-interference makes both sects think themselves within their rights when outraging feelings, whether by Moslems killing cows near Hindu temples, or Hindus carrying their gods past Moslem mosques. The law punishes for only breaches of the peace, and often has to punish both sides. The Salvation Army has stimulated the use of religious processions, and every sect claims the right to the highway with as much pomp, finery, and foolery as it can flaunt.

At an inquest on a suicide at Elland, the jury in a body objected to kissing the Bible provided, on the ground of fear of microbes. The coroner said: "You can kiss the inside; take a nice chapter." But the foreman asked to affirm. The coroner boggled, and said he would inquire whether the Scotch oath was allowable. He ought to know that it is, and that he has not to inquire into the reasons why the claim for affirmation is made.

Among the Bible-believing Puritans of New England the belief in witchcraft seems to be not yet extinct. They hold with John Wesley that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible. A sect in Lyme, Connecticut, is known as the Holiness Band; or, vulgarly, the Holy Ghosters. They recently nearly knocked a poor old woman to death, and a half-a-dozen prominent citizens have been arrested for so doing. They said they were trying to drive the Devil out of her.

Canon Bardsley, at a meeting of the S. P. G., at the Parochial Hall, Huddersfield, quoted the following verse:—

The heathen perish day by day,  
Thousands and thousands pass away;  
Oh, Christians, to the rescue fly,  
Preach Jesus to them ere they die.

Just fancy the Divine Father letting his heathen children perish for want of hearing of his illegitimate son. Thousands must be going to hell headlong who never had a chance of hearing of him. The Canon funks this, and says they will be judged by the light of nature, so he urges subscriptions to missions to give them a better chance of damnation by rejecting the blessed gospel, for they do reject it. The light of nature tells them that children without fathers are in no way supernatural. The really divine ones have no mothers.

Jezreel White, of the Latter House of Israel, who built an asylum for 14,000 idiots prepared to meet the Lord at Gillingham, is to be outdone in America by W. S. Densickr, the latest prophet, who locates at Lebanon. Densickr has had a revelation from the Redeemer to build him a temple of pure gold, twelve miles square and sixty thousand feet high, as a start for the New Jerusalem. Densickr works the snowball racket that has brought so much grist to cadgers on the evangelical lay.

This worthy is like the pious Jabez Balfour—a Napoleon

of finance. He is working what he calls a "church chain"—all for Christ. He writes a letter asking you to contribute five cents to the cause, and thereby obtain the blessing of God. He requests also that you send an exact copy of his letter to three of your friends whom you deem most likely to invest their small change in heavenly grace. The "chain" of letters runs from 1 to 100, and a gentleman who was "touched" figures it out that the 25th number means more than 282 billion letters, and more than 21 billions of money, if every sucker bites at the bait. If the "chain" doesn't break before the 100th number is played out, it will corral all the wealth of this world. Mr. Densickr hath a great head. No wonder Jesus Christ has made him Lord High Treasurer of the New Jerusalem. Baxter will have to look to his laurels.

One of New York's orthodox ministers lately gave notice that he would preach a sermon entitled "Hell is Wide Open." The notice added in letters of equal prominence, "All are Welcome."

Three hundred clergymen applied not long ago for one vacant chaplaincy in the army. There were never so many ministers out of a job as at present, and the religious papers publish numerous advertisements of preachers who are willing to work for low wages.—*Truthseeker.*

Onset Bay, Massachusetts, is a colony of Spiritists and Theosophists. Some one lodged odious charges against H. B. Foulke, one of the claimants to Blavatsky's smirched mantle. Thereupon Mme. Diss de Bar, once a medium and now a Theosophist, lodged information with the authorities at Onset Bay, the Theosophical headquarters, that has led to the granting of warrants for the arrest of thirty-five men charged with immoral conduct. The proceeding indicates that Onset Bay has some of the local features which distinguished the ancient cities of the plain.

The Rev. Philip S. Gibson, pastor of the Mt. Olive Baptist Church, at Plainfield, New Jersey, was arrested on a complaint made by the overseer of the poor, to whom his accuser, Miss Lucy Swain, had made an appeal a short time previously. The young woman stated that up to the previous week the reverend gentleman had written several letters to her in which he implicates himself.

The Rev. J. E. U. Cook, pastor of the Baptist Church at Newmarket, O., has been found guilty of unministerial conduct, having been charged by a young woman with having committed assaults upon her on three occasions; and he has been dismissed from his pastorate.

The Rev. T. N. Raymond James, rector of Luckington, is a worthy disciple of the Lord. He sued a poor woman, who was in receipt of parish relief, for a guinea, as his fee for her having put a single stone on her mother's grave. The poor woman was deaf and dumb, and had paid no attention to the man of God's demand. The magistrate at Malmesbury County Court made an order for defendant to pay 1s. 6d. a month. Several persons who were in the court handed her money to meet the instalments, which, it is to be hoped, the worthy rector will profit by.

The Rev. J. Slattery and the Rev. J. Connellan, two converted Roman Catholics, have raised considerable commotion by lecturing against their former faith. Mrs. Slattery, too, who is said to be an escaped nun, lectures to women only. At Manchester one of their meetings, which was to have taken place in the Christian Association Hall, was prohibited by the police, who declared it would be the occasion of riot.

The eccentric Rev. John Robertson, who seceded from the Gorbals Free Church, Glasgow, and started the City Temple there with a Baptist tank, has intimated his retirement to America, where he will enter on a revivalist career.

The Pope is not satisfied with the Laurier Compromise in Canada, and exhorts the faithful not to use the public schools, but to support their own separate school system when the State refuses to assist.

Paul said that women should be covered in church because of the angels, who, it is well known, came down to see that the daughters of men were fair. In America, however, there is a movement to make the ladies take off their bonnets in church as well as in theatres. Some men having complained to the Rev. Dr. Carroll, of the Hough-avenue Congregational Church, New York, that they could not enjoy his sermons because they could not see his face for the ladies' hats, he issued a request for ladies to be in future uncovered.

They have abundance of poverty, especially among the Catholic population of New York, yet they are spending an enormous sum of money on the new Church of Our Lady of

Lourdes, which will enclose an exact reproduction of every detail of the miraculous grotto. The New York *Herald* says: "Here all will be represented, from the frowning rocks surrounding the grotto to the life-sized statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, standing to the right a little above the floor of the cave, in a deeper recess, where, according to the story, the Virgin stood and announced to the child, 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' Above the statue will appear these words in the language in which they are said to have been spoken: '*Je suis l'Immaculee Conception.*'"

We gather from a Spiritist contemporary that spirits appear in clothes by the power of their wills, because they desire a covering for their nudity. Sometimes they are clothed, and at the same time not conscious; then they take on automatically the clothes they were used to wearing in earth life—soldiers in red, and sailors in blue. The idea of a ghost of a coalscuttle bonnet and a crinoline may astonish you at first, but you get used to it, like eels to skinning.

From a missionary in Basutoland Mr. Bryce had an amusing anecdote. A Basuto had returned to his native country from the diamond mines. He described to the missionary his experiences there. On one occasion his eye had fallen on a valuable diamond in the clay he was breaking into fragments. While he was endeavoring to pick it up, he perceived the overseer approaching, and, having it by this time in his hand, was for a moment terribly frightened, the punishment for theft being very severe. The overseer, however, passed on. "And then," said the Basuto, "I knew that there was indeed a God, for he had preserved me." Such are the consolations of religion to a successful thief!—*Daily News.*

Our pious Lord High Chancellor says that "there are from forty to forty-five thousand Jews at this moment in Jerusalem, the whole population being about sixty thousand, so that about two-thirds of Jerusalem was now Jewish, and the far greater mass of the Jewish population were what might be called paupers. What their occupations were, and how they lived, he had endeavored to ascertain; but he believed it was as great a mystery to those familiar with Palestine as it was to him."

A writer on "Christian Unity" in the Glasgow *Saturday Weekly Citizen* acutely points out that the modern position on the Bible leads to each emphasizing as the divine portions those which most accord with his own personal tastes and aspirations. He adds: "Until the supernatural elements in the conception of Christ are reduced to an unimportant minimum, or eliminated altogether, the idea of re-union of the sects of Christendom is little more than a vain dream."

From time to time the *Crescent*, of Liverpool, reports conversions from Christianity to the faith of Islam. Is there a single instance of a Moslem in England being converted to the belief that Mary's son was God?

Dr. G. M. Fortune, who has resigned his position as a Baptist pastor, at Paris, Texas, asks: "Who are in control of the vast body of Baptists in Texas to-day? You know it is that portion of the people who have made the least progress in moral development, and who have religiously abstained from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. They have governed with the iron hand of the zealot, and dictated the thought of their fellows with the confidence of infallible knowledge. To consort with them is to surrender your manhood to the dictates of blindness, and concede the soundness of a system whose forms of belief cover, but do not conceal, a multitude of moral obliquities."

The Rev. Father F. M. Wyndam returns in the *Weekly Register* to the charge that Freemasonry is "seriously bent on destroying every form of religion, be it Christian or non-Christian." He holds that the French and Italian Masons have worked out the logical consequence of Masonic doctrines.

The *Church Times* will not have it that Board School religion is distinctively Christian. It says: "If any Christian man were asked to state in what primary doctrine the Christian religion differs from every other, he would unhesitatingly name the belief that our Lord is Very God of Very God. Many religions teach some of the moral and religious precepts inculcated by the gospel, but not one of those other religions acknowledges the doctrine of Christ's God-head."

Reconcile the various counter claims of thought and passion, adjust your desires to the inevitable conditions of your lot, cultivate some genial occupation, cherish a disinterested affection for your race, a sublime enthusiasm in contemplation of the universe; and you shall find no hour in life without a glad inspiration, no spot on earth an unwelcome solitude.—*W. R. Alger.*



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 28, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester; at 11, "The Philosophy of Hamlet"; at 6.30, "God and the Devil."

December 5 and 12, Athenæum Hall.

January 2, Birmingham; 9, Manchester.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. C. WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—November 28, Athenæum Hall, London. December 5, Manchester; 12, 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.

T. SEARLE (Devonport).—We have never heard the allegation of your kind, Christian friend, that Richard Carlile had been three times in a lunatic asylum; and we do not believe it. Possibly he means in gaol for his opinions. As for Voltaire causing loss of life by his writings, your friend should read them. Voltaire wrote against war, violence, and torture, when these instruments of tyranny were sanctioned and instigated by the priests.

C. WRIGHT notices that, while the figures from *The Coming Day* give the number of Jews at eight millions, their own year-book gives it at thirteen millions.

V. TEJEDOR.—The address of *Las Dominicales* is 104 Calle Claudia Coello, Madrid; of *La Conciencia Libre*, 25 Calle de Emban, Valencia.

MAGNIFICENT.—Mr. Foote replied to Miss Weston's tract several years ago.

W. TURNER.—Robert Browning's poems have for some time been published in a handy two-volume edition. Mrs. Browning's poems are just published in one volume at 7s. 6d.

Most of the correspondence stands over till next week, owing to Mr. Foote's being occupied in South Wales.

R. JOHNSON.—Mr. M. D. Conway is now settled permanently, we believe, in America, residing at present in New York. His *Life of Thomas Paine* is certainly an excellent piece of work. We only regret that its high price makes it inaccessible to the general Freethought public.

C. H. CATTELL.—Being overcast, we have had to condense your well-written letter on the Birmingham Election. See "Sugar Plums."

F. H. PERRY-COSTE, 13 Fernshaw-road, Chelsea, S.W.—Your address comes too late for the list of Freethought lecturers in the *Secular Almanack*. We gladly give it here.

SNELL.—Canon Taylor's article on "The Great Missionary Failure" appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1888.

F. WOOD.—The extract originally appeared in the *Daily News*, and was copied without acknowledgment by the *Evening News*.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

THE HOOPER FUND.—Mr. Thomas Bellamy acknowledges:—Mr. McLean (per C. Watts), 5s.; T. W. G., 1s.; M. Bywater, 1s.; H. Lyon, 1s.

N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Mr. R. Forder acknowledges:—W. H. Wood, 10s. 6d.; J. Barry, 2s. (should have been 5s. instead of 3s. in last acknowledgment). Per C. Burgees, Rangoon, 7s.

W. BRADBURN.—Cuttings, etc., welcome.

D. MACKINNON.—*Faith and Fact* is published at 28 Lafayette-place, New York. George Eliot's translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* is now out of print.

E. H.—(1) Certainly the twelve labors of Hercules are mythical, though many heroic men may have contributed to the formation of the myths. (2) *J. S. Mill*, a criticism by Professor Bain, gives the best account of his life apart from his own autobiography. (3) R. D. Owen's *Moral Physiology* is on the population question, and still can be obtained from Mr. Truelove.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Huddersfield Daily Examiner—Two Worlds—Fria Tankar—Progressive Thinker—Las Dominicales—Watford Leader—Independent Pulpit—La Conciencia Libre—Open Court—The Adult—Clarion—Daily Mail—Isle of Man Times—Sydney Bulletin—Truthseeker—Chester Chronicle—Liberator—Glasgow Herald—New York Herald—New York Public Opinion—Torch of Reason—Echo—Glasgow Weekly Citizen—Mind—Chatham Observer—Pacific Theosophist—Crescent—Aberdeen Journal—Oxford Times—New Century—Barnet Press.

It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription is due, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 23 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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## SUGAR PLUMS.

SPECIAL efforts were made by the religious bodies to spoil Mr. Foote's meetings at Porth on Sunday. The faithful were warned against hearing the "infidel," and prayers were offered up to the Lord against his success. But they were not exactly efficacious. The morning attendance was moderate, but there were good audiences afternoon and evening, and the lectures were followed with gratifying interest and appreciation. Ample opportunity was given for questions, but the few that were put were not very important. The chair was occupied in the morning by Mr. Martin, the Pontypridd Branch secretary; and in the afternoon by Mr. Cox, whose Freethought lectures have caused a good deal of stir in the district. Mr. Foote was much pleased to make Mr. Cox's acquaintance. He is tall, well-built, handsome, and a good speaker. Unfortunately, he has suffered in business from the boycott consequent on his bold avowal of Secularism.

On Monday evening Mr. Foote lectured at Pontypridd. He debated at the same place on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings with Mr. W. T. Lee. A further notice of these meetings will appear in our next issue from Mr. Foote's own pen, among "Notes on Freethought in South Wales."

To-day (Nov. 28) Mr. Foote delivers two lectures, morning and evening, in the Secular Hall, Leicester. His subjects are varied and interesting. In the morning he discourses on "The Philosophy of Hamlet," and in the evening on "God and the Devil."

Last Sunday morning Mr. Charles Watts gave a free lecture in the Secular Hall, Camberwell, on behalf of the local branch of the N. S. S. His subject was "The Board School Fight." There was a good audience, and the applause was most hearty throughout.

In the evening Mr. Charles Watts gave his new lecture, "The Tactics of Christians Exposed," to an enthusiastic audience at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road. Mr. Thomas, of the North London Branch of the N. S. S., made an excellent chairman.

On Wednesday Mr. Watts addressed a crowded meeting at the Camberwell Baths in favor of the candidature of Mr. Quelch, who stood for East Lambeth in the School Board Election. Mr. Quelch advocates Secular education, and is opposed to the Bible being introduced into our public schools.

This Sunday evening, November 28, Mr. Watts again occupies the platform at the Athenæum Hall, taking for his subject "Can God Do Wrong?" This will be another new lecture, dealing with the oft-repeated statement of the Christians, that "the Supreme Ruler of the Universe must be just and do right."

Last Thursday week Mr. Watts gave the Wood Green Branch of the N. S. S. a free lecture. This being the first of a week-night course of lectures, the audience was not large, but it was exceedingly appreciative. The veteran Freethinker, Mr. E. Truelove, was present. There was no debate.

At Birmingham the Church party were completely roused. The Bishop of Coventry got elected, but three of his nominees got left in the cold. The Liberal Education Eight, which consisted of five Unitarians and three other Nonconformists, were all elected.

The local branch of the N. S. S. supported the two Labor candidates, who declared themselves in favor of a purely Secular Education, and the members of the committee worked hard for their success. Unfortunately, they did not get returned, although their joint votes reached a total of 33,353, only 227 less than the number polled by the Bishop himself in the division he contested, the total number of votes for the seven Church candidates being only 203,487. Had all the Labor and Secular votes been given to one candidate, he would have been placed fourth on the poll.

In London the Moderates and Clericals have let "I dare not wait upon I would"; and while the Church papers, and the *Times* and *St. James's Gazette*, have sniffed at Mr. Diggle and recommended the candidates of the Voluntary Schools' Defence Union, most of the Conservative journals have recommended Mr. Diggle as a safer leader than Mr. Evelyn Cecil, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* has gone over to the Compromise. We go to press before the elections begin, but expect to record a Progressive majority, with a strong increase of the Socialist vote, made up by those who see the one solution is Secular Education.

Mr. Joseph Symes says in the *Liberator*: "When the

time comes for the real history of the Newman brothers to be written, it will be openly and generally acknowledged that the one just dead did his best to urge on the course of thought, truth, and liberty; and that his Popish brother expended his best powers to roll back that course, and to lead or drive the world back into the unutterable darkness of the Middle Ages. One can hardly believe that John Henry ever felt happy in his Popish slavery, although he voluntarily put on the shackles. He had to blind himself to many a fact in history in order to swallow the Popish lie; and one may feel sure he never digested it. On the other hand, Francis William, like his brother, grew out of his earlier superstition; but he had the sense and the self-respect not to adopt any other, and especially not to adopt an infinitely worse one."

## THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

### XIII.—THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ONE of the matters which tend to show that the accounts given by Matthew and Luke of the supernatural birth of Christ are later additions to the Gospels, is the story of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan. This story, as we have seen, was in the Gospel of the Hebrews, and it is also one of the incidents recorded by all four evangelists.

According to Luke (iii. 21, 22), "Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Some of the early Christians believed that Jesus was a mere man, the Son of Joseph and Mary, and that at his baptism a spirit, or æon, called Christ, descended upon him, and gave him wisdom and power to work miracles. It was only *then* that God adopted him as his "Son." This view is confirmed by the announcement of the voice in the Hebrew Gospel: "Thou art my son; *this day* have I begotten thee." It is obvious that, had Jesus been a divine personage begotten by the Holy Ghost, as related in the two Gospel accounts of his miraculous birth, the descent upon him, later on, of an emanation from that Holy Ghost would not have been needed. Hence Marcion, who believed Jesus to be a heavenly being, had no dove-and-voice story in his Gospel.

In one matter, however, all the Gospels are agreed—viz., that Jesus, whether God or man, was filled with a holy "Spirit" which came from God, and, in consequence, that he "spake as never man spake." This being the case, it was but natural that Christ, before leaving the world, should give a portion of this sacred "spirit" or "wind" to his disciples. And here it may not be out of place to point out that the word translated "spirit" (*pneuma*) means primarily "air" or "wind," though it is also used to denote breath, respiration, animating spirit, and a spiritual being. The following is an example from John iii. 8: "The *wind* bloweth where it listeth.....so is everyone that is born of the *Spirit*." The original in both cases is *pneuma*—without a capital letter.

We find from the Fourth Gospel that Christ promised to fill his disciples with a Holy Wind, which, when they had been properly inflated with it, would cause them to remember all the things he had said to them during his ministry. Here are two of these promises:—

"But the Helper, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you*" (xiv. 26). "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he shall guide you into all the truth*" (xvi. 13).

Here is clearly set forth the doctrine of inspiration, as well as the effect to be produced by the Holy Wind, which in one of the passages is misnamed "the Spirit of truth." This air or spirit was to recall to the disciples all they had heard Jesus say during the time they were with him; it was also to "teach them all things," and to guide them "into all the truth." As a matter of fact, this divine afflatus did none of these things. Our examination of the Gospel narratives has proved conclusively that the evangelists, if guided by any "spirit" at all, were directed by what one of the Old Testament writers calls a "lying spirit," and so far from the Gospel writers knowing "all things," or even having some small knowledge of "the truth," they were far more ignorant and credulous than

their Pagan contemporaries. This precious "Spirit"—to take but one example—did not bring to Matthew's remembrance the long discourses put in the mouth of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel; neither did it recall to the memory of the author of the latter Gospel the three chapters of sayings which Christ, according to Matthew, delivered upon an unnamed Mountain.

We have two accounts of the giving of this promised "Spirit" to the apostles—one by the author of the Fourth Gospel, the other by the compiler of the Acts of the Apostles. These accounts are quite independent of each other, and, as a consequence, they contradict each other in every particular.

The Fourth evangelist describes this "inspiring" as taking place on the day of the Resurrection, in a room in Jerusalem where the disciples had assembled and were sitting with closed doors. On this occasion, according to this veracious writer, Jesus suddenly appeared before the apostles, and filled them with the Holy Wind by the simple process of breathing on them.

"Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, *he breathed on them* and saith unto them, *Receive ye the Holy Spirit*: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (xx. 21-23).

This "Spirit" which was to guide the apostles "into all the truth" and to "teach them all things" was also, it appears, to give them power to discriminate between those who really believed and those who did not, so as to enable them to proclaim forgiveness to the faithful only. At any rate, the disciples were now fully inspired—that is, all except Thomas Didymus, who was, unfortunately, absent. This, no doubt, accounts for the fact that the "Gospel of Thomas" contains bigger lies than any in the canonical Gospels.

We come next to Luke's account of the gift of the Holy Ghost. According to this evangelist, Jesus remained on earth for forty days after his resurrection, and on the fortieth day, just before he ascended to heaven, he promised his apostles that they should receive the Holy Spirit "not many days hence" (Acts i. 5). Apparently he had quite forgotten that he had already given them this "Spirit" thirty-nine days before, and, what is more astonishing, the disciples had forgotten it too. Anyway, ten days after Christ's ascension, when the apostles were sitting together "in one place," the Holy Wind came upon them with an immense rush (Acts ii. 2-4):—

"And suddenly there came *from heaven* a sound as of the rushing of a *mighty wind*, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Thus, for the second time, the disciples were inflated with a holy wind, which, this time, came in a gust (the holy gust or ghost), and "from heaven." The apostles knew it came from heaven, because it "filled all the house *where they were sitting*." There appeared, also, in the room forked tongues of flame which rested upon them, the tongues being symbolical of the effect produced by the "Spirit." This was, that the apostles were now able to speak in languages previously unknown to them, without having gone through the drudgery of learning them. This wonderful gift of "tongues," we are told, greatly astonished the strangers "from every nation under heaven" who were then in Jerusalem; for the newly-inspired men went out that very day, and commenced to chatter like magpies in every known dialect. These wonder-stricken foreigners are represented as saying (Acts ii. 8-11):—

"And how hear we, every man in our own language, wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we do hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God."

But this great miracle does not end here; for this gift of "tongues" was not only possessed by the apostles, but the latter had the power to bestow it on new converts. The gift, in fact, is represented as a special mark of conversion

which followed the laying on of hands by the apostles. The following are examples:—

"While Peter yet spake these words, the *Holy Ghost* fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were amazed.....For they heard them *speak with tongues*, and magnify God" (Acts x. 44-46). "And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the *Holy Ghost* came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men" (Acts xix. 6).

In the latter case the converts, before meeting with Paul, were in such a deplorable state of ignorance that they "did not so much as hear whether there is a *Holy Ghost*." The question of the reality of the power to speak with "tongues" comes properly under the head of Miracles. Sufficient it is to say here that it can be shown beyond all reasonable doubt that the early Christians possessed *no* such power.

Leaving this matter, it will be seen that we have two distinct and contradictory accounts both of the giving of the *Holy Ghost* to the apostles, and of the effects alleged to be produced on the recipients of the "Ghost." Assuming that Christ was really a divine personage, and was himself full of this Sacred Wind, and that he, further, possessed the power to impart it to others, the most natural way of doing so would be that described in the Fourth Gospel—by breathing or blowing the *Holy Air* into the bodies of those who were to receive it. The narrative in the Acts of the rushing wind, the fiery tongues, and the gift of languages is the crudest nonsense it is possible to imagine.

The account in the Fourth Gospel is, however, completely ignored by Christian commentators, teachers, and apologists, almost without exception. But will any orthodox Christian dare to maintain that after Jesus had breathed on the apostles, and had given the command "*Receive ye the Holy Spirit*," no effect followed, or that the *Holy Ghost* did not come upon them? The answer cannot be doubtful. Had the "Acts of the Apostles" suffered the fate of many of the other second-century books, and either been "lost" or suppressed by the Church, it is beyond question that the story in the Fourth Gospel would be received by all Christians as the true and only account of the gift of the *Holy Ghost*.

But some may, perhaps, say that the apostles were twice inflated with the *Holy Wind*, and that the author of the Fourth Gospel describes the first blowing out, and Luke the second. This attempted reconciliation is doubtless ingenious; but it is excluded by the promise in the Acts (i. 4-8), which plainly implies that no "spirit" had been given to the disciples up to the day of the Ascension. On that day Jesus "charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father"—i.e., the promised gift of the *Holy Ghost*, which they should receive "not many days hence"—and he says, when taking leave of them, "But ye shall receive power *when the Holy Ghost is come upon you*." There cannot, then, be the smallest doubt that in each of these accounts this wonderful "Spirit" is represented as given for the first time. And this being the case, one of the narratives is undoubtedly false, if not both. To those who feel it a duty to believe one of them, I would recommend the sacred method of casting lots; or, if there be any uncertainty as to the proper method of doing this, the simple toss of a halfpenny will decide the matter equally well.

ABRACADABRA.

Clear thinking is quite as important as correct living; and the man who helps to make men think aright thereby helps to advance not only intellectual, but *moral*, progress, and to augment the sum of human happiness. He, on the contrary—however unexceptionable his conduct and pure his motives—who helps to befog, mystify, and confuse the minds of men by his shallow, dreamy thought, is quite as much the enemy of moral as of intellectual advancement. Slovenliness in thought is certain, in the long run, to result in slovenliness in morals. Thought cannot be divorced from conduct, even though the thought, true or erroneous, of one generation shows itself most conspicuously in the conduct of succeeding generations. A teacher of error may be sincere; but his sincerity in no way severs the connection between cause and effect, and therefore in no way diminishes the results of the error. Indeed, intellectual error is dangerous and harmful in proportion to the sincerity of its adherents, upon which its growth depends.—*B. P. Underwood.*

## THEOLOGY EXPLAINS NOTHING.

If we would believe the adherents of religion, nothing could be explicable in the world without it; nature would be a continual enigma; it would be impossible for man to comprehend himself. But, at the bottom, what does this religion explain to us? The more we examine it, the more we find that theological notions are fit but to perplex all our ideas; they change all into mysteries; they explain to us difficult things by impossible things. Is it, then, explaining things to attribute them to unknown agencies, to invisible powers, to immaterial causes? Is it really enlightening the human mind when, in its embarrassment, it is directed to the "depths of the treasures of divine wisdom," upon which they tell us it is in vain to turn our bold regards? Can the divine nature, which we know nothing about, make us understand man's nature, which we find so difficult to explain?

Ask a Christian philosopher what is the origin of the world. He will answer that God created the universe. What is God? We do not know anything about it. What is it to create? We have no idea of it. What is the cause of pestilences, famines, wars, sterility, inundations, earthquakes? It is God's wrath. What remedies can prevent these calamities? Prayers, sacrifices, processions, offerings, ceremonies, are, we are told, the true means to disarm Celestial fury. But why is heaven angry? Because men are wicked. Why are men wicked? Because their nature is corrupt. What is the cause of this corruption? It is, a theologian of enlightened Europe will reply, because the first man was seduced by the first woman to eat an apple which his God had forbidden him to touch. Who induced this woman to do such a folly? The Devil. Who created the Devil? God. Why did God create this Devil destined to pervert the human race? We know nothing about it; it is a mystery hidden in the bosom of the Deity.

Does the earth revolve around the sun? Two centuries ago a devout philosopher would have replied that such a thought was blasphemy, because such a system could not agree with the holy book, which every Christian reveres as inspired by the Deity himself. What is the opinion to-day about it? Notwithstanding the divine inspiration, the Christian philosophers finally concluded to rely upon evidence rather than upon the testimony of their inspired books.

What is the hidden principle of the actions and of the motions of the human body? It is the soul. What is a soul? It is a spirit. What is a spirit? It is a substance which has neither form, color, expansion, nor parts. How can we conceive of such a substance? How can it move a body? We know nothing about it. Have brutes souls? The Carthusian assures you that they are machines. But do we not see them act, feel, and think in a manner which resembles that of men? This is a pure illusion, you say. But why do you deprive the brutes of souls, which, without understanding it, you attribute to men? It is that the souls of the brutes would embarrass our theologians, who, content with the power of frightening and damning the immortal souls of men, do not take the same interest in damning those of the brutes. Such are the puerile solutions which philosophy, always guided by the leading-strings of theology, was obliged to bring forth to explain the problems of the physical and moral world.

JEAN MESLIER.

## How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Distribute some of our cheap tracts in your walks abroad, at public meetings, or among the audiences around street-corner preachers.
- (6) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

## BOOK CHAT.

THE *Open Court* for November gives a portrait of Euler, the mathematician. Professor Cornill, writing "The History of the People of Israel," notes that the bull-cult, existent in the time of Elijah, was never rebuked by him. The Professor says: "When he denounces Baal in Samaria and Israel, he is simply advocating the 'calves of Dan and Bethel' as the only customary form of worship in the kingdom of Israel, which he himself did not attack." Mr. James Odgers puts forward as the religion of science "the worship of beneficence." How about the practice? The article on "Death in Religious Art," by the editor, is well illustrated from Greek and Roman sources. But has he read W. Simpson's *Worship of Death*?

Appleton's *Popular Science Monthly* has a sketch and portrait of Karl Vogt, the German scientist and Freethinker. It has also an interesting account of the scientific researches in Australia of Dr. Richard Semon, a pupil of Ernst Haeckel, and, like his master, an enthusiastic evolutionist. The Negritos, or native Australians, who still live in a state of culture similar to that of the Stone Age, are described, and there are some admirable reproductions of photographs. According to Dr. Semon, the only religion of the Australians is a fear of the spirits of the dead, who, not having been properly buried, are doomed to walk the night. But, however great the terror inspired by these nocturnal spooks, the easiest way of warding off their attacks is to huddle as closely as possible round the camp fire. Disease and death are not regarded as natural events, but dreaded as the work of the sorcerers of hostile tribes, whose influence can be counteracted only by sorcerers of their own tribe. In some parts a slightly higher stage has produced a vague sort of demonism, with a crude cosmology, in which the founder of the tribe figures as the creator of the world. Here ancestor-worship marks the transition from demonism to deism. They deal with the population question by killing or exposing a certain proportion of infants, or by the castration or hypospadiac mutilation of a percentage of the boys before puberty. In some tribes every father of a family voluntarily submits to one of these radical operations after the birth of his third child. Personal sacrifice for public good could not well go further.

We have not yet seen Mr. Joseph McCabe's *Twelve Years in a Monastery* (Smith, Elder, and Co.), but observe that the *Daily News*, writing on it under the heading "Outside View of Monasticism," speaks of it as "a remarkable testimony to Romanist decay."

Although Mr. Lang is right in refusing a place to Mr. Le Gallienne's *Omar Khayyam* beside that of Fitzgerald—and we even prefer the extract given by us a fortnight ago from Mr. C. L. York—it must be confessed that there are some of the Persian poet's thoughts finely versified. For instance:—

Mysterious mother substance, who are they  
That flout the earth that made them? Who are they  
That waste their wonder on the fabulous soul?  
I can but choose to marvel at the clay.

In some cases Mr. Gallienne is almost too markedly modern. What Freethinker could not say of the Bible?—

The Koran! Well, come put me to the test—  
Lovely old book in hideous error drest—  
Believe me, I can quote the Koran, too;  
The unbeliever knows his Koran best.

Augustine Birrell says: "Bad authors are perpetual—that is to say, there is a perpetual succession of them. The consoling reflection is, that the succession is always changing. There is no accumulation of bad poets, of bad novelists. Twenty years hence people will not be reading the bad authors we are now reading. They will be reading bad authors of their own, and when they are not doing that they will be reading the good authors of our time."

We gather from the very unfavorable notice of Mr. Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* in the *Athenaeum* that the work is a very heterodox one. We hope to accord it a full notice before long.

The *Sydney Bulletin* says of our English literary journals that "competition among them is so great that without publishers' advertisements nearly all of them would die at once. So they are forced to temper truth with a great deal of diplomacy, and mislead in order to live." It makes an honorable exception of the *Saturday Review*.

If this be the state of affairs, it is small wonder that William Platt, in the introduction to his most strenuous work, *Do We Live—Do We Love?* declares that the work shall not be put before the public, but simply left for those

who have found it to bring it before the notice of their friends. This probably is a safer way of reaching those desired than the plan of Robert Buchanan to start a shop on his own account.

In *The Literary History of the American Revolution*, by Dr. Moses Coit Tylor, Professor of American History in Cornell University, is a full account of the political writings and influence of Thomas Paine in the formation of the American Republic.

The *Humanitarian* has an interesting account of an interview with Mr. G. L. Gomme on "The Practical Use of Folk-Lore." Incidentally, Mr. Gomme was asked concerning the question of the origin of man. His answer is worth reprinting: "It is indeed a question with which man has always concerned himself. Before Darwin and other naturalists taught us to connect the natural history of man with that of all other animals, we were content to accept whatever early man had allowed his imagination to supply; and we get as a result, not only the myths of ancient Greece, of India, and of the Zulus, but also the myths of the Hebrews, which are so familiar to us as the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible. While the Church is defending with all her strength these ancient ideas as truth, the science of folk-lore proves that the Hebrews, like every other people in the pre-historic ages, thought out for themselves an absolutely unscientific doctrine to account for man's origin. It was an immense step forward for man to take at all, and that the conclusions were not true is due, not to the bad logic of early man, but to his ignorance of facts."

*Comprehensive Cookery*, compiled by E. and B. May, is a shilling book containing over a thousand tested vegetarian recipes. Many shrewd observations are interspersed, not the least important of which is on the art of cooking water. So, at least, our feminine helpmate declares.

## THE LATE A. TRIPP, OF BRIGHTON.

ON Tuesday, November 16, the late Mr. Arthur Tripp was laid to rest in Brighton Cemetery, at the ripe age of seventy-one. The deceased was well known to all Freethinkers of the South Coast, for his ever active work in all progressive movements; and the large assemblage at the graveside of Secularists, Radicals, and friends testified to the respect which he commanded. There being a doubt if Mr. Holyoake could be present, Mr. G. Ward and I went down to act if needed. Fortunately, Mr. Holyoake arrived, and spoke as follows:—

"We assemble to pay our last tribute to one who desired no personal praise of himself, which shows that he had merits deserving words of honor. His care was for the cause he espoused; he put his principles first, and himself second. One of Shakespeare's characters speaks of Christians who mean to be saved by believing rightly. There are not many Christians who do this. The Churchman means to be saved by Act of Parliament; the Dissenter by believing in the Bible as his minister interprets it; and the majority of persons elsewhere mean to be saved by believing in what other people believe. Mr. Tripp meant to be saved, if saving be necessary, by first saving himself, by thinking for himself, and believing for himself. He adopted the rule of the Emperor Aurelius, who said, 'I seek the truth.' He accepted the saying of Madame de Staël: 'The search for the truth is the noblest work of man, and the publication of it a duty.' This right of publication he maintained—not for himself alone, but for others; not for his own opinions only, but for all opinions that seemed true and useful to those who held them. His aim was to walk, not by the light of faith, which has misled so many, but by the light of reason, which affords the highest security possible in this world, and the best preparation for any other life, if one accrues; truth being the only likely security either here or hereafter. Mr. Tripp had courage and conscience—two great qualities, which do not often go together. Freedom from superstition was a constant pleasure, and gave him peace in death. His abiding consolation was the great maxim of Pythagoras: 'Whatever people may think of you, do that which you think right.' In this manly and intelligent belief he lived, and was always ready to support what he believed. For his example and his integrity all who know him will hold his memory in honor."

The writer then said a few words on his public worth and work, concluding by reading a few sentences from the *Secular Burial Service*. R. FORDER.

I REGRET to announce the death, at two-and-a-half years of age, of the only son of Mr. J. H. Strong, of the West London Branch. A *Secular Burial Service* was read by the undersigned at the burial, on the 19th inst., at Marylebone Cemetery.—W. HEAFORD.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## MORAL INSTRUCTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In yours of the 14th inst. Mr. Gould informs us of the advent of the "Moral Instruction party," which is ultimately to change the "balance of the educational parties," presumably by playing a sort of "Jack on both sides" to both. He tells us also: "This new party says that morality should be the chief aim of the school life." We are likewise given to know that the "old issue between Christianity and purely secular instruction" is likely to yield to the agitation of the "Moral Instructionists."

Not even so much as living in the same street with a prophet, I feel that I must leave Mr. Gould's prophecy about this new party's future balancing power to that future, and confine my remarks to its present pretensions.

The tenor of Mr. Gould's article seems to imply that morality, as understood by this new party, constitutes a sort of a connecting link between secular and religious instruction. In the most kindly way that I am capable of, I would fain suggest that there is no such thing as religious instruction. All instruction is necessarily secular. With comparative religion, as a science, this article has nothing to do.

The Christian religion is a system of dogmas, anent the truthfulness or falsity of which the oldest mummy in the British Museum knows as much as Mr. Gladstone. To my poor intelligence, it is just as reasonable to try to imagine a connecting link between life and death, or between something and nothing, as it is to try to bridge over the chasm between that knowledge which deals with the demonstrable facts of life and that faith which has nothing whatever to do therewith.

Mr. Wheeler's article on "Christianity and Heathens," in the same *Freethinker*, is a demonstration of the utter futility of the mamby-pamby method of moral instruction now in vogue to influence human conduct for the better. "Love your enemies," the "Golden Rule," "Blessed are the merciful," are as well known to the cunning rogue, who robs the heathen of his possessions by artifice, as they are to the man who gains the same end by brute force; and they influence the conduct of neither.

In a recent issue of a widely-read daily paper a detailed account appeared of seven learned solicitors struck off the Rolls for malpractices. Would the new party be able to teach those gentlemen anything in the way of morality that they don't know? Let Mr. Gould go into any Coroner's Court and see with his own eyes five or six (or more) morally-instructed Christians kissing and swearing by the very book which they profess to believe to be the word of their own God, which commands them "not to swear at all." Or let him take note of the convictions for wilful and corrupt perjury of those kissers of, and swearers by, the book that tells them in God's name "not to bear false witness against thy neighbor." If these palpable proofs of the utter futility of book- and tongue-taught morality to make us all good do not suffice to convince Mr. Gould, together with the whole school of which he is such a distinguished member, of the necessity that obtains for a purely secular curriculum in our compulsory schools, I fear we must give up their case of "morality on the brain" as incurable.

T. J. THURLOW.

## NOTHING IN IT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I be allowed to rectify an error into which I think Mr. Watts has fallen in his reference to Mr. Waldron with regard to Mr. Ward's pamphlet? Mr. Waldron once played this off as an argument in Hyde Park; but, when I got hold of the pamphlet, I found it was dated 1891; evidently published as a skit against Atheism, while Mr. Ward was still a Christian. I was enabled to turn it against Mr. Waldron by using it as an argument in proof of the truth of Secularism, inasmuch as the author had since given up Christianity, and espoused the very cause which he had before denounced, being now one of our prominent lecturers. It is also a proof of the length to which our C. E. S. friends will go in their hatred of us and our principles. May I suggest to Mr. Ward that he should publish a second edition of the pamphlet?

R. P. EDWARDS.

Everywhere we find the rule to hold good, "Like people, like gods." The gods cannot be better than the people who make and who worship them. And as all these gods were the product of men or of people in their earlier, more ignorant, crude, and brutal state, it is but reasonable to expect that the gods, creeds, and religious systems of any people will be found inferior in character, more crude, brutal, and irrational than are the people themselves.—*M. Harman.*

## FREETHOUGHT GLEANINGS.

WHOEVER hesitates to utter that which he thinks the highest truth, lest it should be too much in advance of the time, may reassure himself by looking at his acts from an impersonal point of view. Let him duly realize the fact that opinion is the agency through which character adapts external arrangements to itself—that is, opinion rightly forms part of this agency—is a unit of force, constituting, with other such units, the general power which works out social changes, and he will perceive that he may properly give full utterance to his innermost conviction, leaving it to produce what effect it may.—*Herbert Spencer.*

The visible world reminds me of beans in a jar whose number is to be guessed. Any guess is as good as yours until they are counted. Can you count the contents of the universal jar?—*J. Armstrong.*

The world is hardly beyond the beginning of medical discoveries, yet they have already taken from theology what was formerly its strongest province, sweeping away from the vast field of human effort that belief in miracles which for more than twenty centuries has been the main stumbling-block in the path of medicine.—*Andrew D. White.*

A Michigan man, who is said to possess remarkable power in curing disease, asserts that his power to heal comes from Satan. One hears so many unkind things said about the Devil that it is a positive pleasure to be able to announce with some appearance of probability that he has gone into the good work of healing suffering humanity. Under the circumstances, if ever I have said anything to injure his reputation, I hereby take it back. We cannot be too considerate of the feelings of those who demonstrate their inclination to be our friends.—*A. J. W., in "Fresno Republican."*

In no age or country have any sects or factions of religionists dared to "leave their cause to the arbitration of reason." This damning blot disfigures every religious escutcheon. The blood religionists have spilt in defence of their disgraceful impostures the ocean may purge away, but never can bury the remembrance of. The history of their crimes is written on the tablets of human memory in ineffaceable characters. If religionists were united in opinion they would be united in action, and despotism such as prevailed in the Dark Ages would again prevail.—*Charles Southwell.*

Alas for us! this our awful baggage in the rear of humanity, these women who have not moved on their own feet one step since the primal mother taught them to suckle, are perpetually pulling us backward on the march. Slaves of custom, forms, shows, and superstitions, they are slaves of the priests.—*G. Meredith, "Beauchamp's Career," chapter 58.*

The foolish and the dead alone never change their opinions.—*James Russell Lowell.*

What is fanaticism to-day is the fashionable creed to-morrow, and trite as the multiplication table a week after.—*Wendell Phillips.*

## PROFANE JOKES.

THERE is a little girl whose ideas of creation are yet crude, but she is very curious. "Is all of us made out of dust, mamma?" she asked the other day. "Yes, Flossie." "Little babies, too?" "Yes." The child was silent for a moment. "Mamma," she said, "heaven must be a drefful dusty place."

"Daddy," asked little Ephraim, "whar did de fust tukkey cum fum?" "Nebbur yo' min' axin' irreligious questions," said the old man. "An' w'en Pahson Thompson cum fer dinner Sunday, doan' yo' hab ter ax whar dat tukkey cum fum, eider."

Hallelujah Lass (to little gutter-girl who has displayed "a voice")—"Why don't you come and sing for God?" Little Gutter-Girl—"It's manners, mum, to wait till 'E asks me!"

A youthful student of sublime divinity  
Could ne'er be taught to understand the Trinity.  
When he was asked, "Now, is the Father God?"  
The boy replied, "O certainly, or else 'tis odd."  
"And is the Son God?" Then the student said:  
"Not yet; he may be when the Father's dead."

Old Version—Where was Moses when the light went out?  
New Version—Where is Moses when the higher critics get hold of him?

In the Near Futura. Judge—"Do you know, my boy, where you will go if you tell a lie?" Board-school Boy—"No, sir; but I know the authors of the Pentateuch, and I can refute the errors of Supralapsarianism."

## 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.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30. C. Watts, "Can God Do Wrong?"  
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, H. P. Ward, "The Greatest Lie in the World." November 27, at 8.30, Concert and Dance.  
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, Stanley Jones; 7.30, R. Forder, "Fun on the Nile."  
EAST LONDON BRANCH (King's Hall, 83 Commercial-road): 7.30, W. C. Lyons, "How and Why Christianity Spreads."  
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion, "The Origin of Disease"—opener, J. Ellis; 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Ethics of Property."  
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Inner Sea."  
WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, A. Guest, "The Propagation of the Gospel."

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards; 3.30, A lecture.

### COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): C. Cohen—11, "Woman: Past, Present, and Future"; 3, "The Priest and the Child"; 7, "The Case for Secularism." November 29, at 8, "Why Should we Follow Jesus?"  
BRISTOL (St. James's Hall, Cumberland-street): 3, Discussion Class—B. Harney, "Mind and Matter."  
OATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, An Entertainment. Special talent.  
GLASGOW (Brunswick Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; 6.30, A. G. Nostock, F.G.S., "Earthquake; and Volcanoes"—with lantern illustrations.  
LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): G. W. Foote—11, "The Philosophy of Hamlet"; 6.30, "God and the Devil."  
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. W. Baylis, B.A., "Theism."  
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusho'me-road, All Saints): 6.30, Miss Hodgson, "Should Women have a Vote?"  
NEWCASTLE (Newbridge-street): November 29, at 8, Monthly meeting. Important business.  
PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, Members' meeting.  
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rotherham-street): Ernest Evans—3, "Science and Modern Thought"; 7, "The Frog and Cockroach: A Study in Development." Illustrated by lantern slides. Tea at 5.  
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, Lantern lecture, "Paris."

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—November 28 and 29, Birmingham; 30, Derby. December 3, Preston; 5, Bradford; 8, Blackburn; 19, Leicester.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Creden-road, London, S.E.—November 28, m., Camberwell Radical Club. December 5, Mile End; 12, Camberwell Radical Club.

H. PERCY WARD, Leighton Hall, N.W.—November 28, a., Edmonton; e., Bradlaugh Club. December 12, Sheffield. January 30, Stanley.

## POSITIVISM.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Church of Humanity, St. Mary's-place. Service and Discourse every Sunday evening at 7.

SUNDERLAND.—Church of Humanity, 23 Biandford-street. Service and discourse every Sunday afternoon at 2.45.

WEST HARTLEPOOL.—Druids' Hall, Tower-street. Meeting for inquirers, conducted by Mr. Malcolm Quin, second Wednesday of every month at 7.30.

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