

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 51.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1900.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

Dr. Parker's Rushlight.

MODERN Christianity lives largely by sensationalism. That is at least half the secret of the success of the High Church party. Music, decorations, processions, and ornate ritual appeal to the sensuous nature. On the top of them there comes occasionally the "good thick stupefying incense smoke"—as Browning called it, and then the appeal is complete. The female worshipper is entirely overcome and ready for any religious folly; while the male worshipper feels as though he were in a kind of cross-place between a lady's scented chamber and a Chinese opium den. Even the Protestant sect at the other extreme follows a more vulgar edition of the same policy. General Booth has always known the value of glaring color, incessant movement, and blatant noise. Make the people feel, and give them no time to think, is ever the first point in his method. Nor is the leader of the rival show, the Church Army, at all backward in these trade devices. The Rev. Mr. Carlile preaches with limelight illustrations, and holds forth on any notorious topic of the week, even if pertaining to the general police news or the particular exploits of Jack the Ripper. And the same infection has pervaded the whole of the once solemn household of faith. Mr. Price Hughes goes in for a pious music-hall entertainment on Sunday afternoons in Piccadilly. Christian Endeavorers, and other *fin de siècle* bodies, hire public palaces with extensive grounds and camp out in tents. On all sides the old order changeth, giving place to new, and priestcraft fulfils itself in many ways—some of them quite shockingly shady.

Some time ago there was a peculiar bit of religious sensationalism in America. The Rev. C. M. Sheldon wrote a dull, trashy book called *In His Steps: or What would Jesus Do?* One feature of the story was the running of a big daily paper on Christ-like lines. Gambling news, drink and smoke advertisements, and other attractions and sources of revenue, were dropped; and the Sunday edition—got up and printed, by the way, on Saturday—was discontinued. Nothing was allowed to appear but what Jesus Christ would have passed if he occupied the editorial chair, with a halo on his head, and the twelve apostles sitting around him as a committee of first inspection. Of course there was a tremendous loss on the experiment; for, although God made the world, it is not ready for such a godly newspaper. But a rich Christian lady was at hand, with a quarter of million dollars that she hardly knew what to do with, and the Christ-like organ was sustained in the face of public indifference. Even as the story went the experiment was not alluring to investors. Nevertheless the proprietors of the *Topeka Capital* invited the reverend story-teller to take command of their paper for a week. Not longer, for he might kill it. For a week it would probably survive his manipulation, and during that period it would be splendidly advertised all over the United States. Mr. Sheldon, on the other hand, received about £1,000 for his Christ-like services. Both sides were thoroughly satisfied. The *Topeka Capital* still lives, and no doubt flourishes like a green bay tree, though it can hardly want another dose of Sheldon. One bottle of that mixture was enough for a single incarnation.

Our own enterprising and histrionic Dr. Parker has followed in the footsteps of Brother Sheldon, as Brother Sheldon followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. By an arrangement with the proprietors of the *Sun*—the

funny name of a London evening paper—the famous Oracle of the City Temple has been conducting that sheet during the past week—from December 17 to December 23 inclusive. We dare say the arrangement was expected to be mutually profitable. Dr. Parker is not reputed to be fond of working for nothing—not even for Christ; and the *Sun* will benefit by the wide advertisement that must accrue from its odd experiment.

We bought a copy of the "second extra special" on Monday evening. The facetious-looking young man who sold it to us winked as he took our halfpenny. We fancy he knew our name was not Simpkins. Turning to the "Latest News" column our eyes fell upon some ancient texts, followed by an appeal to "all praying souls in London" to wrestle with the Lord, with a view to gambling being made to "perish out of the land." Our own reflection on this matter was that the Lord could stop gambling whenever he pleased, and that Dr. Parker's tip as to the psychological moment was not necessary to Omniscience.

Dr. Parker's idea was to give no gambling news, but a plentiful supply of war news. Is this, however, quite consistent with the teaching of the New Testament? We do not recollect any specific text in that volume against gambling, and there are texts which show that casting lots (or tossing for it, as we say now) was a common method of deciding hard questions. But fighting of all kinds, even in honest self-defence, is forbidden in the Sermon on the Mount. It seems to us, therefore, that Dr. Parker should have excluded all news from the front, as well as the latest odds.

We were amused to see Dr. Parker putting in a good word for "infidels." "Many so-called infidels," he said, "are really not infidels at all. There are more ecclesiastical infidels than religious infidels." On this principle, which is not too clear, Dr. Parker proceeded to explain that, wherever a man was trying to do a good deed, he should give religion the credit for it. "Many men," he condescendingly remarked, "are religious who do not know it." But how does Dr. Parker happen to know them better than they know themselves? If they ignore or repudiate his religion, it is idle on his part, and even impertinent, to claim them as belonging to his own faith. He would not claim a bad "infidel." Why, then, should he claim a good one?

"I delight," Dr. Parker said, "to lead the Devil a hard life"—and editing the *Sun* for a week is a part of that policy. But why should Dr. Parker be so severe on his Satanic Majesty? Instead of his giving the Devil work, some of us think the Devil gives *him* work. What would the men of God do without Old Nick? Is he not their best friend? They are all engaged in fighting him as the enemy of God—who is omnipotent! If he laid down his arms they would have to disband. Even if they only try to save us from sin, it is obvious that their business (and salaries) depends on the Devil's activity; for if he ceased to tempt us, God would have it all his own way, and there would be no one who was not righteous, no not one.

Dr. Parker's social philosophy is worthy of his religious belief. His remedy for Hooliganism is the whip and the cat; a pious imbecility which reminds us that all the great reformers in jurisprudence have been Freethinkers. "I should like," Dr. Parker says, "to have a constable standing in the shadow of every-street lamp to pounce upon guilty people, and to take them away to be flogged." "Try the 'cat,'" was his parting advice. This is Christian sociology after two thousand years of revelation!

G. W. FOOTE.

The Church and the Dying Century.

ANOTHER century of the Christian era is drawing to a close, leaving behind a history of events pregnant with grounds for serious reflection. It has been a century of invention and discovery; of science and philosophy; of political expansion and social disquietude; of literary enterprise and educational improvement; and last, but not least, of indications of religious weakness and of undoubted proof of the progress and consolidation of Freethought. This is not the place to dwell upon all the above improvements, but to me, as a Secularist, it is of special interest to note that, in proportion to the progress of science and the increase of general knowledge, the practical influence of theology has declined. Further, it is obvious that, although during the last hundred years Christianity has had better opportunities than it ever had for proving what vitality for good it possessed, it is perfectly clear that the improvement which has been made within the time mentioned is in no way due to the Christian religion; on the contrary, the Church has been the foremost obstacle to the diffusion of scientific knowledge, the spread of general education, and the acquirement by the masses of their social rights. It can be fairly registered as an undeniable truth that the progress of the nineteenth century is the result of secular agencies rather than of religious teachings. This is most encouraging to Freethinkers, whose one desire is to establish freedom, justice, and honor among men, and thereby to secure and promote the highest welfare possible for the human family.

Let us see what the position of Christianity is at the close of the nineteenth century. Has it become more intelligible and more in harmony with human requirements? Has it become more practical as a factor in the regulation of daily conduct? Has it inspired the Church to proper action in the cause of justice and in the amelioration of the evil condition of the community? The answer is no, for we find that the teachings of the New Testament are entirely ignored; that the Christian's God is entirely forsaken; that the Bible as an infallible guide is given up; that Christ is looked upon more as an "Ideal" than as a practical reformer; that heaven and hell are regarded as *conditions* in this life, not *places* in some other existence; that the devil is admitted to be a non-entity; that the blood of the Lamb has lost its cleansing power; and, finally, that the best sermons preached from the pulpits to-day are based upon the ethics borrowed from ancient philosophers, not upon doctrines which once formed the very essence of Christianity. People have become more than ever indifferent to practical Christianity. So palpable is this fact that Bishop Ryle, in opening his Diocesan Conference in Liverpool, alluded to what he termed

"one very unhealthy and painful symptom which seems to me to characterise the age in which we are living. The symptom I refer to is the increasing indifference to all distinctive doctrines and opinions in religion in every part of the land. I say emphatically *increasing religious indifference*.....I have not in view those huge masses of people in London, and our large towns, who worship nowhere, and appear to have no religion at all. I refer to those myriads in this age who are to be found in all our churches, who are not communicants, and never exhibit any interest in vital religion.....I declare my belief that the size and rapid growth of the school of indifference is one of the most dangerous signs of the times at the close of the nineteenth century. The multitude who belong to this school are not open opponents of the faith and Christ's cause; but they simply sit still and do nothing for religion at home or abroad. Ask any good clergyman who works his parish, and visits his people, and knows their characters, what is the chief difficulty he has to contend with. I am certain he would tell you that it is neither Romanism, nor extreme Ritualism, nor Erastianism, nor Broad Churchism, nor systematic Scepticism, nor any other 'ism,' but a half-dead torpid indifference about any sort or kind of religion."

Thus we see the change which has come over the reception of the Christian faith. The difference between its influence past and present may be seen when we remember that once truth was tested by Christianity, now Christianity is tested by truth; once reason bowed to faith, now faith has to bow to reason; once Christianity was a living principle, now it is practically impotent.

Taking our so-called National Church, which is supposed to be the expounder of the "genuine article" in religion, for the reason that it bears the Government stamp upon it, what is its position at the end of the present century? So far as religion and thought are concerned, this Church is most incongruously and anomalously placed. She is like a man between two stools, clinging to a bending plank overhead. Such a very unreliable support for the Church, the only guarantee for its position, is the State. Let this plank give way—and it must give way ere long—and the Church of England will lapse into chaotic confusion. Her inconsistency is thus manifest. Here we have a Church professedly based on a Divine faith; yet it has to rely for support upon the protection of the State. Were its assumed divinity a reality, secular aid for its existence should be unnecessary. Besides, the functions of the two—the Church and the State—are very different: the one claims the right of spiritual direction; the business of the other is to concern itself with the secular affairs of society. The Anglican Church is, moreover, equivocally placed with respect to her doctrines. She half receives the Reformation dogma of private interpretation of the Scriptures, and half rejects it by affirming that the true sense of Scripture is its interpretation by the Church. She thus professes to bow to reason, while, in fact, she denies its right. It has been said: "Ye cannot serve two masters: ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Alas for this dictum, however, the Church of England has ever been more remarkable for her solicitude to possess riches than for her "spiritual" devotion or regard for consistency! The assumption that the English Church is the national exponent of the religious thought of the age is entirely unsupported by facts. The union of the Church with the State is the main ground upon which the assertion is made. But only a slight reflection is necessary to demonstrate that such a connection cannot make the Church national, using that term in its proper sense. Before it can consistently deserve that designation, it must be shown that the Establishment represents the religious ideas and aspirations of the majority of the people of the United Kingdom. Such, however, is not the case, inasmuch as the bulk of the Protestants of Great Britain do not subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, and will not be bound by the priestly dogmas of the Established Church. The religious faith of Christendom outside the domain of Roman Catholicism day by day grows broader and less inclined to be fettered by the creeds and ecclesiastical teachings of priests and councils.

As Freethinkers, we need not be apprehensive either of Conformity or Nonconformity. The latter is now more political than religious, and the former is more religious than political in spirit; but its connection with the State—which is now tolerant perforce—deprives it of much of its original power to wound. It will be a glorious time when man shall be sufficiently free to cast off the swathing-bands of fetichism and ecclesiasticism, and shall have learned to rely solely upon human effort, and upon his own knowledge of his necessities and potentialities. There is no doubt that the next century will witness a vast improvement in the public mind on theological questions. For, the principle of free inquiry once given to the world, and once admitted by mankind, it would be absurd for any new "minister" to attempt to forge fresh intellectual shackles, or to say to the human mind, "Thus far shalt thou come, but no further!"

It is useless to attempt to disguise the fact that the principal consideration with those who desire to secure a Church living is not the "spiritual" welfare of the people, but whether a particular living possesses such attractions as a good fishing stream, a pleasant riding course, and a congregation composed of persons who are free from Scepticism, being contented to open their mouths and shut their eyes, and accept with implicit faith what their pastors tell them. Of course, it would be unfair to place all the clergy of the Church of England under this category. In this order, as among all bodies of men, are to be found those whose lives are strictly pure, earnest, and useful. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that throughout the rural districts the clergy are not remarkable for displaying that mental activity so desirable in those who essay to guide the conduct of others.

Moreover, the Church is not only surrounded by impure conditions, but it is equally clear that it has failed as a reforming agency. At one period, for instance, the Church had every opportunity of proving its power and intention in the field of education. With vast wealth and influence it had for a long period the direction of the youthful mind. How did this religious institution use its advantages? Simply by thrusting its theological doctrines upon the people, rather than teaching them the practical duties of life. So palpable was the failure of the Church as an educational medium that the State was at length compelled to intervene, and to do what the Church had failed to accomplish. Unable to achieve the work themselves, the members of this wealthiest of all religious establishments became the most determined opponents of those who were able and willing to promote the secular education of the people. From the time when Lord Brougham pleaded for a national scheme of education to the present, when bigotry manifests itself on the Board schools, it can be truly said that the policy of the Church has been to thwart all instruction not in accordance with its own narrow creeds and dogmas. The Church has also been persistently antagonistic to free inquiry, and to all political reform. The indictment of the nineteenth century against the orthodox Christian Church is a severe one, which foretells her doom.

As humble workers in the cause of human improvement, we are proud as Freethinkers of the progress which has been made during the century now departing. We are the more gratified because many of the most prominent progressive thinkers to-day do not even profess to be Christians. The leaders of science and philanthropy in modern times are men who have the love of truth and the love of justice, who possess large and benevolent hearts, but who have no practical faith in Christianity.

CHARLES WATTS.

Pious Doggrel.

ONE of the signs of the times is the growing dissatisfaction of religious people with many of the hymns sung in their places of worship—or, if not sung, at any rate included in their authorised hymnals. A general impression appears to exist that these collections of pious outpourings require very extensive overhauling, mainly with a view to the elimination of hymns that are obsolete, or otherwise out of consonance with the emotional tastes or the ordinary common sense of those who may be called upon to sing them.

This is a step in the right direction. The wonder is that it has not been taken before. No doubt, after the most careful revision by the Churches, there will still remain a large number of hymns that are distasteful to minds with reflective capabilities, or of a sensitively spiritual cast. But, at the present time, there are hymns—some of them frequently used—which, to any person who carefully reads them, are either outrageously repellent or grotesquely absurd. It does not follow that they are doctrinally wrong. In most cases, they are fairly accurate representations in verse of leading features of the Christian faith. Possibly it is that very fact which makes them so objectionable. Preachers may gloss over with euphemisms and circumlocutions many of the falsities and fatuities of theology. But it often seems to be the fate of the hymn-writer to bring out these defects in all their naked absurdity and glaring hideousness. While he tries to adorn he often disrobes. Hence there is probably nothing more calculated to shake the religious faith of a man of intelligence than a critical examination of a hymn-book. He is certain, of course, to be disgusted with the overpowering abundance of doggrel. It will be an odd thing if he is not disgusted with the doctrines as well.

From the *Methodist Times* we learn that the London ministers have been discussing the proposed new hymn-book of the Methodist Connexion. All seemed agreed as to the need of revision. One minister said it would undoubtedly be a gain to be able to sing the hymn commencing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." That is *his* notion, which, fortunately for the national sanity, is not very extensively shared. There was no

desire, he said, for any large selection from Sankey's hymns—which is quite intelligible. Dr. Osborn had so far yielded as to insert one, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by"; but who cared, asked the speaker, to give it out at the present day? Another speaker was against any attempt to propitiate the casual hearer. "They provided him with a seat and a book, and only got, it may be, in return, a button in the offertory bag." He would remove all hymns that could not be used, and take out all objectionable phrases. A large number might with advantage be abridged. No doubt. The less there is of them the better. Much of the discussion turned upon the retention of Wesley's hymns. The Rev. Alfred H. Vine observed that there was very little imagination in Wesley's hymns. Generally it was thought that many of them were too lofty for general use, which may be another way of saying that they are incomprehensible, and their sentiments too nonsensical for modern acceptance. The Rev. Allen Rees expressed the opinion that the reason why certain hymns were not sung was because, however essentially right the doctrines they contained might be, the phraseology employed wanted careful revision. Yes, not only careful, but drastic revision—the sort of revision which would leave very little behind.

While the Methodists were discussing their own special hymn-book, the *Church Gazette* comes out with a scathing criticism of Church hymns. Its leading article is devoted to that subject, and is headed "Wanted—Sensible Hymns." That is a pretty large requirement, in regard to which the demand is likely to be very much in excess of the supply. A hymn to be sensible would have to be devoid of nearly all that characterises that sort of composition, and then, of course, it would cease to be a hymn. The *Church Gazette* premises that the kind of emotion of which hymnology is an outcome must, if it is to be "either trustworthy or to escape mere sensationalism and utter drivel," place itself under the direction of reason and intellect. Such a power, if well and wisely directed, may provide an immense influence for good and for truth:—

"But it may exert in some cases an equally potent influence against what is good and true, just because it has not submitted itself to the guide of reason, or it goes on singing an old song which is no longer in touch with what reason can believe to be true, or else it flatly ignores the surroundings of its own time. In the face of all this generally confessed inadequacy, or else ineptitude, a condition of things has come to pass where the emotions of the masses are forcibly laid hold of by a body of very misleading religious folk-lore which, from old association, has entrenched itself in their affections."

What, then, according to this Church journal, is very clearly required is a reformed hymn-book. It apparently will not be satisfied with a mere revision. It wants a book reformed both in doctrine and style. "Nothing short of a complete change in tone and object will at all meet the requirements of the case." Then it proceeds to indicate certain features which specially call for change. In connection with the season of Advent, it alludes to the "prevailing grossly materialistic pictures of a future event which most of us would prefer to spiritualise." It says that Lent is dealt with in a "foolishly morose and repulsive spirit, and when Easter is reached one finds the silly blunder invariably repeated that the fact of the Resurrection *proves* human immortality. Similar objections apply to the odes which celebrate many other special seasons."

When the *Church Gazette* touches upon the treatment of the Atonement as being nearly always on "the old demoralizing lines of a mere blood-purchase," it indicates one of the most objectionable features of orthodox hymnology. Can anything be more absolutely nauseating than the persistency with which "the blood" is bespattered about in the hymns that people are called upon, Sunday after Sunday, to sing? This sanguinary doctrine may, or may not, be deducible from Scriptural teaching; but the constant harping upon it is none the less sickening. In a recent leading article in the *British Weekly* the writer, quoting the words, "And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," observes quite triumphantly: "Always this is the clothing of the New Testament, no matter how it be blood. It is clothed in a vesture dipped with blood."

This may account for the hymn-books of most of the Churches being similarly saturated, but it does not make them any the more acceptable to people who, not being savages on the war-path, have no special thirst for gore.

There is a great deal in modern hymn-books which is mere prosy and didactic stuff—"as prosy," says the *Church Gazette*, "as a Sunday-school lesson is, but should not be." There is a great deal, too, says that journal, of unreal other-worldliness coupled with neurotic emotionalism.

"For popularity these crazy productions of neurotics to a very great extent carry the day. In church the popular view is transcendental, while out of it it is found to sink to the ordinary level, even sometimes below it, because these rhythmical raptures are not wholesome food. As examples of morbid emotionalism, it may suffice to refer to the well-known hymns which utter the conviction that—

I want to be with Jesus,

and,

'Tis weary waiting here.

Now, it is not too much to say that, if these yearners for a better world were promptly taken at their own word, ninety-nine out of a hundred of them would be equally upset and astonished. The truth is that a wholesome human being does not want to die, and people who say they do are uttering high-pressure sentiment which they do not realise. Church poetry must be genuine, and represent real human feelings, instead of putting into the mouths of the great congregation sentiments which are in fact none of theirs, but which, sheep-like, they never repudiate, perhaps because the whole has to them a sense of unreality."

Then the *C. G.* takes exception to the "mawkish and childish type of hymns," of which it gives the following choice examples:—

I will not let Thee go unless
Thou tell Thy Name to me;
With all Thy great salvation bless,
And make me all like Thee.

Oh, what the joy and the glory must be,
Those endless Sabbaths the blessed ones see;
Crown for the valiant, to weary ones rest,
God shall be all and in all ever blest.

It is a little startling to find a Church journal criticising the hoary and much-extolled hymn, "Rock of ages cleft for me." But it classes that composition amongst the unintelligible hymnody, and observes that the meaning of the opening words is not at all obvious. "It does not occur to many a pious enthusiast to consider the actual meaning of the words he is using; it is sufficient that they are 'blessed words' like Mesopotamia." In conclusion, the *Church Gazette* says:—

"Put briefly, then, our indictment comes to this. Hymns, as we have been accustomed to them, are largely found to be misleading, or maudlin, or prosy, or nonsensical. The poetry teaches error, and it is bad poetry at that. And if the poetry, or some of it, is not poetry, neither are all the tunes music."

These extracts almost read as if they were from back-numbers of the *Freethinker*. But, of course, we assume that the views they contain have been arrived at independently. Their value consists in the fact that they are so completely confirmatory of what has been said in this journal "many times and oft."

FRANCIS NEALE.

Christianity and Civilisation.—IV.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN.

(Continued from page 787.)

MANY statements might be quoted from the Christian Fathers to show that, in their opinion, a plurality of wives might be permitted under the Christian dispensation. Space not permitting this, I will content myself with two or three quotations from more modern, but quite as prominent, believers. Martin Luther's opinion on polygamy is well known. His advice to our own Henry VIII. was to marry a second wife without troubling about a divorce from the first.* And to Philip of Hesse, under similar circumstances, his advice, in a lengthy document signed by himself and six of his most prominent followers, was: "There was nothing

unusual in princes keeping concubines; and, although the lower orders might not perceive the excuses of the thing, the more intelligent know how to make allowances." Their final advice was that it would be better to marry secretly.* Luther's own opinion, given on another occasion, was: "As for me, I avow that I cannot set myself in opposition to men marrying several wives, or assert that such a course is repugnant to the Holy Scripture."†

In England Bishop Burnet, in a tract entitled *Is a Plurality of Wives in any case Lawful under the Gospel?* answered the question in the affirmative. Milton, examining at length the question in his tract on *The Special Government of Man*, says:—

"I have not said, in compliance with the common opinion, of one woman with one man, lest I should by implication charge the holy patriarchs and pillars of our faith.....with habitual fornication and adultery, and lest I should be forced to exclude from the holy sanctuary of God as spurious the holy offspring that sprung from them—yea, the whole of the sons of Israel, for whom the sanctuary itself was made.....Either, therefore, polygamy is a true marriage, or all children born in that state are spurious, which would include the whole race of Jacob, the twelve holy tribes chosen by God.....On what grounds, however, can a practice be considered dishonorable or shameful which is prohibited to no one, even under the Gospel?.....It appears to me sufficiently established that polygamy is allowed by the law of God."‡

I have been led to this slight digression in dealing with the Old Testament in order to avoid the necessity of travelling twice over the same ground. We can now proceed in due order, taking next the New Testament. From the point of view of family ethics, the New Testament is almost a complete blank. Putting on one side the Old Testament, it would be impossible, from the first verse of Matthew to the last in Revelation, for anyone to select enough advice to regulate a family by. The family is practically ignored. The central figure of the book is a celibate; his greatest follower is a celibate likewise; celibacy is the condition of the angels in heaven; and the whole story opens with an account of a virgin birth, which—proceeding, as it does, on the assumption that the physical connection of the sexes is impure and sinful—is a direct insult to every husband and wife on the face of the earth. Among the twelve teachers selected by Jesus there were no women. His reply to the woman of Canaan, begging him to cure her daughter, is: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." His retort to his mother is: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" His greeting to Mary Magdalene, after the resurrection, "Touch me not," again emphasizes the Oriental and rabbinical idea that the very touch of a woman was pollution—a belief that expressed itself later in the Christian Church by women being forbidden to touch the Eucharist with their naked hands.

The same tone is maintained throughout the whole of the New Testament. The women are to learn in silence with all subjection; they are not permitted to speak in church;§ they were created for man, not man for them, and are to obey their husbands even as Sarah obeyed Abraham; for man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the Church. Marriage is permitted, but only to avoid something worse. Paul's advice is: If a man is married, let him not seek to be single; if he is single, let him not seek to be wed. To give a maid in marriage is good, but to give her not is much better. Still, "it is better to marry than to burn." There are few people setting themselves up as teachers who have sanctioned marriage for a more disgusting reason than Paul, and few who have viewed it from a lower standpoint. Marriage, in brief, is little more than a legalised adultery, a concession to the weakness and impurity of human nature. An illustration of this is found in Revelation xiv. 3-4, where the 144,000 saints who wait on "the Lamb" are not "defiled with women, but were virgins." The only conclusion from the passage is that

* Baring Gould's *Origin and Development of Religious Beliefs*, ii., p. 174, and *Life*, Michelet, p. 253.

† Michelet, p. 252.

‡ See Bohn's edition of *Milton's Prose Works*, iv., pp. 225-35.

§ One of the greatest divines of the seventeenth century declared that to allow "women teachers in the house of God were a gross absurdity" (Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, bk. 5, ch. lxii., s. 2).

* See *Life of Luther*, by Peter Rayne.

marriage is defilement, much lower than the celibate life, which is, as Hooker says, "angelic and divine."

With this conception of the nature and function of woman, as a foundation, of that portion of Christian sociology, the prospect of the liberal ideas existing in Rome receiving favorable recognition in the Christian Church was very slight indeed. To the primitive Christian, woman was not only a sinful being, but the quintessence of all sin. In the words of a Christian writer of eminence, to the early Christians "man was a human being made for the highest and noblest purposes; woman was a female (minus the 'human') made to serve only one. She was on the earth to inflame the heart of man with every evil passion."* Accordingly, every precaution had to be taken to keep this exceedingly dangerous fraction of the human race in a thoroughly subordinate position. At first women were permitted to act as doorkeepers in the Church, message carriers, and sweepers; but, after a while, even these offices were thought too exalted for her. Even the verse in Acts 17, referring to a "woman named Damaris," was deleted in some versions owing to a dislike of giving woman any prominence—a dislike that became abhorrence before the middle of the second century.† So strong was this determination to keep women in subjection that Principal Donaldson, starting his inquiry with the traditional bias in favor of Christianity, was driven to the admission: "In the first three centuries I have not been able to see that Christianity had any favorable effect on the position of women, but, on the contrary, that it tended to lower their character and restrict the range of their activity."‡

Throughout the writings of the early Fathers woman is almost universally held up to reprobation and abuse. Mosheim remarks that in the third century there was "an almost general persuasion that they who took wives were, of all others, most subject to the influence of malignant demons." This belief, that women were more open to the influence of demons than men, existed in full force until as late as the seventeenth century, when the majority of the people charged with witchcraft were women owing to the same belief. St. Chrysostom describes woman as a "necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill." Tertullian addresses her thus: "You are the devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree; you are the first deserter of the divine laws; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die." St. Jerome affirmed that the touch of a woman was as much to be dreaded as the bite of a mad dog. Gregory Thaumaturgus declares: "Moreover, among all women I sought for chastity proper to them, and I found it in none. And verily a person may find one man chaste among a thousand, but a woman never." Clement of Alexandria's emphatic advice is: "But, above all, it seems right that we turn away from the sight of woman. For it is sin not only to touch, but to look."§

Enormous care had to be taken to keep this terrible creature in order. In place of the position that we see woman occupying in the public life of Rome, the sum-total of Christian advice was that she was to stay at home and keep herself in the background as much as possible. If she possesses beauty, it must be either concealed or obliterated. To dye the hair is a deadly sin, since it controverts the statement of Jesus, "Thou canst not make one hair black or white." Adornment of any kind was forbidden; and Clement asserts that the use of a mirror or a headdress could only be indulged in by women who were lost to all sense of shame and decency. The childish stupidity of the Christian Fathers in dealing with such matters is incredible to anyone who has not waded through their insufferably dull writings. The sum of their counsel is that women are to be shunned by all who are desirous of leading

a devout life; their prurient imagination detecting temptation in mere contact with one of the opposite sex. In England it was even decreed that a penance of forty days should be inflicted on the priest who, without thought of evil, indulged in the pleasure of conversation with a woman.* A saintly life might be wrecked by looking at the face of even a mother or a sister. To outrage the affections of mother or sister was, indeed, one of the chief proofs of saintly virtue.†

Yet it is the men who held these views concerning women that, we are told, "restored woman to her rightful place, and created that best of God's blessings on earth—the Christian home." And this in face of the plain historic fact that the absence of home life is one of the marked and striking features of early Christian history. I have already dwelt upon the views of Paul concerning marriage, by whom it was regarded as at best a necessary concession to man's sinfulness, only to be tolerated because its prevention would lead to much worse things, and upon the striking absence of teaching in the New Testament concerning home life. In the New Testament about the only instance in which children are prominently introduced is where they are utilised as an illustration of the state of ignorance and trustfulness which people are to encourage if they would inherit the kingdom of heaven. Principal Donaldson remarks, in the article I have already quoted from: "It is strange how seldom children are mentioned in the Christian writings of the second and third centuries. Almost nothing is said of their training; no efforts are mentioned as being made for their instruction. The Christians had come to the belief that the world had enough of children, and was fully stocked, and that every birth was a cause of sorrow and not of joy.....Tertullian describes children as 'burdens which are to most of us all unsuitable, as being perilous to faith'.....During this period there is a striking absence of home life in the history of Christians. No son succeeds the father, no wife comforts the wearied student, no daughter soothes the sorrow of the aged bishop. Perhaps this absence of domestic affection, this deficiency in healthy and vigorous offspring, this homelessness, may account in some degree for the striking features of the next century, and especially the prevalent hardness of heart."

This absence of home life is easily understandable when we bear in mind the peculiar views of marriage held by the early Christian teachers—men who were looked upon by their followers as second only to Jesus Christ himself. The example of Jesus was cited as proof positive that the celibate life was the highest type of excellence; and the language of Paul, together with the supposed origin of evil as the result of the first sexual embrace, led inevitably to marriage being deprecated as much as possible. Of the early Christian writings Lecky remarks:—

"Two or three beautiful descriptions of this institution (marriage) have been culled out of the immense mass of the patristic writings; but, in general, it would be difficult to conceive anything more coarse or more repulsive than the manner in which they regarded it.....Marriage was regarded almost exclusively in its lowest aspect. The tender love which it elicits, the holy and beautiful domestic qualities that follow in its train, were almost absolutely omitted from consideration."‡

And in the same vein Dean Milman asserts that the early Christian writers seem blind to the social aspect of marriage, and completely unconscious of the softening and humanising influence of parental and filial love.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

P.S.—I have been requested by a correspondent to furnish authorities for my statement that Trajan founded orphan asylums, that Antoninus Pius added to their number, and that the Temples of Serapis, etc., were used as hospitals as well as temples. The handiest authorities for my correspondent to consult will be Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii., p. 77; Draper, *Intell. Dev. Europe*, pp. i., 393-99; Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 14-15, where he will find full authority for all statements made. Much information may also be obtained from Wylie's *History of Hospitals* and Beddoe's *History of the Healing Art*.

* Rev. Principal Donaldson, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1889.

† See Professor Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire*, pp. 7-62.

‡ *Contemporary Review*, September, 1889.

§ This writer's chapter dealing with the relation of the sexes is too indecent to be translated into English, and so stands in the "Ante-Nicene Library" in Latin.

* Lea, p. 165.

† For proofs see Lecky, *Morals*, ii., pp. 116-137.

‡ *History of European Morals*, ii., p. 321.

Atheists and Agnostics.

AN AMERICAN EDITOR'S VIEW.

WE are inclined to think that the difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic is somewhat exaggerated by the latter. When the Atheist is asked if he believes in God, he says "No." The Agnostic says: "I don't know whether there is a God or not"; which is not an answer to the question. If he believes in a God, he is a Theist; if he does not, he is an Atheist; and no Agnostic was ever suspected of believing in a deity. When the Atheist says there is no God, he gives it out, not as a matter of fact, but of belief. He means that he does not believe there is a God; and virtually the same state of mind is to be inferred from a man calling himself an Agnostic. We have heard of Agnostics saying they had no belief on the subject, but the statement never engaged our credence. Intelligent minds have reached a conclusion on this theme, and the only thing in doubt is as to whether they shall tell it.

Along with a belief in God has always gone a belief in devils. At the present day it is unorthodox to deny the existence of the great Adversary of Souls, the Supreme Cause of Wickedness. The Demonist and the Ademonist are in the same class with the Theist and Atheist, who, Mr. Holyoake avers, have no logical existence, and must go to the same logical limbo. But what will the modest Agnostic do in the matter? Will he, when interrogated as to the existence of a Devil, "simply say that, having no information on the subject, he does not know"? Once the denial of a belief in the Devil was an extravagant form of heresy. Probably there were a considerable number of persons who wished for some such word as Agnosticism, whereby they might define their position in this respect—some word which would commit them to neither belief nor disbelief, but allow them to act as disinterested spectators until the success of one or the other body of disputants should indicate the proper side for a prudent individual to espouse.

By general consent the Devil has lapsed, but his younger brother, or his offspring, God, still commands belief. Perchance we should be thankful that we live in the day of Agnosticism when, in the interest of accurate thought, we are permitted to say we don't know whether such belief has any validity or not. Those who denied the being and attributes of the Devil could have been met with a demand for the grounds of their denial; they could have been shown that, without affirming a Devil, it was impossible to account for most of the things in the universe, and, if they were not brought to the blush for denying what they could never prove not to be so, they must have been as incorrigibly presumptuous as their Atheistic successors.

Professor Huxley, who first emitted the word Agnostic, was a man whose utterances were marked by great cautiousness of statement. He denied nothing—not even miracles. He was so generous to his opponents that he would agree to believe in the birth of Jesus by a virgin mother provided the fact could be established. He observed this caution because as a man of science he did not wish to go outside of the verifiable. To him nothing was necessary and nothing impossible; he asked only that a thing should be demonstrable. As unprofessional persons, we can afford to be a trifle more reckless. We are permitted a little more latitude. We may say, as a strictly scientific person could not, that the dead do not come to life, that miracles are violations of the laws of nature, and that the birth of Christ with only one parent is not to be credited. That Agnosticism is generally a shield for Atheistic dodgers we do not believe; some of the most aggressive Freethinkers and framers of the most convincing arguments against the being of a God call themselves Agnostics; but it always seemed to us that the Agnostic position was one admirably adapted to the use of persons who wished to dodge.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Every child is born into the world an Atheist, and if he grows into a Theist his deity differs with the country in which the believer may happen to be born, or the people among whom he may happen to be educated. The belief is the result of education or organisation. Religious belief is powerful in proportion to the want of scientific knowledge on the part of the believer. The more ignorant the more credulous.—*Charles Bradlaugh*.

Murderers often make an edifying end. Nordlund, the Swede, who committed seven murders on board the *Prinz Karl* last May, was beheaded the other day at Vesteraas. He sang some verses of a psalm before laying his head on the block. We suppose he is now in heaven, with all the unhung scoundrels of the Old Testament.

Charles Brewer Smith, of Wolverhampton, solicitor, has been arrested on a charge of misappropriating trust money, to which he has confessed. He was secretary to the local branch of the English Church Union. Not an "infidel," therefore,

Acid Drops.

WONDERS will never cease. Count Tolstoi, the famous Russian writer, has generally been claimed by the Socialists in this country as "one of them," in spite of his peculiar brand of Christianity. It appears, however, that he is nothing of the sort. Indeed, he is said to have finished a book, to be called *The New Slavery*, in which he specially attacks the German Social Democratic movement. He regards the Socialists as the great enemies of the kingdom of God, and their system as a worse slavery than the slavery they seek to destroy. The panacea for all the ills that afflict mankind is Christian Anarchy, with self-sacrifice and non-resistance to evil as its principal doctrines.

We were talking the other day to a Freethinker who accepts Tolstoi's social and political philosophy without his religion. "So much do I hate the idea of taking life," he said, "that I would not kill a man if I found him murdering my wife or my child; sooner than take his life I would let him finish his work." "Well," we said, "you may think so now, but at the critical moment you would act on your instincts. That kind of talk is only possible while you *feel safe*. You trust to law and order, and the policemen in the streets, and while you are protected you can afford to indulge in these eccentric theories. It is easy to profess what you feel you will never have to practise. In a ruder state of society, where every man has to protect himself, you would abandon your theory and buy a revolver."

Jesus Christ himself—assuming him to have preached the Sermon on the Mount—lived in a province of the Roman Empire, where the laws were regularly administered, and where life and property were as safe as they are in England to-day. Not even a handful would have listened to his doctrine of non-resistance in a country where every man had to attend to his own self-defence. In ordinary civilised societies the personal instinct of self-defence very largely dies out. That is why so many decent people put up with insults and ruffianism in public places, instead of knocking the insulter or the ruffian down. Very often the decent people do not even venture to remonstrate, but bear the infliction in silence—feeling a bit cowardly all the time.

The reputed miser, Robert Arthington, of Leeds, who recently left £250,000 to the London Missionary Society, should be safe for kingdom-come. He seems to have been a miserable sort of creature on earth. The men of God who are mostly interested in this windfall of a quarter of a million have met and offered a special prayer of thanksgiving to God for the legacy. Then they set to work to whitewash the testator. They admitted that he lived in a penurious manner, that he denied himself nearly everything, that he was eccentric, and so on. Eccentric, indeed, he must have been, for he starved himself to send the Bible to tribes and peoples who do not want it, or who can't understand it if they receive it, and who, in any case, are not at all likely to be as grateful as the poorer classes of his own countrymen might have been if he had left the money for their social amelioration.

"Squalor and personal uncleanness," the *Daily News* says, *apropos* of this case, "are not necessary adjuncts of the saintly character." Perhaps not; but some of the greatest saints were extremely filthy. Some boasted that they had never changed their clothes, some that they had never touched water. One saint, who resolved never to touch the cleansing fluid, had on one occasion to cross a stream. There was no boat, and no one to carry him across. So he prayed to the Lord in his extremity, lest he should wet his saintly dirty feet and his dirty saintly legs; and the Lord waded him across through the air, thus saving him from the contamination of clean water.

The British pilgrimage to Rome, headed by the Duke of Norfolk, falls into a line with other cheap trips. "Messrs. Gaze and Sons," we read, "announce the issue of special tickets at special rates for the journey, hotel accommodation, and board."

Lady Katharine Manners, eldest daughter of the Duke of Rutland, was found dead in Knipton pond. The newspapers say that she had been laboring under "strong religious impressions." Well, we all know what that means; though it doesn't do to speak too plainly about a Duke's daughter.

Serious accusations were made at Peking against Christian natives, and Christian missionaries too, at a recent meeting of the foreign Ministers. M. Pichon, it is reported, raised once more the question of obtaining an indemnity for the native Christians. Sir Ernest Satow observed that, in Peking and the adjacent country, the native Christians had indemnified themselves. This remark is due to the fact that the native Christians have joined in the unrestrained looting

which has gone on in Peking. Some of the missionaries, too, have joined in it, and have justified themselves and the native converts by saying that they had a right to reimburse themselves for their losses. This is a new reading of Christ's injunction, "If any man would take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

The missionaries further defend themselves by declaring that Mr. Conger had authorised their action; but this assertion is contradicted. At the meeting of Ministers, it is said, the truth of Sir Ernest Satow's remark was generally admitted, and the point was not contested even by M. Pichon.

Mark Twain is always level-headed. They say he is an unbeliever in the creeds of Christianity. At the annual meeting of the Public Education Association in Berkeley Lyceum last week he said: "Foreigners are the cause of all the trouble in China. The Chinese don't want them any more than we want the Chinese. They have as much right as a nation to exclude foreigners as we have to exclude them. China never wanted the foreigners, and if the foreigners were gone the trouble would be all over. Now, my sympathies are all with the Boxers. The Boxers are the only patriots China has got. The newspapers call them hard names, but all they are after is to get the foreigners out of their country, and I hope that they will have all success in doing so. If I am opposed to the Chinaman being here, then I am a Boxer, and the only difference between us Boxers here and the China Boxer is that we carried our point and the Chinese didn't."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Another statue—and of Jesus Christ! It will be erected in London, too, where one would think that there are already enough of the hideous effigies called statues. This one, which is likely to out-Herod Herod, is to be erected in front of the new cathedral at Westminster. It is an outcome of the Catholic pilgrimage to Rome for the opening of the century.

Let us hasten to offer our condolences to the sculptor, whoever he may be. How is he going to find out what Jesus Christ was like? The Cromwell statue at Westminster, which is one of the best, as it is the latest, statue in London, is figured out on the lines of authentic portraits. But who has got a portrait of Jesus Christ? The sculptor will have to fall back upon his imagination, or the imaginations of others, and try to spiritualise the presentment of a young Jew of the period when Christ is said to have lived. It is not an enviable task. He is sure to have many unkind critics, for no one seems to agree with anybody else about that much-disputed person who may, or may not, have walked on the shores of Galilee, as related in some obviously unveracious traditions.

Perhaps, if the sculptor makes it perfectly clear that his subject has a head and also hands and feet, he will achieve about as much as may be reasonably expected of him. At any rate, he can always turn round on his critics and say: If he wasn't like this, what *was* he like—and how do you know it?

The hard-worked clergy! A correspondent of the *Church Times*, writing on country parsons and their indolent ways, refers to a rural clergyman who never had his dinner until half-past four on Sunday afternoon, for then he could eat it in peace, knowing his work was over for another week!

The following story has been received by the *Christian World* from a correspondent: "A certain divine, well known by name to our readers as a gentleman whose one aim in life is to annihilate the Higher Critics, was engaged to lecture in a certain church not far from Leeds. An audience of some thirty or forty ladies assembled, to whom the reverend gentleman discoursed upon the blasphemies and wickednesses of such men as Dr. Driver, Dr. Cheyne, Dean Farrar, and others. To prove his points the lecturer quoted liberally from the writings of these gentlemen and others. At the close of the meeting a lady, well advanced in years, remarked to a group of people: 'Well, to think that our minister should have brought a man like this down here to lecture against the Blessed Book. It is awful. But I believe in the Bible for all he says against it.' The moral is obvious."

In a London church one Sunday the preacher was reading the announcements for the following week, but the people were not prepared for the following announcement, and were both surprised and horrified when the preacher said: "The preacher for next Sunday may be seen nailed on the church door."

A curious instance of lingering superstition was recently afforded at a funeral at Swatow, where a gorgeous procession assembled outside the front door of the house of the deceased, and the coffin, with handsome coverings, was brought out from the main entrance, evidently for interment. The procession marched on, but after it had passed well out of sight

four men crept out of the back door of the residence bearing another coffin, which really contained the remains of the departed. The casket which had been taken away with so much pomp and ceremony was empty. This is done to perplex the Devil.

Mrs. Eliza Pritchard went to a gypsy called Selina Smith, who pretended to be a planet ruler, with a view to obtaining a fine business. For the sum of £20 a powder worth a guinea an ounce was handed over to the lady applicant. She was to put it in the fire at twelve o'clock at night, and if she wished while it was burning the business was sure to come. Finally, the police got wind of the affair, and the planet-ruler was arrested at Uttoxeter. She is to be tried at the Petty Sessions, and bail has been refused. No wonder Christianity flourishes in a country where such superstition abounds.

A minister in Glasgow asked an urchin who was standing looking in at one of the Sabbath-school windows how he would like to join the Sunday-school and grow up a good man. "What sort o' Sunday-school is 't? 'Stablished?" "Yes," said the clergyman. "It is connected with the Established Church. Are you not coming in?" "Na," replied the boy; "I tried the 'Stablished Kirk Sunday-school last year, an' I only got twa fardin' oranges an' a pock o' sweeties at the Christmas-tree, sae I'm gaun tae gie the Free Kirk a trial this year."

An anxious inquirer writes to the *Church Gazette*, asking "why God for a thousand years dealt so familiarly with an unknown little country, when now for two thousand years He has been absolutely silent—when, if ever, the world needs an infallible instruction from Him. What is the credit to-day which an intellectual clergy assigns to the marvellous stories of the wilderness or the questionable morality of the books of Moses? Did God give the ritual of Moses? Did He order the extermination of the Canaanites and the destruction of whole cities—men, women, and children? How much is history, how much myth? We complain of the indifference of the people to our services and religion. Is it possible that the answer is: You give us fiction for history, and priestcraft for truth?"

A well-known clerical advocate at Genoa has been arrested on a charge of abstracting securities worth £14,000 from the Vatican. The property is said to have been found in his possession. One would have thought that the holy atmosphere of the Vatican would have rendered such purloining impossible. The Pope has tremendous powers in regard to the hereafter, and the "well-known clerical advocate" is now probably quaking in his shoes. But, very likely, his greatest trouble is that he did not get off with his booty.

"Clerks in holy orders" seem to be turning up in police-court docks pretty frequently of late. The Rev. Alfred Freeman, of Hampton-road, Forest-gate, has been remanded at the Thames Police-court on the charge of insulting behavior to women and girls in the public streets. Of course, he tried a sanctimonious whine, but the magistrate declined to be moved. Later on, however, he bound the prisoner over and discharged him.

As against the wonderful conversions said to be effected by Evangelistic services, the *Sunday Companion* finds it necessary to make a general complaint in regard to persons who endeavor to filch money from the collection plate, by asserting that they have by mistake put in a florin for a penny, and who ask for the coin to be returned.

Somebody had better look after the Rev. J. M. Gibbon, the City Merchants' lecturer for the present month. The *British Weekly* speaks highly of his "ingenuity in giving a modern application to Bible subjects." We should say that, for a believer, he lets his imagination run riot with gross irreverence. It is not for him, as a preacher of the Gospel, to deal flippantly with what, to him, should be solemn and sacred subjects. Banter and burlesque are reserved for those who rejoice in unbelief. What is in an Atheist a "mere choleric word" is in a preacher "rank blasphemy."

This preacher's latest and mildest effort was on what he called "the Round Table Conference at Jerusalem," *vide* Acts xv. He drew a picture of the Apostles sitting at a table, when there enter Galileo, Lyell, and Darwin, who take their seats, proclaiming the discoveries of modern science. But the Apostles are not a bit dismayed. Not they. On the contrary, they assure these great scientists, in the politest terms possible, that the revolution they have accomplished in human knowledge does not affect in the smallest degree the essential principles of Christianity. Startled the Apostles might be by the departure from the Mosaic cosmogony, but, according to the Rev. Gibbon, they still replied: "We believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved"; and nothing could move them from that "impregnable position."

Could anything be more idiotic? Of course, the Christian Church has given up the Mosaic Cosmogony, but how long ago, and why, and after how much persecution of those who opposed it, including poor Galileo mentioned by this Rev. Gibbon—unworthy bearer of a great name? The Christian Church has not even quietly climbed down. It has been kicked down. And the clerics must not be allowed to forget it.

Posing as a prophet in Israel, the Rev. Gibbon says—and this seems to be about the sanest part of his discourse: "In time to come the Churches must be prepared to meet the onslaughts of criticism. The attack on the Old Testament has been made, and the attack on the New follows." Why, certainly!

Another witty retort is attributed to Lord Rosebery. He entertained the members of the Edinburgh Town Council to luncheon at Dalmeny after their election. During the drive out to the house one of the members of the Corporation was discussing with his companion the lost ten tribes of Israel. "I believe," he said, "that the Anglo-Saxon race are the lost tribes of Israel. I have held that belief for the last ten years." Then suddenly, after a pause: "I wonder if Lord Rosebery believes it." Nothing more was said on the subject; but after luncheon, when the members of the Corporation were moving about Dalmeny House, this gentleman walked up to Lord Rosebery, and, without preface or warning, launched the following query at him: "Do you believe, my Lord, that the Anglo-Saxon race are the lost tribes of Israel?" The Earl fixed his interlocutor with a disconcerting gaze, and remarked: "I don't know; but if they are I hope they will not lose themselves again."

The *Rock* predicts another General Election at an early date. It doesn't think the present shortsighted Government can last. It is led to this belief mainly by the fact that when Parliament met there was "no invocation of the Divine blessing" in the Queen's Speech, nor is there any reference to Almighty God in the Queen's Speech proroguing the House. How can such a Government expect to survive?

In order to raise funds for the restoration of the tower and spire of his church, the rector of Princes Risborough has asked several ladies to make pork pies every week and sell them to the parishioners. This may raise the steeple; but who is going to raise the parishioners from the dead after they have eaten the pies and gasped their final breath?

The *Lancet*, after harrowing Christian communities with discourses on the bacterial dangers of a common use of the sacred chalice at Holy Communion, is good enough to suggest a new method. This is the plan adopted in the chapel of a Russian prison. The priest cuts the bread into little pieces and dips them in the cup containing the wine. Then with the spoon he places the piece of bread and wine into the penitent's mouth. Thus there is no drinking out of the cup, and it would be much easier to have a clean spoon for each communicant than a separate cup.

The performance must look very comical—something like the way in which brimstone and treacle used to be ladled out to the boys in boarding-schools years ago.

The same medical authority is also down on holy water. It says that the holy water in Roman Catholic churches is a serious matter. "Innumerable fingers, not always scrupulously clean, are dipped into the water. In Spain, especially, and during the great cholera epidemic of 1885, we have noted that the holy water was absolutely dirty, and living organisms could be seen with the naked eye, so that what the microscope would have revealed may well be imagined."

The Psalms have come in for some more criticism from the Dr. T. K. Cheyne, Oriel Professor at Oxford. Recently he delivered an address to the Churchmen's Union on "The Christian Use of the Psalms," in which he disposed of the once common error that they were prophetic of Christ. The text was often very corrupt, and the true meaning by no means on the surface. There was no proof of any special inspiration in the Psalmists. He explained the forty-fifth Psalm by saying that, as King David and King Solomon had wives, so the Messiah (of the Jews, not of the Christians) must have a spouse too, but a more glorious one. This had been wrongly interpreted as referring to Christ and his Church.

The Penitential Psalms, said Dr. Cheyne, did not anticipate Christ. They were but the utterances of the pious community. Finally, he urged upon his hearers to courageously accept all proved conclusions arising from a critical study of the Psalter, and not to be content with the "familiar though beautiful," if it be not equally "true."

We ought indeed to thank God for our possession of his Holy Word, and for the marvellous care he has taken in its transmission. The Bishop of Worcester has found it necessary to issue an official notice to the clergy of his diocese requesting them to read the First Lesson for Christmas Day from the Revised Version. He says: "The rendering of some verses in the ninth chapter of Isaiah in the Authorised Version is exactly contrary to the true sense, which is correctly given in the Revised Version."

Last summer the garrison church, Halifax, Nova Scotia, was renovated. The Lord must have quietly smiled. He knew what was coming. The other Friday a fire broke out, and the "sacred edifice" was partially destroyed.

A Congregational chapel was burnt down on Sunday at Coventry. The adjoining schools were saved. Does this mean that "Providence" prefers schools to gospel-shops, and teachers to preachers? We hope so.

The *Daily News* is satirical at the expense of Dr. Parker. If he does not raise the morals, it says, he will at least add something to the gaiety of the town. Our contemporary suggests that the Archbishop of Canterbury might edit the *Times* for "one immaculate week."

A suggestion is made that, following Dr. Parker, the *Sun* people should let Dr. Dowie try his hand at editing their paper.

There is to be a Simultaneous Evangelistic Mission at the beginning of the new year on what is described as "an absolutely national and entirely unprecedented scale." At a recent preliminary meeting in London the Rev. Price Hughes gave an address. He urged that the great personal preparation they needed was that they should "forsake all" and follow Christ; that, like the rich young ruler, they should "sell all they had." Very well; why does not Mr. Price Hughes begin by selling all that *he* has? But perhaps he intends the advice for other folks. Beggary is not much in his line, except in so far as it means begging for the Twentieth Century Fund of 1,000,000 guineas, which will make the Methodist Church more than "passing rich."

The good old Westminster Confession of Faith, which so many generations of Scotch Presbyterians have regarded as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is apparently to be "revised"—that is to say, shown to be wrong as it stands. A Committee of leading Presbyterians at Washington have unanimously agreed to recommend that this shall be done. But, of course, the battle royal is yet to come, in the General Assembly, where the old-fashioned orthodox party may once more triumph. Presbyterianism may be expected to die hard.

"Sykes's Singularities" is the heading of a special column in the *Southeast Telegraph*. We presume they are contributed by a well-known local Freethinker of that name. One paragraph refers to the case of Mr. Waggoner, of Toledo, U.S.A., a seventy-four-year-old infidel who found Jesus and burnt his valuable Freethought library. Mr. Sykes has apparently not heard that this "valuable library" was worth about twenty-five dollars at the outside, instead of "several hundred pounds." The Freethinkers in America laugh at old Waggoner and his antics. They know that he is simply fishing for a little cheap notoriety.

A Suffolk clergyman has found a new use for incense. It drives away moths and bats. Yes, and it drives away intelligent people at the same time.

Rev. Silas Hocking admits that "Christianity is not flourishing now." "There are," he says, "less people attending public worship in England to-day, in proportion to the population, than was the case fifty years ago. There are less young people in our Sunday-schools by 20,000 than was the case five years ago." How sad!

Catholic priests cannot play their little games as easily in this country as they can in some others. There is the Rev. Alexander Smith, for instance, a Roman Catholic priest at Salford, who is committed for trial on a charge of intimidation. It is alleged that he invited Thomas Murphy, an egg and fish dealer, to vote for Roman Catholic candidates at the School Board election; that, on Thomas Murphy refusing to do so, Father Smith threatened to have his shop boycotted by all his Roman Catholic customers; and that an abusive crowd assembled and broke his windows.

Rev. Alexander Morison, parish minister at Sandy, Orkney Islands, seems to share the amorous complexion of Saint David. He has been found guilty of adultery with the wife of Dr. E. J. Wenyon, of Dundee; the Court of Session, Edinburgh, granting a decree nisi, with £100 damages against the reverend co-respondent.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 23, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road;
7.30, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."
December 30, Athenæum Hall.
January 6, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 23, Camberwell. January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.
- S. HOLMAN.—Kindly let us know early in the New Year how the effort in connection with Mr. Treharne-Jones's lectures is going, and we will see what assistance can be rendered from headquarters.
- H. R. CLIFTON.—Thanks for your interesting letter and the portrait of your nonagenarian friend. Will you kindly present to him our compliments and best wishes? It affords us much pleasure to know that he enjoys reading the *Freethinker*. His own letter, by the way, is very well written. With regard to Shakespeare, the anecdote you are good enough to reproduce is of very doubtful value. The statement that Shakespeare was a ne'er-do-well is against all the evidence. There is plenty of proof that he was a very careful business man.
- F. J. VOISEY.—Thanks for cuttings. We note your suggestion that Mr. Cohen's articles on "Christianity and Civilisation" should be reprinted in pamphlet form.
- H. HEWSON.—Inserted in another column.
- R. THOMAS.—*Bible Romances*, *Bible Heroes*, and *Bible Handbook* together make a good help for the general study of the Christian Scriptures. You might go farther and fare worse. It is a great mistake to suppose that the dullest books are the most informing. Readers do not learn much unless they are kept awake.
- E. OSBOURNE.—Darwin did not believe in the God of the Bible, nor had he a positive belief in any God. If you get Mr. Foote's *Darwin on God*—published at our office, price sixpence—you will find nearly all he wrote on the subject, collected together from his various books. This pamphlet should be kept at hand by every Freethinker.
- J. C. B.—See acknowledgment. We have only printed your initials, as you requested us to do before. We hope, with you, that the Twentieth Century Fund will realise the amount (£1,000) we first suggested.
- W. SAUNDERS.—Sorry we cannot give you the precise reference. We have not time to look it up.
- T. A. WILLIAMS.—Pamphlets received. We will look through them, though the subject is so painful. You know how the late Colonel Ingersoll hated vivisection.
- W. P. BALL.—At the close of the century we thank you very heartily for your weekly batches of useful cuttings.
- D. P. SWEETLAND.—We have handed your letter to Miss Vance, who will see into the matter and write you. Thanks for your good wishes.
- FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—C. Hermann, 2s. 6d.; D. P. Sweetland, 2s. 6d.; W. Sanders, 1s.; F. G., 2s. 6d.
- FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Promises redeemed:—J. C. B., £5 (second half of £10); C. J. Peacock, £5 5s.
- LOUIS LEVINE.—Thanks for the two American editions you send us of Paine's *Age of Reason*—each minus the third part, which is always included in the English editions. Each is priced on the cover at a quarter of a dollar—say one shilling in English money. How do you make out that they eclipse our projected sixpenny edition, which will be complete? Surely, half the lowest American price is remarkable. No doubt a twopenny *Age of Reason* would circulate more widely, but it would involve a great loss. You say a subscription should be got up for the purpose; but the idea is not practicable just at present.
- F. E. WILLS.—Cuttings received with thanks.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Mr. Foote is sending you subjects for January 6.
- A. SABINE.—Try plain English.
- E. G. H. (Paris).—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- HORACE DAWSON.—Please note that our address is 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C., to which all communications should be sent direct.
- PAPERS RECEIVED.—Manchester Evening Chronicle—Lucifer—Southend Telegraph—Secular Thought—Crescent—Doncaster Gazette—Birmingham Daily Post—Truthseeker (New York).
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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.

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.

Special.

FREETHINKERS all over Great Britain and Ireland are requested to note that the second "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund is fixed for the beginning of January. During the first seven days of that month—the first in the new century—the "rank and file" of the Freethought party are invited to send me at least one shilling each, and as many more as possible. Every subscription will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. Some of those who subscribed to the October "Shilling Week" will probably subscribe again. Hundreds who did not subscribe will now have another (and last) opportunity. I beg them all to remember that this Fund is a specially important one. Its object is to counteract the immense efforts of the Christian Churches. Vast sums of money are being raised to spread and strengthen the Christian superstition. It is the duty of Freethinkers to oppose that enterprise. This cannot be done by mere wishes, but only by practical means. And the most practical means is giving something for "the good old cause."

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

OWING to the Christmas holidays we shall have to publish next week's *Freethinker* on Monday, December 24; otherwise it would not be circulated at the usual time through the trade. Branch secretaries, and other persons concerned, will therefore please note that Lecture Notices, correspondence, etc., for that number must reach us by Saturday, December 22. We gave notice of this last week; we repeat it now; and those who fail to act upon it will have no right to throw any blame upon us.

There was another capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Blood of Christ." Mr. Foote occupies the same platform again this evening (Dec. 23). He will take a seasonable subject; in fact, he will preach a sermon on the text, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." It will be very different from most of the sermons preached that evening, and Christians ought to be got there somehow to hear it. Perhaps our London friends will let as many of them know as possible.

Mr. Foote's new brochure, *The Mother of God*, is somewhat delayed in publication. At the last moment he decided to make further additions, in order to render the little work more comprehensive; and it seemed a pity to waste a considerable quantity of the matter he had collected. The printers are getting on as fast as possible with the new matter, and the brochure will be ready very shortly.

There are still several subscribers to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, whose promises were printed in our list some time ago, who have not yet remitted. The understanding was that they should do so before the end of 1900. Mr. Foote is, therefore, holding back his statement and observations for another week. This will give all an opportunity of remitting within the time originally specified. Next week's *Freethinker* will be dated December 30, and will be the last issue in the present century.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured at Camberwell upon "The Delusions of Spiritualism," to a very appreciative audience. Mr. Victor Roger presided. A gentleman, who said he "had travelled some miles to hear Mr. Watts," offered some pleasant opposition. Mr. Watts occupies the same platform this evening, Sunday, December 23.

Mr. Watts took the second of the course of four free lectures at the Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road, on Monday evening. The audience was slightly improved, but still very moderate. It was hoped that the South London friends would make a special effort to render these meetings more successful. Mr. Foote takes the third lecture of this course on Monday evening, January 7.

We are pleased to see that the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch has once more asserted its claim to the common rights of citizenship. Unfortunately, the new School Board is as bigoted as the old one, if not more so. By a majority of 11 to 4 it has resolved to continue the old policy of exclusion against the Secularists. They may have the use of Board schools for their public meetings, but they must not sell or distribute any literature. This condition only applies to their case, and they justly decline to accept it. There should be one common regulation for all sections of the community, and when Christians say that Secular literature is "objectionable" it simply means that they are Christians.

Mr. Foote visits Birmingham for three lectures on the first Sunday in January. He will have something more to say then about the policy of the School Board towards the Secularists.

The twenty-fourth Annual Congress of the American Secular Union, held at Cincinnati, does not seem to have been a towering success. What our American friends appear to want, most of all, is a capable organising leader. Editor Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, was present, and had a hard job to prevent the Congress from being packed by outsiders, who wanted to abrogate the "membership" condition, and thus carry all before them. The new President is Dr. J. B. Wilson, of Cincinnati. Mr. E. C. Reichwald (Chicago) continues as secretary—an office there is not likely to be a competition for, as it carries with it no salary and all the drudgery. Mrs. Josephine K. Henry is first Vice-President, and Mr. E. M. Macdonald second Vice-President. Mr. Samuel Toorney is Treasurer. We wish the American Secular Union all success in the new year.

One part of the American Secular Union's report will be pleasant reading to the Freethinkers of this country. "We congratulate ourselves," it says, "upon our successful fight against forcing the Bible into the public schools." Our American friends have the task of *keeping* the Bible out of the public schools; we have the harder task of *getting* it out. Their success, however, may be regarded as an augury of our own.

The Secularists of Pontypridd and district held a very successful meeting on Sunday evening, when a start was made towards organising the local forces of Freethought in connection with the services of Mr. Treharne-Jones—the gentleman who lately seceded from the Church of England. A special Fund was opened, and a fair beginning was made with it. One who was present promised £5 if £25 were raised by the end of January. Much enthusiasm was shown, and a comprehensive propaganda was marked out. Pontypridd has been chosen as the centre of operations, which will extend into the two Rhonddas and the Merthyr and Aberdare valleys. Local "saints" who are able and willing to assist in this good work, financially or otherwise, are earnestly requested to communicate with Mr. S. Holman, 5 Jenkinstreet, Porth.

London Freethinkers should note the date—Monday, January 14—of their Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. Some fresh features will be introduced on the program, and the collection cards will be omitted in view of the demands made upon the party of late. Mr. Foote will preside, and will be supported as usual by several leading Secularists. There ought to be a big rally of the "saints" on this occasion. It will be the first dinner in the new century.

Obituary.

I AM sorry to have to announce the death of Mabel Emma, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Rothera, of Kirkburton, and one time secretary of the Heckmondwike Branch of the N. S. S. The deceased was only six years of age, and her illness was short and sharp. By request of the sorrowing parents I read Colonel Ingersoll's oration at the grave of a little child who died in America. I am sure the sympathy of all old friends in this district will go out to the bereaved family. The funeral took place at the Kirkburton churchyard on Friday, December 14. Her death occurred on December 10. "Flowers fall as well as oaks."—H. HEWSON.

Christianity in Japan.

ONE of the most curious and, in truth, most amazing revolutions in all history is probably the silent revolution that has taken place in Japan in the last thirty or forty years. Without bloodshed, without violence, Japan has, practically speaking, at one bound, jumped from an oriental to an occidental civilisation. Nations have at times developed rapidly, but Japan's development is perhaps the most rapid in human chronicles. It almost presents a new set of human problems in itself. At least, it would appear to quash the sociological theory, sometimes put forward, that it is necessary for a less complex civilisation to pass through every stage which other civilisations have passed through in achieving a more complex form. It is also, of course, in the case of Japan, a change that is not perhaps wholly for the best, or, at any rate, one that has many off-sets. The European has complacently come to regard his own way of living as inherently superior to any other way that can be devised on this planet. In the Transvaal and Phillipine wars we have had it over and over again said and insinuated that nations which do not possess halfpenny newspapers reeling off folly every hour in the day, or acres of factory slums, cannot be as "great" or as "civilised" as the nations which possess these advantages. China to-day is talked of as "barbarous" by the press of some European nations, the bulk of whose inhabitants consist of barbarous mobs, incapable of taking a sane view of their own interests, much less a just view of the interests of other peoples. The fact is, civilisation, in any real meaning of the term, is internal, not external; it is measured in moral and intellectual culture, and consists in raising men rather than bank-balances. A nation may be very rich in credits and be very poor in real happiness. Whether Japan, therefore, in its rapid replacement of the old political and economic machinery by new, has proportionately progressed in moral culture and genuine happiness is open to serious question.

But there is one aspect of Japan's metamorphosis that ought to possess an immense interest for the Christian Churches. If Christianity be radically different and immeasurably superior to all other religions in the world, one would expect to find that Japan, in borrowing so much from Europe, would have readily borrowed the "superior" religion of Europe. If, as is assumed, the Japanese so far progressed in intelligence as to perceive the value of European products and habits, one would have thought they would at once have assimilated that mild and gentle and humane creed which, we are always assured, has made Europe what it is.

The facts, however, are quite otherwise. In a recent number of the *Tablet* there is an article on this subject which is about as doleful reading as the pious readers of that orthodox periodical could well wish. Indeed, the appearance of the article in such a paper is only explicable on the ground that the editors considered good Catholics required an occasional chastening and cooling as a kind of medicine. A quotation is made from a writer in *Illustrated Catholic Missions*, who says:—

"The upper classes in Japan have, it is true, been Freethinkers for many hundreds of years past, and are likely to remain such for many hundreds of years to come. Their pride of caste, their ancestral code of honor and morals—known as *Bushido*—is, they consider, religion enough for them. But such a code is manifestly unsuited for the common people; and a variety of circumstances has led their superiors to think that they would be the better for a religion of some kind. In the first place, the great change that has come over Japan within the last twenty years has had the usual effect of all great revolutions—it has unhinged men's minds. Strikes have already occurred. Anarchism may come. The new knowledge is bringing with it the spirit of discontent."

We might almost be reading of "superior" Europe. Here, for instance, is the *Tablet's* own summing-up of the state of affairs in Japan:—

"The old faiths are effete, and have long ceased to be a living force in the national consciousness. Buddhism, undermined by the hopeless immorality of its priesthood, is steadily losing ground, despite efforts to improve its

organisation, to rehabilitate it in the light of the learning of the West, and to obtain recognition for it as the national creed."*

Change the single word "Buddhism" to "Christianity" in this passage, and it might stand for an accurate description of affairs a good deal nearer home than the Far East. Indeed, one wonders whether the writer, after the fashion of some of the rationalising monks of the Middle Ages, is not having a sly joke at the expense of the ponderous *Tablet*. Against the fact of the decay of the old faiths, the writer in the *Tablet* says that some have favored the introduction of Christianity. Other writers "have recommended Christianity to their compatriots, while themselves believing it a collection of superstitions, and the Marquis Ito is among those who favor its diffusion in Japan." This is rather cold comfort, but there is more of a like kind. The writer in *Illustrated Catholic Missions* points out, lest anyone should carry away too roseate an impression:—

"The average Japanese believer looks, in fact, on Christianity as an intellectual system or as a system of government, as a form of philosophy or as an instrument of control.....Faith the Japanese Christians ignore altogether. The generality of them join the Church as a man joins a club. The more serious-minded want to discipline their character and to save their country."

The outlook from the general Christian point of view does not thus appear to be positively dazzling; from the particular Catholic point of view the prospect is almost as dull. Here is the picture as painted, let it be remarked, by a Catholic writer in a Catholic journal:—

"To the acceptance of Catholicism by the educated Japanese there are, on the other hand, two main obstacles: the fear of their ultra-patriotism that the claims of the Papacy should create a division of their allegiance, and the prejudice aroused by its ritual and ceremonial as having a certain superficial resemblance to those of Buddhism [italics ours]. To these we may probably add the absence in the average Japanese of a true spiritual sense, capable of appreciating the significance of religion in its higher aspects. But the strongest influence against the Church of Rome is that exerted by Protestant literature, in which it is represented as that of decadent peoples: 'A Japanese who considers himself—as most Japanese do—thoroughly up to date would as soon think of buying an antiquated steam-engine or an antiquated form of bicycle as of embracing Catholicity.....In short, he would not get full value for his money.'"

This confession is amazing in its conscious, or unconscious, revelations. In the first place, the fact is admitted of the resemblance of Roman ritual to other Eastern rituals; and the half-hearted qualification that this resemblance is only "superficial" takes away nothing from the admission. The Japanese evidently do not swallow the diplomatic adjective. Then we have the old wheeze about the absence of a "spiritual sense" in people who disagree with the religionist's dogmas and ceremonies; though the religionist never seems to see that that theory of accounting for religious differences quashes most of the religionist's own theology. And, lastly, we have the confession that the chief source of proselytising weakness in Christianity is to be found in the quarrels of Christians themselves. The Japanese may well ask what marks of "divinity" there are about a religion whose own adherents dispute with one another as bitterly as any of them can dispute with the "heathen." The Japanese, indeed, may with propriety retort on the Christians: "When you have settled among yourselves what your great God-sent religion really means, it will be time enough to come to us with it for acceptance." But there is one further confession in the *Tablet* article, more remarkable even than the others. Says the *Tablet*:—

"The prospects of the Reformed faiths, which ten years ago were most hopeful, have been undermined by the introduction of the Higher Criticism by some of the clergy themselves. The result is the drift into Agnosticism of a large proportion of the most intelligent converts. Japanese Protestantism is, in fact, too broad and too liberal to live. It is not, indeed, properly speaking, a religion at all.' To create a certain number of social centres throughout the country was described

as its aim by one of its most distinguished followers, which, he contended, was all it did in Europe. What is known as the 'Doshiba affair' is cited as an instance of the evolution of the gifted and inquisitive Japanese Christian into a Freethinker. The institution was an educational one, created by the American Mission Board, in conjunction with native Christians; but the principle of private judgment was pushed by the Japanese trustees to its logical consequences in the claim to formulate a new religion of their own, from which all the main tenets of Christianity were eliminated."

It would thus appear that, even on the confession of the "enemy," Freethought is advancing in Japan. Indeed, the only consolation the Catholic writer offers to his readers is that, where the prospects of Christianity, as a whole, are rather gloomy, the prospects of Catholicism are somewhat less gloomy than those of its rivals. If there is any hope for any form of Christianity, the writer says, in effect, Catholicism perhaps has the best chance. It is scarcely a prospect to excite unbounded enthusiasm. An infinitely-wise deity seems to be neglecting the interests of his chosen interpreters. It may be the "absence in the average Japanese of a true spiritual sense"—a circumstance which would seem to present an ugly problem for the design-argument people—or it may be the presence in the Japanese of an awkward intelligence which appreciates the fallacies of Christianity at their true value, and unkindly observes the "superficial" resemblance of Christian ceremonials to those they propose to replace; but the fact remains, the Church of Christ makes little or no headway. Nay, its propagators themselves introduce the antidote, and, simultaneously with Christianity, goes the scientific refutation of its absurdities.

The fact is, and the *Tablet* writer consciously or unconsciously reveals it, the real missionary days of Christianity are over. A religion which is rejected in the centres of its historic influence by nine out of ten men of science and culture may possibly still have some future amongst savages, to whom it may in some fashion represent an advance; but it can make no serious headway in a community at anything like a similar level of civilisation to that which is rejecting it in its home. A religion that is not good enough or true enough for the best minds in Europe will scarcely be able to impose itself on the best minds of Asia.

FREDERICK RYAN.

The Land of Confucius.—III.

(Concluded from page 780.)

THE question may be asked whether or not that people has still a right to live alone; whether or not other civilizations have any right to break down their walls with Christian cannons and march triumphantly over the prejudices and sanctities of years. It is not for a moment contended that the pressure of the outside world upon China has any philanthropic aim; it is not for a moment contended that the aim of the foreign world is to elevate and enlighten China. Let us be honest: the warships of the different nations have gone there simply and solely for the purpose of profit and gain.

As early as the middle of the sixteenth century the Portuguese succeeded in renting a little space in a sea-port town. It was not ceded to them; the title was never transferred to them; it remained absolutely in the Chinese Government; but they were permitted to remain and occupy as tenants a little place. From that point of vantage the Portuguese carried on their trade. The Spaniards, eager and adventurous, and seeking likewise to extend their trade, unable to secure even so small a concession from the Imperial Government, established their headquarters in the islands of the Philippine group. The warships that went there more than once in the assumed interest of securing reparation for injuries or insults offered to missionaries, went there really in the interest of the extension of commerce. It happened about thirty years ago that two foreign missionaries from Germany were murdered on Chinese soil. Without warning, without any preliminary, two German warships steamed into one of the Chinese harbors and demanded the place from the commandant in reparation

* *Tablet*, November 10, 1900, p. 723.

for the loss of those two missionaries, and, in addition, the exclusive right of German traders to the commerce of the entire province in which the port was situated. Missionaries come high in China.

That we may understand some of the natural and inevitable prejudices and suspicions that exist in the minds of the Chinese on account of foreign religions, let me cite the massacre that occurred in 1870. In the town of northern China, which has been in the last few months the chief centre of disturbance, French Catholic missionaries had established a convent, and, in connection with it, an orphan asylum and foundling hospital. The missionaries persuaded the natives to bring there, and leave in their charge, young children. It was known that, when they came into the charge of the nuns, all right and title of parent or relative or guardian over the child ceased absolutely.

It was also a part of the policy of the missionaries to persuade the people to bring to them children in the last stages of illness that they might be baptised. This, of course, we understand to have been done with a desire on the part of the missionaries to save the children from the awful fate of dying unbaptised.

The natives were somewhat reluctant to bring their children to the foundling hospital, and the missionaries established a system of rewards, so that anyone bringing a child and giving him to the missionaries received a substantial compensation. The effect of this was to induce kidnapping among the natives, and children were stolen and sold to the nuns. The asylum was surrounded by that secrecy and seclusion that everywhere characterise Catholic institutions. Many of the children who were brought there to be baptised in the last stage of illness shortly afterwards would be carried out dead. It is thus easy to see how suspicion and fear arose among the native population. They gathered about the convent and murdered, as before stated, three of the missionaries and twenty-two of the native converts. Can we wonder that that people are unable to understand our ideas? Can we for a moment believe that we shall enlighten and lift them up when the Christendom known to the Chinese observer sends a variety of people all in the name of God, all with the Bible, all with the story of salvation, and yet whose teachings are not only misunderstood by the Chinese, but are irreconcilable among themselves?

Whether or not any people ought to isolate themselves is the question that is foremost now. This question has two distinct and curious aspects. One is whether or not the Chinese people have a right to their own religion. If they have, every missionary is an insolent intruder. The other question is, whether or not the Chinese people have the right to their own commerce, and are under no obligations to exchange commodities or have trade relations with other nations of the world. If they possess that right of isolation and seclusion, then every effort, under whatever guise for the development of commerce, has been an invasion of that right. But it may be questioned whether any nation has the right to remain a hermit, or whether even any man has the right to exclude himself and cut off all relations with his fellow-men. In the case of an individual the right might be conceded, because of the insignificance of the effect that would follow; but has a nation that right? And, if it has not that right, then what is to be the attitude of foreign people towards that once isolated nation?

There is a certain sentiment about history which the race for commercial advantage does not take into account. No thoughtful man can see that ancient people gradually overcome, no thoughtful man can watch the events of the passing day, knowing full well what their final issue must be, without a sense of pity and regret that the doom of the most ancient nation in the world is near at hand. For we must remember that the people of China are not corrupt, effete, nor in the final stages of decay. The Government may be, the officials may be corrupt, but not the people themselves. They could not have sustained themselves through all these centuries if they had been inherently corrupt or depraved. Can we wonder that they refer to all foreigners as "Foreign Devils," and cry out for their expulsion? Does not the Christian world apply the term of opprobrium and contempt to them? We speak of them as "heathen," and "heathen" means, and has

always meant on the lips of the Christian, an inferior, a barbarian, a man in darkness, and error and superstition. If we have our Christ, they have their Confucius; if the glory of our Christ was that he gave us the Golden Rule, their prophet uttered it five hundred years before Christ was born; if we boast about Christian institutions and civilisation, and parade our love for our fellow-men, and our desire to extend our benign and enlightening influences over all the world, they can point to the legislation of the American Congress that forbade a Chinaman to visit this country. The events that are transpiring now have within them possible issues that no man is wise enough to discern or foretell. Of one thing there seems to be sufficient ground for certainty; and that is that the time of Chinese isolation is drawing to its end. With the French on the south, the Germans on the east, the Japanese power rising not far from its shores, Russia on the north, and England trying to get everywhere, it may be doubted if that old people can long continue its policy of exclusion.

After the brilliant and astounding victory of the Japanese over China in their recent war, the two Governments agreed upon the terms of a treaty by which certain important territorial concessions were to be made to Japan, together with the payment of an indemnity fund of one hundred and sixty millions of dollars. Before the ratification of that treaty could be made by the respective Governments, the omnipotent hand of Russia was seen. Her representatives succeeded in persuading both the Chinese and the Japanese Governments to a modification of the treaty, whereby, instead of the concession of the north being made to Japan, it was made to Russia, in lieu of which an increased indemnity of thirty millions of dollars was to be paid by China to Japan. Associated with Russia in this scheme—which was not known outside of secret diplomatic circles for nearly two years after its consummation—were Germany and France. England was left out of the compact. As an equivalent in part for this exclusion of England, she sought to compel what is known as the "open door" policy; which simply means that, in each port where treaty rights were granted to any one nation of the first class, equal and identical rights should also be accorded to every other nation of the first class. In this England was unsuccessful. The situation is now this: an ancient people numbering more than one-third of the population of the globe, so situated territorially with reference to Russia as that the natural order would bring Russia as the conqueror. The contiguity, the neighborhood of these two most powerful nations, renders more than possible the adoption and assimilation by each other of their respective ideas and institutions. In many respects the Russian and Chinese character are alike. Both are adroit, patient, watchful, disingenuous, conservative, and far-sighted. The diplomacy of the western nations is more direct—up and down, blunt, straightforward, and ingenuous; that of the Orient, as that of the Czar, is more disingenuous and cunning. Russia has already succeeded in bringing about a sort of commercial need between the two countries. The great Trans-Siberian railway has within it the possibility of changing the map of the world. What may be the result? If China and Russia were to unite; if the patient conservative millions of China were to be given the stimulus of a strong will, able commanders, and competent leaders; if the millions upon millions of that people were to be organised into a military force, it is a safe statement that the two united nations could dominate the world. Who may know the future? With far-sighted policy, with great adroitness, and with a hidden hand, the Power from the north is bearing down upon the ancient Power of the south. The history of the world may be changed, and the destiny of nations turned aside. In this hour of the uncertainty, of the hesitancy; in this hour of diplomacy; in this hour, when vast possibilities lie in germ, there lie upon every man and every woman two obligations—one is to be so far intelligent, to be so far posted, to come so far into acquaintance with the tradition and the history of that vast people, as to be able to look upon any question without prejudice, to view even the atrocities and the outrages—even the murders and the massacres, even the plots and the intrigues in the land beyond the sea—from a view-point, not of prejudice, but with a desire to

understand the causes, and find, if possible, where rests the blame.

We should have been indignant to a man if, a few years ago, when in the streets of New Orleans a mob set upon and murdered some Italians, the entire people of the United States, the Government of Washington and Lincoln, had been held responsible for the outrage; and yet in our haste, in our frenzy, in our narrow prejudice, we think all the Chinese Empire is responsible for the attacks upon the missionaries, and we think of that ancient people as being simply a conglomerate mass of house-servants, cooks, and laundry-men. Let us know that they had arts and sciences of no inconsiderable degree centuries in advance of the rest of the world; they understood the manufacture and use for amusement and scientific purposes of gunpowder; they understood the manufacture and use of the mariner's compass, and of fine fabrics, centuries before the rest of the world found them out. When Gutenberg placed the marvel of movable type upon the table, it was afterwards discovered that the Chinese had been making paper and printing upon it with movable type for hundreds and hundreds of years. To know these things, to feel a sympathy for a great people, to have some higher ambition than that of the sordid desire for markets and the enlargement of commerce, to fix in the minds of the people the sense of human brotherhood, to decline the feeling of superiority that awakens prejudice, suspicion, and hatred, to recognise that they with us, blind and ignorant, stand before the enigma of human life and destiny; that they, with us, are seeking to find the higher ideals, to exemplify the higher principles of morality and the gentler manners that ought to mark civilisation; to believe that they may help us as well as we them; to set the seal of our disapproval upon fanatical religion, and to look upon all the world as the dwelling-place of men, having natural rights and common needs—these things constitute the obligation we owe to the old world. In the great future, when the map of the world is changed, when the lines of demarcation that separate peoples are less and less observed, when caste and race prejudice have been overcome, when men everywhere are great enough to understand that every other man is great in some degree, that all are children of the great parent nature, that all face towards the mysterious and the unknown, perhaps it will then be seen that kindness and sympathetic understanding were better and more powerful instruments than bayonets or shotted guns.

If I may have created in the mind of any man or any woman a throb of sympathy, a desire for understanding of that ancient and wondrous people, then these humble words of mine are not spoken in vain.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Correspondence.

JOSEPHUS AND JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I regret if my query was cast in such a form as to lead Mr. Watts to suppose that I questioned his views, and thus induced him to devote the greater part of his article on "Josephus and Christ" to the discussion of matters I never raised. Also I regret that he had *originally* no intention of noticing my criticism, for it is a point of the utmost importance to the Secularist, for the three passages of Josephus are part of the Christian line of defence, and it is useless to attack *one* without disposing of the other *two*. Mr. Watts complains that I have not directed my attention sufficiently to the literature; but, if I had, there would be no necessity for me to study the *Freethinker*, or to read Mr. Watts's interesting and improving articles. It is precisely unlearned persons like myself who rely upon the guidance of Mr. Watts in these subjects. Mr. Watts says that, if the passages in Josephus referring to James and John are genuine, they would not be personal evidence in favor of the events recorded, but only hearsay. I do not understand this argument, because Josephus tells us a good deal about Herod the Great which certainly is not *personal* evidence, but only hearsay. Am I, therefore, to understand that Mr. Watts is of opinion that Herod the Great never existed because Josephus had no personal acquaintance with him? Renan says, in his introduction to his *Life of Jesus*: "Josephus, writing especially for

pagans, is not so candid. His short notices of Jesus, of John the Baptist, of Judas the Gaulonite, are dry and colorless. I believe the passage respecting Jesus to be authentic. It is perfectly in the style of Josephus, and, if this historian has made mention of Jesus, it is thus that he must have spoken of him. We feel only that a Christian hand has retouched the passage." It will not be denied that the opinion of Renan is as good as the opinion of Mr. Watts. Meredith's argument that Herod would not have sent John the Baptist to Machærus is absurd. Josephus expressly implies that the execution of the Baptist took place before the quarrel with Aretas, and it would be most clever policy to remove a dangerous subject to a border castle under the authority of Herod's father-in-law, where the offender could be quietly disposed of without exciting a popular tumult. The argument that Josephus ought to have mentioned the *sect* of John the Baptist is also silly, for Josephus was not writing a history of Jewish sects, and there is no evidence that the Baptist had any numerous sect of followers. Also, Josephus cannot be expected to notice every little event of his time, and we should have had no reference to the Baptist at all if it had not been for the war with Aretas. In the new *Secular Almanack* Mr. Chilperic Edwards argues that the paragraph in Josephus relating to the Baptist is an interpolation because it interrupts the thread of the story; but even *he* has nothing to say of the passage about James the Just, for this latter passage cannot be separated from the context in which it stands. The quotation from Judge Strange is unintelligible to me, because I never met with the slightest evidence that the James passage ever stood verbatim in the *Wars* instead of the *Antiquities*, where we now have it. Also, Mr. Watts says Origen proves nothing in favor of my contention; but surely his learning in the literature bearing upon this subject would enable him to see the point intended. The argument against the Jesus passage is that, though Origen, in mentioning the works of Josephus, expressly says that he did not receive Jesus for Christ, yet Eusebius, a hundred years later, quotes the Jesus passage as we have it. So that it is considered probable that Eusebius himself forged this passage, which did not exist in the book in Origen's time. But this argument will not apply to the Baptist passage or the James passage, because these already existed in the time of Origen, and are quoted by him. Therefore, I repeat that the allusions of Josephus to the Baptist and to James require to be disposed of just as much as the Jesus paragraph. As Renan says, they are precisely in the style of Josephus; and, if he mentioned these characters at all, it is precisely in this way that he might be expected to mention them. As the case stands at present, it looks very much as though these passages were objected to simply because their testimony happens to be inconvenient.

CHRYSTABEL VAUGHAN.

THE DOGMA OF THE TRINITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is most disheartening, when you have for upwards of twenty-five years been endeavoring to enlighten the world, to find the same errors and misconceptions repeated and put forth as something new. In my *Secret Societies*, first published in 1875, and republished in 1897 in an enlarged edition—or, rather, in an almost entirely new work—I have fully expounded, in the Introduction and other parts of the book, the origin of the dogma of the Trinity, not as having come to us from this or that nation, but as being coeval with Nature herself, from which it is derived, since in Nature there is no act or fact which does not imply a trinity. This very letter to you is a proof thereof. I, the writer, as the Father, produce my Son, the letter; whilst the act of my writing it is the Spirit. Hence all nations have had their trinities, from China to Peru, as we know from monuments or tradition. And yet almost week after week I must read in the *Freethinker* vain speculations on the possible origin of this dogma—speculations which only skim the surface; whilst its origin must be sought for in the deepest ground of universal nature, existing therein before priestly cunning distorted it for its own selfish objects. When will the world learn to appreciate truth? It readily enough swallows Darwin's warmed-up cabbage of protoplasm, but the Trinity must have a divine origin!

C. W. HECKETHORN.

A converted Western real estate agent was "called" and went to preaching. An old-time friend of his went over into the rival town, "within convenient hailing distance," to hear him preach. When asked how he liked the sermon, he said: "Sermon, nothing; he's at his old tricks again, booming an addition he calls Paradise. Says it's going to be laid out with golden streets, and all that kind of rot."—*Printer's Ink*.

An old darky rose recently in a southern prayer meeting and exclaimed: "Brethren and sistern, I've been having a drestful time since last we met together. I've been chawing hard bones and swallowing bitter pills; I'm afraid I've broken everyone of the Ten Commandments, but, thank the Lord, I haven't lost my religion!"

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, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, A lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Christmas Festival.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, Mr. Edwards, "Christmas."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, A. Gall, "Spiritualism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. P. Ward, "Baby Jesus." Also in the Bull Ring in the morning, if fine, at 11, a lecture.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Stanley Jones, "Civilisations and their Destinies."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Business meeting; G. Faulkner, "The Vedas or Sacred Books of the Brahmins"; 6.30, Children's Party.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, J. W. Bailey, "Mr. N. B. Billany—A Recollection."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Vocal and Instrumental Concert—arranged by Mr. Johnson Lowe.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Hall closed. New Year's Day Annual Soirée—Tea at 5.30, to be followed by entertainment; dancing at 8.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Cohen—11, "The Significance of Evolution"; 3, "China and the Missionary Question"; 7, "Christ, Christians, and Christmas." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—December 23, Sheffield.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—December 23 and 30, Birmingham.

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