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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A Blood Bath.

THOMAS PAINE has left it on record, in his immortal *Age of Reason*, that he was shocked at the early age of eight by a sermon on the Atonement. God was depicted as an angry being, who would only be propitiated by the death of his only son. This made him appear more of a devil than a deity, the little boy Paine thought as he reflected on the sermon outside the church. Such was the first movement of rationalism in the mind of that illustrious personage; and many years afterwards, when he was penning the pages that made him famous with the liberal-minded and infamous with the bigots, he passed the simple but striking observation that no system could be true which shocked the mind of a child.

I well remember how this Christian doctrine affected me in my own childhood. I had infinite pity and affection for poor Jesus, who suffered so much for me and others, but I could not think of his "heavenly father" without a shudder of fear—which, in later years, passed into a shudder of contempt and disgust. I used to imagine God the Father with a huge face as broad as the heavens, and great, level, frowning brows, over eyes that were full of the cold steely light of implacable "justice," as I was taught to believe, though I subsequently saw it to be implacable vengeance. Now I can only smile at the notion of God Almighty keeping an audit of the virtues and vices of a lot of insignificant little insects crawling over this infinitesimal Dutch cheese of a planet. Nothing but their own vanity—of which religion is always the supreme expression—could have suggested such an idea.

When I went to church and Sunday-school, and particularly when I went to the Wesleyan chapel, I often used to hear, and sometimes joined in singing, that famous and delectable hymn—

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged within that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

I understand that this sweet hymn is still sung with fervor in the more primitive places of worship, but is usually eschewed by the more refined congregations. It is crude enough, in all conscience: nevertheless, it is an honest statement of the orthodox doctrine. I cannot call it poetry, though it is undoubtedly verse. The rhymes are accurate, which is not always the case in Christian hymns; but the similes are extremely mixed. A fountain is not a thing that is *filled*, it is a thing that *flows*. Properly speaking, the fountain would be the blood itself flowing from Immanuel's side; but how on earth, whichever way you view it, could this fountain become a *flood*? No doubt the hymn-writer wanted a rhyme to "blood," and hence the "flood," with the "plunge" into it, which would have been impossible in a fountain. The only consistent idea throughout is that of a blood bath. Sinners are "washed in the blood of the Lamb"—to use the express language of Revelation. By this process they lose all their guilty stains. One would think, however, that they would be

stained all over, like the spot ball on a billiard table. It is only Immanuel's blood that has the power of *bleaching*.

Personally, I have no desire for a blood bath. I leave other people to their own taste, but I stand by my own. I prefer clean water. If it must be thicker, let it be soapsuds. Cleanliness, they say, is next to godliness. Some people put godliness first, and never take the second step. For my part, I would rather start with cleanliness. Give me water, give me soap, before any sanguinary fluid from the veins of animals, men, or gods. No doubt a sinner is "off color." He is bad enough as he is. But if he took a dive into a blood bath, pray what color would he come out? Would he not require another good washing to render him even as decent as he was before his "header"?

The truth is that this doctrine, which is expressed in the language of the slaughter-house, comes down to us from old barbaric ages. There is any quantity of "blood" in the Bible, because the Bible was written by semi-savages. Nowadays we shrink from the very word except in medical reports. In ancient times the thing and the word were common. Shedding blood was a vital part of antique religious ceremony. First the blood of men—captives of war or dedicated victims; then the blood of animals, as a substitute for that of human beings. Jehovah's altars, like those of Baal and Moloch, were always red with blood and black with burnt flesh. The idea was that the blood was the life, and was therefore the most precious thing known; and that it would naturally be esteemed as a valuable offering by the gods. Moreover, earthly rulers were fond of bloodshed, and it was thought that the heavenly rulers would have the same preference. Thus, to use the words of Othello, it was "blood, blood, blood!" Even when actual sacrifice was lost in Christianity, the idea was preserved; indeed, it was sublimated and perpetuated. The blood of Christ served once and for ever. He became the universal sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood," as the writer of Hebrews says, "there is no remission." This is a fundamental idea of all the world's religions. Christianity is not unique, even in this respect; it falls into a line with other faiths. And just as blood was partaken of as a sacrament in ancient sacrifices, as it still is in the darkest parts of present-day savagery, so the Christian still drinks his "blood of Christ" in the holy communion—the Protestant symbolically, but the Catholic priest literally, for he believes, or professes to believe, in the constant miracle of transubstantiation.

There are a number of moral maxims in the New Testament, though none of them are original. Some of them are practicable; others are exaggerations and impossibilities. But the best of them are nullified by the religious doctrines of Christianity. This idea, for instance, of a blood bath being necessary to salvation, quite overwhelms the pretty text about loving one's enemies; and it is not surprising that the worshippers of the Christian God are the greatest bloodshedders on earth.

G. W. FOOTE.

The New Theory of the Bible.

ACCORDING to Hobbes, "Words are the counters of wise men and the money of fools." Bacon has also remarked that men "imagine that their minds have the command of language; but it often happens that language bears rule over their minds." The truth of these statements has never been better shown than in the many theories which have been held from time to time in reference to the Bible. Persons propounding different views as to the nature of this book have been prolific in the use of words, without having a clear *understanding* of them. For instance, such phrases as "the inspiration of the Bible," "God's word," and "Divine Revelation" are used in a very different sense now to what they were in former times. Biblical criticism, which in its strictest sense commenced less than a century ago, has entirely destroyed the former claims urged on behalf of both the Old and New Testaments. A striking proof of this is furnished in the second volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, edited by Canon Cheyne and Dr. J. Sutherland Black, which has just been published. The *Christian World*, in reviewing this work, writes:—

"What will most strike the average British reader will be the extremely advanced, not to say destructive, character of some of the critical articles on vital questions. That a contribution which, on the subjects of Christ and Christianity, arrives at what are practically the conclusions of Strauss and Renan should appear in a work issued under the auspices of a dignitary of the Church of England is, indeed, a portent. That this is not beyond the truth will appear from a simple statement of some of the leading points of the article. As to the sources of the Gospels, it coincides with the generally-accepted view which regards Mark and the 'Logia' as the basis of the synoptics; but it considers that these sources had in their turn sources behind them—a consideration which carries the question of historicity a good deal further into the region of the doubtful. Luke it regards as 'by far the most beautiful, picturesque, and pathetic of all the Gospels.....but if bare, bold facts are in question, it is probably the least authoritative of the four.' As to John, 'the apostolic authorship, we are told, is impossible. It cannot be an eye-witness of the facts of the life of Jesus who has presented, as against the Synoptists, an account so much less credible, nor an original apostle who has shown himself so easily accessible to Alexandrian and Gnostic ideas, nor a contemporary of Jesus who survived so late into the second century and yet was capable of composing so profound a work.' It is taken for granted by Professor Schmiedel that John's Gospel can in no sense be regarded as historical. It is, however, in relation to the person of Christ that the traditional conviction is most ruthlessly dwelt with. The birth-stories are made short work of.....On the miracle narratives the writer observes that without postulating miracles as *a priori* impossible one must, in studying the New Testament accounts, note the amazing contradictions in them and the lack of concern for historical precision with which the Evangelists write."

Thus it will be seen that the latest production in the highest class of Biblical criticism is in direct opposition to the Christian views as to the Bible, which were in vogue during the early and middle part of the last century.

It may now be fairly taken for granted that the Bible no longer occupies the position it once did in the estimation of the more intelligent Christians. Still, many of them avow their belief that God's saving revelation to mankind is made in the Bible, and that anyone may read it for himself if he studies the book with what is called a reverent and prayerful spirit. They admit that the Scriptures can no longer be looked upon as inspired in the sense in which that term was once employed; that the whole of the Bible is not God's word, but only certain portions of it; that the volume abounds with errors of copyists, and that many passages, and even books, are spurious. Yet these very persons allege that, when all these deductions are made, there is left a clear and sufficient "divine message," the essential character of which is untouched by any of the errors and defects, and unchanged by any of the various readings. The orthodox stubbornness and inconsistency here manifested in clinging to traditional fallacies are in keeping with the conduct of theologians throughout history. Take their persistent opposition to geology. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Bible teaches

in language which conveys no uncertain meaning that the material universe was created about six thousand years ago. This doctrine was once universally accepted by Christians, and for hundreds of years no one dreamed of calling it in question. When some objectors to written revelations stated that the Chinese could trace the history of their country back to a period more remote than the time fixed for the creation by the Mosaic cosmogony, the idea was ridiculed as a whimsical fiction, and sceptics were taunted with having to resort to childish cavilling, instead of to sound argument, in their endeavors to undermine the authority of the Pentateuch. Six thousand years, it is said, and no more, had the earth been in existence; and he who should venture to ascribe to it a higher antiquity would prove himself an unbeliever in the sacred record, and a man whose information was so limited that his judgment was unreliable.

When, however, the facts of geology became known, this delusion was largely dispelled. Men of science investigated the crust of the earth with a view of ascertaining what Nature had to say herself about her own history. They found various layers of rocks deposited in regular order one upon the other, each containing the fossil remains of animals and plants that had flourished when the stratum which contained them had been in process of formation. These scientists observed the mutual encroachment of the sea upon the land; the upheaving of certain parts of the globe by some pent-up internal force; the effect of rain and other atmospheric agency upon rocks; currents of the ocean washing away portions of large continents, and breaking up immense tracts of land into small islands; rivers wending their way through countries of vast extent, carrying down in their streams not simply the soil from their banks, but whatever might happen by accident to fall into their waters—animals, plants, and human productions—to be deposited in the ocean at their mouths; small coral insects in active operation, raising up from the bottom of the great expanse of waters small islands as monuments of the work of time. These and numerous other forces constituted the agencies by which stratum after stratum had been deposited during the long ages of the past, thereby giving us a history of the earth at a time when no human historian lived to pen the mighty wonders of nature, and hand them down to future generations. It was now clearly proved by the science of geology that six thousand years represented but a small fraction of the time required to effect the mighty changes that had taken place on the earth. And thus the first of a series of fatal blows was dealt at the inaccuracy of Bible records.

Finding it impossible to longer reconcile the old notions as to Bible veracity with modern thought and critical research, and objecting to place the Bible upon its proper basis, certain professors of Christianity started new theories which are as illogical as those they have been compelled to give up. Let us see what these theories are, and what is their value as evidence of the reasonableness of the modern claims put forth on behalf of the Bible. In the first place, it is said that in a certain sense the Scriptures are inspired. But it is not stated what is meant by the term inspiration. St. Paul, writing to Timothy, tells him what he (St. Paul) conceives to be the use of inspiration, but he does not indicate what it is. Apart from the Bible, various theories have been put forward as to what this "divinely inspired writing" is. Johnson tells us that it means "the infusion of ideas into the mind by a superior power." This definition is far from satisfactory; for the "superior power" may mean anything. Dr. Watts says "inspiration" is when an overpowering impression of any proposition is made upon the mind by God himself, that gives a convincing and indubitable evidence of the truth and divinity of it; so were the prophets and apostles inspired." To simply say that an "overpowering impression" made by God is inspiration is a very unsuccessful definition. Besides, what proof have we that the prophets and apostles were so inspired? It is not sufficient to answer that the Bible affirms it. The inquiry still would be, What guarantee have we that the Bible states the truth? Until it can be shown that the Bible is infallible—free from error—it cannot be allowed to decide the question. Webster, far more orthodox, avers that inspiration is "the supernatural

influence of the Spirit of God on the human mind, by which prophets, apostles, and sacred writers were qualified to set forth divine truth without any mixture of error." Of course, to the Freethinker it does not matter which view is accepted as correct, inasmuch as the orthodox Christian is condemned by all. True inspiration consists in intellectual fertility, but this is confined to no one book, age, or race. Its influence was seen in the writings of Homer, Horace, Plato, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Shelley—in fact, in those of all men whose genius has adorned the literature of the world.

In the second place, the advocates of the new theory of the Bible assert that portions only of the book are God's word. Such a view, however, is thoroughly illogical, for the simple reason that it rests upon the false assumption that it is possible to reconcile things which are essentially irreconcilable—reason and faith, Freethought and revelation, liberty and servitude, the natural and what is called the supernatural. Those who hold this theory say in effect: "Here are books purporting to contain the Word of God, and I believe they do contain it, but mixed with many vain words of men; therefore what suits me I shall consider divine, and what does not suit me I shall reject." Now, the fatal objection to this theory is that it makes man the measure and standard of his God, setting up certain Scriptures as supernatural and divine, then subjecting them to the arbitrament of human reason. There is but one logical way to settle the Bible difficulty now that the belief in its infallibility and verbal inspiration has been given up by all the leading Biblical critics of the present time; and that way is to frankly surrender the claim of "divine inspiration" for the books, and then, of course, it would be quite consistent to sit in judgment upon them, as upon any other human writings, welcoming what we find in them that is good and true, and rejecting what we regard as bad and false.

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—XII.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE JEWS.

(Continued from p. 84.)

In dealing with the condition of the Jews under the Christian government of Russia, I have no intention of entering into a discussion of what has been called "The Problem of the Jew."* This question is important enough and serious enough to deserve study, if only for the strong light thrown by it upon many other problems; but at present I have to limit my attention to the treatment of the Jew by one of the most religious of modern Governments.

The story of the Jew in Russia is a very ancient one, running back to some 300 B.C.; but the story of persistent and systematic persecution only commences with the latter portion of the seventeenth century. The conquest of the provinces of Smolensk and the Ukraine, and the subsequent conquest of Poland, gave Russia too many Jewish subjects for her to resort to the easy policy of expulsion. Some other method had to be adopted to keep the Christian faith pure, and this was found in the institution of the "Pale of Settlement." The "Pale" consists of a given number of towns in which Jews may settle, but which may be restricted or expanded according to the goodwill of the powers that be. A town in which the Jews are allowed to live to-day may be closed to them to-morrow; at a moment's notice thousands may be packed into towns already overcrowded, and it is this uncertainty of residence, with the necessity of buying the *right to live* of various officials, that forms one of the gravest features of the problem.

With this preliminary, we can proceed with a brief outline of the measures passed, and *riots incited*, by the

* Those who desire to follow up the question in detail will find the necessary information in the following works:—*The New Exodus*, by Harold Frederic. *The Russian Jews*, by L. Errera. *The Jewish Question in Russia*, by Prince Demidoff San Donato. *Israel among the Nations*, by A. Leroy-Beaulieu. *Russia: Political and Social*, by L. Tikhomirov. *Report of the Commissioners upon the Causes which Incite Immigration to the United States*, by Messrs. Weber and Kempster. (Washington; 1892.) These are the principal authorities I have used in what follows.

Russian Government during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century—all that we really have space for. To deal with the matter at length would require a volume.

Since 1880 the history of Jewish persecution in Russia may be summed up in the career of one man, M. Pobédonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, the most exalted religious office in Russia. He may be, probably is, a sincerely religious man; but he is one of the most powerful reactionaries in present-day Russia. He has enormous influence over the present Czar, as he had over his predecessor, and nearly all the legislation during the last fifteen years that has aimed at crippling educational institutions, destroying liberal ideas, and suppressing heresy, may be directly or indirectly traced to his influence. It may be, as Leroy-Beaulieu and other writers assert, that his persecution of the Jews is only part of his general policy of exterminating heresy; but it is true, as the American commissioners remarked, that there is religious intolerance underlying all. Altogether this gentleman with the many-jointed name is as fair a sample of a Torquemada as one could expect to find nowadays, and his influence over the Emperor is not unlike that wielded by his Spanish predecessor over Ferdinand and Isabella. To him is attributed the saying that of the Jews in Russia "a third will emigrate, a third will be converted, and the rest will die of hunger." One can certainly credit this from what has happened since 1881.

In 1880, in addition to the taxes paid by the ordinary Russian subject, who is the heaviest-taxed animal in Europe, there was a special set of taxes that fell upon Jews alone. There was a tax upon every animal killed by a Jewish butcher, and a further tax upon every pound of meat sold afterwards. There was a percentage tax levied on the rents of all houses or shops received by Jews, and on the profits of all factories or industrial establishments owned by them. Every printing press owned by a Jew paid a special tax, and a heavy duty was placed on all legacies received by them. A tax had to be paid for the privilege of wearing a skull cap at prayers; even the candles used in Jewish homes to usher in the Sabbath were taxed so as to yield the Government £28,000 per annum.

Even family life is not secure against this modern Torquemada. Any child of fourteen can enter the Orthodox Church despite the wishes of its parents, who must, nevertheless, support it. Every convert receives from fifteen to thirty roubles, children only half this amount. A Jew who becomes converted is released from all obligation to his wife and children if they do not follow him in his change of faith; the same rule applies to a Jewess who enters the Church without her husband. But while the act of conversion divorces a man from his wife without further ceremony, and leaves him free to marry again, the wife, who remains a Jewess, is forbidden to contract a second marriage. Jews are forbidden to settle in all parts of the empire—a privilege which is accorded to prostitutes, and which has led many Jewesses to take out the yellow ticket in order to study, or to remain with their mothers, whose profession of midwives allowed them to move outside the Pale, in others. M. A. Leroy-Beaulieu cites one case of a young girl who took out the yellow ticket in order to learn shorthand in Moscow, but who was afterwards expelled by the police because she was not following her assumed trade.

A law of 1865, passed under Alexander II., gave Jewish artisans the right to settle outside the Pale on obtaining the necessary papers. In 1889 the Holy Synod set to work to define the term "artisan," which had hitherto been undefined. It was decided that butchers, bakers, vinegar makers, and glaziers did not come under that head, and they were hurried back, penniless, to the overcrowded Pale. In Moscow twenty-four compositors were expelled, on the ground that printing was not a trade, but an art. In August, 1840, when certain private railways were bought up by the State, all the Jewish employees were dismissed. Other companies were ordered by circular to follow suit, on the ground that engine-drivers were not artisans, and the two navigation companies of Dneiper were ordered to dismiss their Jewish officials. About eight thousand Jews, earning honest livings, were thus thrown out of employment.

It is the same with professions. A Jew could not become a magistrate nor a lawyer without special permission, which was never granted. He cannot be elected to the Provincial Assemblies, nor to the post of Mayor, President of the Municipal Council, a member of a recruiting committee, or a member of a Stock Exchange committee. In 1882 the number of Jewish students in the medical military schools was limited to five per cent.; later they were excluded altogether. Similar regulations existed with regard to the technical engineering schools. In 1886 Jews were excluded from the only veterinary school in Russia; in 1887 the proportion admitted to the School for Civil Engineers and Universities was fixed at three per cent.; circulars were also addressed to the mistresses of High Schools for Girls, ordering them not to admit Jewish pupils. In 1888, 400 Jews had passed their matriculation examination, and had earned the right to enter a University. The Government refused admission to 326 out of the 400. Even in institutions that owe their existence to the Jews the same procedure obtains. The Technical School at Vinitza, the Mining Institute at Gorlovka, the Polytechnic School at Kiev, were built with Jewish money; but the Procurator has forbidden more than one pupil out of twenty in the first place to be a Jew, more than one in ten in the second, and has absolutely excluded them from the third. Yet the Russian Government urges, in defence of its acts of persecution—and some of our stupid Consuls repeat the statement, in the face of these and many similar enactments—that the Jews are hated because they will not take up with industrial or the higher intellectual pursuits.

Want of space prevents my detailing the further efforts of the Holy Synod in the matter of elementary education, by which as much as ninety-five per cent. of Jewish children are in some towns prevented from receiving the rudiments of an education, or the measures forbidding doctors to attend to Jews in certain public hospitals; I must pass on to one or two instances of persecution beside which all I have hitherto narrated is as nothing.

That there are persecutions of Jews in Russia the English public know from notices that appear in newspapers from time to time; but, perhaps because there is little political or religious capital to be made out of the subject, it is to be feared that but little is known concerning its extent and nature. One thing the public has to do, and that is to dismiss the idea that these outbreaks are the spontaneous action of irresponsible mobs. There exists abundant evidence that they are carefully engineered from headquarters, and all circumstances point to the Holy Synod, with its chief, M. Pobédonostsev, as their promoter. Immediately following the death of Alexander II., in 1881, organised riots broke out in various parts of the empire. At Elizabethgrad and Kieff the dwellings of 2,000 Jews were burned, and women and girls outraged by bands of soldiers and the mob. In Warsaw Christmas was celebrated by burning 900 houses and driving out 10,000 men and women and children into the bitter winter weather. And meanwhile a garrison of 20,000 soldiers remained idle, their commander refusing to take any steps to control the disturbances. In 1891 the deaths and wounded at Starodoub reached the total of 500. In 1892 Admiral Zeleni expelled about one thousand Jewish families from Odessa: "Mothers with their babes and sick children, tottering old men, all received like treatment, and, as if they had been the vilest criminals, were pushed and jostled by a large escort of Cossacks, and followed by crowds of people, who did not cease to abuse them."

But all persecutions pale before the expulsion of the Jews from Moscow in 1891-2. The number of Jews resident in Moscow in 1891 was about 30,000 or 40,000. The military commander of the district was General Kostanda, a Greek. In March this officer was summoned to St. Petersburg, and received orders to settle the Jewish question in Moscow before Easter. What this meant may be told in Harold Frederic's words, he being in Russia at the time: "A few days after General Kortanda's return the whole Zariadic quarter was surrounded at midnight by the police, the mounted Cossacks who serve under police control, and even the city firemen.....Then, under (General) Yourkoffaky's personal supervision, the whole quarter

was ransacked, apartments forced open, doors smashed, every bedroom without exception searched, and every living soul—men, women, and children—routed out..... The indignities which the women, young and old alike, underwent at the hands of the Cossacks may not be described."

Outside of Moscow, in a suburb called the "Marina Rostscha," there lived about 300 families of Jews of the poorest possible class. Here, too, on a cold winter night, the Cossacks, under the written orders of Prince Golitzyn, proceeded in their work of "purification." The inhabitants were informed of the Government intentions by the crashing in of their doors in the dead of night, the entrance of Cossacks with torches and drawn swords, and their being driven into the night without time even to dress. Some escaped into the forest and built fires, round which they sought warmth for themselves and their children, only to be followed by the soldiers and have their fires stamped out. In the morning women and children were found frozen to death; one woman, named Epstien, had given birth to a child in the snow, and mother and child remained frozen monuments to the Holy Synod's "Christian charity."

But all was not finished. The clearance at Moscow was only partial, and in the following year, January 26, 1892, a final "purification" was attempted. On this occasion the winter cold was so severe as to register thirty-two degrees below zero. Gas would not burn, large fires had to be lit at the corners of streets for the benefit of the few people who were compelled to be outdoors. On the 22nd orders were issued that the forwarding of convicts from the central prison should be stopped, owing to the cold. But the edict against the Jews had to be carried into effect notwithstanding. The weather that was too cold for convicts was warm enough for Jews. One might have traced their route by the frozen bodies of children. Some died of the cold, others had their hands and feet frozen off; one woman, confined four days previously, and surrounded by six starving children, was found half dead on a waggon. On the 28th the Government issued the same order concerning the Jews they had issued concerning convicts six days before; but this was *two days after the expulsion had taken place*. Yet Madame Novikoff could parade this document as a proof of the clemency of the Russian Government. Meanwhile, Russia is at work civilising the Chinese and protesting against the barbarities inflicted on the Armenians by the Turks.

Such is a brief epitome of the Christian treatment of Jews in Russia during the last twenty years. On reading it one feels that they are transported back to some barbaric period of human history that now exists only as a legend. Hardly so, however. One is only witnessing Christianity strong and active—untamed by modern civilisation, unchecked by modern science. It is by eliminating these last factors that we are able to see Christianity as it once was universally, as it now *is* wherever it has the chance to express itself, or as it *would* be again if only the opportunity offered.

C. COHEN.

Gospel Dates.

CHRISTIANITY being a historical religion—that is to say, being founded upon certain events which are alleged to have actually happened—the dates of these events ought to be beyond dispute. So far from this being the case, however, nothing is certainly known regarding even the year of the birth or death of the presumed founder of Christianity, or of any incident in his career. According to orthodoxy, events of the most profound importance to the whole human race took place some two thousand years ago; yet, while we know the year, the day, and almost the hour of such commonplace events as the assassination of Julius Cæsar, the deaths of the Roman Emperors, and the appearance of sundry comets and eclipses, the early history of the Faith is shrouded in impenetrable darkness. We are calmly asked to believe that the Deity who created the sun, the moon, the years, the days, the times, and the seasons, visited this earth in incarnate form, and departed from it without leaving a single chronological landmark for the guidance of mankind.

If the Gospels were merely collections of fables written by people who wished to impose upon the credulity of their fellows, we could understand this want of chronological accuracy; but, if they are records of actual facts, it is inexplicable.

We are not left dependent upon one single Gospel for the career of Jesus of Nazareth. There are four of them; and at first sight it might appear a good thing to have so many, in order that by the mouth of two or three witnesses everything may be established. But the difficulty is that the four witnesses contradict each other upon all important points; and they leave the impression that the evangelists were ill-equipped for the work, or else that they relied largely upon their imaginations for their narratives.

In the Gospel according to St. Matthew we are not given any particulars of the exact address of the parents of Jesus Christ; but the whole tenor of the narrative shows that they lived at Bethlehem, and we are expressly told that "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the King." Now, in the "Chronological Notes" in the *Secular Almanack* for 1901 there is a full exposition of the chronology of this period, so there is no need to go into details, beyond remarking that Herod the Great became King in 40 B.C., and died in the early part of 4 B.C. Matthew's reference to the "days of Herod" is therefore very vague, for it gives us a period of thirty-six years to select from. However, he goes on to inform us that Jesus was taken by his parents into Egypt for the purpose of fulfilling the prophecies, and on their return they went to live in a city called Nazareth in order to fulfil more prophecies, and because they learned that Archelaus had become King of Judæa upon the death of his father Herod.

Mark and John knew nothing about the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, or, if they did, they did not think it worth while to say anything about it. But Luke has a lot to say upon this subject; and, what is more, he has quite a different story to Matthew. According to the third Evangelist, "there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled"; and it is very remarkable that no one else knew anything about any such decree. The facts of the reign of Augustus are fairly well known; but, if it were not for the Gospel of St. Luke, we should never have been aware of any such universal enrolment. In fact, so desirous were the Romans of concealing all particulars which might have gone to support the veracity of the Gospels that no such decree is recorded upon the Ancyra marbles, which contain a contemporary summary of the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Josephus, however, informs us that in A.D. 6 Archelaus, the successor of Herod, was deposed by Augustus. Judæa and Samaria were annexed to the Roman Empire, and a census of those countries was made by P. Sulpitius Quirinus, the Governor of Syria. This is evidently what Luke meant; but he either exaggerated the event, or else he did not understand it. The Evangelist goes on to inform us that "Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David." It appears from Josephus, however, that Galilee was subject to Antipas, so that the deposition of Archelaus could have had no effect upon an inhabitant of Nazareth. At all events, St. Luke asserts that the operation of this census was the cause of Jesus being born in Bethlehem in A.D. 6. Consequently, if Luke is right, Matthew is wrong; for Herod the Great had been dead ten years before Quirinus made his census.

But in Luke iii. 1, 23, we are informed that Jesus was about thirty years old in the fifteenth year of Tiberius—that is to say, in A.D. 29. We are thus presented with a most complex problem. If Jesus was born before the death of Herod in 4 B.C., and was also born in A.D. 6, how could he have been thirty years of age in A.D. 29? The Prophet of Nazareth would appear to have achieved the difficult task of having been born three times over, upon different dates. "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

One of the characters mentioned in the Gospels is named John the Baptist. In Matthew and Mark we have a very circumstantial and romantic account of this individual's death. We are informed that John objected

to Herod the Tetrarch having married his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, and was imprisoned for saying so. The daughter of Herodias, however, managed to get John beheaded. There seems to be a great deal of confusion in this story; but it is not at all remarkable, for the family relationships of the Herods are extremely puzzling. In the first place, the Philip alluded to did not marry Herodias at all. He wedded her daughter, and died childless in A.D. 34. In the same year Herod the Tetrarch met Herodias in Rome, and induced her to divorce her husband (whose name was also Herod) and marry him. If, therefore, John the Baptist lost his life through his denunciation of Herodias, it must have been after 34 A.D. But in that case it is difficult to understand the chronology of the Gospels. Many pious people have set themselves to discover the exact date of the death of Jesus Christ, which is usually put some time between A.D. 29 and A.D. 33; and, whichever date is adopted, it seems evident that Jesus Christ could have known nothing of the execution of the Baptist, which took place some years after his own.

It may, perhaps, be argued that Jesus had a prophetic knowledge of the death of the Baptist; and the gift of prophecy is still more evident in Matthew xxiii. 35, where he refers to the murder of Zechariah, the son of Berachiah, in the temple, in A.D. 67—that is to say, thirty-four years after his own death. Commentators, of little faith, have been staggered by this remarkable fact, and have tried to wriggle out of it by all possible means. But all the great Uncial manuscripts, except the Codex Sinaiticus, have the words: "Son of Berachiah." Irenæus and Origen read the same; and no authority previous to the fourth century omits them. Consequently there can be no denying that the Gospel of St. Matthew had these words from the first; and weak-kneed believers are bound to accept them.

St. Luke is good enough to inform us that the fifteenth year of Tiberius fell in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. Annas became pontiff A.D. 6, and was deposed A.D. 14. Caiaphas was appointed A.D. 17, and deposed A.D. 37; and, as Luke was wrong in supposing that there were two high priests at once, he was also wrong in imagining that Annas was pontiff in A.D. 29.

Luke seems to have always been shaky in his chronology, for we are told in Acts v. 36, 37, that, "Before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody.....After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment." By looking in the margin of a reference Bible, we learn that "these days" were about 33 A.D. Josephus, however, informs us that the insurrection of Theudas took place in A.D. 46, thirteen years after Gamaliel is supposed to have made this speech, and forty years after the "days of the enrolment." Gamaliel no doubt possessed the gift of prophecy, which enabled him to refer to events which had not yet happened; but even in that case he was in error in saying that Judas of Galilee came *after* Theudas.

After all the discrepancies of the Gospels, it is refreshing to find that they agree about something. They are unanimous in saying that Jesus was put to death by Pontius Pilate. As, however, Pontius Pilate became procurator of Judæa in A.D. 26, and was recalled in A.D. 36, his name is very little guide to us.

If there had been any known body of facts concerning the birth and death of Jesus at the time the Gospels were written, it is impossible that the said Gospels should have varied so much from each other. The phenomena they present can only be explained on the view that nothing certain was known of the career of Jesus. Each biographer connected him with some event which struck his fancy, and thus we have so many equations with remarkable occurrences. The death of Herod the Great, the census which accompanied the annexation of Judæa, the sacrilegious murder of Zechariah, and the incestuous marriage of Herodias, were all jumbled together in the evangelical imagination, and introduced into the career of Jesus without any sense of incongruity. In a word, the whole Gospel story is mythic, and gives us another instance of the tendency of the human imagination to crystallise well-known stories around some name which happens to possess the greatest interest to the myth-maker.

Acid Drops.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS had to join the choir of poets, or poeticules, who sang Queen Victoria's death, and his effort was duly published in the *Times*. We say *effort* advisedly, for the composition was evidently laborious. It may have been a labor of love, but it was a labor all the same. It reminded us of Iago's invention, which came from him (as he said, the rascal!) with such difficulty that it "plucked out brains and all." Sir Lewis Morris is not a great poet, though he has published a great deal of verse; but he never wrote such skimble-scamble stuff as this funeral poem. The last verse is as good or bad as any of the rest. Here it is:—

Lay her beside her dear!
O faithful lovers twain!
In Heaven above, as here,
Re-knit again!

Three notes of admiration in four lines. And really they are enough to make the reader stare. The last line is simply superb—in ineptitude. Sir Lewis Morris resembles poet Wilson Barrett in one thing. He defies grammar. "Re-knit again" is lovely. "Re" means "again," so the line means "Again knit again." Such shifts are hasty poets reduced to by the exigencies of rhyme. "Re-knit" was what Sir Lewis Morris had to say, but the line had to be eked out with a word that rhymed with "twain," so he added "again," though most people pronounce it "agen."

The *Morning Post* secured a couple of quatrains on "February 2" from Mr. George Meredith. They were much above the general run of verses on that occasion, but not exactly worthy of such a fine and noble poet. All we will say more is to ask *que le diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*

According to the Duke of Grafton, the secret of "Queen's weather," as it was popularly called during the later years of Queen Victoria's reign, lay in the fact that her Majesty had "boundless faith in the efficacy of prayer." We presume, therefore, that she used to confer with the Almighty prior to her occasional appearances in public. In that case, it is a great pity that she did not say a word for the poor Peculiar People who were sent to prison for their "boundless faith in the efficacy of prayer." What in the Queen was an elegant virtue was a crime in her humblest subjects. Which is another illustration of the truth of Carlyle's saying, "Great is the empire of Cant!"

Down at Norwich, the chairman of a Co-operative meeting tried to begin the business with a "vote of condolence" on the death of Queen Victoria. Much to his surprise, he was greeted with loud cries of "No flunkeyism!" His motion was put to the vote, and he had the humiliation of seeing it lost by a large majority.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church has presented an address to Edward the Seventh, expressing the "dutiful allegiance" of its members, and praying that Almighty God will enable him to "fulfil the duties" of his illustrious position. "Albert Edward" has no doubt put it "with the rest," in a cupboard or a waste-basket.

The following letter has been received by Mr. Foote:—

38 Glengarry-road, E. Dulwich, Feb. 4, 1901.

SIR,—Referring to your address in the Athenæum Hall yesterday week, I have since been wondering whether you would have the courage to deliver it in the same form in (say) Brockwell Park. You said much about "honesty" in speaking and writing. It will, however, strike most people as being a curious kind of *honesty*, according to which a man indulges in speech when surrounded by his minions which he neither dares to print nor to repeat in the open. I would therefore suggest the word "honesty" be eliminated from the vocabulary of Secularism, and expediency put in its place.—Yours truly,
GEORGE DAY.

This polite correspondent refers to Mr. Foote's lecture at the Athenæum Hall on "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'" Most of what he said on that occasion was printed substantially in "Acid Drops" in the next number of the *Freethinker*, so one of this gentleman's gibes falls perfectly flat and harmless. As to Mr. Foote's being surrounded by his "minions," it is sufficient to say that the lecture was publicly advertised, and that the most rabidly loyal persons in London were free to attend it by planking down a small coin bearing the Queen's effigy at the door. There was no reason in the world for going to Brockwell Park instead of to the Athenæum Hall with that lecture. Mr. Foote is not in the habit of lecturing in Brockwell Park, and if he were this is not the most reasonable time of the year for outdoor speaking. Nor is there any particular reason why that lecture should be repeated. It was opportune then, but can hardly be so again. Even queens only die once.

Mr. George Day might be reminded that Mr. Foote's pamphlet, entitled *Royal Paupers*, written a good many years ago, has never been withdrawn from circulation,

and can still be obtained for the modest sum of twopence. It contains some stronger things than he had the heart to say while the Queen was lying unburied in her coffin.

This much, however, may be said, if it will afford Mr. George Day any consolation. Every public speaker who is not a born jackass has some regard to the audience he is addressing. The object of all serious oratory is persuasion. Method has therefore to be suited to time, place, and circumstance. Mr. Foote would be very happy to address a Christian congregation on Freethought. If he did so, he would adopt another method than the one he pursues at the Athenæum Hall; not because he is dishonest, but because he has some common sense.

The Evangelical simultaneous mission, which was announced with such flourish of trumpets, does not appear to have been much of a success after all, in London at any rate. The *Examiner* says: "It has been a liberal education to some eminent provincial preachers to see the apathy of certain London suburbs." The apathy is so confirmed that the mission has been able to do little to dispel it. The *Examiner* adds: "The crass indifference of the average Londoner to spiritual things is not to be easily overcome, and the failure of one effort should only suggest another and more effective one."

The Rev. Price Hughes says that one thing that has been learned is that the majority of the church members were inclined to be indifferent. He admits that the mission in London failed to reach the outsiders. It had, he said, taken them a week to awaken the churches themselves, and then by the time they had got the churches awake the mission was over.

All this is very sad, though perhaps not quite inexplicable. It is possible that even religious-minded people are tired of missions, especially those which are too insistent in their demands on busy people's time and attention.

A writer in the *Christian World* says that the grave fact must be solemnly faced that the great Simultaneous Mission has not reached the "outsiders." At Clapham the meetings were held in the "highly respectable, beautifully upholstered Presbyterian Church," but the non-churchgoers were "frightened away." This gentleman is of opinion that a theatre would have been preferable. "I hate to write this," he says, "for it sounds like treason; but if the people will not come to churches what are we to do?"

Dr. John Clifford admits that "the outsider has not been reached to any appreciable extent." Rev. Silvester Horne says that "the inquiry rooms at Islington and Highbury were never used." Rev. F. S. Spurr says: "We have scarcely touched the outsiders." Of course not. It was simply a big beanfeast for the converted. The heathen still rage.

The Bishop of Coventry, "the blackguard bishop," is crying out for new churches in Birmingham. He admits that "people draw attention to the fact that some of the existing churches are not full," but thinks that where this is so it is due either to the fact that the church is in the wrong place, or that the wrong man is in it. Well, as we recently said, in regard to a similar cry by Canon Gore, the obvious thing is to sell such churches and their sites. As for the "wrong" men—we will not presume to legislate for them, but we may well ask—What are church patrons and bishops doing to allow anything of the sort to happen?

Le Pelerin du Nord, one of the clerical sheets which feed the credulity of the French Roman Catholic peasantry, publishes the following:—"An ancient, constant, and universal adoration has been rendered to the Virgin Mary's hair. This adoration has more than once received the seal of miracle. Here are the names of the churches which have the happiness still to preserve the holy hair of Mary. Most of them only possess a few hairs." Then comes a list of twenty-three churches, including the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, St. Mark's at Venice, Notre-Dame des Agnes at Assisi, St. Anthony's at Padua, and the cathedral of Frascati.

No fewer than 1,087 "shrines" in France are visited periodically by Roman Catholics. *Le Temoignage*, a Protestant journal, has discovered that at none of these places are the "miracles" attributed to the power of Christ. In 582 cases the Virgin Mary is credited with beneficent results, and in the remaining 505 one saint or another receives the honor. Not a very comforting reflection that the new century should commence with so much credulity.

Providence seems to be somewhere about Philadelphia, where severe earthquake shocks have occurred. He doesn't appear to have caused any deaths nor miraculously preserved anybody, but he has contrived to alarm a great number of folks who may now offer up "thanksgivings" that things were not worse.

Somebody writes to the *Daily Chronicle* complaining that much of the bright young life of to-day is alienated from the churches, and states that the pulpit is to blame for it. Preachers, he says, are fifty years behind the times; they are strangers to the scientific spirit of the day; and, with notable exceptions, they are inferior even in Biblical scholarship to many young men in their congregations.

Mrs. Ormiston Chant, in one of her addresses, tells the story of a band of good women who furnished the means for educating a poor young man for the ministry. Later on, when he left the college, he rewarded their kindness and self-sacrifice by preaching his first sermon from the text: "Let your women keep silence in the churches."

Sectarian disputes afforded Queen Victoria, a few months since, the opportunity of making a rather amusing remark to one of the clergy of the Isle of Wight. She said to him: "I hope you will get on well with the Nonconformists, Mr. —. You will have to get on with them in heaven, you know."

Marianne Farningham, the well-known contributor to the *Christian World*, writes: "The Queen is away. Where? Is heaven far up beyond the stars, or is it all about us? And what makes heaven? What was the manner of her entrance into it? And what is her status there?" Why, any little tinpot parson could answer these questions straight off the reel—without, of course, the slightest knowledge.

The ex-Queen Margherita, of Italy, revived an old Roman custom of giving a dowry of thirty ducats to 150 dowerless maidens on their marriage each year. Until the ex-Queen revived the usage, it had lapsed for over twenty years. In older times the Church authorities used to decide on the merits of the candidates, but the Queen appointed a committee of ladies for this purpose. Which was probably better than leaving it to the priests.

Another curious Russian sect has established itself, this time in Siberia. They style themselves "Slaves of Christ." To the question, "Whose are you?" they answer: "A slave of Christ." They teach that the earth is flat and stands on three whales, and that in the middle of the ocean there is a gigantic chancleer, which crows at sunrise. Railways, telegraphs, and telephones are attributed to Antichrist. When any of the faithful die the following procedure is observed: A number of unkempt and shaggy peasants stand round the body, twirling their caps in a vacant kind of way, while awaiting the Elder, who, on arrival, exclaims: "The river of fire has passed from the west to the east; on this river rode Michael, the Archangel. Let us pray that his soul may go direct to Paradise." The peasants thereupon make a motion with their heads sideways, and exclaim: "Yes, straight to Paradise." After this the Elder whispers in the ear of the deceased: "Listen, brother; may you enjoy Sabaoth. He will never leave you, and forty angels shall greet you." And, after stroking his head, the corpse is carried out and buried.

The announcement of old Dr. Dowie's first service after his return appeared in the Chicago papers under the heading of "Amusements." He is making the servant problem still more difficult by an order to all Zionite housemaids and cooks to leave the employ of any families who use pork, rabbits, oysters, or lard.

It is an unwritten privilege of every Bencher that he may command the singing of any of his favorite hymns at any service which he attends at the Temple Church. "Sam" Warren, Q.C., the well-known author, was very fond of availing himself of this privilege, which was frequently decidedly inconvenient to the organist, the late Dr. Hopkins. This fact inspired a wit to write:—

Sam moves in a mysterious way
His anthems to be sung,
And worries Hopkins so each day
H. wishes Sam were hung.

A foreign student rushed into Matlock Bath Roman Catholic Church and got over the altar rails, tearing at the statue of the Virgin Mary. Father Le Roy attacked the assailant, and a violent scene occurred for an hour, resulting in the removal of the disturber to gaol. The student has been identified as Hildebrand de Brito Lyra, and has been medically certified to be of unsound mind. He is another religious maniac added to the long list.

Three men who were working in a field in Texas sat down to eat their luncheon, when a tramp accosted them, asking for food and saying he had eaten nothing for two days. As they appeared to doubt his statement, he added: "God strike me stiff if I tell a lie." He immediately became rigid as

stone. The men ran to the nearest telegraph office, says the *Truthseeker* (New York), to send the story of the miracle to the Northern papers, that it might be used as a text by the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, and inserted in this season's issue of Sunday-school books. Having accomplished this purpose, they returned with a stretcher, a policeman, and a member of the Y. M. C. A., but found, upon arriving, that the tramp and their provisions had disappeared.

In the Samoan island of Tutuila, where the London Mission Society succeeded in setting up a Christian dispensation, Sunday is observed with a strictness unknown since the days of Puritanism in New England. Fine, hard labor, and deprivation of Church privileges await the offender who stays contumaciously away from church, who sings on that day other than hymns, who tells stories except those in the Bible. Tutuila is new under American rule, and the native chiefs, who chafe under Sabbatarianism, have applied to Commander Tilley, the Governor, for relief. It is said that their petition requests him to "repeal the Fourth Commandment"; but that is hardly to be believed, as the commandment enjoins the observance of Saturday, and it is Sunday tyranny against which these new Americans protest.

Rev. Eliphas Dawkins, of Cherokee County, S. C., a colored preacher, is under arrest, charged with the murder of his wife. The neighbors say he threw kerosene over her and set her on fire.

Albert Stummel, a Dowieite, who keeps a store at Dyer, Ind., lost his eight-year-old boy by death; and, being told by another Dowieite that the boy's death was sent by God to punish the father for selling tobacco, Stummel hauled his entire stock of the weed to a vacant lot and burnt it. As a reward for this sacrifice, observes the *Truthseeker* (New York), the Dowie God should return the child to life and health; but, of course, a God mean enough to kill a boy for his father's fault cannot be expected to possess that sense of justice which would prompt him to make restitution.

James Balfour, member of the Legislative Council of Victoria, is said to be a man without a single redeeming vice. When a discussion arose in Melbourne about the iniquity of cooking dinners on the Sabbath, he publicly announced that, though he had hot potatoes for the principal meal on that day, they were cooked by an Atheist, who lived next day.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

One good turn deserves another. In consequence of Blackburn ministers signing a memorial to the Council objecting to liquor dealers serving on the Watch Committee, the local Licensed Victuallers' Association have resolved to withhold their support from the places of worship of which such ministers are pastors.

A clergyman, taking occasional duty for a friend in one of the moorland churches of a remote part of England, was greatly scandalised on observing the old verger, who had been collecting the offertory, quietly abstract a half-crown before presenting the plate at the altar-rails. After service he called the old man into the vestry, and told him, with emotion, that his crime had been discovered. The verger looked puzzled. Then a sudden light dawned on him. "Why, sir, you doan't mean that ould half-crown of mine! Why, O've 'led off' with he this last fifteen year!"

"The woman tempted me," said Adam, when the Boss found him eating the pippins. The same sort of excuse was put forward by the Rev. Mr. Cory-Thomas, who has been washing his dirty linen in the law courts, and has obtained a verdict of forty shillings damages for his "libelled" character. There is evidently a good deal of Adam in this queer man of God. There is also a good deal of David and Solomon. Three thousand years ago he might have won a distinguished place in the gallery of Bible heroes. His misfortune is that he was born too late. A more refined and scrupulous age fails to appreciate his primitive qualities.

This clerical descendant of Adam, with traces by the way of David and Solomon, met a lady at Euston Station, had lunch with her at a restaurant, and then took her to a private room in a certain house in the neighborhood, which he hired for a few hours. According to his account, he went there for a talk; according to her account, he went there for something else—which he did not obtain. Every person endowed with a little common sense will agree with the jury on this point.

Referring to this unsavory case of the Rev. Turberville Cory-Thomas, the *Evening News* observes: "We can only be thankful that when such a case does occur it is not hushed up—a course which some of the papers have been regretting was not adopted."

Rome must be pretty active in seducing our English press, if we may believe the Rev. Dr. Horton. That worthy champion of Protestantism asserts, in a letter to the *Christian World*: "I have clear evidence of two facts—(1) that on almost every newspaper, daily and weekly, there is a Romanist, whose business it is to give prominence to Catholic affairs, and to burke any book or speech, or any unpleasant fact, which reveals the dark side of the Roman Church; (2) that there are Roman Catholics in all parts of the country whose business it is to immediately overwhelm an editor with correspondence if any statement has been made in his paper, however true, which may be injurious to Romanism."

Clerical *lapsus lingua* have formed a considerable percentage of the world's anecdote. An example of the tendency of the human towards tripping occurred in the charity sermon of a nervous curate. He was appealing for funds for a new heating apparatus for the church. "In this foggy, winter weather, my friends, our beautiful church is apt to become clamp and dammy"—and here he paused and gasped at what he said.

Rev. Albert Reynolds Palmer was summoned at the Belfast Recorder's Court for having obtained by false pretences a suit of clothes from a Belfast tailor. The jury acquitted him, apparently regarding it as an ordinary debt, which result may make other tradesmen chary of giving credit to "men of God" for goods delivered, however much credit may be extended to their pulpit utterances, which nowadays is rather limited.

That familiar composition in which there is combined so much ultra-loyalty and ultra-piety badly presented—namely, "God Save the Queen," has just now come in for some well-deserved criticism. Mr. Arthur Beckett suggests that there should be a new National Anthem, and the *Literary World* thinks the suggestion a good one. Few people would assert that "God Save the King" is a composition of any literary merit which would suggest its retention.

The *Christian World* has hastened to bespeak the new King's sympathy with Nonconformists. And that despite the letter from the Prince of Wales to the Archbishop of Canterbury in regard to the baccarat scandal at Tranby Croft, when his Royal Highness blamed "the Low Church, and especially the Nonconformists," for the "torrent of abuse" which was launched upon him. This letter and attitude the *C. W.* unsuccessfully endeavors to explain away.

A bishop is charged with looting in Peking, according to a *New York Herald* despatch. The family of Lou Sen, executed under order of the Empress, have sent to the representatives of the Powers a protest and complaint accusing Bishop Favier of having seized monies and precious objects belonging to the deceased, and valued at a million of taels. Some of the articles appropriated were in the hands of Mr. Squires, Second Secretary of the American Legation, who was preparing to send them out of the country.

Native Christians are reported to be taking a decent share in the looting in China. Apparently they see no reason why the luxury should be monopolised by Western Christians.

According to a Laffan telegram, a party of Britishers have looted a fine Buddhist temple at Peking, and are now offering for sale three gods, each weighing two tons. These are made of copper and plated with gold, and are therefore more substantial and valuable than a good many gods that might be mentioned. Smaller gods, it is reported, are being sold daily.

Rev. William Routh, proprietor and editor of the *Church Gazette*, a weekly journal recently defunct, came up at the London Bankruptcy Court for examination the other day. The liabilities were returned at £1,009 and the assets at £267 10s., and the examination closed.

A dying Scotchman suggested that he would, if possible, pay his wife a post-mortem visit. "Nay, Charles," she said; "keep your own side."

Considering the vast sums of money that wealthy England almost throws away; considering, too, there are already rumors of a contemplated attempt to increase the cost of our monarchy, it is extremely interesting to learn that it is possible for an East London boot-finisher to earn three shillings and sixpence by working twenty-two hours on a stretch. This fact came out in evidence at a recent Bethnal Green inquest. A foreign workman, a Russian, tried to earn a living that way; and, getting tired of it at last, he hanged himself. We commend this little incident to the attention of some of the people who are shouting so lustily "God Save the King!" in what they seem to regard as the best country in the best of all possible worlds.

A tract issued by a Glasgow firm of printers and publishers advertises a "Cheap Excursion from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City." The tickets are "gratis," the fare having been paid by the "Crucified Lamb of God." There is an important omission, however; it is not stated where these free tickets are obtainable. The only address on the tract (or bill) is 73 Bothwell-street, Glasgow. Perhaps that is a Branch Office of the Celestial Railway.

Anti-Clerical demonstrations have disturbed the orthodox peace of Madrid. The Jesuit College has been the principal object of attack, and "Down with the Jesuits!" has been the great cry of the demonstrators. We are no friends of violence, but we rejoice that Spanish students and working people are beginning to recognise the true enemies of their country.

Another suicide in St. Paul's Cathedral. But as the Italian gentleman who was tired of his life did not die inside the sacred edifice, it is said that there is no necessity for a re-consecration. That ceremony was gone through some ten years ago, when Gilbert Easton shot himself to death there. Easton was a Freethinker. Slow paralysis was creeping over him, nearly all his savings were spent, and he dreaded becoming a burden to his widowed mother. During his lifetime he had suffered much in a private way from Christian bigotry, and he appears to have selected a church to die in as a final bit of sarcastic retaliation.

"Singular shadows" have appeared in the porch of the White House at Washington. One of them heralded the death of President McKinley's mother. Another heralded the death of Queen Victoria. It is high time that one of these shadows heralded the death of some of the second-sighted fools in the neighborhood.

The King of Portugal has promised a deputation of the Evangelical Alliance that religious liberty shall be granted to all the Protestants throughout his dominions. He says nothing about Freethinkers. But their turn will come.

The Bishop of Oxford, preaching from the text, "For the throne is established by righteousness," thanked God for Queen Victoria, and ventured to ask for "a sevenfold blessing on the new century under the seventh Edward." How the "seventh Edward" must smile to himself if he reads such utterances.

One result of the action of the soldiers of Christ in China is an unparalleled famine in the provinces of Shensi and Shansi. Multitudes of innocent people are reduced to the last extremities. Starving parents are offering to sell their children, and cannibalism has become common. Many of the more sensitive parents are driven into insanity and suicide by the cries of their children for bread. What a spectacle! And what a comment on the blessings of Christian civilisation!

"God knows," "God help me," are expressions in a letter written by George Henry Parker, *alias* Hill, who is charged with the murder of Mr. William Pearson, of Winchester, in a South-Western train. Evidently his mind was not perverted by Freethought.

Jesus Christ was called a friend of wine-bibbers. He appears to have had no sympathy with teetotalism. On one occasion he provided some seventy-five gallons of good drink to keep a wedding party going. Many of his modern disciples, however, affect to regard the New Testament as a temperance manual. Mrs. Nation, a Christian lady of Kansas, wields a Gospel temperance axe in her Savior's name. She goes into liquor saloons with it and chops up the furniture. By this means she hopes to render prohibition a fact. If she succeeds she will drive all the thirsty souls into the druggists' shops to imbibe "cholera mixture."

David Allport, the man who is charged at Bristol with systematically neglecting and starving to death his own offspring, was a very affecting preacher. One of his most touching sermons was on the text, "Suffer little children to come unto me."

Rev. John Keller, a well-known Episcopalian clergyman, has been shot at Arlington, on the Hudson River, near New York, by Mr. Thomas Barker, an Englishman, manager of the Commercial Cable Company's office. Barker's wife had been ill for months with a mysterious nervous malady, and at last she confessed that a year ago Keller had assaulted her. The two men had been bosom friends, and New York is much agitated over the affair, especially as the man of God was held in positive veneration by his flock.

The vicar of Salchurst, Sussex, fell dead while arranging for the holding of a memorial service. A church organist died immediately after playing the "Dead March" at a service in Bethnal Green. Apparently religious acts and occupations are no preservative against sudden death, but, on the contrary, may cause it. Where does Divine Providence come in?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, February 17, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester: 11, "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic"; 3, "Shakespeare and the Bible: A Comparison and a Contrast"; 6.30, "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'"

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—February 17, Athenæum Hall, London. 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.

J. YOUNG.—Thanks for the leaflet. See "Acid Drops."

L. R. says that the Church Army in Middlesex-street, White-chapel, on Sundays from 12 to 1 p.m., give an opportunity for questions and discussion. This correspondent hopes that some of the local Freethinkers will avail themselves of the opportunity.

T. J. THURLOW.—It is a good thing to have notices of the deaths and non-religious funerals of Freethinkers printed in our columns. It shows the general public what truth there is in the orthodox stories of how Freethinkers sneak out of existence.

D. WALLWORK.—Sorry we have not space for your letter this week. Will try to find room for it in our next.

D. FRANKEL.—See paragraph. Enclosure handed to Miss Vance.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

T. FISHER.—We are obliged. See "Acid Drops."

A. W. P.—We are well acquainted with the extract on Jesus Christ which you send us from John Stuart Mill. You will find it carefully criticised in Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *What was Christ?* By the way, the extract is not, as you say, from Mill's essay on the Utility of Religion, but from his essay on Theism. We judge, therefore, that you quote at second-hand. When you say that "ridicule is powerless" you say what is not true. Probably you do not believe it yourself, or you would not betray such anxiety.

W. A. PYRKE.—Your suggestion of a Freethought Demonstration at Edmonton shall be considered.

S. HOLMAN.—See paragraph.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for your cuttings. Mr. Foote is much better and almost himself again. He travelled 400 miles on Saturday, delivered three full-measure lectures on Sunday, and travelled 400 miles again on Monday, without any feeling of exhaustion. A pretty good test.

E. WOODWARD.—Thank for your letter and the enclosure from Victor Charbonnel, which shall have attention.

C. E. S.—We do not recollect the date of Prince Jerome Napoleon's death. It was several years ago—some ten or twelve, we think—and we believe it took place at Paris. He was nicknamed "Plon Plon."

HAROLD ELLIOTT.—Our own reflection is, How curious that the editor of the *Clarion* should be so simple as to publish such a question about Charles Bradlaugh.

SHILLING WEEK.—Harold Elliott, is.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Hugh Hotson, £5; Robert Brown, 10s.

E. COLE writes: "Perusing the published lists of crowned heads, etc., attending the obsequies of our late Queen, I was struck by the conspicuous omission of the Crown of Thorns."

A. SIMMONDS.—Pleased to have a letter from so recent a convert to Freethought. Your reference to Thomas Paine shows the abiding influence of a great Freethinker, whose masterpiece, *The Age of Reason*, will soon be circulated at the low price of sixpence amongst the masses of the people.

OTTO THOMSON (Stockholm).—We reciprocate all your good wishes. Please convey our thanks and sympathy to the members of the Liberty League. We should like to meet them in the flesh, though we fear it is hardly likely.

HUGH HOTSON.—Your contribution to the Twentieth Century Fund is formally acknowledged under that heading. Considering the drawbacks you refer to, it might be said that the Fund would be an immense success if others subscribed as generously. We note your regret (it is a compliment) that "Fooling Round Shakespeare" has ended.

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Sugar Plums." Mr. Peacock amply deserved the honor, but we confess we are surprised at his obtaining it.

M. ROGERS.—Mr. Alcock is apparently a very amiable clergyman, but he does not seem to appreciate that his defence of the Bible is very old-fashioned, even in the eyes of myriads of his co-religionists. It is sufficient to refer him to (say) the *Bible Handbook*.

W. J. BAYLIS.—Unfortunately, the subject is one that excites the most passionate prejudice on both sides. We therefore keep to our resolve to exclude it from our columns. Thanks, all the same; and your verses are really good.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Crescent—Meat Trades Journal—Progressive Thinker—Zoophilist—Edinburgh Evening News—Searchlight—Truthseeker (New York)—Book Finder—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—People's Newspaper—Secular Thought—Blue Grass Blade—Huddersfield Examiner—Public Opinion—Liberator—Open Court—Clarion—Anglo-Russian—Torch of Reason—New Century—Lucifer—Two Worlds.

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE delivers three lectures to-day (Feb. 17) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. The evening subject, by request, is "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'" The afternoon subject is "Shakespeare and the Bible," and the morning subject, "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic." All three lectures, and particularly the evening one, should attract large audiences.

Mr. Foote paid a successful visit to Glasgow on Sunday. His morning lecture in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, was well attended; there was a still better attendance in the afternoon, and the hall was crowded in the evening. The third lecture on "Shakespeare and the Bible," which lasted quite an hour and a half, was followed with intense interest; indeed, it is not easy to imagine that any audience could be more sympathetic and appreciative. One gentleman, who asked a question afterwards, said incidentally that the lecture he had just listened to was, after Ingersoll's, the finest he had ever heard or read on that subject.

It is pleasant to note that the Glasgow Branch continues to be in a most flourishing condition. It is prosperous outwardly, and harmonious internally. One of its latest propagandist efforts is the judicious distribution of a large quantity of Freethought literature, consisting very largely of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* in the separate numbers. The distribution being gratuitous, the Freethought Publishing Company has supplied the stock at a considerably reduced rate.

Mr. Charles Watts had a capital audience last Sunday morning at the Masonic Hall, Camberwell, when he opened a debate upon "Secularism." Several interesting speeches were made by members of the Ethical Society, all of whom expressed their pleasure at Mr. Watts's exposition of Secular principles. He was cordially invited to open another debate at the same place at an early date.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Watts lectured at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, to a good and enthusiastic audience. His subject was "The New King." Judging from the repeated applause, the audience was evidently in sympathy with Mr. Watts's views. Mr. C. H. Cattell presided. The Rev. Mr. Coles offered some comments upon the lecture, and complimented Mr. Watts upon his "fair and able treatment of his subject." Mr. Watts occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (Feb. 17), his subject being "The Evil Influence of Christianity."

The *Academy* offered a prize of one guinea for the most interesting reason for reviving some historical personage for a quarter of an hour's conversation. "Joan of Arc" took the prize, but the first of the "other replies" was a good one. It ran as follows:—"PONTIUS PILATE.—Because he would be able to supply an unbiased account of the trial and death of the Founder of Christianity, and would, in all probability, be in a position to settle many disputes arising from the imperfect character of all existing chronicles. Favorably disposed towards Christ, he yet carried out what he considered to be his duty as an impartial administrator of justice, and this points towards a well-balanced mind and the habitude of unprejudiced consideration. His testimony would be of more

value to humanity at large than that of any historical character with whom we are acquainted."

The East London N. S. S. Branch holds its annual meeting on Sunday, February 24, at 3.30 p.m., at the Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney. All members are earnestly invited to attend. We have been favored with a copy of this Branch's balance-sheet. Both income and expenditure are small, for the Branch works in a poor neighborhood; still, the document is a healthy one as far as it goes, and we happen to know that the modest figures represent the financial side of a great deal of strenuous and successful labor. Donations, we may add, are sorely needed in view of the coming summer's operations.

Mr. S. M. Peacock has been appointed Vice-Chairman of the South Shields School Board, his nominator and seconder being both reverend gentlemen. Considering Mr. Peacock's long connection with the N. S. S. Branch, and his well-known Freethought convictions, this is a striking tribute to his personal character. The reverend gentlemen, too, are to be congratulated on their liberality.

We do not know exactly how the computations are made, but the *People's Almanack* for 1901 gives the following list of the "Religions of the English-Speaking People": "Anglicans, 29,200,000; Methodists, 18,650; Roman Catholics, 15,500; Presbyterians, 12,250,000; Baptists, 9,230,000; Congregationalists, 6,150,000; Freethinkers, 5,250,000; Lutherans, 2,800,000; Unitarians, 2,600,000; Minor Sects, 5,500,000; Unclassified, 17,000,000." If this list is anything like correct, the Freethinkers vastly outnumber the Unitarians, and are nearly as many as the Baptists.

A meeting of Freethinkers in the district will be held this evening (Feb. 17) at 6 o'clock at the City Restaurant, Pontypridd. All interested in Secular organisation are earnestly requested to attend.

The *Edinburgh Evening News* has another article on the Higher Critics, the conclusion of which is sufficiently outspoken: "If the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, if it is not a reliable message from heaven, then those who pose as Ambassadors of Heaven must be told that their occupation is gone. The clergy would be more honorably employed in breaking stones on the highway than in expounding, as a revelation from God, a book which, according to the Higher Critics, is three-fourths legend and the rest a mixture of historic truth and mental delusion."

"Chilperic's" article on "Characteristics of St. Mark" is reproduced from our columns in the *Liberator* (Melbourne).

We have received a welcome letter from the veteran, stalwart Swedish Freethinker, Captain Otto Thomson, in which he wishes every success to the Freethought cause in England during the new century. He adds that these good wishes are shared by all the members of the Liberty League. Captain Thomson pays Mr. Foote some handsome compliments. Watching the movement from a distance, he is able (as he says) to see how important are the services of the National Secular Society's president, whom he congratulates on his "undiminished vigor" in bearing a "tremendous burden of work."

Progress is being made with the Twentieth Century edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, which is being issued by the Secular Society, Limited, and will be put into the widest possible circulation amongst the masses of the people at the unprecedentedly low price of sixpence. The volume is being printed in new type on good paper, and will bear a first-rate appearance. Some delay has been occasioned by the necessity of correcting many mistakes that had crept into the later editions from which the compositors are working.

A correspondent suggests that Mr. Foote should prepare a new edition of *Infidel Death-Beds*, including the more recent names of Whitman, Bradlaugh, Tyndall, Huxley, Renan, Ingersoll, etc. "Short biographies, with the description of their last days," he says, "would encourage many weak men to remain firm and resolute in their liberal thought." We may state that Mr. Foote has for some time cherished the intention of preparing another edition of this little work, bringing it right up to date. Our correspondent is, therefore, likely to see his wish realised in the no distant future.

Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing him against copies that remain unsold. Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances. Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus. Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Miss Vance will send them on application. Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

Rich Religionists.

In the Christian Church, at any rate, there could hardly be a more violent contrast between religious professions and religionist practices than that which presents itself to-day. In regard to the pursuit, acquirement, and accumulation of wealth, Christians, individually and collectively, stand condemned by the plainest precepts of the Master whom they profess to follow—whose example and teaching they laud to the skies, but fail to carry out in their daily existence. Their chief end and aim appear to be exactly that which in unmistakable terms he seems to have been specially moved to denounce.

Let us consider some of the religious communities first. The Orthodox Church of Russia is probably the richest Christian organisation in existence. Its funds are estimated to reach a total of £200,000,000! Its yearly revenue is immense, being derived from highly lucrative sources. One of the most profitable of these sources of income is the sale of candles, of which it possesses a monopoly. This is probably the only kind of light it supplies in return for these enormous contributions.

The recent debate in the French Assembly on the Draft Bill introduced by the Government for the restriction of the wealth and influence of the religious orders in France resulted in some rather startling revelations. Lately it was shown, in an article in the *Contemporary*, that the wealth of these societies is enormous, and rapidly increasing. A number of them carry on a large business in the manufacture and sale of liqueurs and other commodities, and in this way they are formidable rivals of the trading interests of the country. We are reminded by the *Rock* that the President of the Council, in a speech at Toulouse, fixed the total figure of this wealth at no less than a milliard of francs, or £40,000,000 sterling, the same sum which was exacted from the nation as an indemnity after the Franco-German War, although their landed property is estimated at only 21,000 hectares, or 52,000 acres.

We need not trouble to estimate the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church generally, or that of our own Anglican Church. It is sufficient to know that it is enormous. When Christ sent his apostles out to evangelise the world, he commanded them to take neither purse nor scrip. But Christian evangelists of the present and many former centuries know a better plan than that. They have been on the "grab" ever since they had the opportunity. Hence their present possessions, which they represent as being devoted to the work of Christ, but which in reality are largely employed in the maintenance of themselves—and not a few of them in worldly pomp and splendor which would have made Christ stare aghast.

The clerical classes, no less than the laity, have been seized throughout history with a burning desire to accumulate wealth. They have amassed it in their organisations, and some of them have counted themselves fortunate in acquiring large shares in their own right. It has been of no consequence to them that Christ was loud in his denunciation of riches, and represented in the most striking manner the difficulty, amounting almost to an impossibility, of a rich man entering heaven; nor that, on the other hand, he sounded the praises of poverty. Neither clerics nor their flocks believe that "Blessed are the poor." With many it is a lifelong struggle to avoid that happy state so approvingly described by Christ.

The inconsistency is so glaring that it is a matter of deep concern and of much tribulation to the few believers who really desire to follow Christ. The attempted justifications or palliations are too transparently false and mendacious. Only here and there do we find a Christian at all concerned to follow, in this important matter of principle and pursuit, the injunctions of his Lord and Savior.

Touching upon this subject, there has just been published, by George Allen, London, a notable work, called *The Believing Bishop*, by Havergall Bates. It is a religious novel of an exceedingly thought-suggestive type, written by one who is keen to perceive and to graphically depict the almost incredible inconsistency between Christ's teaching and the ordinary Christian life. Needless to say, the believing bishop of the story

soon ceases to be a bishop, simply because he is a believer. He abandons everything—his emoluments, his episcopal abode, even his wife and family—in order to labor, as he believed Christ would do, in the East End of London, where he dies miserably from self-sacrifice and privation. The story is intensely interesting. One is not inclined to think that the believing bishop was the sanest sort of person; but the author makes it clear that the renunciation and the subsequent martyrdom are the inevitable outcome of an endeavor to follow Christ. Even the poor folks amongst whom this ex-bishop labored, living in a garret, mending boots and minding babies, thought him mad.

Prior to the abandonment of his bishopric, this ardent follower of Christ has a conversation with a fashionable Kensington canon, from which we extract the following:—

"Then the bishop turned upon the canon with his sad face and glowing eyes, and asked: 'Do you think, Canon Dreiffil, that there are many rich Christians?'"

"The amazed canon almost jumped in his easy chair. 'Did Jesus,' continued the bishop, 'make a mistake when he said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."'"

"Yes, that is a terrible passage, but I think all admit it is full of Eastern exaggeration, and by common consent the Church has allowed it to disappear from her teaching."

"Just so, just so!" said the bishop with great agitation; "first one thing and then another disappears.....The meaning of the passage fortunately does not depend on a solitary word.....The ruler did not mistake the purport of the answer."

There is much argument between the bishop and the canon on this subject, at the end of which the former is confirmed in his view that Christ meant what he said, and determines to reduce the teaching to practice, with the result described.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Dream of Papa Pecci.

"The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies."—LUCRETIVS.

THERE was a time when the Great Lying Catholic Church was as liberal as her younger Anglican sister. It once had its "broad" wing, its rationalists, its scholars and thinkers, who found her borrowed mummeries and stolen creeds susceptible of mystical interpretation. The ignorant evangelical party gradually prevailed over these, and exterminated them by fire and sword, with rack and gibbet, leaving themselves more ignorant and bigoted than before. Gradually the whole Church was made over into their "leprous likeness."

It required centuries to produce this result. The very triumphs of Liberty of Thought indirectly contributed to this end. Every Christian who became a Freethinker assisted this process. The more brains that were drawn out of the Church, the more did the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven, and tend to flatten and harden down to a mere mass of ignorance and intolerance. What constitutes the obstructive character of the Great Lying Christian Church is the abyss which now separates it from the highest intelligence around it: the live, alert intellect of science, and the leaden, moveless stereotype of Dogma. There has been of late a revival of interest in the Great Lying Catholic Church since the Romish party in the Church of England have waxed fat and strong. The bold, bad Ritualists have not done all that was hoped by themselves and dreaded by the timid Evangelicals in the early days of the fight; but they have secured a firm footing, and His Grace of Canterbury has not the will or the power to kick them out. It is now quite certain that there is a strong body of the Anglican Church who play fast and loose with the authority of the Church in its entirety. At this hour there are covered by the English Church's banner men who hold the extremest doctrine of the freedom of the individual and men who are willing to submit to the extremest doctrine of priestly control. How long will this divided house stand? That a large and increasing number of the Anglican clergy are coquetting with Rome has caused a flutter in the dove-cotes of the

Great Lying Catholic Church. The vicar of Christ has hopes of reconverting England, of reimposing the yoke which our ancestors threw off. The wish is father to the thought. The "Fisherman of the Universe" is a dreamer of dreams impossible of realisation. The great hopes of the Great Lying Church, so far as Great Britain is concerned, are as dead as the dodo. Englishmen and women will never as a people submit themselves to the temporal or "spiritual" tyranny of Rome. We shall never as a people permit the cesspool of the confessional. We shall never as a people submit to the poisoned weapons of priestcraft, its hypocritical affectations of a celibate life, its tyranny in the home, its officiousness in public affairs, its menace at the death-bed. Ecclesiasticism had not a safe seat on English shoulders, even before the days of the Reformation. In darkened and superstitious times the power of the Roman Catholic Church was great; but it finished with the yellow glare of the fearful fires of Smithfield. It was never as unquestioned and unresisted as in Italy, Spain, and France. There is a wholesome tendency to rebellion in British blood. It shows itself whenever any especially arrogant claim on obedience is heard, as King Charles I. and James II. knew to their cost. The Great Lying Catholic Church may do its worst. Her dreams, promises, and threats are idle. This country will escape her clutches. Thought stirs and knowledge continually extends, but "the bride of Christ" still uses the language of departed ignorance.

Science expands in search of new light, and feels energetically after new truth. The most powerful Christian Church is still entombed within the covers of the Hebrew Scriptures. Men ask for the bread of knowledge; the Lying Church offers but the sawdust of theological superstition. The Church's teaching is no longer of any practical use. The passage of the years makes it less and less interesting. The Great Lying Catholic Church represents but a backwash in the brook of knowledge. The great river of human thought rolls on, and bears us further and further away from the spiritual bugbears of the past, further and further from the shadow of the Cross.

MIMNERMUS.

The Household of Faith.

(Concluded from page 92.)

LET me tell you. Everything in the Bible that is true is left; it still remains, and is still of value. It cannot be said too often that the truth needs no inspiration; neither can it be said too often that inspiration cannot help falsehood. Every good and noble sentiment uttered in the Bible is still good and noble. Every fact remains. All that is good in the Sermon on the Mount is retained. The Lord's Prayer is not affected. The grandeur of self-denial, the nobility of forgiveness, and the ineffable splendor of mercy are with us still. And besides, there remains the great hope for all the human race.

What is lost? All the mistakes, all the falsehoods, all the absurdities, all the cruelties, and all the curses contained in the Scriptures. We have almost lost the "hope" of eternal pain—the "consolation" of perdition; and in time we shall lose the frightful shadow that has fallen upon so many hearts, that has darkened so many lives.

The great trouble for many years has been, and still is, that the clergy are not quite candid. They are disposed to defend the old creed. They have been educated in the Universities of the Sacred Mistake—Universities that Bruno would call "the widows of true learning." They have been taught to measure with a false standard; they have weighed with inaccurate scales. In youth they became convinced of the truth of the creed. This was impressed upon them by the solemnity of professors who spoke in tones of awe. The enthusiasm of life's morning was misdirected. They went out into the world knowing nothing of value. They preached a creed outgrown. Having been for so many years entirely certain of their position, they met doubt with a spirit of irritation—afterwards with hatred. They are hardly courageous enough to admit that they are wrong.

Once the pulpit was the leader—it spoke with authority. By its side was the sword of the State, with the hilt towards its hand. Now it is apologised for—it carries a weight. It is now like a living man to whom has been chained a corpse. It cannot defend the old, and it has not accepted the new. In some strange way it imagines that morality cannot live except in partnership with the sanctified follies and falsehoods of the past.

The old creeds cannot be defended by argument. They are not within the circumference of reason—they are not embraced in any of the facts within the experience of man. All the subterfuges have been exposed; all the excuses have been shown to be shallow, and at last the Church must meet, and fairly meet, the objections of our time.

Solemnity is no longer an argument. Falsehood is no longer sacred. People are not willing to admit that mistakes are divine. Truth is more important than belief—far better than creeds, vastly more useful than superstitions. The Church must accept the truths of the present, must admit the demonstrations of science, or take its place in the mental museums with the fossils and monstrosities of the past.

The time for personalities has passed; these questions cannot be determined by ascertaining the character of the disputants; epithets are no longer regarded as arguments; the curse of the Church produces laughter; theological slander is no longer a weapon; argument must be answered with argument, and the Church must appeal to reason, and by that standard it must stand or fall. The theories and discoveries of Darwin cannot be answered by the resolutions of synods, or by quotations from the Old Testament.

The world has advanced. The Bible has remained the same. We must go back to the book—it cannot come to us—or we must leave it forever. In order to remain orthodox, we must forget the discoveries, the inventions, the intellectual efforts of many centuries; we must go back until our knowledge—or rather our ignorance—will harmonise with the barbaric creeds.

It is not pretended that all the creeds have not been naturally produced. It is admitted that under the same circumstances the same religions would again ensnare the human race. It is also admitted that under the same circumstances the same efforts would be made by the great and intellectual of every age to break the chains of superstition.

There is no necessity of attacking people—we should combat error. We should hate hypocrisy, but not the hypocrite—larceny, but not the thief—superstition, but not its victim. We should do all within our power to inform, to educate, and to benefit our fellow men.

There is no elevating power in hatred. There is no reformation in punishment. The soul grows greater and grander in the air of kindness, in the sunlight of intelligence.

We must rely upon the evidence of our senses, upon the conclusions of our reason.

For many centuries the Church has insisted that man is totally depraved, that he is naturally wicked, that all of his natural desires are contrary to the will of God. Only a few years ago it was solemnly asserted that our senses were originally honest, true, and faithful, but, having been debauched by original sin, were now cheats and liars; that they constantly deceived and misled the soul; that they were traps and snares; that no man could be safe who relied upon his senses, or upon his reason; he must simply rely upon faith—in other words, that the only way for man to really see was to put out his eyes.

There has been a rapid improvement in the intellectual world. The improvement has been slow in the realm of religion, for the reason that religion was hedged about, defended, and barricaded by fear, by prejudice, and by law. It was considered sacred. It was illegal to call its truth in question. Whoever disputed the priest became a criminal; whoever demanded a reason, or an explanation, became a blasphemer, a scoffer, a moral leper.

The Church defended its mistakes by every means within its power.

But, in spite of all this, there has been advancement, and there are enough of the orthodox clergy left to

make it possible for us to measure the distance that has been travelled by sensible people.

The world is beginning to see that a minister should be a teacher, and that "he should not endeavor to inculcate a particular system of dogmas, but to prepare his hearers for exercising their own judgments."

As a last resource, the orthodox tell the thoughtful that they are not "spiritual"; that they are "of the earth, earthy"; that they cannot perceive that which is spiritual. They insist that "God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit."

But let me ask, What is it to be spiritual? In order to be really spiritual, must a man sacrifice this world for the sake of another? Were the selfish hermits, who deserted their wives and children for the miserable purpose of saving their own little souls, spiritual? Were those who put their fellow-men in dungeons, or burned them at the stake on account of a difference of opinion, all spiritual people? Did John Calvin give evidence of his spirituality by burning Servetus? Were they spiritual people who invented and used instruments of torture, who denied the liberty of thought and expression, who waged wars for the propagation of the faith? Were they spiritual people who insisted that Infinite Love could punish his poor, ignorant children for ever? Is it necessary to believe in eternal torment to understand the meaning of the word "spiritual"? Is it necessary to hate those who disagree with you, and to calumniate those whose argument you cannot answer, in order to be spiritual? Must you hold a demonstrated fact in contempt? Must you deny or avoid what you know to be true, in order to substantiate the fact that you are spiritual?

What is it to be spiritual? Is the man spiritual who searches for the truth; who lives in accordance with his highest ideal; who loves his wife and children; who discharges his obligations; who makes a happy fireside for the ones he loves; who succors the oppressed; who gives his honest opinions; who is guided by principle; who is merciful and just?

Is the man spiritual who loves the beautiful; who is thrilled by music, and touched to tears in the presence of the sublime, the heroic, and the self-denying? Is the man spiritual who endeavors by thought and deed to ennoble the human race?

The defenders of the orthodox faith, by this time, should know that the foundations are insecure.

They should have the courage to defend or the candor to abandon. If the Bible is an inspired book, it ought to be true. Its defenders must admit that Jehovah knew the facts not only about the earth, but about the stars, and that the Creator of the universe knew all about geology and astronomy even four thousand years ago.

The champions of Christianity must show that the Bible tells the truth about the Creation of Man, the Garden of Eden, the Temptation, the Fall, and the Flood. They must take the ground that the sacred book is historically correct; that the events related really happened; that the miracles were actually performed; that the laws promulgated from Sinai were, and are, wise and just, and that nothing is upheld, commanded, endorsed, or in any way approved or sustained, that is not absolutely right. In other words, if they insist that a being of infinite goodness and intelligence is the author of the Bible, they must be ready to show that it is absolutely perfect. They must defend its astronomy, geology, history, miracle, and morality.

If the Bible is true, man is a special creation; and, if man is a special creation, millions of facts must have conspired, millions of ages ago, to deceive the scientific world of to-day.

If the Bible is true, slavery is right, and the world should go back to the barbarism of the lash and chain. If the Bible is true, polygamy is the highest form of virtue. If the Bible is true, Nature has a master, and the miraculous is independent of, and superior to, cause and effect. If the Bible is true, most of the children of men are destined to suffer eternal pain. If the Bible is true, the science known as astronomy is a collection of mistakes—the telescope is a false witness, and light is a luminous liar. If the Bible is true, the science known as geology is false, and every fossil is a petrified perjurer.

The defenders of orthodox creeds should have the courage to candidly answer at least two questions: *First*, Is the Bible inspired? *Second*, Is the Bible true? And, when they answer these questions, they should remember that, if the Bible is true, it needs no inspiration, and that, if not true, inspiration can do it no good.

R. G. INGERSOLL.

Correspondence.

VOLTAIRE'S AND ROUSSEAU'S REMAINS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It was with some surprise that I read the article by Mimnermus, entitled "Body Snatching as a Fine Art," in last week's *Freethinker*. Therein he describes how the remains of Voltaire and Rousseau were stolen from their tombs, and in the dead of night buried in a grave of quicklime in May, 1814.

I cannot understand how this passed the editorial notice, considering that it is hardly a year or so ago that prominent articles appeared in the French and English papers relating an official investigation of the tombs of these illustrious men in order to set at rest, once and for all, the doubts as to whether the tombs contained their bodies or not. As you will see by the enclosed cutting taken from the *Daily Telegraph* at the time, and which I discovered I had placed in my copy of Morley's *Voltaire*, the committee found the seals unbroken, and on opening the coffins the skeletons were found, and they were identified by eminent men, such as Berthelot, Hanotiaux, Claretie, and others. I have also a distinct recollection that a full-page illustration of this interesting event appeared in the *Sketch*. Unfortunately, I cannot recall the date, and my cutting does not include it.

It would certainly appear that Mimnermus was not aware of this investigation, and, as it is important that Freethinkers should be well informed of an event of this kind, I hasten to let you know, so that any necessary correction can be made.

GEORGE PACER.

THE "DAILY TELEGRAPH" ACCOUNT.

For the past half-century and more doubts have been periodically expressed as to the presence of the remains of Voltaire and Rousseau in their tombs in the crypt of the Panthéon. The doubts have now been settled, like those about Cardinal Richelieu's head, which was duly found in his tomb in the chapel of the Sarbonne, when it was opened a few years since in the presence of M. Hanotiaux and others. There are those, however, who continue to deny that the skull in the Sarbonne sarcophagus is really that of the great prelate and politician; but negation will hardly be tenable about the bodies, or rather the bones, of Voltaire and Rousseau, which were brought to light yesterday and officially identified. The agitation raised recently about Rousseau's tomb at Ermenonville, outside Paris, was the cause of yesterday's lugubrious proceedings in the Panthéon. The people of Ermenonville contended that they had the body of the Geneva philosopher in their local tomb erected to his memory. This was a positive denial of the historic fact that Rousseau's body was placed in the Panthéon during the Great Revolution, as is testified by all writers on the subject. The Ermenonville memorial was in a bad state, and the owner of the land on which it stands restored it. In the course of the restoration the tomb was opened, and contained no vestige of a body. Senator Ernest Hamel and M. Grand Carteret accordingly set to work, and asked for the opening of the sarcophagi in the Panthéon said to hold the remains of Rousseau and Voltaire. The Minister of Fine Arts constituted a committee, and gave the necessary authorisation for the searches, which were made yesterday, in presence of M. Roujon, representative of the Government, the architect of the Panthéon, M. Berger, Deputy, and a few other privileged persons. There was a good deal of disorder in the crypt of the Panthéon, owing to the rush to see the tombs; but as the police kept back most of the newspaper representatives, as well as the merely curious, there is a good deal of confliction in the reports published to-day. In any case, it is certain that the remains were discovered in the coffins. Voltaire's outer coffin was just as it has been described in the official documents of 1821—that is to say, it is of beechwood, covered by iron bands, and showing the remains of the seals and wax affixed in the year mentioned. As the nearly-rotten lid was opened, there was a cry, "Voltaire is there," and it ran through the crypt like a password. Inside, in an oak shell, were the bones and skull of the great writer. A viscous matter, apparently coagulated sawdust, was scattered thickly through the remains, and the skull was seen to be sawn in two sections above the eyes, probably during the post-mortem examination. The head of the eyeless skeleton was compared with that of the statue of Voltaire, and the resemblance was striking. M. Claretie, who was present, said that it also thoroughly resembled the statue sculptured by Pigalle for the French Academy.

Rousseau's tomb was next visited by the members of the committee appointed by the Government, with whom was the Swiss Minister, M. Lardy. The workmen had a heavy task in opening the tomb, and especially the leaden coffin, which was enclosed in one of wood. On the leaden shell was in relief a Latin inscription, setting forth, "Here lie the bones of Jean Jacques Rousseau." This was followed by the French inscription, "Ci-git Rousseau," and then the year, in Latin, Anno 1778. The skeleton was seen to be in a good state of preservation, the hands crossed on the breast. The skull was also sawed in two like that of Voltaire, and it was ascertained that it showed no trace of a bullet, the assertion that Rousseau committed suicide by shooting himself being thus exploded. M. Berthelot, in examining the remains, found fragments of the winding-sheet, substances of an anti-septic and aromatic nature, such as are used in embalming, some teeth, and even a little hair still adhering to the frontal part of the skull, and forming a sort of crown, or tonsure, like that of monks.

ADVERTISING IN "OUR" JOURNAL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I believe that one of the drawbacks to the prosperity of the *Freethinker* is the lack of paying advertisements. I presume that most of the likely advertisers cannot appeal to a sufficiently large number of people to make an ordinary advertisement in the *Freethinker* pay.

Now, I would suggest that advertisements in the form of a Directory would meet the case; and, from a rough computation of one of the pages, it would be worth £5 per page at least, at sixpence per line. I am certain you could fill two pages with such advertisements.

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I imagine my idea will be a "ripping" success. I have spoken to three probable advertisers; they think the idea commendable. I would suggest that you make the terms, at first, as easy as possible, so that you may have plenty, which will encourage the others. You may then consider the advisability of stiffening the prices. Would you limit the Directory to members of the N. S. S.? You might broach the idea in the next issue of the *Freethinker*, and see what the readers say. The two above-mentioned readers and myself will be pleased to take at least a quarter's advertisements.

Did you ever consider the advisability of devoting a column or so to advertisements on the lines of the *Exchange, Mart, and Bazaar*? A goodly number of Freethinkers have either dabbled or wish to dabble in scientific experiments. Of necessity there will be a certain number who wish to dispose of their apparatus and books, and a certain number wish to buy them. I commend the idea to you.

J. MCGHEE.

Obituary.

DIED, at his residence, Victoria Park-road, South Hackney, on January 30, and interred as a Secularist at Ilford Cemetery, February 8, a locally well-known and highly-respected tradesman of Bethnal Green, aged 67, Mr. Featherstone, senior. Besides the great bodily suffering that his fatal malady entailed, the tedium of his many months' enforced inactivity was a source of great mental pain to him, for his had been a most busy and useful life. The deceased gentleman was a great admirer and a staunch supporter of both Mr. Bradlaugh and his respected successor in the leadership of organised Freethought, Mr. Foote. Though in business in a church-ridden locality, Mr. Featherstone never concealed his antagonism for that gross form of superstition known as Christianity. At the graveside it fell to my lot to say a few words of respectful sympathy and condolence to his sorrowing family and friends, and to read Mr. Austin Holyoake's beautiful Service for the Dead over his remains, as we consigned them to their final resting-place.—T. J. THURLOW.

I REGRET to have to record yet another Freethought veteran's death in Huddersfield—Mr. Edward Kaye, in his eighty-first year; he was a staunch Secularist, true as steel to the cause, and a warm admirer of our past and present presidents. He was a gentleman of the kindest disposition, and one of the most unassuming of men; in fact, "he was a man." A number of Freethinkers attended the funeral, as bearers, which was carried out by the Unitarian minister at the Huddersfield Cemetery on Monday week.—W. H. SPIVEY.

The priests discovered that a peasant girl who lived in Palestine was the mother of God. This they proved by a book, and, to make the book evidence, they called it inspired.—Ingersoll.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Evil Influence of Christianity."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. M. Robertson, "The Struggle in South Africa." With lantern views.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Sir William Wedderburn, M.P., "Are Indian Famines Inevitable?"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 7, A lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, Miss R. F. Craigmile, "Higher Stoicism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): C. Cohen—11, "The Significance of Evolution"; 3, "Atheism: What it is, and what it is not"; 7, "Missionaries in China, India, and Africa: What they do, and how they do it." Musical selections 6.30 to 7.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, R. P. Edwards, "New Testament Origins." Special members' meeting after lecture to consider Summer propagandist work.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe—12, "What Know ye of Christ?" 6.30, "A Century of Disillusionment."

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, G. Smith, "Superstition and Absurdities."

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): G. W. Foote—11, "The Pope, the Catholic Church, and the French Republic"; 3, "Shakespeare and the Bible: A Comparison and a Contrast"; 6.30, "The End of 'God Save the Queen.'" Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A Local Gentleman, "Spiritualism Criticised from a Materialist Standpoint; with Special Reference to E. W. Wallis's *Spiritualism Explained*."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "The Teachings of Confucius"; 8, Important Business.

Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—February 24, Birmingham. April 28, Glasgow.

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