

The Free Thinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.]

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

GOD HELP US!

MOST people suppose, just because they are taught so in their childhood, that the affairs of this world—to say nothing of any other—are supervised and directed by a being called "Providence." In the New Testament this being is described as all-comprehensive in his vigilance. Not only does he keep a straight eye on every man on this planet; he also looks after every single bird, so that not a sparrow comes to grief without his knowledge, and the sportsman who eats sparrow-pie has one license, which he pays for, from the Government, and another license, which he doesn't pay for, from God. Indeed, this "Providence" is so careful and particular that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered. A strict account is kept for every one of us from the cradle to the grave. The celestial bookkeepers know who has been using Tatcho and who has been moulting in domestic disturbances.

All this is very pretty—on paper, but it doesn't square with experience. Everybody would like to know that there was a universal Father up above, who cared for all his children, and gave them counsel in their difficulties, assistance in their necessities, and comfort in their trials. But what we would like to know, and what we do know, are not the same thing. The doctrine of "Providence" has always rested on faith, and not on reason. Nothing could be more hollow and specious than the arguments that have been employed by theologians to "justify the ways of God to man." At the finish they always fall back on mystery—which is a confession of defeat in the court of logic. The appeal is taken to another court which will not give judgment till we are dead—and, perhaps, not then. The eternal balance of facts in this life is against the doctrine of "Providence." Those who have read the late Cardinal Newman's beautiful and fascinating *Apologia*—the history of a great soul in the meshes of superstition—will remember (for who could forget it?) that exquisite passage in which he confesses that, although his whole being was full of the idea of God, he failed to find proofs of it when he looked outside himself on the world, on human society, and on man's history. "The impression made upon me," he said, "is as though I looked into a mirror and saw no reflection of my face."

Is it not curious that popular language belies this popular doctrine? When people say "God help you," they mean it is all over with you. It is a gentler way of saying "The poor devil is done for." Nobody ever expects aught but ruin or death for you when you come to that extremity. And if you happen to show a sincere and thorough-going belief in "Providence" you are liable to derision as a fool and punishment as a criminal. It is only a few months since two Peculiar People—that is to say, simple, earnest Christians—were found guilty of manslaughter for relying on God's promise to cure the sick in answer to prayer. And not a voice was raised on their behalf from any Christian pulpit, not a pen was wielded on their behalf in any Christian paper. It was only the "blasphemous" *Free-thinker* that called for justice and honesty in the treatment of these simple religionists.

If there be a God, and he has any desire to help us, he has just now a very fine opportunity. Mischiefs seem to be brewing all over the world. A lot of hell-broth, as Carlyle would call it, is being got ready for the nations to swallow. At home in England we have a fierce and bitter war between capital and labor. For twenty-nine weeks one of the

leading industries of the country has been disorganized, and almost brought to a standstill, in consequence of a trade dispute which ought to have been settled on common-sense lines at the very outset. During all that time, as though the country were altogether too prosperous, and actually did not know what to do with its wealth, certain persons have been agitating for a larger expenditure on our army and navy. And these agitators have succeeded. The Government is going to ask for more millions to build ships, and buy guns, and multiply crews and regiments. England is to keep the lead in the gunpowder-and-glory business, even if her poor fathers lack work, and her poor mothers hear their children crying for bread.

Over in France we see a nation sacrificing itself for its Army, which has become a perfect fetish. The Russian alliance is a sinister farce, in which Russia stands to gain everything and France nothing, except the gratification of a foolish egotism. There are no signs of the progress of freedom in Russia, but the great eastern despotism is extending itself in Asia. Already it looks across the sterile wastes of Siberia to the rich plains of China, and a situation is being created there which is fraught with danger to the peace of the whole world.

Emperor William, of Germany, has made the Chinese pay heavily for giving martyr's crowns to a couple of meddling missionaries. They have to build three churches for the Germans, besides paying a cash indemnity and ceding one of their best harbors. Such is Christian tenderness to the poor benighted heathen! Such are the benefits of missionary enterprise to the hypocritical thieves of Christendom! Is it any wonder that Emperor William, who builds churches though he can't fill them, has made a design for the new rifle which is being dealt out to the German army? He has also selected a pious inscription for it. Bullets will fly from those rifles and kill men in the name of God and the Emperor. But that is to come. Meanwhile hundreds of Germans are sent to prison for smiling at the alleged alliance between William and God Almighty. Some time ago William said that a man could not be a good soldier without being a good Christian; whereupon the first comic paper in Germany wanted to know whether Leonidas and Alexander, two ancient Greeks, and Frederick the Great and Napoleon, two modern Deists, were bad soldiers. For this criticism of William's speech the editor has just been sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Happy Germany! But, after all, she might be happier if "Providence" would make a change. There is hardly room for William and God Almighty together in this world. Perhaps there is room for both in heaven.

God might help the world mightily at present if he would only bestir himself. But we fancy he will do nothing of the kind, and that the poor human race will have to get through its own troubles as it can by the exercise of its own intelligence. When the "great apostle" asked some of the earliest Christians whether they had received the Holy Ghost, they replied that they did not know there was a Holy Ghost. Men of common sense are beginning to say the same of God. It is related that the great Roman general, who afterwards wore the purple, penetrated into the Holy of Holies of the Temple at the capture of Jerusalem, in order to see what were the secret paraphernalia of the Jewish religion. He looked and saw—nothing. And that is the bottom of every religion on earth.

G. W. FOOTE.

GRANT ALLEN'S "IDEA OF GOD."*

(Concluded from page 50.)

CHRISTIANITY in an important aspect is but the ancient worship of the dead carried on and concentrated mainly upon a single figure. In this respect it is, as Mr. Grant Allen contends, typical. He says:—

"In the first place, Christianity is thoroughly typical in the fact that beyond all doubt its most central divine figure was at first, by common consent of orthodox and heterodox alike, nothing other than a particular Deified Man. All else that has been asserted about this particular Man—that he was the Son of God, that he was the incarnation of the Logos, that he existed previously from all eternity, that he sits now on the right hand of the Father—all the rest of these theological stories do nothing in any way to obscure the plain and universally-admitted historical fact, that this Divine Person, the Very God of Very God, being of one substance with the Father, begotten of the Father before all worlds, was yet, at the moment when we first catch a glimpse of him in the writings of his followers, a Man recently deceased, respected, revered, and perhaps worshipped by a little group of fellow-peasants who had once known him as Jesus, the son of the carpenter."

We shall see later on that Mr. Allen is himself dubious as to the historical accuracy of all told concerning the carpenter's son. He sees, too, that Christianity fails to be typical in that it borrows largely a whole ready-made theology, and, above all, a single supreme God from a pre-existent religion. It is, however, I fancy, because Mr. Allen has had his eye so much on the Christianity around him that he has given less attention to polydemonism than I think it merits in any investigation of the origins of religion.

Mr. Allen argues that Judaism originally was undistinguished from the polytheisms around, and that the Israelites worshipped a cylindrical stone pillar. "The belief that Jahweh fought for Israel, and that by trust in Jahweh alone could Israel hold her own against Egypt and Assyria, wildly fanatical as it appears to us to-day, and utterly disproved by all the facts of the case as it ultimately was, nevertheless formed a central idea of the Hebrew patriots, and resulted by slow degrees in the firm establishment—first of an exclusive, and afterwards of a truly monotheistic, Jewish cult." This monotheism Christianity took over from Judaism. It grew, Mr. Allen holds, for the most part, among the lower orders of the cosmopolitan towns like Antioch and Alexandria. Hence, while based on Judaism, "it gathered hospitably into itself all those elements of religious thought and religious practice that were common to the whole world, and especially to the Eastern Mediterranean basin." It bases itself, above all, on the old ideas of sacrament, sacrifice, atonement, and resurrection. Rome had prepared the way. Its unity of government needed a single religion, under a single strong god, and this it found in the new modification of Judaism. With regard to the origin of Christianity, Mr. Allen says:—

"In spite of certain remarks in my first chapter, I am not such a 'gross and crass Euhemerist' as to insist dogmatically on the historical existence of a personal Jesus. Of the Christ himself, if a Christ there were, we know little or nothing. The account of his life which has come down to us in the Gospels is so devoid of authority, and so entirely built up of miraculous fragments, derived from elsewhere, that we may well be excused for gravely doubting whether he is not rather to be numbered with St. George and St. Catherine, with Perseus and Arthur, among the wholly mythical and imaginary figures of legend and religion."

At the same time, he holds that it is quite possible, or even probable, that there really did live in Galilee, at some time about the beginning of our accepted era, a teacher and reformer bearing the Semitic name which is finally Hellenized and Latinized for us as Jesus. If so, he adds, it seems not unlikely that this unknown person was crucified, or rather hung on a post by the Romans at Jerusalem, and that after his death he was worshipped more or less as a god by his immediate followers. Such kernel of truth may be embedded in the mass of unhistorical myth which implicitly identifies him with all the familiar corn-gods and wine-gods

of the Eastern Mediterranean. Our author illustrates this from Paul's argument on the resurrection of the body, and from the central and earliest rite of sacramentally eating and drinking of bread and wine in supposed commemoration of the death of the Lord and his last supper. Mr. Allen says: "The language put into his mouth on this occasion in the Gospels, especially the Fourth, is distinctly that of the corn and wine-god. 'I am the true vine, ye are the branches.' 'I am the bread of life. Take, eat; this is my body.'" In the parable of the vineyard God the Father is described as the owner of a vineyard, who tends his only begotten son to receive the fruit of it; and she workers slay him. The Bacchic character of the first miracle at Cana has been frequently pointed out. Mr. Allen alludes to the evidences of the same faith exhibited in the catacombs at Rome, and I may interject the possibility of such stories as those of the multiplication of bread and wine, and of the supper, having arisen from illustrations depicting these gifts of our sun-god. Our author illustrates, too, the similarities of the alleged trial and condemnation of Jesus with those attending the mock kings in the ceremonies connected with killing the god. Mr. Allen says:—

"The episode, where Herod and his men of war array the Christ in a gorgeous robe, is the equivalent of the episode of the Mexican king arraying the god-victim in royal dress, and is also paralleled in numerous other like dramas elsewhere. The women who prepare spices and ointments for the body recall the Adonis rites; Pilate washing his hands of the guilt of condemnation recalls the frequent episode of the slaughterers of the god, laying the blame upon others, or casting it on the knife, or crying out: 'We bought you with a price; we are guiltless.' Whoever will read carefully through the Gospel accounts, side by side with Mr. Frazer's well-chosen collection of mock-king narratives, will see for himself that endless other minor traits crop up in the story, which may be equalled with numerous similar incidents in the death and resurrection of the man-god elsewhere."

Christianity triumphed because it united the most vital elements of the religions then current in the world with little that was local, national, or distasteful, and it added to them a high ethical note and a social doctrine of human brotherhood especially suited to an age of unification and systematic government.

J. M. WHEELER.

IS MAN A SINNER?

(Concluded from page 51.)

HAVING, in my article which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*, considered the meaning of the word "sin," I now propose to inquire into its alleged origin, and also to examine the Christian teaching that man is by nature a sinner, in the sense in which that term is used by the majority of orthodox believers.

According to the Bible, Adam was placed with Eve in the Garden of Eden, where there grew "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food." To them was given "every herb which is upon the face of all the earth," "the fowl of the air," and "every living thing that moveth upon the earth." It is said that "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." Now, up to this period in the narrative we hear nothing of sin, nor of man being a sinner; the question therefore arises, Where did sin come from? It appears to me there is but one answer, and that is: it came from God, who, therefore, is alone responsible for the introduction of evil into the world. It has been aptly pointed out that, if all creation is the work of a personal God, the germs of evil must have been present in his materials, or they could not have developed. If this were not so, then evil was imparted after creation. But, if so, by whom? If everything was perfect in itself, there could have been no evil agency possible. Then, if the germs of evil were present in the materials, it forces upon us the conclusion that they must have been present in the Creator himself, for only one with evil in himself would work with evil-germinating materials; and this, again, gives birth to the question, How came evil present in this Creator? We are told to think of this God as a self-existent being; and, therefore, evil must have been self-existent as a component of Deity.

It is no answer to say that the Devil is the author of sin, because, if he were, a further question would be pertinent:

* *The Evolution of the Idea of God: An Inquiry into the Origins of Religion.* By Grant Allen. (Grant Richards, 9 Henrietta-street.)

Who made the Devil? He could not have made himself if God were the "author of all things"; therefore, if the serpent were a part of God's "creation," he (God) must be held responsible for the "work of his own hands"—that is, for the nature, power, and desires which the serpent possessed. Thus, it appears from the story as related in Genesis that sin originated with God. It is not fair to blame the "poor devil" for doing what it was his nature to do. He has been termed the "father of lies," but the Bible account represents him as being more truthful than God himself. Therein it is recorded: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now, the serpent, who spoke more in harmony with the sequel of the story, said to Eve: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." We read that the fruit was eaten, and that Adam did *not* die as God said he would, but both he and Eve lived on, as the serpent told Eve she would. Neither did they, as it is often asserted, meet with a "spiritual" death; for, if a knowledge of good and evil was originally confined to gods, man, on attaining to it, must have made a distinct advance into "spiritual life."

Is man a sinner? The Bible answers Yes, and that he was "born in sin and shapened in iniquity." And, be it observed, Christianity does not teach that man is a sinner merely as the result of imperfect training or a deteriorating environment, but that he is by nature a sinner. Dr. Tulloch, who was Principal of St. Mary's College in the University of St. Andrew's, and one of her Majesty's Chaplains for Scotland, in his work, *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, writes: "There is a special aspect of sin, afterwards elaborated by St. Paul, which also appears in our Lord's teaching. He characterizes it, not merely in act and in essence, but as a condition and tendency of humanity. Man not only sins, but he is a sinner naturally. It is his nature and disposition to sin.... Sin is set forth as a disease or corruption of human nature. It is not merely an act, but a state which clings to the race, a tendency lying in our nature, and which is constantly coming forth into action" (pp. 124-5). In support of this view the Rev. Doctor quotes the Bible passages: "There is no man that doeth good and sinneth not," and "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Now, are we really such sinners as are here described? In my opinion, we are not; and if the Christian theory be true, that God is the author of Nature, and that we are her outcome, it can be no sin against God to act in accordance with the nature that he has endowed us with. Viewing man, as I do, as a natural being, having no "spiritual" elements in him, he cannot be a sinner in the theological sense. Principal Tulloch admits this, for in his work referred to above he writes: "If the individual and social man alike are merely the outcome of natural forces working endlessly forward towards higher and more complex forms, then, whatever man is, he is not, and cannot be, a sinner" (p. 5). Theology, in order to support its theory that man is a sinner, ascribes to his nature certain imaginary qualities, which, to many of us, appear to form no part of humanity. The fact is, man is man, and not a theological machine. He is a sinner only when he neglects the cultivation of his physical, intellectual, and moral nature, or when his conduct tends to lower his personal character, and to mar the happiness and welfare of his fellow beings.

But what are Christian sinners? In the regular service of the Church of England, which the devotees of that form of religion go through every Sunday, generally twice, each person confesses that he has "left undone the things which he ought to have done, and done the things which he ought not to have done." This continual acknowledgment of misdoing is not very complimentary to the faith which is supposed to influence the conduct of the wrong-doers. By the way, what a peculiar predicament such worshippers would be placed in supposing that, in one week, they had, by an extraordinary effort, or by having been placed in very favorable circumstances, or by both combined, done what they ought to do, and not done what they ought not to do; then the following Sunday the repetition of these words would really be lying, and, what is worse from their point of view, lying to their God—that

is, if the confession be addressed to him, rather than intended for the ears of the rest of the congregation. In such a case what is to be done? The words are there, and must be repeated. Is it not, therefore, necessary for the people to do wrong on the week-day in order that they may speak the truth on the Sunday? They then add, "There is no health in us," and go on to pray, "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners"—or "offenders," which means the same thing. The word "health" here has reference, no doubt, to "spiritual" health, for the entire congregation could scarcely be said to be suffering from some physical disease. Indeed, it is well enough known that "health" and "holiness" are really identical in their signification, having the same derivation, as originally they had the same meaning. Health is harmony; disease is discord, whether of body or mind. The man, therefore, who really feels that there is no health in him confesses himself to be out of harmony with law, an abnormal product in the universe, a morbid accretion on the fair face of nature, a diseased and withered branch on the tree of life. Such a confession may be fitly indulged in for once when the discovery is made; but to be always doing it is the height of religious folly. For, if there is an intention to put matters right, why is it not done? If no such intention, then why not cease canting about it? Well may such persons call themselves "miserable sinners," for miserable they can hardly help being while they remain at variance with law and order, and are everlastingly lamenting that they are so, and yet make no attempt to mend matters. If we take these people at their own estimate, they are offended, which shows that the confession so glibly made week after week is insincere, to say the least of it—in fact, it is what they themselves would call in others rank hypocrisy. A story is told of John Wesley to the effect that an old woman went to the great preacher and said: "Oh, Mr. Wesley, I am a dreadful sinner." Wesley replied: "Yes, ma'am." She repeated: "I am an awful sinner." Wesley nodded assent. "You have no idea," she continued, "how bad I am: I have been a terrible sinner." "Yes," said Wesley, "I can easily understand that you are very bad." At which the old woman glared up, and said: "Bad, Mr. Wesley? What do you mean? I am not bad: I'll have you to know that I am as good as you." Now, if you take such people at their word, and describe them in the same terms as they apply to themselves, it will soon be seen how insincere their confession has been.

That sin, which is wrong-doing to oneself and others of the human race, exists, must be readily granted; but it has no connection with what Adam and Eve are supposed to have done, and it has no relation to anything beyond mundane affairs.

CHARLES WATTS.

THE PRAISE OF GOD.

OF all the ideas that men in their vain imaginings have formed of Deity, surely the most grotesque is that which represents him as an Almighty Egotist—a Being consumed with an infinite vanity, hungering incessantly for the praise of his creatures, and imposing upon them, as a duty, the continual glorification of himself. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, alludes to this curious belief that "a Power—present in innumerable worlds throughout infinite space, and who, during millions of years of the earth's earlier existence, needed no honoring by its inhabitants—should be seized with a craving for praise, and, having created mankind, should be angry with them if they do not perpetually tell him how great he is." That such a belief will sooner or later die can hardly be doubted. With it must disappear one, at least, of the objects of public worship.

Setting aside as too puerile for serious consideration the picture of mankind finding in a future life their greatest felicity in chanting "Holy, holy, holy" before a throne, we may well inquire whether there is really any rational incitement to the continued praise of Deity in the present life. Does he need it? Is he pleased by it? Could the serenity of a supposed great cause of everything be affected in any fashion by the meed of praise bestowed upon him, or withheld from him, by the human beings inhabiting our globe? If thus influenced by adulation, the Creator must be subject to the caprice of his creatures,

and must sink in our view to the level of a mere earthly potentate, to whom the incense of praise may indeed be acceptable, and who may naturally become wrathful towards those who fail to bend the knee or raise a shout in his honor. But the glorification of the Great Cause, as if he were but one remove above the chief of a tribe or the monarch of a nation, must surely be a self-imposed and superfluous performance, amounting almost to actual irreverence. If we try to form any idea of that mysterious, impersonal, palpable Power in the universe, which is the highest form of modern belief, we shall realize how inapplicable, and even impertinent, must be any expression of ours which assumes the nature of praise.

Fulsome praise is distasteful to refined human natures. Even well-deserved and sincerely expressed laudation becomes nauseous to its object when persistent, and is morally detrimental to those who continue it by its tendency to create a low and grovelling spirit. As, however, the human distaste may arise from an inward consciousness of shortcomings, the Divine complacency may not be so disturbed. It is possible to imagine a certain kind of deity who is content to accept all that comes as simply his due, and who may even be greedy and exacting in his demands. But it seems incongruous with an elevated notion of the Creator to believe that he can take any pleasure in praise which, in his case, has the peculiarity that it may be supposed to have been previously arranged for by himself in the creation of the persons who are to praise him, in their endowment with the faculties and dispositions necessary to praise, and—if we believe in "Divine Revelation"—in the positive dictation of the terms of such praise.

The element of spontaneity is necessarily absent. The Deity, having provided for the outpouring of adulation—having included great singing to his own honor and glory in his plans—has been looking forward to it through all the millions and millions of years which go towards what we may call the other side of eternity—*i.e.*, before our appearance on the earth. He must be credited with having known exactly when the praise would commence, of what it would consist, by whom it would be offered, and when, if ever, it will cease. It cannot, therefore, affect him as a pleasant surprise, or excite any emotion not experienced by him before the beginning of time. This rather disappointing consideration, if not exactly discouraging to those who lift their voices high, may well tend to make the work of praise what, indeed, it often is—a somewhat perfunctory undertaking.

There is much probability, however, in the view that all this praise and glorification of God, which forms so large a part of public worship, is but the survival of the rude worship by our remote progenitors of the supposed deities of their dead chiefs. The Bible-God is but a great king above all gods, whose pleasure it is to be constantly reminded of that fact. When the praise takes the form, not so much of commendation of his power and achievements as of gratitude for his gifts, of individual or national rejoicing and thanksgiving, there arises the question, If we should praise or thank God for that which is good, why should we not condemn and denounce him for that which is bad?

Apart from these reflections, the nature of the praise set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and displayed in the hymnology of all religious sects, is such as could hardly be imagined to be welcome or agreeable to any self-respecting deity. The recital, for instance, every Sunday, of selections of the Psalms—with their barbaric imagery and primitive modes of expression—is scarcely to be regarded as the most fitting tribute that the nineteenth-century culture of the West can offer to its god. He might, indeed, be expected to resent it as a personal affront. And herein we see the point of Heine's ironical suggestion, that the reason why Jehovah treated the Jews so scurvily in their latter days was, that they knew him in his first crude, deistic state, and daily reminded him in their synagogues of his former obscure and merely national rank.

The gross familiarity with which the Deity is addressed in the set forms of praise in common use in our modern conventicles must be painfully distasteful to all really devout and reverent minds. The other day the staid *Scotsman* thought it necessary to lecture the Rev. Bernard J. Snell, simply for entitling a book of addresses to children *Le Bon Dieu*. The Scotch newspaper says: "It is out of harmony with the genius of our language to be

on familiar terms with Deity. Readers who know French, and ponder Mr. Snell's words, cannot but think of Béranger's *Bon Dieu*, and such thoughts are, to say the least of it, not clerical." Mr. Snell's offence, however, is but venial in view of the terms employed in psalms, prayers, and hymns in every-day use. The phraseology of the Bible affords him every justification.

That the Christian God does indeed demand and expect the praise of his creatures, and is displeased if it be withheld, is not to be disputed, in the face of Scriptural teaching. "Our Father" has specially provided in the Lord's Prayer that "hallowed" shall be his name. St. Paul, writing to the Hebrews, says: "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Heb. xiii. 15); and, again: "In the midst of the Church will I sing praises unto thee" (Heb. ii. 12). David, in enjoining upon Israel the duty of praise, links with it another obligation, which has a peculiar significance. He says: "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand" (Psalm cxlix. 6). The combination is charming! As we know, nations of modern and civilized times, who ought to have known better, have similarly gone to battle. In that extraordinary production, the "Book of Revelation," we read: "And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great" (xix. 5). In 1 Chronicles we are told: "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised" (xvi. 25); and, again: "Ye that fear the Lord praise him" (Psalm xxii. 23). The Lord himself invites praise: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Psalm l. 23). He tells us that he adopted the Jews in order to glorify himself. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise" (Isaiah xliii. 21). And there are many other passages in the Scriptures of like purport.

To David must be given the palm as the champion "praiser" of all time. Reading his Psalms, one would think that even Jehovah must have been surfeited with the overflowing abundance of panegyric. He resolves that his tongue shall speak of the Lord's praise all day long (Psalm xxxv. 28); he will sing praises unto that name for ever (lxi. 8); he will sing praises unto the Lord as long as he lives (civ. 33); the Lord's praise shall be continually in his mouth (xxxiv. 1); he will praise him with his whole heart; before the gods he will praise him (cxxxviii. 1). At times he assumes somewhat of a patronizing air. "Be thou exalted, Lord," he says, "in thine own strength, so will we sing and praise thy power" (Psalm xxi. 13); and, again: "I will extol thee, my God" (cxlv. 1). "We will show forth thy praise to all generations" (lxxix. 13). Isaiah, too, offers a reassuring guarantee. He says: "I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name" (xxv. 1). David, it is true, seemed at one time disposed to moderate his raptures, for he says, rather cautiously: "I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness." Generally, however, David showed no lack of enthusiasm or extravagance in his undertaking, and the Lord was no doubt proportionately grateful to him, as we are led to believe he will be to anybody else who will tell him what a high and mighty God he is.

To conclude: The whole ordinance of praise argues an anthropomorphic idea of Deity. But for the beautiful music to which the orthodox words are oftentimes linked in our churches and chapels, it would be difficult to conceive how intelligent people could take part in services so devoid of taste, reverence, or rational sentiment.

FRANCIS NEALE.

ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD.

LET us first make the statement that it requires a god to speak or write the word of God. Whether there be such a person, or being, or thing, in the universe as God, or as a god, we are not able to say. All we know is, that we have no knowledge of such a person, or being, or thing.

History is sown thick with names of gods. Some of these gods have ceased to have anything to do with earthly affairs; or, rather, the inhabitants of earth have ceased to have anything to do with these gods. How they died, when they died, or where they died, we cannot say. The most we are able to assert is, that their names no longer inspire worship. The temples built in their honor, the altars raised to receive offerings to these deities, and the

reverence which surrounded their names, have disappeared in that vast sea of oblivion which overwhelms gods as well as men.

It is a religious fact that the gods worshipped by one age are laughed at by succeeding ones. The gods of ancient Egypt would be hooted by the boys on the streets could they be resurrected and stand before the eyes of this generation. Were they alive, they might excite passing curiosity, and be a worthy attraction in a pious zoological-garden. The gods of ancient Greece had the physical beauty of men and women, and the morals of beasts. Their forms would excite our admiration, and their lives our disgust. The best part of them has survived—their marble grandeur. The deified stones of Greece reveal the white wealth of flesh from which their sculptors copied them.

The advancement of man has dethroned the gods. Jupiter, and all the cities of Rome, fell before the march of human progress. When truth undermines falsehood, the gods of man topple from their places. It is no longer safe to set up the throne of God on the earth. Science has made it impossible for the priest to locate his deity on a mountain-top. Men have climbed Olympus and Sinai, and found that, instead of being the abodes of gods, they were the homes of that vast silence which dwells upon the heights. No voice of god now comes from mount or cave. All the deities have been chased to the stars. Every divine being has moved his household effects from the earth. It is true that man has swept the globe clean of its gods.

Gods to-day inhabit the upper air. They are placed at a safe distance from the eyes of men. We are informed that heaven is the abode of the divine essence. This may be true. At any rate, it is no longer wise to have the divine dwelling-place where it can be searched by the detectives of science.

The experiences of the past show that priests have lied to men and women. They have acted as agents of gods that never had an existence. They have imposed upon the world a worship which was not demanded, and was not required by any obligation of man to his fellow-man. They have made things holy which were only necessary to the success of their sacerdotal schemes. Priests have made religion a system of spoils in the name of God. Judging by the past, it is almost safe to say that the gods of the heavens are as false as were the gods of earth, and that in time science will disprove the existence of the Christian deity, as it has destroyed Isis and Zeus.

—*Boston Investigator.*

THE FALL OF MAN.

If Adam was created perfect, he could not have sinned, because none but an imperfect nature can sympathize with wrong. If he was morally perfect at all, his perfection must have consisted in the supremacy of his moral faculties, and in a necessary incapacity to yield the reins of government to the lower propensities. And if his moral faculties had been supreme, his highest pleasure would have been in acting according to their dictates. It is, therefore, unreasonable to believe that such a man was ever created perfect, and that, notwithstanding his perfect moral powers, he allowed the lower nature to overcome the higher.

The idea of a perfect moral nature necessarily implies a complete moral restraining power. And where this moral restraint is perfect, no amount of temptation would be capable of overruling it. Such a mind would be as incapable of vice as Nero was incapable of virtue. Imagine Nero being irresistibly tempted to a life of purity! Could anything be more absurd? And yet it is surely no more inconsistent than to imagine a perfect man and woman being induced to steal.

If it is objected that in a perfect mental organization the lower faculties would be subject to the same temptations as in any other combination, I answer that from the very nature of the case the greater the appeal to do wrong, the greater would be the offence to the moral sentiments; and as in a perfect supremacy of the moral forces all sinful appeals to the lower propensities would elicit a corresponding resistance from the moral sentiments, of course the intensity of this resistance would keep pace

with the force of the appeals to the lower faculties, thus entirely preventing the lower propensities from ever obtaining the consent of the moral faculties to indulge in a criminal desire.

Take, for example, a highly cultivated and refined lady, with large benevolence, conscientiousness, etc., and with small destructiveness and acquisitiveness. Think of such a person being tempted to commit a murder for the purpose of robbery. That is, imagine her debating the question in her mind; her small destructiveness urging her to commit the deed, and her moral faculties protesting against it. With such a combination of faculties, could there be any conflict in the mind, any debate, any temptation? It would surely be an argument of only one side; a simple decision of the moral faculties. The bare mention of so terrible a crime would shock such a nature. Now, if the reader will picture to himself a mind in which the moral faculties exert a similar restraining power over all the inferior propensities, he will have the idea of a perfect mental government.

If Adam possessed such a perfect mental equipment, he would not and could not have sinned, because perfection implies complete moral restraint. On the other hand, if he was created imperfect, in yielding to sin he would have undergone no constitutional change. That is to say, if he sinned in deed he was a sinner in thought before he committed any outward act, and must have been originally endowed with a sinful nature. Or, in still other words, he must have been depraved before he fell, or he would not have fallen; and, being already sinful, of course he did not fall when he sinned.

The Bible teaches that Adam fell. If he was created perfect, the idea of the fall is absurd; if he was imperfect, he then, in sinning, simply acted out the nature with which he was endowed, and manifested a will which was necessarily evolved from his inherent organization and his environments. In the latter case God would have been directly responsible for Adam's transgression.

—*E. C. Beall.*

I LAUGH TO THINK OF THE HEAVENLY LAND.

(TUNE:—"Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos," No. 97.)

I LAUGH to think of the heavenly land,
Whose streets are paved with gold;
The souls which on that pavement stand
Will find it rather cold.

Chorus.—They'll want some "clogs" on,
Laplanders' "togs" on,
Big fires with logs on—
'Twill be so "parky" there!

I laugh to think of the heavenly Zoo,
The beasts, and elders' ark;
There are some species there which you
Don't find in Regent's Park.

Chorus.—Those heavenly creatures
Have curious features,
Not known to teachers
Upon this earthly sphere.

I laugh to think of the hideous row
Those beasts and elders make;
To watch their ludicrous antics, how
Angelic sides will shake.

Chorus.—There'll be some laughter
In heaven hereafter;
Each golden rafter
Will ring with laughter there.

I laugh to think of the heavenly "bar,"
Where "living waters" flow;
Methinks those waters stronger are
Than common H.2O

Chorus.—With Jehovah's "sherry"
Souls will make merry;
God's drinks are very
So very "cheering" there.

I laugh to think of the thirsty souls
Who'll use the heavenly "tap";
Some, formerly, from flowing bowls
Were fond of their "wee drap."

Chorus.—Christ-pardoned sinners;
Well-seasoned gin-ers,
Thirsty as "finners,"
Will break their pledges there.

I loathe to think of the godly gang
Who'll flap their wings and crow,
And golden jews-harps gaily twang,
While sceptics burn below.

Chorus.—We'd rather be all
Cast down to Sheol,
For we shall see all
The best of people there!
ESS JAY BEE.

MARK TWAIN AND THE MISSIONARY.

MARK TWAIN once attended a missionary meeting in Hartford at which a missionary made an address. After listening to the agonizing story of suffering, Mark Twain said to himself: "For God's sake, send that plate around, so that I can pour my sympathy into it. I'll give you these four one-hundred dollar bills, and if I can get a piece of paper I'll write a cheque for something more. I can very well spare a little money for a cause like that."

The lecturer went on talking, and as he talked Twain's enthusiasm calmed. "When the missionary had been talking for half an hour," he continues, "I had saved one of those bills, and when he had talked five minutes more two of those bills were mine again, and when he had been talking an hour I had won all four back, and, by gosh, when he finally did send that plate around I borrowed ten cents out of it to pay my car fare home."

—*Argonaut.*

ACID DROPS.

"THE first championship match of the season was played here to-night between Ingersoll and Simcoe. Ingersoll won by 4 to 2." This clipping from a Toronto paper reads funnily at first sight, but it is all right when you know that the "Ingersoll" in the report is a town named after the great Freethought orator.

According to an advertisement in the *Stockkeeper*, there is a "nice children's pet" on sale for two guineas—namely, the "Imp, by Black Satan ex Hades." We suppose it is a dog, but the advertisement looks a good deal like a sly poke at the parsons.

Many preachers appeal to a prurient curiosity by delivering addresses "to men only." This little dodge goes unchallenged. We are surprised, therefore, to see from *Personal Rights* that Mrs. Martha Ann Thompson has been prosecuted at Church Police-court for giving physiological lectures to "ladies only." She had a model of the female human figure, which could hardly have excited the feelings of her female audience, besides some lantern slides and a book she was selling. The magistrates soon decided against the prisoner, though it does not appear that she was guilty of any real obscenity. Indeed, the counsel for the prosecution took the ground that such "subjects were only fit to be discussed by medical men"—which is all stuff and nonsense. Every woman has a right to know her own physiology without asking a lawyer, a magistrate, or a doctor.

The American Board of Missions have sent an address to the pastors of all the evangelical churches in the United States and Canada. It is complained that the foreign mission fake is declining. The address says that the pastors of the present day are paying too little attention to work among the heathen in foreign lands, and that, owing to this apathy, the collections for foreign missions in the churches have fallen off to such an extent that every missionary society has been burdened with a load of debt. To bring the matter forcibly before the pastors was the chief object of the address, which also suggested that local meetings composed of the pastors of all denominations be held to arouse interest in foreign missions.

The American Board of Foreign Missions seems to be in a bad way financially. All missionaries' salaries must be reduced five to ten per cent. in the coming year, "with a cut in the appropriations to the native agencies, churches, pastors, and schools of forty-five per cent. on the average below the needs of the missions." It is also necessary for the prudential committee to have at least \$110,000 more than a year ago, simply to meet the actual needs and necessities of the missions. It is odd that the work of Almighty God should so depend upon the almighty dollar.

The leading American sky-pilots have declared against another Parliament of Religions. They feel that Christianity split into innumerable sects makes but a poor show, and do not desire their flocks to make any further acquaintance

with such great faiths as Buddhism, Islam, Brahmanism, Jainism, Parsiism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

Mark Twain says the English are mentioned in the Bible, and he cites in confirmation: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

While a number of ministers are beating the drum ecclesiastic to raise funds to bring the heathen to Christ, the Rev. Winnington Ingram, of the Oxford House in Bethnal Green, is reported as saying from his personal experience: "Not one per cent. of the population of that district attend either church or chapel." And this, despite the Oxford House Settlement.

South London is said to be in an even worse state of heathenism than the East-end. The Bishop of Rochester, in whose diocese is the bulk of South London, has appointed Wednesday, March 2, as a day of special prayer and humiliation in regard to the work of God in the diocese.

Father Doyle, of the Paulist Fathers, speaking at a Catholic revival meeting in New York, said that America ought to be Catholic, because "it was discovered under Catholic auspices." He forgot to add that the natives were murdered by millions under Catholic auspices. The Spanish conquests in America were perhaps the very vilest episodes in human history.

In the *Crescent* of January 19 there is "A Short History of the Progress of Islam in England." It is stated that in June, 1887, Sheik Quilliam was the only declared native-born Muslim in the British Isles. Now they number 188, of whom 135 are adults. On January 9 eight Christians became converts to Islam the same evening. If this evinces nothing else, it shows some dissatisfaction with Christianity.

The festivities in Sicily in connection with the Jubilee celebration of the risings of '48 have led to talk of a by-gone generation. The *Civita Catholica* has put forward the daring but absurd proposal of a Republican Italy in obedience to the Pope. The Papacy would fain undo the work of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour, and is ready to coquette with Republicans and Socialists against the Monarchy to that end. But Republicans and Socialists are not to be caught with Papal chaff. Italy is united on one point—its own unity—with Rome as the capital. Whatever the drawbacks of the monarchy, those who remember Papal Rome, without public schools and with streets in filth and darkness, will never think of undoing the work of September 20, 1870.

Remarks the *Kwong Yik Wah Bo* (Sydney Chinese paper): "A Christian sect called the Wesleyans have decided to send Christian missionaries among the Chinese in Queensland. They decided to do this by only one vote. In all these Christian bodies who do missionary work preference is usually given to the kind of work that appeals to their sense of the picturesque, that enables their missionaries to wear foreign clothes and to go among foreign people. The decision of the Wesleyans is a common-sense decision. Surely, if Christianity is good, it is well to make Christians of those who are close at hand. If they convert any of the Queensland Chinese to their way of thinking, the converts will make good missionaries to send to China; but it is useless to hope to convert many of our people while the Christian teaching is so far away from the practice of the Christians. The best way to convert the Chinese is to treat them with absolute justice, so that when they return to China they will be able to say that the European Christians practise what they preach."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, addressing a temperance meeting at Maidenhead, denied that alcoholic liquor made men jolly and pleasant. He challenged any drinker to be as jolly or social as himself. Perhaps the drinker might retort that it is easy to be jolly on £15,000 a year. Temple does not look a very jolly specimen, though he may feel like one.

The Bishop of Salisbury, it is said, has been greatly shocked by the conduct of the churchwarden of St. James's Church, Shaftesbury, who enriched his farm by the addition of five loads of earth from the site of a former chancel. He had done it, he stated, by permission of the rector; but the Bishop took a serious view of the action, and said it was a most unseemly thing to allow the sacred dust of ages to be taken on to a farm and trampled on by cattle. He ordered the earth to be returned, if possible; but, if not, it was to be collected in a mound and grassed over.

Ex-butcher Varley, who can boast with truth that he has been immersed in the blood of the lamb, is now working the near-coming-of-Christ racket. He does not fix a date, but it is to be so speedy that those with houses and lands might just as well sell out for what they can get, and hand

the proceeds over to the treasury of God. If Christ should come, it is to be hoped he will bring his scourge of cords with him.

The *Birmingham Gazette* pretty well shares our opinion of Alice Dale's novel, *Marcus Ward, Atheist*. In a disdainful review of this book it says: "It is curious that even a lady bent on doing good should think that any sane person could be moved by such imbecility."

A leading Wesleyan minister, the Rev. Thomas Champness, who doubtless regards himself as a brilliant apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, discusses whether dull preachers will go to heaven. He thinks they will, which is very good of him; only he fancies they will not be treated quite as nicely as their brighter brethren. Of course the subject has little importance for us, as we are known to be booked for the opposite establishment. Still, we have just a faint hope that all ministers will go to heaven. We should be sorry, in every sense, to meet any of them in the other place.

They are having fine old jinks at St. Ethelburga's Church, in Bishopsgate-street. Mr. Kensit, the true-blue Protestant, continues to protest against the High Church service, and makes himself a nuisance to the majority of the congregation. Last Sunday morning the fun waxed furious. "Gregorian music was used," says the *Westminster Gazette*, "and, owing to want of practice probably, was not a success, the more so as the Kensit party sang psalms and canticles to other tunes." Fortunately, a good many police, plain and colored, were in attendance; otherwise a brisk business might have been done at the nearest hospital.

The Rev. J. S. Balmer, of Blackpool, lecturing to young men against infidelity, warned them that the dear Lord Almighty is very wrath with any who question his existence. He is reported as saying: "Believe in God, and do not be wheedled or shamed or scorned out of it. If they went and told a man on the street that they did not believe him, if he were a pugilist, he would strike them down. There was nothing that gave more offence than to say they did not believe him." Mr. Balmer's pugilistic God has an unanswerable way of demonstrating his existence. Every questioner may get a knock-down blow from the Almighty fist. Wherefore, be warned in time, young men.

The Rev. T. Oden Taylor, preaching at Higher Tranmere on "Modern Scepticism," is reported as saying that Frederick the Great said not long before his death that he would give his most famous battle if he could put religion where he found it when he ascended his throne. Will Mr. Taylor inform us where he found this anecdote, which is not recorded by Carlyle or any of the biographers of Frederick with which we are acquainted?

Prison Gate Home was started by the Salvation Army in California. Its object was to reform convicts on a fine farm of 300 acres. But the convicts were not taking any, and the Home has been abandoned. Boothism doesn't empty gaols in America any more than it does in England.

Superstitious people are always excited by eclipses. Centuries ago the church bells used to be rung during an eclipse of the sun to frighten the powers of evil. Christians, therefore, need not be surprised at the recent commotion in India. Native astrologers prophesied all sorts of calamities, including a tidal wave at Bombay. Some said the eclipse portended the downfall of British rule in India, but the old flag still floats over the government buildings. Myriads of Hindus sat down while the eclipse was on, counting their beads, and reciting prayers and hymns. Even the Brahmin priests stopped begging. But the common beggars took the opportunity to cry: "Give alms for the recovery of the sun from the jaws of the dragon Rahu."

Some Hindus say that, before the Mohammedan or British rule in India, the sun was eclipsed once in every twelve years, but the phenomenon is more frequent now on account of sins and misdeeds. Very funny, is it not? But we need not laugh too loud in Christian England, when our Bible is full of similar rubbish.

The Lord's Prayer is parodied by an American firm of soap-makers. One of their advertisement posters represents two little children kneeling, with clasped hands, and praying, "Give us this day our daily soap."

There is talk of using the X-rays to give sight to the blind. Some little progress is said to have been made in this direction. Let us hope that it may be true. If Jesus had only known of these rays, he might have so astonished the people that they would have made him what he longed to be—king of the Jews. But no "god" has ever known more than the men of his time knew; and revelations from

"gods" and ghosts have failed to add the most trifling fact to the world's stock of knowledge. We need feel no surprise at this, for "gods" and ghosts are but different phases of those who see, hear, or deal in them. They are as subjective as the fireworks seen when the eye is struck or pressed, or the horrors seen in delirium tremens.—*Liberator*.

Martin Tupper said that "prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence." But then, fancy Omniscience requiring human nerves to set his divine muscles in motion.

The vicar of St. Peter's, Colchester, is a lucky man. A lady has just left £13,350, free of legacy duty, to the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty "for the augmentation of the maintenance of the Vicar of St. Peter's, Colchester, and for no other purpose whatsoever." This sum will bring in £400 a year on the best security. No doubt the Vicar will preach a thanksgiving sermon from the text of "Blessed be ye poor."

Hugh Price Hughes is a very exact man. Take this instance. Speaking last Sunday evening in St. James's Hall, he declared that "the Devil was strongest in the back streets of Soho," and "there was more vice, lust, and crime within half a mile of St. James's Hall than anywhere else in London." And this to be said after ten years' presence of Hughes & Co. in the neighborhood.

Rev. W. Taylor Smith, at a meeting of the Devon Association, read a paper on "Church Growth: Its Aid and its Hindrances." He said it was an undoubted fact that people were giving up their Biblical studies for games like football, cricket, cycling, and tennis, and for concerts. It was also lamented that Christian Endeavor meetings tended to supplant the proper work of the Church—a subject upon which the *British Weekly* has been eliciting various opinions.

Another church choir is on strike at Middleton, owing to friction between the vicar and a young man who is a member of the choir and Sunday-school. On Sunday afternoon the vicar came accompanied by a policeman, and the young man was ejected. In the evening he was again made to leave the choir stalls. Thereupon the whole choir left their seats, and declined to return until he was reinstated.

The Gallas of Abyssinia have a very convenient creed. They hold that all the pious maxims necessary for life were once embodied in a sacred book; but that divine revelation got swallowed by a cow. Now, all the religious duty of a Galla consists in finding cows, and killing them, in search for the sacred book. He becomes most pious when most hungry.

The writer of "Liqueur, Sir," in the *Ludgate*, points to the irony of the fact that the monks of Chartreuse, vowed to poverty, are the richest firm of distillers in the world; and, vowed to abstinence from fleshly appetites, they concoct the most superb ministrant to appetite that is known.

Christianity lives largely from the glories acquired from art. The *Paradise Lost* of Milton and the *Messiah* of Handel have done more for it than any of its saints and apostles. Yet Milton was an unbeliever in the Trinity, and a heretic on the subject of Christian marriage and divorce. Now the *Saturday Review* tells us: "Handel had nothing of the religious temperament. In temperament he was wholly secular. He was an eighteenth-century pagan. He was perfectly satisfied with the visible and audible world his energy and imagination created out of things; about the why and wherefore of things he seems never to have troubled; his soul asked no questions, and he was never driven to accept a religious or any other explanation."

The vicar of St. Laurence, Birmingham, has hit upon a new and cheap way of cleaning out his church. He told his congregation that he would rather see it cleaned and kept by willing hands than by hired laborers. Now, the church was very dirty, and the congregation took the hint. Some thirty female members assembled the other evening and worked away with mops and brushes at the holy edifice. It is not reported that the parson joined in the sport. No doubt he only looked on while the women slaved away (as usual) for Jesus.

Economy appears to be creeping into the Red Army as well as into the Black Army. We have just been told on the highest authority—namely, by Mr. Brodick—that after the fall of Khartoum a long dispatch had to be written by Sir Redvers Buller. He was so exhausted, however, by want of sleep, having been three days and nights on duty, that he felt quite unequal to the task. Lord Wolseley—who, by the way, is a teetotaler—suggested that he should drink a bottle of champagne. This suggestion was acted upon, and the dispatch was written to the War Office. Sir

Redvers Buller was in England eight months later, and he found that the War Office had charged him for that bottle of champagne!

Mr. Wilson Barrett is taking himself too seriously as a moral and religious reformer. His head, or something else, seems turned by the success of the *Sign of the Cross*. He now affects to regard the theatre as a sort of church, duly licensed, and with the star actor as parson. Talking to an Australian interviewer, he declared that people who never went to theatre did not do their duty to morality or to God. Mr. Barrett has only to go on at this rate for another year or two, and he will be ready for holy orders. It would be amusing, for many reasons, to see him blossom into a popular preacher.

It appears that the Rev. E. N. Pochin, who left £80,000 to the British and Foreign Bible Society, actually left nothing to his two sons and one daughter, nor even to his widow. In these circumstances, the Committee of the Bible Society could never have the face to take the whole amount, so they have decided to relinquish one half for the benefit of the family. Parson Pochin evidently loved the Bible infinitely better than his own wife and children.

After three centuries, a monument is to be erected in Canterbury in memory of the forty-one martyrs who were burnt at the stake there during the reign of Queen Mary. The memorial may serve to recall how far religious bigotry can over-ride all considerations of humanity.

The latest mortality returns from Bombay show 651 deaths from plague during the week. The death-rate is now 95.29 per thousand inhabitants. The exodus is increasing, and business is stagnant. But India has long ceased to be under Providential government.

Secular Thought gives some more instances of "The Visitation of God": "The Rev. Mr. Burns, moderator of the Toronto Presbytery, was buried in Toronto on January 4, having died suddenly as he was opening his book to read the burial service at a funeral at Galt on January 2. At Wayland, N.Y., December 26, Gottlieb Zellbier fell dead in the M. E. Church."

To dance or not to dance? That is the question agitated among the young Christian Endeavorers, who are looked on as the hope of the Nonconformist churches. The elders are in opposition, but the youngsters refer to the pious example of David, king of Israel.

According to the *Progressive Thinker*, of Chicago, the political bureaux which supply editorials advocating the measures of the party represented, also provide political sermons prepared all ready for delivery. These are sent into the rural districts to preachers who are reported of the right political faith, to be used on great occasions, as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's days. It is laughable, says our exchange, to note the consternation of the country press as it tells of the delivery of these manufactured sermons, in strange and unfamiliar language, so entirely in conflict with surrounding conditions, and far above the comprehension of either preacher or hearers.

A Western paper works it out this way: *Vox populi, vox dei* (The voice of the people is the voice of God). The voice of Balaam's ass was the voice of Jehovah. Two things equalling the same thing are equal to each other. *Vox populi, vox dei, equals Vox asini, vox dei*. (The voice of an ass is the voice of God; and the people is a jackass.) If there is any validity in this demonstration, it helps to explain why conclusions founded upon texts of scripture are still regarded by the people as having an inspired basis. —G. E. M.

The Catholics on the Continent are working the anti-Semitic feeling for all it is worth, and in France are crying *a bas Zola*, because he has had the bravery to ask for justice. When race and religious rancor combine the result is little creditable to humanity.

The Rev. W. E. Needham, of Brooklyn, unites the functions of lightning-chalk artist with those of pulpit-puncher, and, in consequence, is drawing large audiences. The sky-pilots are being so put into the back ground by the singers that it is expected the more enterprising of them may attempt to maintain their prestige by a combination of acrobatics with their usual histrionics.

The church of Christ Church, Birmingham, was recently sold for a large sum of money. Under the church are extensive catacombs, containing a large number of dead, and deep indignation is being caused by the vicar claiming a fee of £1 is. upon each body prior to removal.

Dr. Horton, preaching on the theatre at the Hampstead

Congregational Church, said that young men fell into the abyss of sin after leaving the theatre at night. On the other hand, Mr. W. H. Denny, speaking on the same subject before the Playgoers' Club, said he knew some very undesirable people who made a point of going to church twice of a Sunday—he knew some who had adopted that practice, and who were "doing time" to-day. Dr. Horton wanted to know if Christ would visit the theatre. If he went on the old plan of turning water into wine, he would be a valuable acquisition at the music-halls and restaurants.

Dr. Horton said that, as to attending the theatre, he should not go himself, and no Christian could go except after much prayer and anxious inquiry. The bald-headed men of God to be seen at the Empire and Alhambra, especially at the May-meeting season, have doubtless gone after much anxious inquiry, if not prayer.

Clark Braden, junr., the son of a notorious reverend defamer of Ingersoll, an employee in the office of the American Express Company, New York, has absconded with bonds and money worth \$10,000.

The Rev. T. S. Rooks, Methodist, forty-five years old, left his wife and children at Steelburg, Nebraska, and eloped with a young girl. He will be criminally prosecuted.

The Rev. Emmett L. Waldorp, an Evangelist, was arrested at Saginaw, Michigan, charged with theft. The goods alleged to have been stolen were found in his house.

A Salvationist named Abbott, belonging to the barracks in Bleecker-street, New York, is to be tried for killing a man. In Oakland, California, an officer of the Salvation Army named Hall was about to be married when he was arrested for betraying a female member of the army under promise of marriage. He got out of jail by marrying the woman he had deceived, his intended bride paying for the licence.

Most of our readers have heard of Anthony Comstock, the founder and boss of the American Vice Society which prosecuted D. M. Bennett, of the *Truthseeker*, some sixteen years ago. One Dr. Levenson called him a notorious blackmailer, who never earned an honest dollar in his life. Comstock sued him for \$50,000 damages. The jury, however, gave a verdict for 6 cents., and he has to pay his own costs.

In return for his services to Turkey against the demands of the Powers, the Kaiser of Germany has been appropriately presented by the Sultan with the bogus site at Jerusalem, where the Last Supper is said to have been held. It will be turned into a chapel. The Russians have conceded to the French the right to the Northern flight of steps to the Holy Sepulchre. For years the Greek Church has striven, at the cost of much fighting, to push the Latins away from the north steps, and to hold them themselves. The old Christmas ceremonials at the Holy Sepulchre have been this year, for the first time, free from unseemly strife.

As the ministers are becoming Agnostic they are discovering that Agnostics can be saved. The question has been much discussed by Dr. Lyman Abbott, so kindly opening a back entrance for Agnostics into Paradise. Now the Rev. Thomas Silcer, All Souls' Church, follows. Preaching on "The Great Affirmations of Religion," he said: "If God reveals his will in the Bible, as each religion asserts of its own Bible, why has he not given a Bible to the Anglo-Saxon race? Scepticism of the soul is as holy as religion. Agnosticism, against which men cry out, is a phase of religion in its beginning. A sincere Agnostic is the disciple of the Holy Spirit."

The Rev. Dr. Heber Newton went further, and declared the world had outlived Christianity, and a new religion must be found. He said: "The problem of the world at this moment is, 'How to find a new religion?' Some great conception which shall be once more capable, as the old were capable, of welding societies and keeping man's brutish elements in check."

"The traditional systems of divinity," said Dr. Heber Newton, "which have guided the course of the Western world, seem to hosts of men to-day of as much help as the charts of New York harbor, drawn up by the primitive Knickerbockers, would be to our monster steamers. The mass of average intelligent men are slowly and painfully realizing that there is no answer in the Thirty-nine Articles and Westminster Confession for us in the year of 1898. Their whole thought is as antique and obsolete as the language of Chaucer and Spenser." Dr. Newton may find his flock carry this further than he intended, and give up the pastors who preach from an out-of-date volume. It needs little discernment to perceive that the parsons are ready to throw over everything so long as they can hold on to the main chance.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, January 30, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.; 7.30, Memorial Address on Charles Bradlaugh.
February 6, Athenæum Hall; 20, Glasgow.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—January 30, Birmingham; 31 and February 1, 2, and 3, Derby; 6, Sheffield; 13, Camberwell. May 1, Glasgow.—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.
- S. G. COWLEY.—We have no concern with your personal interpretation of Scripture. When we speak of Christianity, we speak of the great historic faith of the Churches. You say the Bible does not teach everlasting punishment. The majority of Christians say it does. Don't appeal to us, therefore; settle it among yourselves. You ask whether we believe in a Supreme Being. Define what you mean, and we will give you an answer. As to "the Scripture," some things recorded in it are doubtless true; but others are known to be false historically. Most of the fulfilled "prophecies" in the Bible were written *after* and not *before* the event.
- JAMES CRAIG (Toronto).—Glad to know you appreciate "the brave *Freethinker*," as you call it. Thanks for your letter and enclosures. See paragraph.
- G. W. BLYTHE.—Casuistry may be a very interesting subject, but we have no room for it in this journal.
- ZONA VALLANCE, secretary of the Moral Instruction League, writing from the Deanery, Stratford, E., requests that Secularists who write to her will give their addresses in full. She has received some letters without this necessary particular.
- J. R. WILLIAMSON.—Anything fresh on the subject would be more acceptable. We believe that most of our readers have made up their minds already against compulsory vaccination.
- W. GARDNER.—Charles Bradlaugh was a stalwart friend of Trade Unionism when it had few friends indeed. Others came when all was safe, and thrust out their tongues at him. Mr. Foote will deal with every aspect of Bradlaugh's career in the Memorial Address at the Athenæum Hall this evening (January 30).
- STUDENT.—Mr. Grant Allen earns his income by writing novels and popular articles. Like other men, he cannot possibly make much, if anything, out of his better work. His book on the *Evolution of the Idea of God* costs £1, but of course it only appeals to a very limited circle of buyers. Perhaps there will be a cheaper edition when the book has made something of a name, and is in greater demand.
- G. PALMER.—Glad to know you have found what you wanted. There was no "trouble" in the matter. We are always ready to oblige when we can.
- T. HOPKINS.—Thanks for your amusing letter with enclosure. You omitted your address. Kindly forward it for an obvious reason.
- J. K. MAAGAARD.—We regret the delay. Thanks for cutting.
- H. G. DALE and C. J. BROOKS.—We have already noticed it in "Acid Drops."
- J. T. CONGREVE.—The cheapest current edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, we believe, is the one published in Bohn's Library, in two volumes at 7s. Tegg's one-volume edition can sometimes be picked up second-hand for four or five shillings.
- W. W. LEAVIS.—Under consideration.
- N. S. S. TREASURER'S SCHEME.—Miss Vance acknowledges: J. P. May, £2; Octogenarian, 5s.; R. E. D., 10s.; Ips, 2s. 6d. *Per Mr. Cohen*:—S. Swale, 5s.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Liverpool Branch Collection, 14s.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Toronto Globe—Shields Daily Gazette—Cheltenham Mercury—Behar Times—Torch of Reason—Progressive Thinker—Blackpool Times—Two Worlds—Truthseeker—New York Public Opinion—Personal Rights Journal—Liberator—Lucifer—Free Society—The New Century—Crescent—Cincinnati Free Opinion—New York World—Islamic World—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.
- The *Freethinker* will be forwarded, direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- ORDERS for liberators should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E. O.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS.—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

SUGAR PLUMS.

LONDON Freethinkers should wend their way this evening (Jan. 30) to the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road. It is the seventh anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death, and Mr. Foote will deliver a Memorial Address. There ought to be a large gathering.

Camberwell Secular Hall was filled by a fine audience on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Way to Heaven." His discourse was frequently punctuated with laughter and applause. Mr. Victor Roger occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal for new members. A collection was taken at the door in aid of the fund for the Children's Party.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts's lectures last Sunday in Birmingham were in every respect a great success. We are informed that he had the largest morning audience that the local Branch of the N. S. S. has ever had, and in the evening the hall was packed in every part; not only was all standing-room occupied, but more than a hundred persons filled the ante-room. Mr. Watts was in capital form, and received the repeated and enthusiastic applause of the large meetings. An interesting incident occurred at the morning lecture. An intelligent young gentleman took part in the discussion, and said that for years he had been a lecturer for the Christian Evidence Society, but for some time he had been re-studying the alleged Christian evidences, and if Mr. Watts could satisfy him upon one ethical point, he should at once join the Secular Society. This Mr. Watts did, and the young gentleman publicly announced his adherence to the Secular party. The conversion was, we are told, the result of "long and profound thought."

During the past week Mr. Watts has been debating in Birmingham, where he again lectures (morning and evening) to-day, Sunday, January 30. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday next he gives four special lectures in Derby. The first two are under the auspices of the N. S. S. Treasurer's Scheme.

On Sunday last Mr. Chilperic Edwards, author of *The Witness of Assyria*, lectured for the Westminster Society on "The Book of Jonah in the Light of the Higher Criticism." The room was full, and the lecturer's critical and scholarly discourse appeared to be highly appreciated by the audience. The lecture was characterized by a dry humor that evoked much laughter, and there was loud applause at the conclusion.

Mr. A. B. Moss delivered another Freethought lecture last Sunday morning at the North Camberwell Radical Club. It was highly appreciated. Mr. Moss lectures this evening (January 30) at the Camberwell Secular Hall on Darwin.

Mr. Cohen debates with the Rev. Mr. Waldron in the Corn Exchange, Chester, on the evenings of February 1 and 2. The subject for debate is "Christianity v. Secularism." Local friends should do their best to fill the hall on both occasions. Chair taken at 8 prompt.

Mr. S. M. Peacock, one of the vice-presidents of the N. S. S., was re-elected last week on the South Shields School Board. He had, of course, a deal of clerical opposition, but polled 4,703 votes.

"Some Plain Words on India" was the title of a lecture by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner last Sunday evening in the Secular Hall, New Brompton. The secretary informs us that there was a large and appreciative audience.

Under the auspices of the Humanitarian League, a lecture on "The Rights and Wrongs of Native Races" will be given at St. Martin's Town Hall, W.C., on Tuesday, February 1, at 8 p.m., by H. R. Fox Bourne, secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society. Admission is free.

Mr. Joseph Collinson, of the Humanitarian League, seems bent on showing what one man can do with a single pen for a cause he has at heart. His name is probably known to the editor of every paper in England, and now we find him waging war on Catholics and Vivisection in the columns of the *Behar Times*, of India.

The *Blue Grass Blade* (of Kentucky) has subsided, but a new Freethought journal has started with the title *Cincinnati Free Opinion*, in which Mr. C. C. Moore will give his old friends an occasional sample of his spicy writing.

Mr. L. K. Washburn is once more seated in the editorial chair of the good old *Boston Investigator*, with Mr. R. W. Chainey as sub-editor. We hope he will long occupy it.

Liberty is to the collective body what health is to every individual body. Without health no pleasure can be tasted by man; without liberty no happiness can be enjoyed by society.—*Bolingbroke*.

Mr. Washburn is a very capable writer, and he has a capital assistant in young Mr. Chainey.

George Macdonald versifies an old story in opposition to John Burroughs' poem, beginning, "Serene I fold my hands and wait." The verses read:—

Long time I prayed the Lord or love
To bring me a Turkey Christmas Day;
But nothing fluttered from above,
Nor reached me any other way.

Seems though my prayers had not been heard,
But Christmas Eve was drawing on;
"Send me," I prayed, "to fetch that bird,"
And I had a turkey 'fore next dawn.

The Attorney General has introduced a Bill in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario for amending the *Act to Prevent the Profanation of the Lord's day*. Under this Bill, if it be passed, milk and ice can be delivered to customers on Sunday, telephone and telegraph offices may be kept open, houses and vehicles may be let out, and any work may be done in newspaper offices that is necessary for the purpose of preparing and printing the Monday morning edition. Naturally the Sabbatarians are up in arms against this Bill. The *Toronto World* says that their demands "exceed the bounds of moderation and decency." They have imported a Yankee preacher named Crafts from Washington to work up the agitation on their side, and the *World* tells him he had better go home, as "Canada has cranks enough of its own without importing them from the United States."

Meyer Chinsky, the bookseller prosecuted by Anthony Comstock for selling *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu* in the original Hebrew, has been acquitted. In England the work has long been on sale as *The Jewish Life of Christ*.

ANGLO-INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM.

PROSPER the English tongue!
Where'er its words are sung,
Let slavery die!
May the pure English speech
Unto all nations reach,
And every creature teach
Glad freedom's cry!

Prosper the rights of Man!
English, American,
Australian, rise!
Establish equal right!
Enlighten error's night!
Abolish envy's blight!
Prosper the wise!

Prosper the Reign of Peace!
Let wars and conflicts cease!
Prosper the good!
Banish the strife for gain!
Banish the worker's pain!
'Stablish on land and main
Man's Brotherhood!

Liberty, Learning, Love,
Be thine the power above
All ills of life!
United English race!
Proclaim in every place
The Golden Age of Grace,
The end of strife!

—Robert Chamblet Adams.

THE FINSBURY BRANCH CONCERT.

THE Social Evening in aid of the funds of the Finsbury Branch, which took place at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening last, was highly successful. Songs, dances, dramatic, musical, and ventriloquial sketches, and a pianoforte solo by Miss Helen Foote, held the attention of a large audience until our President arrived to give the success of the evening—Mark Antony's speech from *Julius Caesar*. Any defect in the program would have been forgiven after this, but the whole arrangements passed off without a hitch. The Committee and officers of the Branch desire me to add that Mr. Foote generously gave the use of the Hall upon this occasion, thus materially increasing the balance.

HARRY BROWN, *Hon. Secretary*.

THE REASON WHY MEN DO NOT GO TO CHURCH.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AS TAUGHT IN THE CHURCHES.

THEOLOGICAL religion, as taught by the priest, has been, and is, a curse. It is to-day an active power in destroying the happiness of man. It is the greatest curse of our age. It cramps the mind of man; it poisons the intellect; it stagnates the brain; it fills the mind with falsehood, and bars the way to truth; it destroys social intercourse; it blights the home, and separates husband and wife; it estranges the child from father and mother; it separates brother from sister; it is the cause of hatred; it prompts a child to look on its parent as a heretic, an infidel, and a wicked man—one who is doomed to eternal damnation. In times gone by such a man would have been burned alive at the stake. It is in thousands of cases to-day the one cause of unhappiness between man and wife. The wife is under the domain of the priest. She believes her husband to be in sin, and one who would destroy her soul. She believes he will, if he can, destroy the everlasting salvation of her children. She is in constant communication with her spiritual confessor and adviser—spiritually and temporally. He teaches her how to behave to her husband, and how to protect her children from his teachings. What would otherwise be a happy home is converted into an earthly hell. All this, and more, is the work of the minister of theological religion. The husband, the father, the master, the worker and provider of all comforts, is treated with icy coldness, if not with contempt. Is this caused by religion itself—true religion? No; it is caused by theology. Theology is mixed with religion, and this mixture is administered by the priest. Theology is not religion, but a result of man's ignorance. Religion is love—the love of man for man, the service of man to man. Love is higher than morality, for morality is man's duty to man. True religion embraces both love and duty.

Religion is the outcome of love; it is an inward spirit promoting to good actions; it makes man love man; it binds society together; it causes the happiness of man and wife, parents and children, brother and sister. It causes the rich to regard the poor, and is to man's life what the sun is to nature. The curse of theology comes in and poisons the whole—and what is this theology, this poison? It is this; a something set up by man to cover his ignorance of the cause of nature, or what we more correctly call phenomena. The theologian says nature must have been created, a created; thing must have had a creator; that creator is, and that creator he calls God. Thus does ignorant man create his God. This is not knowledge, for man does not know there is a God. I say again, man does not know this, but he assumes it; it is an inference, an hypothesis, and nothing more. Now, man believes this. He says, I believe in God; but he does not say I know it, because he does not, and cannot, know it; no man hath seen God at any time. Can man by searching find out God? If man knew there was a God, he could prove it, and cause others to know it and prove it. I tell my friend that I have found gold in my back garden by digging for water. I tell him I know that there is gold there. He doubts my statement, and says: "I cannot believe it." Now, I do not expect him to believe me. I do not expect him to accept my word, but say to him: "I can prove what I say. Here is some of the gold I found." He may say this is not proof that I found it in my garden. "Let me know this to be fact; take me to your garden, and prove what you say to be true." I take my friend, and he sees for himself the gold mixed with the earth and stones. He digs, and finds gold. Now, he not only believes, but he knows. The theologian cannot do this; he cannot prove that his God exists, but he expects others to accept as fact what he has inferred—his hypothesis they must believe or be damned.

If he could prove the existence of God, there would be no ill-feeling; none could possibly exist, because each would know it was true; but if one says there is God without proof, and expects others to believe him, he creates ill-feeling because all will not accept his conclusions. Not content with having created a god, the theologian has given him attributes; he is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. God creates a world, and on it places a (perfect?) man; he gives this creature orders what to do and what not to do. This (perfect) man at once disobeys his maker, and is forthwith punished; but not content with punishing the man who committed the sin, he must needs punish all this man's offspring with hard labour and spiritual death. In time this god feels that he would like to do something to enable this poor sinful creature to regain his lost purity, for he it remembered that in consequence of the sin of Adam, all men are born in sin; untold millions of human creatures are born in sin, and, in consequence, must be damned everlastingly! Now, to give man a chance of escaping this, God, his maker, bethought him to put himself into the form of man and call himself his only begotten son.

This son was born of a woman—of a virgin (?). He lived a singular life, taught much good and much nonsense. In consequence of his goodness and his high pretensions, he was put to death in a most cruel manner by men. This man, Jesus Christ, is set up as being God himself (see Church of England Prayer Book and Roman Catholic Books on Christian Doctrine). The plea of salvation according to the Christian doctrine is this, that whoso believeth that this man, Jesus Christ, was the very God and that he came on earth in this form for the very purpose of being put to death, and thereby offer himself to himself as a sacrifice for what his created man had done. It is said God repented that he had made man, and so had himself put to a cruel death to please himself. I will continue the scheme or plan of salvation. Now the merit or act which is to please God and save man from eternal damnation is to believe this is true. Yes, to believe this silly tale to be true. This is the plan of salvation; if you believe this you shall be forgiven original and actual sin and go to heaven.

To believe this is to be a Christian. Now, what have theologians built on this scheme or plan of salvation? According to the Roman Christian faith, Christ is God, Mary his mother. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is continued in the mass. The body and blood of Christ is eaten in the form of a wafer, or bit of flour and water. The priest, who offers up this daily sacrifice, is a sacred person. He can forgive sins; he or the Church holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The priest will for payment pray for your soul when you are in purgatory. This the priest teaches, and it is this sacred person who teaches men, women, and children that if their fathers and mothers do not believe this they are unfit to live with! A father must believe all this, or suffer what I have stated in the first part of this paper. And what is this but a fable built on the hypothesis of a god, not on fact, but on what *may* be, what we think there is, what the theologian says there is, what they have set up to be behind what we see.

What untold misery this teaching has caused; what untold misery it will cause. The whole thing is simply this: I have a table on which I now write; I know my joiner made it—my joiner is a man. I go into another room and see a table; I say a man made this table also, for I know tables are made by men. On my table I have flowers; I know they have been caused to be, because they are. I say the table was made by a man, and ask myself, Who made the flowers? *They must have had a maker.* I don't know that maker, but they had one, so I will call the unknown maker by the name of God. I have decided this, and if others do not accept this reasoning I will damn them to all eternity.

To listen to such teaching men will not go to church; this is why men do not go to church.

HENRY SCRIBE.

BOOK CHAT.

A VERY amusing, but rather too lengthy, book entitled *Some Account of Church-going*, by Theophilus Binks, Esquire, Yeoman, has been published by Watts & Co. It has for subtitle "The Declining Belief in the Supernatural, and the Uselessness of Religious Worship as a Means of Purifying the Soul: Together with Matters Purely Secular." The work, indeed, comprises a complete review of theological absurdities, and dip where you may you come across some shrewd argument or entertaining exposure of parsonic pretensions. Theophilus Binks is lively and logical, but he is fearfully discursive, and not only trots us over our little globe, but treats us to the manners and customs of the Saturnians. The work is an *ollu podrida*, into which we hope often to put in our thumb and pull out many a plum suitable for a Freethinker. The author, in his preface, warns all bishops, cardinals, and even the Pope himself, against reading this treatise, as they might come to feel so disgusted with the false positions in which they are placed that they would resign their sacred offices and take to honest labor.

With somewhat similar aims, Mr. Stephen Claye has written a neat little shilling book, entitled *The Gospel of Common Sense* (Simpkin, Marshall, & Co.). In his preface he says "he ranks among those who no longer consider it an honor to be classed as a Christian." He seeks to bring common sense to bear on the strife of creeds and sects. He says, for instance: "If on any subject in the whole range of literature so much triviality and common-place drivel were talked as is uttered under the name of a sermon, the whole process would be laughed out of court." Mr. Claye is distinguished by the moderation which usually goes with common sense, and his work, a thoughtful little book, is one which can be commended to inquirers into religious pretensions.

In his wise and witty book, *The Twilight of the Gods*, Dr. Garnett has told the story of Abdallah the Adite, who was consumed by a desire to dispel the darkness around him. His master, Sergius, a hermit, reminded him how he himself had been persecuted on account of his inability to perceive the supernatural light emanating from the navel of Brother Gregory. After some time Abdallah returned covered with weals and scars, and his bones protruded through his skin. The Caliph had imprisoned him for blasphemy. Yet he went a second time. After a space he returned, covered as before with wounds and bruises, but comely and fat. "Whence this sleekness of body?" he was asked. "Through the charity of the Caliph's wives," he answered, "who have fed me secretly, I having assured them that, in remembrance of this good work, each of them in the world to come would have seven husbands." He was reproved for seeking to win over weak, ignorant people by promises of a future life, of which he knew no more than they, and set forth again. After a while he returned, sound, but with something on his mind. His claims as a teacher had been disputed, because he could not breathe fire out of his mouth and nostrils; but, when Abdallah learnt to do this and walk over hot ploughshares with well-soaped feet, he was soon renowned as a teacher. Presently Abdallah produces the book of Cid, which prohibits polygamy, but has a supplement permitting it. In time his followers slaughter heretics wholesale, taking their young women as is ordained in the eleventh supplement to the book of Cid. Finally, he shows Sergius a man chained to a stake and about to be burned. Asked wherefore this atrocity, "This man," he replied, "is a blasphemer, who hath said that the book of Cid is written on the bones of a cow." "But it is written on the bones of a cow," he cried. "Even so," said he, "and therefore is his heresy the more damnable, and his punishment the more exemplary. Had it been, indeed, written on the bones of a camel, he might have affirmed what pleased him."

The Physiology of Love: A Study in Stirpiculture, by Henry Seymour, published by L. N. Fowler (7 Imperial Arcade, Ludgate-circus, E.C.; 1s.), is an illustrated, plainly-written *brochure* on a subject of universal interest. Mr. Seymour describes and illustrates a variety of temperaments, which he considers suitable for mating; but the question arises whether the matter is not more subtly provided for by the instinct known as "falling in love," than by any treatise. This, at any rate, is the opinion of Mr. Grant Allen. Mr. Seymour's views of "a natural affinity between the brown eye and the blue," and against inter-breeding, may be questioned. The late J. H. Noyes laid it down that God's method to produce his chosen people was by close inter-breeding. Abraham married his sister, Nahor his niece, Isaac the daughter of his cousin, while Jacob married two of his first cousins on his mother's side, and could trace his own lineage to Terah through all four of Terah's children. But they did strange things in Bible times. Mr. Seymour's book should have a large circulation.

The *Labor Annual*, edited by J. Edwards (Wallasey, near Liverpool), has, as usual, a big budget of information concerning all advanced movements. It has a concise chronology of social and political progress, an account of labor organizations and advanced societies, directories of lecturers and reformers, the reform press and reform societies, an account of recent books and pamphlets on Social Reform, and biographies, with portraits, of reformers. Among these are Annie Besant, Jane Hume Clapperton, Mr. C. Cohen, Dr. Stanton Coit, Pete Curran, F. J. Gould, A. Hamon, G. J. Harney, J. S. Maxwell, Amy Morant, Professor F. W. Newman, E. R. Pease, J. M. Robertson, H. Snell, George Standing, Charlotte Stotson, E. Truelove, E. W. Walters, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and J. M. Wheeler. There is an important paper on "The Great Battle of Labor," by the late Henry George. Altogether, the Annual is an excellent shilling's worth.

We hear that Lady Renouf has placed at the disposal of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, of which the Rev. A. H. Sayce is the new President, all the notes left by the late Sir Peter Renouf for his work on the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. The publication of the work will be continued by the Society. We understand that a scheme for widening the operations of the Society is under consideration by the Council.

Bjornsterne Bjornson, the Norwegian Freethinker and Republican, has addressed to Mr. Zola a letter of enthusiastic approbation for standing out as the champion of justice. Bjornson says: "I have always held that the work of a romance writer or a poet bears the same relation to himself, personally, as notes do to the bank whence they are issued, and which should have in hand securities corresponding to its deliveries. We now see that, if your works are circulated all over the world to increase courage and enrich the heart of humanity, it is because you are yourself a man of courage and of heart." We venture to say from what we know of Bjornson's writings that the like can be said of himself.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WHAT DOES SECULARISM OFFER?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A leaflet has been sent to me which purports to be a reprint of a letter to your paper criticising a lecture I gave some time ago under the above heading; and I claim, in fairness, the liberty of reply. Your correspondent, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, says he was told my answer was, "The World, the Flesh, and the Devil." His information was singularly inaccurate, for not even incidentally did I mention those things, so that his criticism is but a travesty of my lecture, and therefore stale, flat, and unprofitable.

As a Catholic priest, my duty was to be fair to opponents, and hence, in my lecture, I took *seriatim* the points put forward in a leaflet by yourselves on this subject, and on these based my remarks.

Having shown the utter fallaciousness of Mr. Wheeler's reply, I need go no farther; but I prefer to follow—if you will allow me—some of the lucubrations of his brain. He tells us that Secularists "mean to make the best of this world, for it is awhile their home." I should have thought it was altogether their home, since they know no other. According to their ideas, then, it is important to make the best of it. That should be no reason why others, in following the freedom of their thoughts, and hoping for a better home, may not seek—using the things of this world as a means—a higher and spiritual home, which they call heaven.

Mr. Wheeler gives us some rhymes, presuming to show the futility of hoping for a future world, and the sweetness of the present life. What a pity it is that he cannot implant this doctrine in the minds of the hundreds of suicides in this country! They seem to have failed to find life's sweetness, however prettily it is rhymed. There are probably hundreds of others so discontented with this present world that they would gladly leave it at any moment. Nature is strangely cruel to make man so prolific that the struggle for existence has taken the sweetness out of life for such a large portion of mankind.

He laments the devotion spent on another world, showing that even to him this world is sometimes a "vale of tears." He proceeds: "Perhaps by 'the world' you mean only the struggle to crush down others in a mad rage for pride or pelf." If I used the term at all, I should have meant no such thing, and I am surprised that even a Freethinker should attribute such unworthy motives to a fellow-man. And Mr. Wheeler adds that our "Church, while pointing above, has ever taken care to grasp the earth beneath—with its priests in gold-embroidered garments, and its worshippers in rags; with images bejewelled, and beggars grovelling before them; with wealth and art lavished on a God who wants them not, and the people kept hungry and ignorant."

This is not even the lucubrations of a reasonable being, but of a man "intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity." Let us examine this jeremiad a little closely. I must evidently be included in this invective; and, though I do not like writing an apology *pro vitiis meis*, I do not see how to avoid doing so, if I am to clear myself at all.

Does your correspondent not know that what the Catholic Church holds is ever in trust for the people, and mainly for the poor? Many who have entered the Church have been wealthy, and have left in it their riches, and even sometimes have given gold-embroidered vestments. Surely Mr. Wheeler does not think we priests loll about all day in gold-embroidered garments, or go to bed in them. If we have such, they are only used at a few special feasts in the year. Then, our "worshippers are in rags." This is an admission that our Church is the Church of the poor, and that, as Christ said, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

How does it follow, though, that we keep the people in rags, or are the cause of their poverty? Why, I am partly in rags myself, and should be glad to sell to Mr. Wheeler all I stand up in for a sovereign, that so I might have a chance to get a new suit—a luxury I have not indulged in for seven years. For the twenty-two years I have been a priest I have never taken a farthing of stipend—nor have my *confreres*—and all that time I have been working for the poor, and am practically their servant. Last summer I could take no holiday for want of money and of time; and yet during the year we spend in various ways nearly £1,000 on the poor; and none who are deserving are left in rags. This is Mr. Wheeler's romance.

He complains that "wealth and art are lavished on a God who needs them not, and the people kept hungry and ignorant." Yes, believing in God, we consecrate to him of the best and most precious. Not that he needs anything, but to show our love for him. It were ungrateful, indeed, to know that all good comes from him, and not to acknowledge his supreme dominion. That we keep the people hungry and ignorant is on a par with your correspondent's other information, and, therefore, in this matter distinctly

false. I have never in my life met a creature of any creed hungry whom I did not relieve. Our Sisters of Charity are ever visiting the district and administering to cases of real distress. In the cold of winter 600 dinners and over are given to the needy; while children and people scantily dressed are clothed. A society of working men visit their co-workers in their homes; and none are left without succor. In our schools we give an education to nearly 700 children, equal to that given in the best Board schools, as testified by Her Majesty's Inspectors; so that Mr. Wheeler is proved guilty of gross libel.

Under the term, "the flesh," your correspondent foists upon me what only is born in his own foetid imagination—that I "mean," thereby, "the despoiling and degradation of woman for the sensual gratification of man." This is, like so many other things he says, a monstrous untruth. Further on he adds "that priests and hypocrites decry the body, and stigmatize its most sacred function; compelling the retort that the history of sacerdotal celibacy shows how the flesh can have its revenge." I wonder what does the history of the matrimonial contract show? Certainly not conjugal fidelity, if the work of the Divorce-court is evidence, or even the reports of the Police-courts. It is time to point to accidental defects in celibacy when matrimony makes couples immaculate.

Were I to say Freethinkers were liars, I would have as much reason as Mr. Wheeler has in putting priests in the same category as hypocrites. I have again to say it is not true that priests decry the body and stigmatize its most sacred function. We always encourage people to get married, and in our Church marriage has the dignity of a sacrament, and is indissoluble. We teach that *only* those who have a special vocation should remain celibate, and whose mission is to dedicate themselves to the poor and to the visiting of the sick, however contagious the disease may be. Were I a married man, I would not be free to do this, nor to live without stipend, nor give almost all my means to the poor.

But, says Mr. Wheeler, giving the most unbounded freedom to his evil thoughts of us, "Celibate ears itch for the confidences of brides and maidens." Verily, Mr. Wheeler must think his readers very gullible if they can be made to believe that priests have few other confessions to hear than those of brides and maidens. If the brides be so many, then this is a flat contradiction to his former statement, that we "stigmatize the body's most sacred function." Both contraries cannot be true. The ignorance of a priest's work, in your correspondent's mind, is so crass that I despair of enlightening him. Permit me, however, to give your readers some idea of our work in the Confessional. First of all, nearly as many men come to confession as women. Secondly, it is never permitted to inquire into the details or circumstances of sin confessed. Thirdly, it is in the Confessional that reconciliation is made between enemies, restitution enforced of injured characters, or of ill-gotten goods. There are penitents checked of their evil living, and those weakened by intoxication encouraged to temperance and sobriety. Extreme patience and charity have to be exercised, and the work is undoubtedly part of the most laborious of a priest's life. The pruriency of which Mr. Wheeler speaks can but come from the tingling of his own itching ears. Why, in Catholic Ireland, where the habit of confession is universal, morality is 50 per cent. higher than in any part of the British Isles.

From the "Flesh" Mr. Wheeler goes to the Devil, whither I do not intend to follow him, for on this question there is no common ground of argument between us. He does not believe in the old gentleman, whereas I do, if for no other reason than the existence of characters who pretend to help the cause of humanity by libelling their fellow-men.

Had your correspondent a spark of zeal for the education of the people, he would at least be sure of his facts. I have shown that his letter has no foundation to be a reply to my lecture, and that, moreover, it is as full of ignorance as it is of falsity.

If Secularism has, indeed, anything to offer, let it first be true; then should it be charitable. But attacks on Christianity which are baseless and slanderous will never advance any cause. And here I wash my hands of Mr. Wheeler's venom.—I am, your obedient servant,

J. P. BANNIN.

Italian Church, Clerkenwell-road,
Jan. 18, 1898.

P.S.—If I write strongly, it is because I am compelled to defend myself with the same weapons with which I was attacked.

MR. WHEELER'S REPLY.

Father Bannin's warmth has led him into some pardonable mistakes. I expressly stated (*Freethinker*, December 12) that I had not heard his lecture, so was not criticising it. I merely made it the occasion of contrasting the attitude of his Church and of Secularism to "the world, the flesh, and the devil." I was throughout addressing an

imaginary opponent, and had no thought of attacking Father Bannin personally, or his individual mission. I have expressed to him privately, and here repeat my regret, at having taken his name in vain. I am pleased to believe, and ready to own, that there are many priests who try to reconcile the service of their Church with that of humanity.

It suits Father Bannin to treat my leaflet as a personal invective, instead of an attack on Catholicism, as found in history and throughout many lands. He can say: "I confess nearly as many men as women"; "our schools are equal to the best Board schools," etc.; yet he probably knows that in France most of the penitents are women, and in Spain eighty per cent. of the population are illiterate. He can say "I am poor," yet he knows his Church is wealthy; and its head, I read, has personal property to the value of \$76,000,000. In England Romanism is on its best behavior. Its educational efforts are self-preservative mainly. They are necessary to prevent its extinction, and without them the priests would soon lose their hold on the minds of the people.

The Father says that "what the Catholic Church holds is ever in trust for the people, and mainly for the poor." Yet the poor remain poor, and the Church continues to hold the wealth. He explains it, telling us, "We always encourage people to get married," though "Nature" [i.e., God] "is strangely cruel to make man so prolific that the struggle for existence has taken the sweetness out of life for such a large portion of mankind." The Church's method of dealing with poverty, while preaching "increase and multiply," only perpetuates evil. So with its teaching of morality. The pretended clearing off of sin by absolution in the confessional keeps character weak. The Father says: "In Catholic Ireland, where the habit of confession is universal, morality is fifty per cent. higher than in any part of the British Isles." What does he mean by morality? Are the Irish more truthful, honest, or humane than the English? Not a bit. But they have fewer illegitimate children. When one knows that the highest percentages of illegitimacy in Europe are in Catholic Bavaria and Austria, one suspects that custom, heredity, and race have something to do with this kind of morality as well as the confessional. How is it that there where the Church flourishes the people are poorest, most ignorant, and most criminal? Here is the proportion of murders to every 100,000 inhabitants: Italy, 12.67; Spain, 8.59; Austria, 3.11; Belgium, 2.52; France, 2.13; Ireland, 1.93; Germany, 1.14; England, 1.08; Scotland, 0.94.

I did not attribute to Father Bannin the words he disclaims. The Church, asking its disciples to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, presumably puts a bad significance on those terms. "If any man love the world," says Christ, "the love of the Father is not in him." Paul says: "He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." It were easy to cite the Christian Fathers, Tertullian, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and others, who decried the body and stigmatized its most sacred function. But I must remind the Father that the Council of Trent anathematizes all who say that virginity and celibacy are not superior to, and more blessed than, marriage.* This is an universal proposition, binding on all Catholics. Father Bannin puts it: "Only those who have a special vocation should remain celibate." Yet his Church describes celibacy alone as "the religious life," and induces children to take vows at the age of sixteen. The words "celibate ears" did not begin a sentence, but were part of one couched in the potential mood, so that, separated from their context, they should have the word "may" inserted after them. Now, the history of *Sacerdotal Celibacy* has been temperately written by Henry C. Lea, and I refer readers to that work to see if all I said be not fully justified. It needs no fœtid imagination to know that shaving the crown does not eliminate sexual appetite, while the manuals of confession of Dens, Sanchez, and others, prove how thoroughly the penitent may be probed on every possible sexual offence. I do not say Father Bannin does this. But he could find many authorities to support him if he did. Father Bannin wittily refuses to follow me to the Devil, and apparently regards me as the old gentleman's advance agent. Well, I regard him as the servant of a corrupt corporation, far more crafty than himself, and which utilizes celibacy to ensure that wealth and devotion, which would flow to the priest, pass on into the vast treasury of the Church.

J. M. W.

FREEWILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It seems so absolutely absurd to hear a prominent Christian putting forward the doctrine of "freewill" that I ask a little space in your paper in order to point out to Mr. Engström its absurdity. The very reverse of freewill is taught by the Bible itself. In that foolish old fable of the

* "Si quis dixerit statum conjugalem anteposendum esse statui virginitatis vel calibatus, et non esse melius ac beatius manere in virginitate aut calibatu, quam jungi matrimonii, anathema sit" (Sess. xxiv., De Matr., Canon x.).

Fall (which Mr. Engström professes to believe) we are assured that a God made male and female, and that they fell; but, seeing that the scheme of salvation was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" (see 1 Peter i. 20), the whole thing resolves itself into a mere farce, so far as freewill is concerned. Adam and Eve had no choice in the matter. We are frequently assured that sin or evil, or disobedience to the Christian God's commands, is the most detestable thing in his Majesty's sight; that it brought all the misery into the world. But now, surely, if this God was really the creator, he was also the creator of man's thinking powers, and of every faculty capable of being exercised; and seeing that a more powerful incentive to rebel against, than to obey, predominated, as is evidenced by the Fall, why not give this God his due as the introducer of evil into the world? Man created nothing.

If it was really this God's desire that man should not have sinned against his so-called Maker; if all-powerful, he could most easily have prevented it; but, seeing that he certainly did not do so, the sole responsibility must be given to God, not man. If we refer to the Bible, we find (Isaiah xlv. 7): "I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." Amos iii. 6: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" How absolutely absurd, then, to throw all the blame of evil on man, giving God the credit for all good. If a creator is claimed, then I want such to take the credit of all—the bad as well as the good; if not, "creation" is denied.

The Bible is put into the hands of the child with these words: "Believe or be damned." The book may be disbelieved in, and, being true to honest convictions, it is rejected; for such honesty you receive "damnation eternal." Perhaps Mr. Engström can tell you where the freedom comes in here, and what is its value.

Mr. Engström says he believes in the "Fall," as "he sees its effect in himself and others." But recognising evil tendencies in man is no proof whatever that the "Fall" (as per Bible) ever occurred. We do recognise in animals beneath man cruel and bloodthirsty desires in their full development, and unless Mr. Engström can give us proof that there was once a period when men existed free from all evil thoughts, desires, and passions (which I am sure he cannot), he has unconsciously given us evidence in favor of evolution, and not Christianity.

Concerning "freewill," I believe that all actions are influenced through the accumulated force of circumstances (mostly external), over which we have no immediate control, but which impel us to act as we do. Even climatic influence, location, heredity, exercise a large share in determining our actions.

I would advise Mr. Engström to note the myriads of instances of "inebriates," very many of whom, although seeing misery, ruin, and even death as the inevitable consequences of their intemperance, yet have no power to abstain therefrom. I have seen "drunkards" cry like very children, while making the most earnest protestations for reformation. The morning comes, and they are still the victims of circumstances—the heirs of the ages.

In conclusion, I may add that I do not think that anyone shows much of the true spirit of "humanity," or even the love of brotherhood, who would say that everyone of these poor victims could (if they but would) exercise "freewill" in the sense put forward; neither do I consider it to the credit of any man to put forward, as the truth, the puerile, lying, filthy, and immoral doctrines of the Bible, with the knowledge of the nineteenth century at his feet.

OCTAVIUS DREWELL.

PROFANE JOKES.

SOME miners once found an old copper kettle, and decided, by way of amusement, to give it to the person who could tell the biggest lie. When engaged in this strange competition a clergyman, who was passing, desired to know what they were doing. He was promptly informed, whereupon he exclaimed with pious indignation: "How very wicked; I would not lie on any consideration." "Give him the kettle," quietly observed one of the miners.

A clergyman, happening to pass a boy weeping bitterly, halted, and asked: "What is the matter, my little fellow?" The boy replied: "We could hardly get enough to eat before, and now there's another one come!" "Hush your mourning, and wipe off those tears," said the clergyman; "and remember that God never sends mouths without he sends victuals to put into them." "I know that," said the boy; "but then all the mouths come to our house, and all the victuals to your house."

Little Elmer—"Pa, what does 'requiescat in pace' mean?" Professor Broadhead—"Please stay dead" is near enough.—*Puck*.

Lidy Church Stallkeeper—"I'll give you a kiss if you buy one of my kikes." Bold bad bald old gent—"I hope, my dear, your kisses are lighter than your cakes."

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, G. W. Foote, Memorial Address on Charles Bradlaugh.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 7.15, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Crime: Its Causes and its Punishments."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 11.30, Stanley Jones, "Miracles and Medicine"; 7.30, A. B. Moss, "Darwin the SLakespeare of Science."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion on "Ethical Aims and Ideals," opened by Francis Gould; 7, Sidney Webb, L.C.C., "The Future of London."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall): 11.15, F. R. Statham, "The Value of Fiction."

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY ("Barley Mow," Horseferry-road): 7.30, "Is the Bible True?" Part II.

WOOD GREEN (Station-road Hall): 7.30, W. Snow, "Labor, Leisure, and Luxury."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH (Peckham Rye-lane "Triangle"): Jan. 29, 8, Stanley Jones, "Christianity or Secularism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture; 8.30, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM (Bristol-street Board School): C. Watts—11, "Life: Its True Value"; 7, "Christian Tactics Exposed."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7, Dramatic Sketch, "Deaf as a Post," will be given by the dramatic class.

CHESTER (Corn Exchange): Feb. 1 and 2, 8, Debate between C. Cohen and Rev. A. J. Waldron, subject: "The Relative Merits of Secularism and Christianity."

DERBY (Co-operative Hall, Exchange-street): C. Watts—Jan. 31, "The Decline of Paganism and the Dawn of Christianity." Feb. 1, "Morality versus Superstition"; Feb. 2, "Triumph of Reason over Faith"; Feb. 3, "Christian Tactics Exposed." Each evening at 8.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class, T. Robertson; 6.30, A. G. Nostick, "The History of Coal," with lantern illustrations.

HULL (Cobden Hall, Storey-street): 7, Social evening.

LEICESTER SECULAR HALL (Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Stanton Coit, "Shelley, the Poet and Rebel."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Ross, "The Death and Resurrection of Christ."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen—11, "Looking Forward"; 8, "How Christianity Began"; 6.30, "Is Religion Worth Preserving?"

PLYMOUTH (Democratic Club, Whimble-street): 7, Meeting of members.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Bockingham-street): 7, Extra musical and other recitals. Feb. 2, Soirée and ball.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, King-street): 7, Business meeting; 7.30, "Religious Education."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 12 Merchant-street, Bow-road, London.—January 30, Manchester. February 6, Manchester; 13 and 14, Birmingham; 20 and 27, Liverpool. March 6, Liverpool.

A. B. MOSS, 44 Oredon-road, London, S.E.—January 30, Camberwell. February 20, King's Hall, Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 6 Wawne Grove, Alexandra-road, Hull.—January 30, Blyth. February 6 and 13, Hull; 20 to 27, Manchester. March 6 to 11, Mission at Derby; 13, Birmingham; 20, Sheffield. April 17, Glasgow.

POSITIVISM.

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SUNDERLAND.—Church of Humanity, 23 Blandford-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.

BATLEY.—Positivist Meeting at Mr. Joseph Walker's, Primrose Hill, Lady Anne-road, every Sunday afternoon at 2.30.

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