

THE Freethinker

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The Flight of Jesus.

HAVING dealt with the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, at the seasonable time of the year, we may as well deal also with the Ascension, and get rid of this ridiculous story altogether.

It is pretended by modern Christians that Jesus rose from the dead with "a glorified body," with which "glorified body" he ascended into heaven. What they mean by this "glorified body" they are careful not to tell us. We can understand a heavy or a light body, a long or a short body, a lean or a fat body, a well-favored or an ugly body. But what on earth is a glorified body? Nobody knows. The expression is simply used to bamboozle the readers who are puzzled by the contradictory stories of the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection.

At one time he is a pure ghost, entering a locked room—possibly through the keyhole; or suddenly appearing to two men along a lonely road, holding a conversation with them, and then as suddenly vanishing. At another time he is a solid reality of flesh, blood, and presumably bones; desiring his disciples to feel for themselves whether he is "a spirit" or a real man, and even sitting down with them to a supper of broiled fish and honeycomb. Now it is difficult to see how a body could appear and vanish, or go through a keyhole; and it is just as difficult to see how a spirit is to eat a fish supper. So the subtle divines of the Christian superstition patch up a compromise. Jesus, they say, rose from the dead bodily, but his body was then glorified; a meaningless expression like the "presto" of the conjurer, yet sufficient to deceive and satisfy a crowd of listening dupes.

With this "glorified body" Jesus went up with into heaven, where he now sitteth at the right hand of the Father; though his sitting at the right hand of a being who has "neither parts nor passions," like the peace of God, passes all understanding.

The early Christians were obliged to round off the story of the Resurrection with that of the Ascension, for one lie naturally needs another to support it. Had they preached the Resurrection alone, their hearers would have asked to see their risen Savior; but, with the additional story of the Ascension, they could silence all such inquisitive persons by saying that it was impossible to see him again as he had "gone up."

Having started the story, however, it is a pity that they could not agree about it. We mean from their own point of view. From our point of view, of course, their confusion is charming. According to the third Gospel, Jesus ascended from Bethany, a short distance from Jerusalem, on the very day of the Resurrection, or at the latest the next morning. According to the second Gospel, which gives no particular time, he ascended from Galilee, which is at least sixty miles from Jerusalem. The Acts of the Apostles agrees with the third Gospel as to the place, but differs very seriously as to the time; for, according to this book, Jesus spent forty

days (off and on) with his disciples before bidding them adieu in this world for ever.

Another curious feature of the story is this. Jesus is said to have ascended in the presence of the eleven—Judas, the twelfth apostle, having first ratted and then committed suicide. Two of those eleven were Matthew and John, and their names are attached to the first and fourth Gospels. Yet in neither of these Gospels is the Ascension related. All the details are given in the second and third Gospels, whose writers were not present at the occurrence, nor were they even known at that time.

It is related in the Acts of the Apostles that Jesus took the eleven with him to the place of his ascent, that he there made a brief farewell speech to them, that he was then "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." They did not see him sail away, growing smaller and smaller as he went, until he faded into a scarce perceptible speck and was finally lost in space. A useful cloud came along and concealed him from their sight. All they knew, therefore, even according to the narrative, was that he was lost in a cloud—like everybody who has believed the story ever since.

The one point of agreement amongst all these writers is the one that damns their whole story. During the whole period—whether twenty-four hours or forty days—between rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, Jesus skulked about like a thief in fear of the police. Not a single person outside his own set ever caught a glimpse of him. Now this circumstance is absolutely fatal. He was crucified *in public*, but he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven *in private*. Such a fact throws the allegation under the darkest and most sinister suspicion. Is it reasonable to suppose that the Savior of the world, whose death was to redeem it, would be lifted up on the cross in the sight of all men, and would carefully hide all the evidences of his resurrection and ascension? Would he not have established beyond cavil what was so necessary for all men to believe? Would he not have confronted the Roman governor in open court, and the Jewish Sanhedrin in full session, and demonstrated beyond a doubt that he was the very same person who had been sentenced and executed? Would he not then have announced the time and place of his ascent from earth to heaven? Would he not have allowed deputations from all parts of the Roman empire to witness the event? Would he not have taken his flight in the presence of a vast and mixed multitude, who might have returned to their several countries and given a full and faithful report of what they had seen to their fellow citizens, and by this means have handed down the incontestable fact to the remotest posterity? That he did not do these things is a proof that he could not do them—in other words, the fact that the resurrection and ascension were both transacted with the most astonishing privacy is a sufficient proof that they are not history, but romance. The season of this story shifts every year. It depends upon a solar and lunar calculation, and the story itself is clearly mythological.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Dramatic Art.

RELIGION, which is based upon the belief in the alleged supernatural has depended, for its limited success upon extraneous elements—that is, its inherent qualities, instead of controlling surrounding conditions, have been influenced for good or for evil by those very conditions. This explains to some extent the varied aspects the history of religion has presented in different countries and in different ages. The religion of the East has but little in common with that of the West; and the Christianity of the earlier centuries, as also that of the Middle Ages, had but few features of resemblance to those of the faith bearing that name to-day. This shows how religion in all its forms has been dependent for its existence and manifestations upon forces apart from itself. It also indicates that religion was of human origin, and that the so-called "religious sentiment" is acquired, not innate. Herbert Spencer, no doubt, was of this opinion when, in his *Principles of Sociology*, he wrote: "Not only by theologians at large, but also by some who have treated religion rationalistically, it is held that man is by constitution a religious being..... But this doctrine, once almost universally accepted, has been rudely shaken by the facts which psychologists and anthropologists have brought to light. There is clear proof that minds which have from infancy been cut off by bodily defects from intercourse with the minds of adults are devoid of ideas." He then quotes several authorities, giving instances where no idea of religion, immortality, and the belief in a Supreme Being exists.

Perhaps one of the principal accessories in the promotion of the Christian religion has been the dramatic art. Plays known as *Morals*, or *Moralities*, formed one of the most powerful instruments by which the progress of the Reformation was facilitated. Both in England and Scotland they were the chief vehicle for attacking the vices of the Roman Catholic clergy, and undermining their power by the never-failing weapon of public ridicule. A still further advance was made when the allegorical personages were dropped and real ones introduced, as was done in what were called the *Interludes*. The *Mass* of the Roman Catholic Church, and the "theatrical display" of the Protestant High Church, together with the farcical tricks of the Salvation Army and the production of such absurd and misleading plays as the *Sign of the Cross*, are attempts to aid religion in its endeavor to secure the sympathies of the people. If the churches were to cease their dramatic efforts, their teachings would be considered, even more than they are now, as "stale, flat, and unprofitable." It is not simply the preaching of "Christ and him crucified" that draws the people to the "House of God"; it is the singing and music that attract; also those clergymen and ministers who display the most dramatic power in the pulpit. It was so in Rome, where the "miracle" and other plays were the principal factors in religious propaganda. In Greece, also, the dramatic art was made the vehicle for religious instruction, with the result that among the Greeks love of the beautiful gained a height never previously attained, while philosophy reached its culminating point. It was there that Art, apart from all theological perplexities, strove to make beauty a permanent token of glory, and unrivalled genius and undying splendor became blended and shed their lustre upon the Athenian Temple.

It is evident that some intelligent professors of Christianity have discovered the importance of the dramatic art in the propagandism of their faith. In the *Christian World*, of April 4, "J. B.," who is its principal "leader" writer, has an article on "Dramatic Religion," in which he urges the necessity of allying more than ever the dramatic art with Christian advocacy. He says:—

"Amongst the immense suggestions to the Christian heart of Passion week and Eastertide there is one that does not lie on the surface, but which is, nevertheless, worthy of all consideration. It is that of the intensely dramatic element which belongs to Christianity. The drama is the expression of man's feeling for action..... One cannot, indeed, take any wide survey of things without realising that the dramatic element in religion is almost as old as religion itself, and as broad as humanity.In Greece dramatic representation stood largely for our idea of the religious service. Professor Blackie has hardly exaggerated in his statement that 'the lyrical

drama of the Greeks presents, in a combination elsewhere unexampled, the best elements of our serious drama, our opera, our oratorio, our public worship, and our festal recreations.'"

Far be it from me even to attempt to depreciate the dramatic art. I regard it as one of the best means of inculcating all that is noble and ennobling in nature. It is a fact that knowledge is received through perception, and that the popular mind is slow to grasp abstract truths. Hence the value of the drama, whose function it is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." The dramatic art brings out every passion, and, as Colonel Ingersoll remarked, we want all our faculties—humor, wit, candor—with reason as the final arbiter. In my opinion, the "Bard of Avon," in mental capacity, in sublimity of thought, in genius of conception, in grandeur of expression, and in practical, useful teaching, towers mountains high above the "Reformer of Judea." If it be true that Jesus achieved a high position despite his humble birth and lack of early education, it is also true that Shakespeare, having to encounter similar drawbacks, gained a much higher position, and gave to the world a legacy of intellectual worth unequalled by anything found in the New Testament, or in any other literature in the world. What could be more extraordinary than the success of Shakespeare in the path of true greatness? He was born of illiterate parents, he was self-educated, and he appeared amidst a galaxy of mental geniuses and brilliant wits; and yet he outshone them all. It was Shakespeare who found "tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." As Johnson said of him:—

Each change of many-colored life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new.

It might be said, to use a form of speech known to theologians, "Never man wrote like this man." Truly, he was "not of one age, but for all time."

While all this, and much more, can be urged in favor of the drama, it must not be overlooked that it is a combination of fact and fiction, of reality and imagination, and of the probable and improbable. Moreover, it was born of human genius, and is supported by human sympathies. But Christians will not admit that this is true of their faith. They contend that Christianity is all fact, without any fiction. And yet the Bible is full of materials which could be used for the construction of the most excited melodrama that was ever put upon the stage. Apart from the stories of the Garden of Eden, Noah and the Ark, Songs of Solomon, the wars of Moses and Joshua, the exploits of Samson and David, we have in the New Testament many incidents for both serious and comic dramas—such, for instance, as the story of a carpenter's son, born amidst angelic salutations, performing wonderful acts in his youth, proclaiming the gospel of poverty, and denouncing the arrogance and affluence of the rich. He rebels against the Government; casts out, in a forcible manner, the money changers from the temple; and rides, as a king, in a most dramatic fashion into Jerusalem. He is arrested, tried, convicted, sentenced to death, and crucified upon the cross. At his death "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the rocks rent. And the graves were opened, and many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose." After all this he appears to his friends, here and there, like Banquo's ghost, and ultimately he is "carried up into heaven." Associated with him was the multitude, who cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David." He also had with him two prominent characters who were essential to the drama—Judas and Peter; he was betrayed by the first and denied by the second. And then the alleged movements of the "star in the east," the songs of the angels, the descent of the dove, and the Devil taking Christ up into a high mountain and showing him all the kingdoms of the world; Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt and an ass at the same time, and the sending of thousands of devils into swine, causing them to rush madly into the sea, furnish the comic element for any one drama. Now, it should be remembered that the fiction of dramatic art is allied with some facts, while, if the facts of the Bible be what Christians

allege, they should be allied with no fiction. It is not here denied that poetry is to be found in the Bible; but it appears to me to lack that poetic genius whose excellence consists in so clothing imagination that its truths shall appear to us as palpable as the various phenomena by which we are surrounded. As the great Master himself declares in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

The Christian writer of the article to which reference has already been made deplures the mode hitherto adopted in the advocacy of religion. He says :—

"That our present method has not worked out right is clear enough. The simple truth is that under it the people have lost religion. Whereas of old everybody was religious, we have now a lofty faith for the *élite*, and a vast outside world going its way untouched. We have rarefied the atmosphere to suit the higher spiritual capacities, until the plain man cannot breathe in it, and hastens away accordingly to a stratum better adapted to his lungs.....It must be the task of our time to bridge the gulf which has here yawned between religion and the common life. The old paganism, in giving, after its fashion, a religious significance, joyously recognised by the people, to its art, its drama, its festivities, and its daily round of affairs, suggests the immense task laid on the modern Christian consciousness."

This is a frank admission that the Christian method has failed as a regenerating force, and that paganism has set Christians an example which they must follow if they desire to avert the doom of other superstitions. It has been wisely said of what is termed religious truth, that it begins with undoubting acceptance, and ends at last in the class of rejected and exploded errors. This is becoming more and more the case with Christianity. Its former power is gone, it has no self-sustaining force, and the perpetuation of its very name depends upon secular aids, not upon "divine agencies." The reason of this is not difficult to find. The voice of the pulpit is hollow and meaningless to the intellects of modern times. The words used by Bassanio, when speaking of Gratiano (*Merchant of Venice*), are equally applicable to the average preacher of to-day: "He speaks an infinite deal of nothing.....His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff. You shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search."

CHARLES WATTS.

Religion and the State.

THE course of recent events in Russia—the excommunication of Count Tolstoi, the brutal attacks made by the Russian police upon the students, with the determined efforts of the ruling powers to kill, or at least cripple, liberal education and liberal institutions—has succeeded in making the name of the Procurator of the Holy Synod, M. Pobiedonostzeff, tolerably familiar to the average newspaper reader. It is not likely, even were this gentleman with the many-jointed name to disappear from the face of history, that the system of repression now reigning in Russia would cease; but at present he would seem to be the visible emblem of a policy that is exciting general disgust both at home and abroad. A man of great force of character, strong convictions, and a clearness of ideas that is more often the property of men of his stamp than of those ardent for reforms, he presents one with an interesting study in the clash of outworn ideals with modern civilisation.

The Procurator of the Holy Synod, as revealed in both his writings and his actions, is engaged in a dual task: on the one side to maintain an autocratic form of government, with a strong dash of paternalism, against all democratic innovations; and, on the other, to perpetuate the existence of Church and State, not as two distinct things, but as indivisible aspects of the same thing. With the first portion of this self-appointed work I am not now specially concerned. Two points may, however, be noted. First, the Procurator falls into the common error of looking upon the faults of

democratic government as a sufficient justification for the existence of its opposite. That there are faults—many of them serious ones—few rational students will deny; but I think we may reasonably look upon these as the price a democracy pays for the benefits it unquestionably enjoys. The art of self-government has to be learned, and there is little reason in our expecting to acquire it without making some blunders during the course of our instruction.

In the next place—and this is a point that should be of special interest to all—the Procurator realises very clearly that the greatest adjunct to the maintenance of his autocracy is religion. Upon this hangs everything. Let all the people be united in a single Church, receiving its tenets with unquestioning obedience, and all else is easy. When you have destroyed the mental independence of man, his physical subjection is a mere matter of time. In this the Procurator is on sound historical ground. If history proves anything, it proves that reforms and revolutions have only been permanently useful as they have rested upon mental freedom and enlightenment. Without this last qualification the increase in the machinery of government is too often only increasing the means by which the crafty few may enslave the credulous many. The Church and the throne, the priest and the exploiter, superstition and degradation, always have gone hand in hand, and, in all probability, always will. M. Pobiedonostzeff not only knows exactly what he wants—he also knows the only means by which he can hope to reach his desired end.

I have said that the Procurator is a man of clear, even though mistaken, ideas. The truth of this is seen in his attempt to bring about an identification of Church and State, if not to make the latter a department of the former. In dealing with the relation of Christian belief to society, we are logically bound to take one of two positions. Either religious beliefs are essential to the well-being of the State, or they are not; either they are matters of earnest, practical importance, or they are speculations which no man gains by holding or loses by rejecting. There is no logical middle term. It is this question which the Holy Synod is at present fighting in Russia, and it is one which, under various forms, crops up in all parts of the civilised world.

Now, it does not seem to me that there remains any room for doubt as to what should be the attitude of a sincere and intelligent believer in Christianity on this matter. If we once assume that Christian belief is not a matter of mere speculation, but of absolute certainty, and that upon its acceptance or rejection hinges an eternity of happiness or misery, then its inculcation by the State becomes a highly commendable policy. And if we go further and say, as a great many of our own clergy do say, that the higher forms of social life are impossible in the absence of Christianity, then the enforcement of religion by the State becomes an absolute necessity. This seems to me to be the logic of the situation. It is sheer mental confusion to say that the State cannot exist without religion; but, at the same time, the State may teach everything but the one thing on which its existence is said to depend.

The Procurator is far too clear-headed to fall into any such confusion. He denies that it is possible to separate man into two portions, one concerned with the Church and the other with the State, and he, quite as emphatically, repudiates the idea that the Church can pursue its course without any attempt to dominate the State. "Can we expect," he asks, "that the Church—I do not speak of the Catholic Church in particular, but of the Universal Church—will consent to abdicate its interest in civil society, in family society, human society—all, in short, that is understood by the State?.....No; the moral principle is indivisible.....and no Church which retains the consciousness of its own worthiness will ever surrender its lawful influence on the family or on civil society. To demand that the Church shall abstain from intervention in civil affairs is scarcely to give it new strength."

Now, I am prepared to be told that this union of Church and State always has led, and always will lead, to persecution; I admit the truth of the statement, and, if possible, emphasize it. Indeed, my object in playing the part of "Devil's Advocate" is to insist upon two things: first, that the union of the two must prove socially obstructive and individually injurious, and,

secondly, that all Christians are logically bound to work for just such a combination. And, as a matter of fact, all Christians do work, consciously or unconsciously, for such a union. The muddle-headed plea of the average Dissenter, that he does not wish the State to interfere in matters of religion, may be dismissed as mere verbiage. Every Christian body, without exception, asks and receives State support when and where it can. They all get relief from taxation; they all appeal for special privileges; they all invoke Government to suppress different agencies that stand in the way of their own development; and they all utilise the national schools in order to impress their beliefs upon children. All that the Dissenter means is, that he does not wish the State to patronise any form of religious belief but his own.

With this reservation the Dissenter has no objection whatever to the State teaching and enforcing religion. Nor does he always shrink from employing such measures of excommunication as are within his power. He will raise the cry of heresy as readily as others, and only recently a leading London Nonconformist minister, the Rev. Mr. R. F. Horton, was found declaring that those people who do not believe in the immortality of the soul "are a public nuisance. They bestialise life, they lower the tone of everything.....I would mark them all and avoid them, and, if they cannot change their mind, they should be ostracised from human society." The Holy Synod, in its treatment of Count Tolstoy, has not gone quite so far as this preacher of "liberal" Christianity would go with unbelievers. It has only cast him out of the Church; Mr. Horton would shut out unbelievers from human society.

It is a fact both in history and in ordinary experience that every form of organised Christianity has always and everywhere sought to dominate the secular power; and what I wish to emphasize is that this circumstance is not adventitious, not dependent upon the narrowness or the intolerance of any particular sect, but results from the very nature of Christian beliefs. Once convince a body of men that the manner in which we shall spend an eternity of existence depends upon our holding certain beliefs, and it is next to impossible that this conception of life shall not materially influence society both in thought and deed. Under such conditions the extinction of heresy becomes a serious social necessity. The heretic is one who threatens the entire welfare of society, and his destruction is a mere act of self-defence. Persecution thus becomes a duty, and the thoroughness of the persecution becomes a measure of the fervency of the belief. Earlier generations of Christians punished heresy with severity because their belief was of an unquestioning character. The modern Christian does not persecute so readily, partly because of the temper of the age in which he lives, partly because he no longer holds his beliefs with the same thoroughness as did his predecessors.

In brief, the method by which the modern believer imagines he harmonises the Christian ideal with present-day thought, that of "a free Church in a free State," is itself a register, not of a heightened religious sense, but of a weakened one. As the Procurator of the Holy Synod rightly says, it is founded not on a principle of belief, "but on the principle of religious indifferentism, and it is associated with doctrines which inculcate not toleration and respect, but a manifest and tacit contempt for religion as an outworn factor of the physical development of individual and national life." With this I entirely agree. Toleration of heresy is itself a mark of a growing indifference to religion. It would be foolish to pretend that the majority of people are more tolerant towards differences of religion because they realise the intellectual basis of toleration; they pass them by for the simple reason that they are becoming increasingly indifferent to all those questions with which religion is essentially concerned.

Here, then, is the position. M. Pobiedonostzeff is being denounced as bigoted, intolerant, old-fashioned, and unchristian. For what? Because, as I have said, he aims at keeping his faith pure and undefiled, to merge the State in the Church, and to extirpate heresy. But these, far from being unchristian, are, once we grant the certitude of Christianity, among the most serious and most sacred of duties. It is not he who is unchristian, but those who look upon such conduct as

being in any way reprehensible. It is open to the Free-thinker to denounce such proceedings; but, then, he does not believe that an error in belief here will lead to eternal misery hereafter, and does not seek to guide life by maxims drawn from the region of the unknown and the unknowable. A Christian who really believes in his creed is bound to measure this life in terms of the supposed hereafter; he is bound to attempt to regulate human conduct in accordance with the supposed necessities of the future state, and to suppress at all costs those forces which, uncurbed, would imperil his faith. I readily admit all that may be said concerning the evils that flow from the connection between Church and State; but these, as I have tried to show, are inherent in the Christian creed, and no Christian can repudiate such evils without at the same time rejecting some portion of his faith.

C. COHEN.

Tennyson.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

—TENNYSON.

It seems but yesterday that Tennyson was among us. A short time ago the poet was still singing, and now he is as voiceless as his beloved Virgil. It is sometimes the sorrowful great gift of the poet to see that which no other of his day can see, to be in advance of even the vanguard of his time. Tennyson, happier than Shelley, found an audience fit and more than few. Tennyson's delineation of the "spirit of the time" was as true, in its way, as that which Thackeray and Dickens have left of our manners, or as that which Hogarth presented of the outer aspect of an earlier period. It is not that Tennyson was less a poet than those who wrote far in advance of their age. The general and immediate recognition of his genius arose simply from the fact that the reading public had really reached a higher intellectual plane than their predecessors, who were deaf to Keats, and falsely thought of the author of "The Cenci" and "Prometheus Unbound" as a madman with a pretty talent for blasphemy. Few poets were so fortunate as Tennyson. Preserved from the temptation to follow literature for the sake of pelf, he resisted, or probably never felt, that stronger and more insidious temptation to woo her for the sake of praise. Thus it was only at rare intervals that we saw those slender green-bound volumes which we opened, as Gretchen did her jewel casket, with a thrill of delicious anticipation.

The substance of Tennyson's work was always characterised by ethical elevation; its form seldom lacked a dignity which was all the more impressive for lack of any taint of pretentiousness. With strong religious and political convictions, he displayed neither bigotry nor narrowness. In fact, he made his influence felt not as a hater of anything, but as a lover of all things that are at once lovely and of good repute. Of such a writer it is difficult—and it seems ungracious—to say a word that savors of depreciation. It would, however, be more unfitting to lapse into the vulgar flattery of falsehood. The truth is that Tennyson, though long and honorably known by his mastery over the *technique* of verse, was really deficient in the signs by which we recognise the man who is born a really great poet. He was never so conspicuously flat and absolutely prosaic as was sometimes his great master Wordsworth, but his work reminds us constantly of those frequent passages in Wordsworth where the external form and the measured music of verse clothe but the momentum of an exhausted inspiration. In the work of Wordsworth we half felt the inspiration; in the work of Tennyson we fail to feel it. We have in the latter emotional fervor, ethical elevation, felicity of expression, and fine sensibility. We only miss one thing, which, however, happens to be the one thing needful—the vital underlying thought. The verse is frequently rendered unattractive by the strain and hysteria, but thinly disguised by wealth of language.

Now and again a great writer has made the memory of a comparatively unknown friend gracious, lovable, and lasting. These tributes to dead friendship are very

touching. Milton eulogises his Lycidas, otherwise long since forgotten. Shelley beautifies even the beautiful memory of Adonais. Carlyle translates John Sterling from oblivion, and places him amongst the immortals. In like manner Tennyson perpetuated the memory of his friend Hallam. It is for once a fine and equitable adjustment of fate that the mourner has raised his own best monument, whilst he did but endeavor to build that of a dead friend. The self-erected memorial of Ozymandias crumbles and leaves nothing but a fragment of a name; but the lament of Catullus over his beloved brother lives through nineteen centuries.

"In Memoriam" was published in 1850. The work reveals the extent of Tennyson's heterodoxy. As in his later poems, the thought is often extremely pantheistic. No thoroughly convinced Christian could have written of—

The Shadow cloaked from head to foot
Who keeps the keys of all the creeds.

The fundamental dogmas of Christianity are held loosely where the poet speaks of one—

Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form.

What shall we say of these lines?—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Or the final lines of the whole poem?—

One far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

Which an eminent critic asserts, in all seriousness, "puts the theory of evolution in a couplet."

Tennyson had no sympathy with the infamous doctrine of an everlasting hell. He proclaimed himself a Universalist in the lines in which he hoped—

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life should be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

In "Despair," a poem of his old age, Tennyson denounces the same hideous dogma. He makes the Agnostic cry out to the parson:—

What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has served us so well?
Infinite cruelty, rather, that made everlasting hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and does what he will with his own;
Better our dead brute mother who never has heard us groan!

Tennyson's friend, Frederick Denison Maurice, a priest, dared to deny the existence of hell, and got into trouble with the ecclesiastics. The poet invited him to share his hospitality:—

For being of that honest few
Who give the Fiend himself his due,
Should eighty thousand college-councils
Thunder "Anathema," friend, at you;
Should all our churchmen foam in spite
At you, so careful of the right,
Yet one lay hearth would give you welcome
(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight.

Tennyson's fiercest attack on this savage doctrine of eternal torment occurs in "Rizpah," that splendid poem throbbing with humanity. The passionate words of the poor, old, dying mother, full of deathless love for her own boy who was hanged for robbing the mail, are "too deep for tears." They give the quintessence of the moral revolt against hell:—

Election, Election, and Reprobation—it's all very well,
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in hell.

And if he be lost—but to save my soul, that is all your desire;
Do you think that I care for my soul if my boy be gone to the fire?

Tennyson also revolted against the low ethical ideas of Christianity. He did not approve the text, "Great is your reward in heaven." He was above such "damned

commercialism." He sang of virtue in the very spirit of Marcus Aurelius:—

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky.
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

Pantheism frequently appears in Tennyson's writings. Nowhere can we find a better literary expression of it than in the following:—

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Some of his finest similes are startling in their audacity:—

And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made himself an awful rose of dawn.

And again:—

To rest beneath the clover sod
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God.

Professional defenders of Christianity are never tired of quoting Tennyson. We do not quarrel with them. It must be a relief for them to turn from the elegant versified productions of such men as Heber and Keble, whose twaddle would never be allotted real poetic rank save by those to whose peculiar superstitions and religious feelings they happen to give pleasure. The great masters of song have never been hampered by creed. The world, it is true, possesses two great so-called Christian epics—"The Divine Comedy" and "Paradise Lost"; but, though Dante and Milton are definite enough in their theological ideas, these are merely part and parcel of the literary machinery of their works. Everybody has felt that Dante wasted a splendid genius among theological horrors, and Milton came perilously near ridicule with his celestial sham-fights. The theology would be better away, and only deforms the works of two sublime poets.

As for Shakespeare, the fact that people still dispute as to whether he was a Catholic or a Puritan is enough to prove that the poet was neither, "but of all time." Living amid the very clash of furious theological dogmas, he instinctively felt that religious opinions are very transitory matters, and that nature is both above and beyond all creeds.

Tennyson, in spite of his heresy, was buried in Westminster Abbey. That, however, is a matter that concerns a small group of "illustrious-obscure" ecclesiastics, who never neglect an opportunity of body-snatching for the glory of God. Another and more fitting memorial exists—which, doubtless, Tennyson would have liked the best. A plain white cross on the ridge of a noble down, looking over the sea which he loved and sung, and standing out as a beacon to aid all who live and move upon its waters, was a wise and happy choice. Love of the sea, with all its dangers and sadness, and a just pride in the people who can rule it, was one of the strongest passions which he felt. It is surely well that the multitude of Old England's seamen who pass up and down the Channel, near the poet's home, should count his monument among their beacons now that he, too, has crossed the bar. It is because Tennyson was an almost flawless artist, and because he loved England,

that precious stone set in the silver sea,

and voiced that love in such noble words, that his verse will ever stand out, like his beacon, as a guiding star to Englishmen.

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand
And the sound of a voice that is still.

MIMNERMUS.

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.

Little Things.

A GOOD-BYE is a little thing,
 With your hand on the door to go,
 But it takes the venom out of the sting
 Of a thoughtless word, or a cruel fling,
 That you made an hour ago.

A kiss of greeting is sweet and rare
 After the toil of the day,
 And its smooths the furrows ploughed by care,
 The lines on the forehead you once called fair
 In the years that have flown away.

'Tis a little thing to say, "You are kind;
 I love you, my dear," each night;
 But it sends a thrill through the heart, I find—
 For love is tender as love is blind—
 As we climb life's rugged height.

We starve each other for love's caress;
 We take, but we do not give;
 It seems so easy some soul to bless,
 But we dole the love grudgingly less and less,
 Till 'tis bitter and hard to live.

—*McCall's Magazine.*

Acid Drops.

HAVING spent some eight or nine months in China, looting, murdering, and violating, the Christian Powers now present the Celestial Government with their little bill for these services. Russia comes first of all, being the nearest thief, and therefore the biggest. She wants £18,000,000. Germany wants £14,000,000. This includes, we suppose, a large amount as "intellectual and moral damages," in view of the outraged feelings of pious Emperor William. France wants £8,000,000. The United States want £5,000,000. Great Britain wants £4,800,000. Belgium, not to be out of the swim, wants £1,158,000. Italy and Austria, and even poor old Spain, that *will* be in it, want £6,000,000 together. Such is the price which China is expected to pay for her new lesson in Christian salvation! Was there ever such a sanguinary farce in the whole of human history? The world has always had a large stock of thieves and blackguards, but it was reserved for Christianity to organise scoundrelism in the name of virtue and civilisation.

We suppose the missionaries will now have a fresh lease of activity in China. But why the devil don't they work the reformation business a bit nearer home? We don't believe there are as many disgusting ruffians to the square yard in "heathen" Peking as there are in "Christian" London. Just look at this sample taken from the first evening paper to hand. A fireman was placed on duty in High-street, Shore-ditch, near a fire-alarm from which false signals had frequently been sent to the station. Up comes a rogue-fool, or a fool-rogue, and breaks the glass for a lark. The fireman seizes him in the presence of a small crowd. But the crowd do not assist the fireman. Oh dear no! They set upon him and brutally ill-use him; and he is only saved from being murdered by the timely arrival of the fire-engine with a lot of sturdy rescuers. The sequel is the arrest of one of the unspeakable ruffians, and his sentence to a £20 fine or two months' imprisonment. Now, we verily believe that the lowest savages in the "heathen" world would have too much sense and decency to assault a man who was looking after an agency for saving their lives and property from destruction. Yet there are "crowds" of savages in "Christian" cities capable of such idiotic brutality. On the whole, the missionaries might as well go to work in London. They seem to be wanted here, whether they are wanted in China or not.

That the missionaries are *not* wanted in China seems as clear as daylight. "Take away your missionaries and your opium," said the enlightened Prince Kung to Sir Robert Hart, "and all will be well." And he really appears to have voiced the almost unanimous feeling of Chinese statesmen.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral, at Westminster, will be able to boast a number of costly ornaments, and amongst them a gorgeous throne for the use of the Cardinal Archbishop. It is of white marble with Mosaic work, and was sculptured at Rome after the pattern of the opal throne in St. John Lateran's. This throne—mark the word *this throne*—will be used by Cardinal Vaughan, if he lives to see the Cathedral opened for religious services. Like other priests, he is a poor servant of Christ; indeed, the Pope calls himself the servant of the servants of God. That is the theory—in other words, that is the humbug and the hypocrisy. The practice is not poverty, but wealth; not renunciation, but grasping at power and authority; not humility, but pride and arrogance. It is all summed up in that one word "throne."

Jesus Christ promised that when he came into his kingdom

his apostles should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Cardinal Vaughan evidently thinks that Jesus Christ *has* come into his kingdom, and that a Cardinal Archbishop has as much right to a throne as a fishy apostle.

The old proverb says that the Devil can quote Scripture to suit his own purpose. The clergy are imitating his Sooty Majesty. In *Lloyd's Newspaper* for April 14 we find the new Bishop of London quoting Matthew Arnold. Fortunately, Arnold is dead. He would otherwise object to his verse being used as soothing syrup for intellectual infants.

If the Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose, there is a man at Bath pretty nearly as clever as Old Nick. He refers to the Scriptural injunction to utter the Lord's praise "with his whole heart" in justification of his singing so loudly as to annoy all the rest of the congregation in the parish church of St. Luke. The vestry has decided to refuse him a sitting and to take legal advice.

A curious thing happened in connection with the recent earthquake at Constantinople. Turkish women, whose husbands perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, are also entitled to the rank of pilgrim if they remain at home all the time that their lords and masters are visiting the Holy City. Many ladies were earning this title when the earthquake frightened them out of their houses and destroyed their chances of success.

The May Meetings of the various religious bodies are approaching. Very agreeably—that is, by an advertisement in its columns—the *Methodist Times* is apprised of the interesting fact. And, with a thankful heart, it gives a little editorial note like the fanfare of a herald. It hopes that familiarity with these yearly gatherings in Exeter Hall "will not breed in any of our readers that foolish contempt with which impertinent and ignorant journalists" sometimes refer to them.

That is rather rough on the journalists, whose playful allusions may be impertinent, but can hardly be described as "ignorant." Rather does the chaff arise, in many instances, from too full a knowledge of these pious gatherings—from possibly the painful experience of having, for the sake of a modest "par," to sit out hours of sanctified oratory intermingled with hymns and prayers. The religious weeklies, of course, revel in these meetings; their myrmidons slave away, piling up page after page of eloquent advocacy of missions to Timbuctoo or the Fiji Islands, whose inhabitants are represented as simply dying to hear about Christ. But the sub-editors of the ordinary newspapers groan in agony at having to find even the smallest amount of room for the "rot," and sometimes they lift up their heads and utter dreadful curses—alas, it may be, to the danger of their immortal souls.

Someone writes to the *Sunday Companion* inquiring whether there is any "harm in a religious person reading a newspaper on a week day." The editor gravely informs him that there is not, but "there is a very real danger when the Sunday secular newspaper usurps the place of attendance at God's house, and the reading of police-court doings and worldly affairs is substituted for Bible study." There now, we have the whole question dealt with in a nutshell. But can the editor of the *Sunday Companion* find in any Sunday newspaper—police-court reports included—anything approaching the obscene and revolting character of many parts of the Old Testament?

"Blatant Atheism has now quite gone down," said Mr. S. Smith, M.P., speaking the other day at Liverpool. We don't know what he means by "blatant" Atheism. If Atheism has ever been blatant, it has made but a poor show in that respect by the side of Christian Theism. Perhaps Mr. S. Smith merely intended the word as a little adjectival embellishment not to be taken too seriously. So Atheism has "now quite gone down"—as he elegantly puts it. Well, this will be news not only to readers of the *Freethinker*, but to many of Mr. Smith's co-religionists, who, when they want to stir up their audiences into a fever of alarm, never fail to enlarge on the growing Atheism and scepticism of the age.

After all, it doesn't seem to matter much whether Atheism has "gone down" or not, because, according to Mr. S. Smith, "beyond doubt, the majority of the male people can no longer be classed as worshippers at any shrine. The Sunday has, with most, ceased to be a holy day, and has become a day of amusement to the masses in the metropolis and large towns." A truly dreadful state of affairs! And is this the latest stage in our history as a Christian nation? Ought we not to cashier the clergy and ministers for gross inefficiency?

Mr. Henry Varley, the well-known revivalist, has been conducting a mission at Aberdeen. In one of his discourses he characterises the Christian College at Calcutta as an

egregious failure as a missionary agency, though it was an excellent educational institution. He said there had not been a single conversion within its walls for thirty years, and eight out of every ten of its professors were Mohammedans. Sir William Henderson walked out of the meeting, it is understood, as a protest against the statements.

So that it amounts to this: either Mr. Varley has been perverting the truth, or Sir William Henderson is a bigot blind to facts. Both these individuals are Christians.

Providence must surely resemble the typical policeman who, according to the small wits, looks another way when he thinks it would be inconvenient to interfere. Else how are we to account for the following recent occurrence?—"A congregation of a sect called Nazarenes assembled in their church in Hungary for worship. A rival sect, it is said, locked the door from the outside, and set fire to the church. There was a fearful panic. Eventually the doors were burst, and women and children were trodden under foot. Ten were killed, and forty-five injured."

"I was told only last week," writes a correspondent of the *Examiner*, "of two members of the London County Council who unfailingly make it a practice never to go to a meeting of the Council without first arranging a time for prayer." Presumably they pray for the Divine guidance, not only of themselves, but of their fellow members at Spring Gardens. It seems rather a pity that we cannot trace any specific response from on High. If the Deity is not disposed to use his influence in reducing the rates, he might at least close the mouths of some of the idiots whose voices are for ever resounding in the Council Chamber.

Here is some Scripture as understood by a young hopeful, according to a paper handed in by him at a recent school examination: "Joseph was a very lucky boy, he had a coat of many colors and he lived with his father. But he had to brothers that were very unkind to him, and he had a dream that maid them moor crosser still and he had a nother-one and he went to tell them and they put him down a ditch and took his coat off and dipet it in mud and gave him away. And said a lion killed him. Absulum, Saul, Soloman, Izaiah, Josef of Arimathea, are tribes, Samson killed a lion with his hands, John the baptist baptised, all the pepol of Jurisulem were baptised by him. John the baptised and peter were apostles. When there father was ded they dug the vinyard up and found grapes and Rosbery's, the lepers were healed by woord and Jesus healed them."

From other answers we learn that "Amen means that you have said your prayers," verily means when "God sais something important to His disciples. Jesus fulfilled Abram. Peter Abraham, Aposels, Iziah, Bejanin, Didymus, Iscaurtt, barnabas were slaves."

The other day Miss Wickham, daughter of the rector of Compton, decorated the parish church, and the Lord indicated his approval, in the mysterious way peculiar to him, by allowing her to be run over and killed by an express train as she was returning home.

The *Rock* thinks there is "something quaint" in the idea of a serious religious work written to prove that the Bible does not teach teetotalism. So there is, in the sense of its being quite unnecessary. The *Rock* says that teetotalism and Christianity are not synonymous. Quite so; if anyone doubts it, let him read Mr. Foote's pamphlet on *The Bible and Beer*. Christ's association with "wine bibbers," and his first miracle in providing wine for the marriage feast at Cana, when the guests were "well drunk," might afford some evidence that the Lord and Savior was not exactly a teetotaler. The Scotch book, whether "quaint" or not, is apparently written on strict Biblical lines.

The philosophic Arthur who stretches his lank legs on the Treasury Bench, and yawns with cynical contempt at the proceedings of the House of which he is supposed to be "leader," has recently received a protest. It is not a protest against his personal inertia, but against the appointment of Winton-Ingram to the See of London. The people who protest say: "Like all sacerdotalists, Dr. Ingram wants to take the Bible from the people, and to put a powerful priesthood in its place. And the only way to accomplish this is by making the Word of God despised by deluding the unwary with the false science and false philosophy against which St. Paul has warned us. It is known that some of the most prominent of the Tractarians deliberately helped to spread the poison of German Rationalism at the Universities in order to undermine Protestantism. To gain exclusive possession of the Bible, and to make the priests its sole legitimate interpreters, is the object aimed at."

This is rather an unexpected disclosure. Are we to suppose that all Dr. Ingram's tremendous controversial efforts in Victoria Park were actuated by a desire to "make the Word of God despised"? Possibly—indeed, actually—that was the result; but one can hardly think that it was the intention. And what are we to think of those wicked Tractarians who "deliberately helped to spread the poison of German Rationalism at the Universities"? There seems to be something excessively absurd in the idea of trying to get the Bible despised in order to secure its sole interpretation. To the rational mind it would appear of the smallest importance who interprets the book when once it is despised, and therefore rejected.

One often wonders where all the religious literature which is pitched on to outward-bound ships eventually goes to. Sailors could tell some yarns about it if they cared, and the yarns would be closer approximations to the truth than those, for example, of the converted Mr. Frank Bullen, an alleged novelist, whom the *British Weekly* has done its best to exploit. The Missions to Seamen Society has recently issued an appeal, in which it is said "much of the literature is destroyed by salt water." The Society does not mean that the literature is pitched overboard. We couldn't expect it to tell the truth in that barefaced fashion. What it probably means, and what the pious will readily realise, is that the literature is soaked into a pulpy mass by the salt tears of Jack Tar's repentance. If this isn't the explanation, we apologise.

For several years past the Common Council of the City of London has been called upon to consider whether its Guildhall Art Gallery shall be opened on a Sunday. A good friend to Sunday opening is Alderman Sir William Treloar, to whom is usually deputed the moving of the proposition, which should "go without saying," or, at any rate, should not have to be repeated annually. A constant opponent is Mr. Lile, a gentleman of culture, who is quite independent of education weekdays or Sundays, as may be judged by the following extract from his latest speech: "It's a new-fangled idea, and would not have been entertained by our forefathers who sat here five, ten, or fifteen years ago." (Roars of laughter.) He appealed to the Court to throw the motion out. On a division it was decided to open on Sundays.

Inconsistency—thy name is religion! Here is the King of our happy Christian and Protestant realm posing as the god-father of a little Papist. Edward VII., as we remember, read off at the opening of Parliament a fearful diatribe against Romanism. Now we hear of him attending the baptism of the Earl of Denbigh's daughter, and acting as god-father—the Earl of Denbigh being, as his father before him, a pronounced Roman Catholic.

"A Stupefied Congregation" is the heading of a paragraph in the *Christian World*. Was it a sense of humor that dictated the headline? We can imagine many stupefied congregations—especially those who sit under the Rev. Price Hughes or Dr. Parker, or those who may hereafter have to listen to the episcopal oratory of Dr. Ingram. This particular congregation spoken of by the *Christian World* seems not to have been stupefied by gas from the pulpit, but by coal gas. It was in a Connecticut church. Something went wrong with a furnace in the basement, and the fumes filled the church. At first no one thought of opening the windows or of leaving, as all believed that the odor would pass away. Presently, however, the pastor was overcome and reeled to his chair, and a little girl fell to the floor. A general, though somewhat feeble, rush was made for the open air, but twenty persons could not leave their seats. It took five doctors an hour to revive the congregation.

Where—oh, where was Providence? If he can't take care of his own worshippers, of what use is he?

"Chaplain to the Queen" used to be a very familiar designation under which clerics of no particular ability, but with aristocratic connections, paraded themselves in pious and genteel society. Mr. Labouchere, dealing with the Civil List, points out that over £6,000 a year was expended for "Ecclesiastical salaries and allowances," and adds that this amount is practically "an endowment of the State Church of England out of public funds." He thinks that one or two chaplains for the Sovereign would be ample in place of the thirty-six which the Queen had. We should think so too, and probably that opinion is shared by Edward, unless he is very different to what he used to be.

It is a little late to notice it, but really we must place on record the charming telegram sent by the pious Kaiser to Abdul the Assassin. There was a little touch of earthquake in Constantinople, causing the Sultan to rather precipitately leave a building in which he happened to be at the time. The Kaiser wired him: "It is with deep emotion that I have just

learned what danger your Majesty was in at the time of the feast of Bairam, and how manifestly God has protected your Majesty's precious life.....I pray to the Lord to continue to hold your Majesty in his gracious and holy keeping." What a trio—the Kaiser, Sultan, and the Lord!

It is not surprising, says the *Christian World*, that Dr. Schmiedel's startling contribution to the second volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* should continue to attract attention. The Zürich Professor's daring has quickly lifted him to notoriety, if not to fame, and dissatisfaction with his conclusions has not precluded a recognition of his ingenuity and ability. In the *Critical Review* Principal Salmond sums up a brief and inadequate notice by describing Dr. Schmiedel's method as "science" in a "craze"; a kind of science, he adds, which ought "not" to be associated with the name of Robertson Smith. In the *London Quarterly Review* Professor W. T. Davison writes much more exhaustively on the subject, and furnishes one of the best criticisms that have yet appeared. His article (on "Christ and Modern Criticism") will be of great service to the large class of non-expert readers who have no means of finding their way through the technical intricacies of the question. They know that the Gospels have been subjected to criticism, and the supreme consideration for them must always be, how far is the essential authenticity and significance of the records unshaken?

Then the *Christian World* adopts with approval Professor Davison's argument that, despite the variety of details and the apparent or real inconsistencies in some of the narratives, a whole appears for which no rationalistic critic has yet accounted by his analysis of sources and "sources of sources." But why should any critic be called upon to account for the Christian mythology either in whole or in part? If he undertakes any account of its origin, it is quite as a work of superelevation. We reject Christna and the ancient gods of Greece and Rome without troubling to ascertain how they came to be placed on their pedestals. There is, of course, a general explanation in the one word, Superstition, which accounts for the accretion of the supernatural to whatever nucleus of history there may be at the bottom of the Christian Gospels.

Pity the poor rector of St. Ethelburga, Bishopgate-street Within. He can't find a place wherein to lay his head in the City. So he has had to betake himself to Kensington, where he has succeeded in finding a residence at a little less than £300 a year for rent, rates, and taxes. He writes complainingly in his parish magazine, and is too dull to anticipate possible chaff.

A eulogistic notice appears in the *Methodist Times* of Dr. George Adam Smith's work on *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*. This notwithstanding the conclusion of the author, which the *M. T.* quotes, that "on the present evidence it is impossible to be sure of more than that they (the narratives of the Patriarchs) contain a substratum of actual personal history."

Dr. Nicoll, who edits the *British Weekly*, has commenced a series of articles in refutation of the latest criticism of the New Testament. He says: "We have in the new volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* a thorough-going criticism applied to the New Testament, and in *The Historical New Testament* of Mr. Moffatt there issues from the bosom of an orthodox Church a new claim on the part of advanced criticism for room and verge. It is of no avail to lift up hands in horror. The critics have to be met. If they are not frankly encountered, the door of faith will be closed on multitudes. In one sense, we take up the discussion with great satisfaction. Now, at last, the very life of the faith has to be fought for."

This is very valiant, but, apparently, we shall have to wait till the next issue of the *British Weekly* for anything in the shape of a reply. There is a rather petulant remark that these modern critics "ought to have shown how they could conserve the faith after surrendering what they have surrendered." Why should they? The truth is the truth, whatever the consequences. Criticism is not to be trammelled by a desire to "conserve the faith," except on the supposition that there is a hole in the head of the pious which must be stuffed with something or other, it being of no consequence what it is as long as the vacuum is filled.

Mr. W. L. Courtney, reviewing new books in the *Daily Telegraph*, calls attention to a verse of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's which gives the title to a novel by Mr. Daniel Woodroffe. "To my own Gods I go. It may be they shall give me greater ease Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities." *Tangled Trinities*—Mr. Woodroffe's title from Kipling—is a capital phrase. Mr. Courtney calls it "a mocking description of Christian dogma in the mouth of a member of an alien creed." But why *mocking*? Surely the Christian

Trinity is a tangled affair. All the divines admit that. We do not know of one who thinks it can be explained. The common teaching is that it must be accepted in a spirit of faith. And does not the Athanasian Creed—which, by the way, is adopted by most of the Churches, if not by every one of them—distinctly say that the Trinity is absolutely incomprehensible? Not only severally incomprehensible, but collectively incomprehensible. The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost is incomprehensible; and yet there are not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible. So says the Athanasian Creed, and if this is not a "tangle" what is it? Mr. Courtney will perhaps explain.

A terrible tragedy (the *Daily News* reports) has just taken place here [Naples]. Nearly three years ago an elderly priest, Don Pietro Potenza, took lodgings in this city in the house of a young, well-to-do widow lady. He had not been long in her house before he began to annoy her by unwarranted attentions, followed in time, when he found no hearing, by threats. Things gradually got so bad that Signora Orlanda applied to the police, and the priest left at the end of the year. Not long after, Potenza was summoned before the magistrates charged with the attempted seduction of a young girl, but was acquitted for want of evidence. He then again renewed his persecution of Signora Orlanda, following her in the streets, and repeating his threats. The whole wretched affair culminated on Wednesday. Signora Orlanda that afternoon went out to visit a friend, accompanied by her adopted son, Giovanni, aged twelve, and her own boy, Nicola, aged eight. On her return towards four o'clock she saw the priest, who by this time had become an object of terror to her, following them. She hurried on, but the man, seeing that his victim was almost running, quickened his steps, overtook her, and began to speak. Then suddenly he took a revolver from under his gown, and fired two shots. Both took effect; the lady and her little boy, Nicola, fell to the ground. She was shot through the brain, and died instantly; and the boy, with a bullet in his back, succumbed as he was being carried to the hospital. The priest cast off his gown, threw away his three-cornered hat, and rushed away; but a carabineer pursued, and caught him, and he was taken to the lock-up. Potenza is a tall, thin man of sinister aspect, with an odious squint in his eyes. He served mass at two churches in Naples, and had often been reprimanded by his superiors for irregular conduct. On being questioned, he slandered the deceased lady, and concluded with the words, coolly pronounced: "One knows how he was born, but never how he will die."

We introduce this case, not in order to gloat over the crime of a priest, but in order to emphasize the dangers of a celibate priesthood. Don Pietro Potenza, like so many other priests, was not deficient in animal passions; and if he had been married those passions would probably have been disciplined by affection and domestic attachments. But he was forbidden to marry, and his passions were a perpetual provocation. Thrown into the society of a young widow, he lost all control over himself; and as baffled lust soon turns to hate, he ended by becoming a murderer.

"When the extreme Secularist apostrophises Liberty," the *Daily Telegraph* says, "what he really desires is the unrestricted liberty to declaim his sentiments and full power to suppress whatever he disapproves in the opinions of other people." We beg to tell our contemporary that this is nonsense, and rather malignant nonsense too. The fact is, we take it, that Christians are very slow to understand freedom. When a Secularist claims absolute equality with themselves, they are apt to look upon him as an impudent upstart; and when he proceeds to enforce his claim, they are apt to look upon themselves as oppressed and defrauded. Long usage has given them a vested interest in privilege. That is the secret of all such foolish outbursts as the one we are calling attention to in the *Telegraph*.

Poor Sir Isaac Newton! According to Mr. David Wardlaw Scott, he "spent a long life in teaching a false system of astronomy, unsupported by any fact in nature, and in direct contradiction to the plain statements of the Bible." Mr. Scott says this in a new volume called *Terra Firma*. He argues that the earth is not a planet and that it is flat, as the Bible clearly considers it. We suppose he is a Christian scientist. Anyhow, we daresay he is a Christian.

We have much sympathy with the Rev. G. Whitehead, of St. Andrew's Church, Northampton. One hundred and four collections in his church only realised £26 16s. 7d. altogether. This is enough to make any parson cry "Ichabod"—or even to use stronger language.

A Washington preacher, in praying for Mrs. Nation recently, said: "God bless her and keep her, but keep her in Kansas!"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April 21, Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Birmingham: 3, "The Fable of Jesus Christ"; 7, "Priestcraft on the Birmingham School Board." At 10.45, if fine, in the Bull Ring, Freethought Demonstration.

April 22, Coventry; 28, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—April 21, New Brompton; 23, Public Debate with the Rev. Henry Alcock at the Athenæum Hall; 28, Camberwell Secular Hall. May 5, Glasgow; 12 and 19, Sheffield.—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.

F. J. VOISEY.—Always glad to receive cuttings.

W. JOHNSON.—You will find all that you are seeking in Mr. Foote's *Bible Heroes* and *Bible Romances* together. Although written racy, those two volumes contain a considerable mass of accurate information.

W. P. BALL.—Accept our best thanks for your weekly batches of useful cuttings.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—J. Baker, 5s.; T. Thornett, 5s. (A. Jones, 1s.; W. B., 1s.; both Manchester, not previously acknowledged.)

F. E. WILLIS.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. G. (Glasgow).—Surely you cannot be serious, unless you are in a great hurry, in suggesting that we should follow the religionists in their "underhand treatment" of Freethinkers. Better show them a superior example.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Mr. Marsh will doubtless see by this answer that you have received his donation of £1 towards Mr. Percy Ward's School Board candidature at Birmingham. It is hardly necessary to send him a formal receipt after two acknowledgments in the *Freethinker*.

L. COLEMAN.—See paragraph. We hope the East London Branch will have a prosperous summer season.

E. PURCIAS.—Sorry to hear that on your visiting Oxford, after a long absence, you found it more difficult than of old to obtain a copy of the *Freethinker* at a newsagent's. This sort of thing is one of our greatest troubles. The sale of this journal is terribly impeded by the bigotry and timidity of newsvendors. If only common justice were done to it, its circulation would be doubled, or perhaps trebled.

L. C. PHILLIPS.—Mr. Watts gave an explanation at the time in our columns of the outside article to which you refer. It is scarcely worth while to reopen the matter now.

A. LIDDLE.—The reference to Paul at the close of our article on "The Jerusalem Ghost" must be taken merely in the light of Christian documents and traditions. It does not commit us to a positive admission that Paul was an historical character. You justly observe that no historian of the first century mentions him—though that is not quite conclusive in his case. We confess to some dubiety on the subject, but we incline to think that Paul is almost, if not quite, as mythical a figure as Jesus.

Q. C.—The late Marquis of Queensberry called himself an Agnostic. The late Oscar Wilde never was a Freethinker, and he died a Roman Catholic.

W. ATKINSON.—We do not know of any such book as you require, showing the full cost of religion to this country. Even the revenues of the Church of England are variously stated. This Church does not receive money direct from the State—that is, from the Consolidated Fund; but it receives tithes, etc., which are only leviable by virtue of the law of the land.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—La Raison—Newcastle Daily Leader—East Anglian Daily Times—Saturday Herald—Manchester Evening News—Public Opinion (New York)—Truthseeker (New York)—Carlisle Journal—Progressive Thinker—Daily Record—The People's Newspaper—Glasgow Herald—Nature.

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

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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

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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.

CAMBERWELL Secular Hall was full to the door on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Fable of Jesus Christ." The advertising had been well attended to, and the result was most satisfactory, in spite of the fact that some bigots had been round mutilating the posters on the walls. Mr. Victor Roger, who occupied the chair, took the opportunity of appealing on behalf of the open-air propaganda in South London, for which a collection was made as the audience left the hall. The indoor meetings end with the month of April, and the Branch concentrates its efforts until September upon the outdoor gatherings at Station-road and Brockwell-park. We hope the Camberwell Branch will have a thoroughly successful summer, as it deserves to do, and that it will reopen its hall for the winter with the most cheerful prospects.

Mr. Foote lectures to-day (April 21) in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, Birmingham; in the afternoon at 3 on "The Fable of Jesus Christ," and in the evening at 7 on "Priestcraft on the Birmingham School Board." In the morning Mr. Foote has agreed to speak at the Freethought Demonstration which is to be held in the Bull Ring at 10.45. Should the weather be too wet for this open-air gathering, Mr. Foote will lecture in the Assembly Rooms at 11 on "Shakespeare and the Bible."

On Monday evening (April 22) Mr. Foote pays his first visit to Coventry, where he will lecture in the Assembly Hall, Union-street, at 8 o'clock, on "Religion in the Light of Science." An effort will be made to start a local Branch of the National Secular Society.

Mr. George Jacob Holyoake attained to the great age of eighty-four on Saturday, April 13. We beg to join in the congratulations that are reaching him from all parts of the civilised world. We cannot help regretting, however, that the newspapers, while referring, in more or less eulogistic terms, to Mr. Holyoake's political and social work, have been nearly all (*quite* all, as far as we know) silent about his Freethought labors. Perhaps they think it was so long ago that he was an active Freethought propagandist that the fact may as well be forgotten. But it is also possible that they were too timid or hypocritical to mention that aspect of his career.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured at the Athenæum Hall to a good and enthusiastic audience. He was in his best form, and the many excellent points in his address won the hearty and manifest approval of his hearers. The Rev. J. B. Coles offered some courteous opposition, and highly complimented Mr. Watts upon his "very able, fair, and eloquent lecture. He (the rev. gentleman) would like to see the lecture in print, and he would do his best to circulate it as widely as possible." Mr. C. H. Cattell made an excellent chairman.

Mr. Watts lectures this evening, Sunday, April 21, at New Brompton, and on Tuesday evening next, April 23, he will debate with the Rev. Henry J. Alcock at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, upon the question, "Christ, as Revealed in Scripture, Perfect in his Character and Teachings." The chair will be taken at 8 o'clock sharp. The discussion ought to be an interesting one.

Mr. Cohen addressed three good meetings at Aberdare on Sunday, and several names were taken as members of a new N. S. S. Branch. Mr. Cohen lectures this evening (April 21) at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London, taking for his subject, "What is there Left of Christianity?" No doubt he will have a good audience.

A friend of our far-off colleague, Mr. Joseph Symes, of Melbourne, has just called upon us with a letter of introduction from him. We are glad to hear that Mr. Symes is in good health and spirits, and that his prospects are somewhat brightening. We are sorry to hear, however, that he has abandoned, at any rate for the present, his contemplated visit to England. The insuperable difficulty is that he cannot find a substitute during his absence, and his paper and his platform must be carried on by some competent person.

The East London Branch commenced its open-air work at Mile End Waste on Sunday with a lecture by Mr. W. Heaford, who was in first-rate form, and attracted a large audience. Mr. Cohen is the lecturer there to-day (April 21), and we are asked to request the local "saints" to rally in strong force around the platform.

The *Literary World*, noticing Mr. Watts's pamphlet on

Spiritualism, thinks it is not enough to say that men like Wallace and Crookes have been "led astray by their defect of critical faculty." Perhaps it is not, but Mr. Watts says a good deal more than that, as our contemporary might have told its readers.

Mr. Cohen has done excellent service to the cause of common sense by writing his new pamphlet on *Foreign Missions: their Dangers and Delusions*. He has crammed this little work with facts and figures, all taken from official sources, and generally from the Reports of the Missionary Societies themselves. A large section is devoted to China, and should prove particularly interesting. Mr. Cohen has taken great pains to obtain the most authentic information; his pamphlet should therefore be of uncommon value, and we hope it will be both read by Freethinkers and circulated by them amongst their Christian friends. It is a pity to see money wasted on this missionary business, when it is so much required for progressive efforts at home.

The Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's immortal *Age of Reason* is now on sale. This edition is issued by the Secular Society, Limited, and is sold by the Free-thought Publishing Company. It is not an enterprise for profit, but a propagandist effort. Neither expense nor trouble has been spared to make it the best, as well as the cheapest, edition that has ever been offered to the public. It has been printed with brand-new type on good paper, and a beautiful portrait of Paine appears on the cover. This should be in itself a very great attraction. Much time has been spent on correcting the mistakes that had crept into the text of the work through the blunders and carelessness of former printers and editors. In addition, a considerable number of Annotations have been supplied by Mr. Foote, in order to show the general reader that most of Paine's conclusions are the same as those of the so-called Higher Critics of to-day. Mr. Foote has also contributed a Biographical Introduction, in which he has presented all the important facts of Paine's career in the compass of fourteen pages. On the whole, Mr. Foote has found this one of the most troublesome jobs he has ever undertaken. His space was necessarily limited, and he wanted to do as much justice as possible to one of the greatest of Freethinkers.

This Twentieth Century Edition of the *Age of Reason* is published at the marvellously low price of *sixpence*, which places it within the reach of everyone who can buy a book at all. At this price it ought to circulate by the myriad. The first issue comprises 10,000 copies, and another should be called for within six months, or at least before the end of the present year. From what we hear through the channel of trade inquiries we think this is not at all unlikely. But it is not only through trade channels that this wonderful sixpenny-worth should be circulated. A great many Freethinkers might turn propagandists at a comparatively small cost, by purchasing a half-dozen, a dozen, or several dozen copies of this book, and circulating them gratuitously amongst their friends and acquaintances. Although it extends to 240 pages, and is so well got-up, besides being adorned with a very fine portrait of the author, it will be supplied direct from our publishing office to such purchasers for free distribution at the rate of 4½d. per copy, provided that not less than six copies be ordered at a time. Six copies will cost 2s. 3d., and a dozen (of course) only 4s. 6d., in addition to the carriage when sent by post or rail. For less than 5s. a Freethinker may put a copy into a dozen well-selected hands of a great book, full of wit and logic, which has been the means of converting thousands of Christians from error and superstition. Think of it! Only five shillings' expenditure, and the prospect of saving a dozen Christians for the money! Never before was there such a splendid missionary chance in the history of the world.

A Cheerful Outlook.

Goodun—"It is said that the millennium will come when the Gospel has been preached to all nations."

Badun—"Well, I guess that's right. The missionaries will then have no country left in which to make trouble and cause war."—*Life*.

"What would you say," began the voluble prophet of woe, "if I were to tell you that in a short space of time all the rivers in this country would dry up?" "I would say," replied the patient man, "Go thou and do likewise."—*Philadelphia Press*.

In Ohio, recently, Mr. Mawley tried to melt a rusted bullet out of an old musket. He succeeded. Mr. Mawley was sixty-one years of age, and leaves a wife and one child.

Little Elmer (who has an inquiring mind)—"Papa, what is conscience?" Professor Broadhead—"Conscience, my son, is the name usually given to the fear we feel that other people will find us out."—*Harper's Bazaar*.

Drowsy Deities.

No doubt it is rather a tough job to run a universe. Few of us have tried it, otherwise than in dreams. If we were to take our coats off and turn up our sleeves, and say "Now, then, we are going to make this universe hum; everything is going to work on the principle of an improved automatic machine, and nobody who puts a penny in the slot shall get a cigarette when he wants chocolate cream," we should find it rather difficult to work out the arrangement, in a practical way, to anything like universal satisfaction. There would be sure to be complaints, and indignant letters to the newspapers, and perhaps even questions in the House. This would arise from the fact that, after all, we should only be amateur deities, not fully fledged and "to the manner born."

The chief trouble would be that we should have to take over from the out-going freeholder a universe not at all constructed on our own plans—full of dilapidations, and requiring heaps of repairs. Before we could be said to have a fair chance, we should have to sweep away no end of rubbish—a few continents it may be, or two or three millions of planets that are either malefic or useless in the sense of not being worth their salt. We should have to alter some of the universal laws which experience has shown do not work out beneficially to sentient existence. And, really, there would be so much to do in the way of reconstruction that one would much prefer to smash it all up and start afresh.

The present presiding Deity must be, if wakeful and observant, rather inclined to fall in with that view himself. He was seized by a similar feeling some thousands of years ago. Then he tried to drown the whole world, of which—soon after he had pronounced it good—he was inclined to despair. He did not seem to be aware that this little trifling orb was but a speck in the infinitude of his possessions. But now, by the help of science, he knows that there are solar systems piled upon solar systems, and that time and space are illimitable. Judging by the way in which things are going on now, he must be either eaten up with conceit, or has gone sulking into his tent.

We can never think of him as an active, intelligent governor. The charitable view is that he has gone to sleep—fatigued, and perhaps disappointed. The great mistake of his life was to let the Devil go loose, playing "hell and Tommy" with all his works. Why did he make so gross a blunder? Truly, he tried to rectify the error when practically it was too late. He never could have anticipated all the trouble he was piling up for himself. One is not quite sure whether he is now deserving of sympathy or of censure. He did his best to put matters right by sending his Son, who was himself, to die a miserable death in order to appease his own displeasure. But that was a blundering kind of move, which has not tended to any appreciable rectification. The Devil, like De Wet, has proved himself an elusive, untiring, artful tactician. Whilst the Deity has been asleep the Devil has been at work. And the poor clergy and ministers of all denominations have been at their wits' ends to know what to do with a world full of wickedness, notwithstanding the supreme sacrifice on Calvary.

If we were believers, we should be inclined to say that God ought to be called to account. He has no right to bring us into an existence where sin and sorrow predominate; where we are subject to so much temptation; where health and happiness are so difficult of attainment; where disease, physical and moral, lies lurking in wait for us at every corner; where in our sweetest cup of joy there is always a taste of bitter aloes. At any rate, he has no right to pose all the time as a beneficent Being, and to require us to love him. This is really adding insult to injury. Why should we love him? How can we, unless we are hypnotised by the adventitious aids to worship employed by the priestly caste which has set itself up to explain the ways of God to men, and is in the end obliged to confess that it knows no more than other men about the mysteries of existence. As to the fabled future, in which everything is to be set right, we have only their word for it.

Reasoning from what we know, the future existence, if any, may be as bad as this—perhaps worse.

We, therefore, go back and conclude that Deity, having made a fearful botch of his work, and exhausted himself with futile remedial efforts, has now gone to sleep, perhaps for millions of years. Who knows—he may be dead! It is not inconceivable that a god may drop out of existence and leave his work behind him. Who says that he is necessarily eternal? The priests may make that assertion, but it is pure assumption. How do they know? The testimony of facts is against the idea. The universe goes on, apparently working in a mechanical way, stern and ruthless, with no eye to pity or heart to save. May not the mechanism have survived its maker, if maker it had, and if the sum-total of things has not existed from eternity as he is supposed to have done?

If the Deity is neither dead nor sleeping, he must be callously indifferent or bound with inextricable bonds by the laws of his own making. Nothing else can account for the daily atrocities on this planet, the pain and misery, physical and moral, which everywhere abound. Jove occasionally nodded, and the heathens, as we know, occasionally suspect their idols of going off to sleep. They adopt a practical method of treatment—quite as sensible as our Western forms of prayer. They take their idols down and give them a sound good thrashing, meanwhile shouting to them to "Wake up!" If our own God wishes to be treated as a gentleman, let him bestir himself, otherwise he will have to be, as a veteran Freethinker once suggested, "put on half pay." He has the least excuse of all the Deities, ancient and modern, because there are three of him. They might manage, amongst them, turn and turn about, to keep an eye on the planet Earth which so badly needs some kind of active supervision. Otherwise, if this inattention to business and drowsy disinclination to do anything continues, the Lord need not be astonished if the faithful put buttons in the offertory bag on Sundays, or even take to openly blaspheming.

FRANCIS NEALE.

On the Present Status of the "God" Question, and on Life and Substance.

A Lecture by DR. ROBERT PARK.

III.

THE unorthodox dogmatic conception is that of the Unitarian body, and need not detain us. Forasmuch as it rests simply upon the same authority as the other, but claiming a different interpretation, and as we have shown the authority to be no valid authority at all, purporting to be the revelation of a God which never had any reality of existence outside of the imagination of man, and exhibiting to the critical and historical the most flagrant and irreconcilable contradictions, it practically rests upon nothing. It doesn't present to us a coherent conception any more reasonably worthy of worship than the other. That its adherents recognise this may be inferred from the fact that they are, to a larger extent even than the orthodox, modifying their conception in favor of some of the philosophical, but especially the Pantheistic. Thus, in a McQuaker Trust lecture, delivered by the Rev. J. Page Hopps, and presided over by the Rev. Albert Lazenby, and reported in the *Glasgow Herald*, I find the following utterance:—

"Last night the first of a course of lectures in connection with the McQuaker Trust, which was founded for the special object of propagating Unitarian opinions and beliefs in Scotland, was delivered in the St. Andrew's (Berkeley) Hall by the Rev. John Page Hopps, Croydon, London. There was a good attendance, and the Rev. A. Lazenby presided. The lecturer, whose subject was 'Incarnations of God,' observed that every generation was troubled with its own problem, and he was inclined to think that to-day it related to the fundamental question of the personality of God and the modes of his manifestations to mankind. After discussing various conceptions entertained of God, he said they were at length arriving at the thought that God was really what Jesus said He was—not an exaggerated man at all; that he was in some entirely inscrutable way the cause of all things—a subtle and vital energy, so that it was literally

true that in God we all live and move and have our being. The doctrine of incarnation was a profound scientific doctrine. It was based on the great fact that all things are only varying modes of manifestation of one supreme force, from a beetle to a planet. God not only incarnated Himself in sentient beings, but in all material things. He was the universal cause if he was anything, not as manufacturer, but as inspirer. God the Unseen Father was as incarnate in a crust as in a Christ. The main thing they had to do was to see that Jesus did not stand alone. In the interests of the human race it was high time to put a stop, if they could, to the deifying of the man Jesus, and to check what he could only call the conceit of Christendom. God was their unceasing Savior, and He saved in ten million ways, and by ten million of mediators between God and man. In relation to the deity of Christ, and the exceptional incarnation of God in Him, he held that the old theory was disappearing. In its place there was being put a vague affirmation of the incarnation of God in Him. The change was simply revolutionary, and abundantly justified the Unitarian protest and testimony of the past two hundred years."

Well, notwithstanding the ingenious and plausible, but very stupid, advocacy of the Rev. J. P. Hopps, we may congratulate ourselves, I think, upon an entirely Atheistic attitude towards this conception also.

We have then at first an ambulant, talking anthropomorphic personage, wrestling with one patriarch, eating veal and cakes with another, contending (for a time in vain) with the magic of other gods, smelling the odor of meat on the fire—angry, jealous, repenting, sanctioning fraud; committing fraud by sanction, committing cruelty, and exhibiting almost every passion and imperfection of man. These are the god ideas of a childish age, and clearly reveal the deity as the issue of the imagination of man, and not a self-revelation of deity; because deity, if self-knowing, must have known better. As man grew in knowledge, and especially as the parochial Hebrew mind became impregnated with ideas of deity proceeding from Egypt, Persia, Babylonia, and the far East, we find the Pentateuchal notion becomes slowly purified, ennobled, and uplifted. This development may be traced all through Judges, Psalms, and Prophets, until in the New Testament the idea of the deity as Love is reached, a notion entirely incompatible with and contradictory to the primary, and implying clearly that, if the books called collectively the Bible are to be reckoned in any real sense of the term a revelation, then the deity must, at least, be as big a liar as Kruger himself, his latest and most faithful believer and worshipper. This deity may be Love; it may be what is called Spirit by those who pretend to know about such a thing; it may be Light, though it isn't likely; it may be a father, and it may stand towards all living things in the relation of father or begetter, in the sense of being, as Caird put it, "the immanent presence in nature." But, if so, it has all to be proven. The revelation doesn't prove it. The devil has to be taken account of there, and so has hell, or Sheol as the new version has it. All the assertions of all the theologians won't make it so, for us at least, who have rid ourselves of the bonds of superstition, and cast from us the cords of exploded dogmas.

This evolution of a god idea is discernible in the names variously used by various writers, supposed to be all equally inspired. El, or Eloah, or Elohim, means strong; "I am that I am," or Jehovah, means eternal; Jehovah-Sabaoth—the eternal Leader of Hosts. St. John's idea was that of Light or Spirit, not a personal notion at all; then Love; then the Jesuine notion—Father.

Then, again, it is traceable in reputed sayings of the deity. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"—i.e., he, "the Jew-god," was to be topsawyer. Then in Exodus: "Who is like unto thee, Jehovah, among the gods?" And in Kings: "There is no God like thee in heaven above or earth beneath." Moses, before Pharaoh, represents Him as "God of the Hebrews." This God actually enters into competition of magical prowess with the Egyptian gods. Moses, if he was the author—which he wasn't, there are good reasons for believing—inspired or otherwise, had no doubt of the real existence of the Egyptian gods. Until after the time of David indeed Moloch, Dagon, and Astarte were as real gods, in the view of the Hebrews, as their own; only they were not *their* gods. Theirs was the superior, and could beat the others—that was all. When they

went to war, it was between the gods as well as the peoples. In this respect Hebrew and Greek and Roman mythology are on a par. After David the idea dawned upon the Hebrew mind that the other gods were no gods at all, but only myths; but they couldn't see that their own God *was just as much a myth as any*. Hence the idea grew—being taken up and fostered, of course, by the craft of the priests—that their God was the only God ruling the world, or as much of it as they knew of. Micah and Isaiah envisage the fulness of this idea. Monotheism was an idea of slow growth, therefore, in the Hebrew mind, and the Bible unquestionably reveals that; but the very fact of the revelation shows clearly that an omniscient and omnipotent deity was not concerned in making the revelation, for the simple reason that the true idea, in all its fulness, could have been revealed at once; whereas, like Topsy, "it grewed," like all other ideas.

It is traceable, again, in men's ideas of the moral character of God. At first he is strong and vindictive; obtains his way by unscrupulous means; he has favorites; he is jealous; only partially informed of what goes on upon earth. This was evidently not a conception of God revealed to man by the God himself. The idea is absurd. It was man's own crude idea of God when he was intellectually groping, in his ignorance, for some explanation of the origin of himself and his surroundings, and some explication of his emotional yearnings. The morality involved in the story of the Fall, in the story of Moses and Pharaoh, is such as no decent deity would reveal about himself. He is made to tempt Eve per medium of a talking serpent; to harden Pharaoh's heart; to endorse and suggest lying and theft; and *then*, having thus got Pharaoh into trouble, punishes with disease and death all those who were practically carrying out his will. Surely an omniscient deity must be admitted to have some self-respect! Or was Moses (or the author) mistaken merely, or craftily representing these instructions as emanating from the Lord? In either case, then, the whole "revelation" becomes invalid as a revelation. But, apparently, neither the Jews nor the Christians of the present day (who would have us believe in an infallible Bible) seem to see, or have seen, any incongruity in attributing such a morality to Jehovah.

(To be continued.)

Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?

BY THE LATE ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

(Concluded from page 237.)

I BELIEVE that I am familiar with the material facts bearing upon the religious belief of Mr. Lincoln, and that I know what he thought of orthodox Christianity. I was somewhat acquainted with him, and well acquainted with many of his associates and friends, and I am familiar with Mr. Lincoln's public utterances. Orthodox Christians have the habit of claiming all great men—all men who have held important positions, men of reputation, men of wealth. As soon as the funeral is over clergymen begin to relate imaginary conversations with the deceased, and in a very little while the great man is changed to a Christian—possibly to a saint.

All this happened in Mr. Lincoln's case. Many pious falsehoods were told, conversations were manufactured, and suddenly the Church claimed that the great President was an orthodox Christian. The truth is that Lincoln, in his religious views, agreed with Franklin, Jefferson, and Voltaire. He did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, or the divinity of Christ, or the scheme of salvation, and he utterly repudiated the dogma of eternal pain.

In making up my mind as to what Mr. Lincoln really believed, I do not take into consideration the evidence of unnamed persons, or the contents of anonymous letters; I take the testimony of those who knew and loved him, of those to whom he opened his heart, and to whom he spoke in the freedom of perfect confidence.

Mr. Herndon was his friend and partner for many years. I knew Mr. Herndon well. I know that Lincoln never had a better, warmer, truer friend.

Herndon was an honest, thoughtful, able, studious man, respected by all who knew him. He was as natural and sincere as Lincoln himself. On several occasions Mr. Herndon told me what Lincoln believed, and what he rejected, in the realm of religion. He told me again and again that Mr. Lincoln did not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, or in the existence of a personal God. There was no possible reason for Mr. Herndon to make a mistake or to color the facts.

Justice David Davis was a life-long friend and associate of Mr. Lincoln, and Judge Davis knew Lincoln's religious opinions, and knew Lincoln as well as anybody did. Judge Davis told me that Lincoln was a Freethinker, that he denied the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, and all miracles. Davis also told me that he had talked with Lincoln on these subjects hundreds of times.

I was well acquainted with Colonel Ward H. Lamon, and had many conversations with him about Mr. Lincoln's religious belief, before and after he wrote his *Life of Lincoln*. He told me that he had told the exact truth in his *Life of Lincoln*; that Lincoln never did believe in the Bible, or in the divinity of Christ, or in the dogma of eternal pain; that Lincoln was a Freethinker.

For many years I was well acquainted with the Hon. Jesse W. Fell, one of Lincoln's warmest friends. Mr. Fell often came to my house, and we had many talks about the religious belief of Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Fell told me that Lincoln did not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and that he denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. Mr. Fell was very liberal in his own ideas, a great admirer of Theodore Parker, and a perfectly sincere and honorable man.

For several years I was well acquainted with William G. Green, who was a clerk with Lincoln at New Salem in the early days, and who admired and loved Lincoln with all his heart. Green told me that Lincoln was always an infidel, and that he had heard him argue against the Bible hundreds of times. Mr. Green knew Lincoln, and knew him well, up to the time of Lincoln's death.

The Hon. James Tuttle, of Illinois, was a great friend of Lincoln, and he is, if living, a friend of mine, and I am a friend of his. He knew Lincoln well for many years, and he told me again and again that Lincoln was an infidel. Mr. Tuttle is a Freethinker himself, and has always enjoyed the respect of his neighbors. A man with purer motives does not live.

So I place great reliance on the testimony of Colonel John G. Nicolay. Six weeks after Mr. Lincoln's death Colonel Nicolay said that he did not, in any way, change his religious ideas, opinions, or belief from the time he left Springfield until the day of his death.

In addition to all said by the persons I have mentioned, Mrs. Lincoln said that her husband *was not a Christian*. There are many other witnesses upon this question whose testimony can be found in a book entitled *Abraham Lincoln: Was He a Christian?* written by John E. Remsburg, and published in 1893. In that book will be found all the evidence on both sides. Mr. Remsburg states the case with great clearness, and demonstrates that Lincoln was not a Christian.

Now, what is a Christian?

First. He is a believer in the existence of God, the creator and governor of the universe.

Second. He believes in the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments.

Third. He believes in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ; that the Holy Ghost was his father.

Fourth. He believes that this Christ was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of men, that he was crucified, dead and buried, that he arose from the dead, and that he ascended into heaven.

Fifth. He believes in the "Fall of man," in the scheme of redemption through the Atonement.

Sixth. He believes in salvation by faith, that the few are to be eternally happy, and that the many are to be eternally damned.

Seventh. He believes in the Trinity, in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Now, is there the slightest evidence to show that Lincoln believed in the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments?

Has anybody said that he was heard to say that he so believed?

Does anybody testify that Lincoln believed in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, that the Holy Ghost was the Father, or that Christ was, or is, God?

Has anybody testified that Lincoln believed that Christ was raised from the dead?

Did anyone ever hear him say that he believed in the ascension of Jesus Christ? Did anyone ever hear him assert that he believed in the forgiveness of sins, or in salvation by faith, or that belief was a virtue and investigation a crime?

Where, then, is the evidence that he was a Christian?

There is another reason for thinking that Lincoln never became a Christian.

All will admit that he was an honest man, that he discharged all obligations perceived, and did what he believed to be his duty. If he had become a Christian, it was his duty publicly to say so. He was President; he had the ear of the nation; every citizen, had he spoken, would have listened. It was his duty to make a clear, explicit statement of his conversion, and it was his duty to join some orthodox church, and he should have endeavored to reach the heart and brain of the Republic. It was unmanly for him to keep his "second birth" a secret, and sneak into heaven leaving his old friends to travel the road to hell.

Great pains have been taken to show that Mr. Lincoln believed in, and worshipped, the one true God. This by many is held to have been his greatest virtue, the foundation of his character; and yet the God he worshipped, the God to whom he prayed, allowed him to be assassinated.

Is it possible that God will not protect his friends?

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Correspondence.

GOD, KRUGER, AND THE BIG BATTALIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the instalment of his lecture in last week's *Freethinker*, Dr. Robert Park makes a point which has been made by some other Freethinkers during the South African War, and which bears a word of criticism. We have often heard of the Napoleonic saying that God fights on the side of the biggest battalions, and Dr. Park, in this connection, says very much the same. Now, far be it from me to deny the utter worthlessness, from any point of view, philosophical or ethical, of the God-idea; no one will here suspect me of a desire to in any way rehabilitate that myth. But I must respectfully point out that the case of Kruger and the Transvaal seems an exceedingly awkward text on which to specifically found such an argument. The success of the Boers, time after time, against forces eight, ten, and even sixteen times their own, has actually driven pro-Boer religionists, with some show of plausibility, to exult in the demonstration that God sometimes fights on the side of the little battalions. Recently I heard this very aspect of the case discussed, and one speaker rather vigorously summed it up with the remark: "Well if, in addition to all the troops England has scraped up from the four corners of the earth, white, black, and copper-colored, she has had God on her side too, one can only say the Boers have made a damned good show against the combination." And the end is not yet. God *plus* the quarter-million have not been able for De Wet, who, perhaps, has the Devil backing him.

The real fact is that whilst, other things being equal, the big battalions will always win, yet big battalions alone, and in the absence of political sagacity and a sense of common justice, may often fail—a truth of which history furnishes sufficient proofs. Napoleon, with his battalions and his Star of Destiny (something suspiciously like the "Inevitable" of the Jingo politician), could win battles. But the Napoleonic policy was a failure.

There is one other point incidentally connected with this matter which it may be well to endeavor to make clear. Dr. Park seems by his tone—though I may make a mistake—to adopt the common imputation against President Kruger of being a canting hypocrite. "Old Kruger should have known better than pray to a Mumbo Jumbo," says Dr. Park, though why "old" Kruger should have been expected to exhibit so much more intelligence than "old" Roberts, the flower of Imperial chivalry and British military genius, it is not easy to see. It was bad enough and sad enough to see the war recommended to the Mumbo-Jumbo worshippers of England on the ground that Mr. Kruger was such an irreligious

knave. It was sadder and somewhat worse to see the war excused to Freethinkers on the ground that Kruger was so crassly religious.

The plain fact, again, I take to be that, as between the Briton and the Boer, the Boer is infinitely the more honest religionist of the two. The average Boer does really "believe." And I confess, if one must choose between the two types, I would rather have the rough honesty of the Boer religionist than the questionable honesty of the average British clergyman, who gets into his pulpit and preaches the old doctrine, with his tongue in his cheek and the last volume of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* on his study-table. FREDERICK RYAN.

"GRAINS OF SALT."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Permit me a brief reply to Mr. Coles. He tells us he is a Christian—that he takes the Bible as his standard and test of truth. I am exceedingly sorry; for, if anything is easy of demonstration, it is that his "standard" is as false and self-contradictory as any book ever published. However, as a Christian, he is bound to recognise the Bible-God as a living reality, and I must confine him to such. Surely he can have a very little knowledge of creeds if he does not know that such is anthropomorphic—purely a man-made tribal deity, "Yahveh," a brutal, cannibalistic, bloodthirsty conception, bearing the characteristics of those by whom fashioned, his chief occupation being ordering of the slaughtering of humanity, the most idiotic ceremonies, commanding the vilest form of slavery, drowning a world's inhabitants, and inspiring men to write the most abominable filth and falsehoods ever placed between two covers. I am indeed sorry, if Mr. Coles *must* have a God, he cannot find a better specimen to believe in. To me, at least, it seems truly pitiable that at this time of day an adult should put forward the Bible as the "standard and test of truth," and that it is a "revelation from a God."

Evolution, as applied to the sum-total of the known universe, takes no cognizance whatever of any personal God or Creator; it would be contrary to the fundamental principles of evolution; and I am bound to tell Mr. Coles that neither he (nor any man living) knows of a time when the universe of matter had no existence and needed creation. Therefore all "beliefs" in gods or creators can only amount to mere assumption—presumption; in short, blind guesses which are absolutely valueless to establish a fact.

Evolution does not recognise a personal God or Devil; it does not teach that organs were designed to function with; it does not teach a heaven or hell; it does not teach salvation through faith; it does not teach that man is a fallen angel, nor that his so-styled soul shall enjoy a conscious existence beyond the grave. Yet all this, and much more, Mr. Coles as a Christian is bound to believe in; I must, therefore, leave to his own judgment whether evolution and Christianity can both be true. He will first have to tell us where evolution teaches a *first man*, as per his standard of truth, the Bible; evolution certainly does not.

He inquires if "evil can be sufficiently accounted for by saying it is the result of the remains of the brute." I think so, decidedly; but why should a professed Christian ask such a question? He has only to refer to his "standard and test of truth," the Bible, and the question is answered—Isaiah lxxv. 7: "I form the light, I create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things."

If the Bible tale of the Fall be true, Mr. Coles' God must take all the credit for the "evil." He creates man with certain passions, surrounds him with certain circumstances, and condemns him and the vast majority of the human race to everlasting torment for acting as omniscience had foreseen, and as he had made him. If Mr. Coles' God be supreme, he could, did he desire, determine the moral character of every individual born. If he could not, he is not all-powerful; if he could, and does not, give him the credit for the evil propensities, for man created nothing.

If Mr. Coles' beliefs are true, his God fashioned man's brain with an incentive to rebel against him—a more powerful factor than the incentive to obey. If not, why did Adam fall? Mr. Coles' God knew beforehand what man would develop, and he possessed the knowledge that he would have to damn the vast majority to hell (although he would everyone should be saved). This speaks very little in favor of a Creator of that which is good. I do not doubt Mr. Coles is conscientious in his beliefs; but again I confess I am sorry for him. OCTAVIUS DREWELL.

When you have decided that a thing ought to be done and are doing it, never avoid being seen doing it, though the many shall form an unfavorable opinion about it. For, if it is not right to do it, avoid doing the thing; but if it is right, why are you afraid of those who shall find fault wrongly?—*Epicletus*.

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. Cohen, "What is there Left of Christianity?"

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. M. Robertson, "The Fallacies of Anti-Malthusians."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "The Ethics of Property."
STREATHAM AND BRIXTON ETHICAL INSTITUTE (Raleigh College Hall, Effra-road, Brixton Hill): 7, W. Birks, "Astronomy and its Lessons."

BATTERSEA ETHICAL SOCIETY (455 Battersea Park-road): 3.15, J. Oakesmith, M.A., "Browning's Poetry."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Stanton Coit, Ph.D., "The Just and Unjust."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30 and 7, Mr. White.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, J. W. Cox.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): G. W. Foote—10.45 (in the Bull Ring), Free-thought Demonstration; 3 (in Assembly Rooms), "The Fable of Jesus Christ"; 7 (in Assembly Rooms), "Priestcraft on the Birmingham School Board."

COVENTRY (Assembly Hall, Union-street): Monday, April 22, at 8, G. W. Foote, "Religion in the Light of Science."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Charles Watts, "Will Christianity Survive the Twentieth Century?"

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—D. Black; 6.30, J. S. Hill, "Prehistoric Peoples of Europe."

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, A lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "The Religion of the Greeks."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A. W. Short, "The Natural History of the Devil."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, W. Simpson, "Memory and Education."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lecture or reading by a Local Gentleman.

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

Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—April 21, Birmingham. 28, Glasgow. May 4 and 5, Stanley; 12, Birmingham; 19, Birmingham.

ATHENÆUM HALL, 73 Tottenham Court-road, W.

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