

# THE Freethinker

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*So densely is the world thronged that any shifting of position, even the best warranted advance, hurts somebody's heels.*—THOMAS HARDY.

## The Holy War.—II.

(Concluded from page 642.)

### IV.

Long before Johnson, and soon after Bacon, the wise and witty, and generally humane, Thomas Fuller dealt with this point in his *History of the Holy War*—that is, of the Crusades. Fuller gives the arguments for and against the "lawfulness of the Holy War" without positively committing himself to either side. Amongst the affirmative arguments, he perhaps implies, but he does not assert, that the Mohammedans were bound to propagate their religion by the sword. "A preventive war," he says, grounded on a just fear of invasion is lawful; but such was this holy war." The only "fear" he actually alleges, however, is based upon the Saracenic conquests, which had driven Christianity out of Africa and Asia, and were threatening it in Europe. This might have justified the Christian nations in joining together to keep the Saracens out of Europe: but, as a matter of fact, they did not join together for that object; their aim was simply to wrest Palestine—and with it Jerusalem and the Sepulchre of Christ—from the hands of the "unbelievers," who had been peaceably settled there for four hundred and sixty years!

Fuller, although a doctor of divinity, was so little of a bigot that he not only slurred over the popular Christian belief so openly adopted by Bacon, but often put in a good word for the Mohammedans. The following admission, touching the state of the Christians in Palestine, is quite remarkable:—

"Now the condition of the Christians under these Saracens was as uncertain as April weather. Sometimes they enjoyed the liberty and public exercise of their religion; and, to give the Mahometans their due, they are generally good fellows on this point, and Christians amongst them may keep their consciences free, if their tongues be fettered not to oppose the doctrine of Mahomet."

We do not believe that such an honest sentence concerning Mohammedanism can be found in the pages of any contemporary writer. Fuller probably felt in his heart that Christianity was the more intolerant religion of the two.

Historically, it is quite true that the Mohammedans have always allowed Christians to live amongst them in peace—at least to a far greater extent than Christians have tolerated Mohammedans. Mohammed himself never oppressed the Christians who would live at peace with him. Gibbon justly observes that he "readily granted the security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship." Christian churches were permitted in Mohammedan states, although no Christian state would have tolerated a Mohammedan mosque. The Mohammedan conquerors of India showed religious toleration to the inhabitants; and the first empire in modern times in which perfect religious freedom was uni-

versal, was that of Akbar, whose magnanimity has been sung by Tennyson. The Arabian caliphs gave freedom to all the oriental sects, employed Christians as secretaries and physicians, appointed them collectors of the revenue, and sometimes raised them to the command of cities and provinces. Saladin, on recapturing Jerusalem from the Crusaders, treated the Latin Christians as foreigners, and therefore as captives of war; but he regarded the Greek and Oriental Christians as inhabitants of the locality, and therefore permitted them to remain as his subjects, and to worship their gods in their own fashion. Nor has this tolerant tradition ever been violated. Many a fugitive from Christian bigotry has found shelter in Turkey. Jews and Christians enjoy equal liberty of conscience throughout the Turkish empire. Latin and Greek Christians are both allowed to worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Yet their hatred of each other is still so great that a line of Turkish soldiers stand between them to prevent their flying at each other's throats. What a spectacle! And how the Turk, who worships one God, without a rival or a partner, must look down with contempt on these quarrelsome superstitionists!

### V.

With regard to the Turks, in particular, it is a common Christian notion that they were always brutal conquerors, who upheld and extended their religion simply by the sword. This is a very mistaken notion. When the Turkish power was flourishing, before it began to decay under the attacks and diplomacy of Russia, and the general pressure of the European governments, it was renowned for its liberality.

Let us pause here to tell a story—a true one. During the bitter persecution of the inoffensive Quakers in England in the seventeenth century, many women were stripped and flogged on their naked backs in public places. This suffering and indignity was inflicted upon them by their fellow Christians; not tumultuously, but deliberately, in the name of the law, and by the order of the authorities. One simple young woman was flogged from town to town, and frequently imprisoned under shocking conditions. Being an invincible enthusiast, she took it into her head to go off to the East and speak to the Sultan of Turkey. She succeeded in making her way there, and found the Sultan encamped before Adrianople. She was brought before him, and he listened courteously to her "message from God." When she had finished he told her that what she had said was very good, and thanked her for her trouble, although he could not quite believe all that she did. He then asked her how she came so far alone. She replied that she trusted in God. Whereupon he smiled, and said he hardly thought this protection enough for a lonely maid. He saw that her wants were supplied, and appointed a guard to conduct her safely through his own dominions.

What a fine gentleman! If men must have kings, this is the sort they should have. We could do with a few like him in modern Europe. And just think of the two different experiences of that Quaker maiden. Brutally ill-treated in her own country by her fellow-Christians, and treated with the noblest courtesy by a Mohammedan ruler in a foreign land!

The spirit displayed by that Sultan was far from



singular in the great days of the Turkish empire. There was, indeed, a tradition of magnanimity in the Mohammedan world. It was remembered how finely the Caliph Omar had acted after his capture of Jerusalem; how the lives, liberties, possessions, and churches of the Christians were respected. It was remembered how the Crusaders, hundreds of years afterwards, recaptured Jerusalem, and turned it into a slaughter-house. It was remembered how, in spite of this terrible provocation, Saladin listened to the voice of humanity when he won Jerusalem back from the Christians; how he shed no unnecessary drop of blood, and showed the tenderest compassion to his captives. Never had the great Mohammedan rulers dealt with the Christians after the method so often employed in Europe. They could have swept Christianity out of their dominions as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or as Louis XIV. drove Protestantism out of France. But they did nothing of the kind. If they had, there would have been no Christian Churches, or Christian provinces, left to give rise to the present-day troubles in the Turkish empire.

When the Turks took Constantinople, in 1453, the first thing Mohammed II. did, after re-establishing order in the city, was to issue a decree of toleration to the Christians, who were practically allowed to regulate their own affairs. Indeed, the majority of them found the change a welcome relief, after their experience of Christian misrule.

Mohammedanism spread in South-east Europe subsequently without compulsion. The fact is that freedom and toleration were only to be found under the Sultan's government. Jews fled to it from persecution; persecuted Protestants looked towards it with longing eyes. Even the Russians praised it when the Catholic Poles, in the seventeenth century, inflicted frightful atrocities on the members of the orthodox Eastern Church. It was in reference to these horrors that Macarius, the Patriarch of Antioch, exclaimed "God perpetuate the empire of the Turks for ever! For they," he added, "take their impost, and enter into no account of religion, be their subjects Christians or Nazarenes, Jews or Samaritans."

It may be objected that the Turks carved out an empire with the sword, and that this is tantamount to the spread of Mohammedanism by the same means. But is not this objection nonsensical? With what, pray, did the British carve out an empire in India? And is that empire, won as it was, a proof that Christianity is spread by the sword?

## VI.

Now if Mohammedanism has, as a matter of fact, been far more tolerant than Christianity, there must be something wrong somewhere when Christians stand up and address Mohammedans as persecutors, represent them as being under a fatal necessity of propagating their religion by the sword, and accuse them of being a perpetual menace to all their neighbors.

Mohammed distinctly says in the Koran, "Let there be no compulsion in religion." "Wilt thou," he asks, "compel men to become believers? No soul can believe but by the permission of God." The Prophet of Islam never said anything really contrary to this. All the texts that are cited about war with unbelievers were, as we shall see presently, of local and special application.

That the Mussulman faith never forced consciences was emphasised by one of the Spanish Mohammedans who was driven out of Spain in the last expulsion of the Moriscos in 1610, at the instigation of the bloody Inquisition. Here are some of his words:—

"Did our victorious ancestors ever once attempt to extirpate Christianity out of Spain, when it was in their power? Did they not suffer your forefathers to enjoy the free use of their rites at the same time that they wore their chains? Is not the absolute injunction of our Prophet, that whatever nation is conquered by Mussulman steel, should, upon payment of a moderate annual tribute, be permitted to persevere in their own

pristine persuasion, how absurd soever, or to embrace what other belief they themselves best approved of? If there may have been some examples of forced conversions, they are so rare as scarce to deserve mentioning, and only attempted by men who had not the fear of God, and the Prophet, before their eyes, and who, in so doing, have acted directly and diametrically contrary to the holy precepts and ordinances of Islam, which cannot, without sacrilege, be violated by any who would be held worthy of the honorable epithet of Mussulman..... You can never produce, among us, any bloodthirsty, formal tribunal, on account of different persuasions in points of faith, that anywise approaches your execrable Inquisition. Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion; but we are not allowed by our sacred Kurán to tyrannise over consciences."

This very toleration was urged against them as one of their principle crimes by the Archbishop of Valencia, who presented Philip III., in 1602, with an account of the "Apostacies and Treasons of the Moriscos," with a view to their expulsion from the Christian soil of Spain. One article against them was: "That they commended nothing so much as liberty of conscience, in all matters of religion, which the Turks, and all other Mohammedans, suffer their subjects to enjoy."

In spite of all this it is urged that the Jihad, or Holy War, is taught in the Koran, and is a part of the law and faith of Islam.

Professor Arnold, who devotes a chapter to this subject, shows conclusively that the meaning of the verb *jahada* is really to "strive, labor, toil, exert oneself, take pains, be diligent." "Primarily," he says, "the word bears no reference to war or fighting, much less to fighting against unbelievers or forcible conversion of them, but derives its particular application from the context only." This he proves by citing all the passages in the Koran in which the word occurs.

There is no higher English authority than Lane, and his verdict is clear and decisive. "No precept," he says, "is to be found in the Kurán which, taken with the context, can justify unprovoked war."

Professor Arnold shows that the verses so often quoted from the ninth chapter of the Koran had reference only to the Meccans, who had violated a truce and compelled Mohammed to fight by attacking his allies. To accept them as of universal application is like accepting the Old Testament order to exterminate the Canaanites as implying a similar duty on the part of modern Christians.

We may observe, in passing, that it has been maintained that all the wars of Mohammed were defensive. He also appears to have warned his followers against beginning a war. "The holy war," as Dozy says, "is only imposed as a duty in the single case of the enemies of Islam being the aggressors; if the prescriptions of the Koran are taken otherwise, it is by an arbitrary interpretation on the part of theologians."

Professor Arnold's summary of the whole matter is as follows:—

"It is due to the Muhammadan legists and commentators that jihad came to be interpreted as a religious war against unbelievers, who might be attacked even though they were not the aggressors; but such a doctrine is wholly unauthorised by the Qur'an, and can only be extracted therefrom by quoting isolated portions of different verses, considered apart from the context and the special circumstances under which they were delivered and to which alone they were held to refer, being in no way intended as positive injunctions for future observance or religious precepts for coming generations. But though some Muhammadan legists have maintained the rightfulness of unprovoked war against unbelievers, none (as far as I am aware) have ventured to justify compulsory conversion, but have always vindicated for the conquered the right of retaining their own faith on payment of *jizyah*."

The only point to be added is that "some legists" are not all legists. As far as we can ascertain, the majority of Mohammedan legists have been against unprovoked war on unbelievers. There were always some of these gentlemen ready to second the policy of ambitious conquerors. But whenever has Christendom been short of the same fraternity?



## VII.

When all is said and done, the fact remains that all the great Holy Wars in history have been fought by Christians. If the tree is to be judged by its fruit—or, to use a more homely image, if the proof of the pudding is in the eating—it follows that Christianity is the supremely intolerant religion. It was a holy war when Charlemagne offered the Northern Pagans baptism or death. It was a holy war when the Papal sword was sharpened against the Albigenses. It was a holy war when Alva butchered and burnt in the Netherlands. It was a holy war when the Great Armada sailed for England. It was a holy war when the heretics were destroyed by myriads in the massacre of St. Bartholomew. It was a holy war when Louis XIV. dragoonaded the Huguenots and swept the survivors out of France. It was a holy war when Germany was devastated and depopulated for thirty long years. It was a holy war when the Moriscos and the Jews were driven, in the midst of unspeakable barbarities, out of Spain. It was a holy war when the Spanish conquerors of America, with the Pope's blessing, carried fire and slaughter amongst the mild and hospitable Indians. It was a holy war when the Protestants and Catholics, from England to Poland, fought each other all over the continent of Europe. It was a holy war when the Catholics burnt the Protestants, and the Protestants burnt the Catholics, for a mere difference of opinion. And it has been a holy war every time the Christians have let themselves loose, with massacre and violation, upon the poor inoffensive Jews.

But the greatest of all holy wars was the Holy War—the Crusades—whose history was written by Fuller before it was written by Gibbon, Michaud, and Mills. It lasted a hundred and ninety-four years, and was, as Fuller said, "for continuance the longest, for bloodshed the cruellest, for pretences the most pious the world ever saw." Christianity hurled itself against Mohammedanism in nine successive crusades, with the professed object of wresting the Holy Land from the hands of the "infidels." It was captured and held for a while; and then lost again for ever. The bogus sepulchre of Christ—for it is no more—was still left in the custody of unbelievers. And in less than two centuries afterwards the Turkish crescent floated over the first Christian cathedral in Europe, in the first Christian city ever built—the city of Constantine. It floats there now, after the lapse of four hundred and fifty years. Perhaps it is destined to disappear. Christian divisions allowed it to come, and Christian divisions allow it to continue. But there is no need to vilify a people who had their great day of empire when our forefathers were little else than barbarians; and still less need, if possible, to fling bigoted libels at the faith they profess. If a proud nation must go down to its grave, those who are digging the pit for it need not prepare to heap over it a mountain of lies.

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Unanswerable Argument.

AN unanswerable argument! And in defence of Christianity! Such was the title of a lecture by Mr. H. Maldwyn Hughes, B.A., of Birmingham, the place from whence so many startling things have recently issued. The discovery was remarkable and, if sound, momentous. Christianity is at present in such a parlous condition, its traditional defences are so woefully discredited, that this discovery quite puts that of Radium in the shade, and the discoverer deserves to rank as the Newton of theology. The only consideration to give us pause is that we have all met many so-called "unanswerable" arguments before, and invariably they have turned out to be as invincible as dummy guns in times of peace. I had a feeling of doubt before ever reading the lecture, and this was afterwards confirmed. For Mr. Hughes' unanswerable argument turned out to be, after all,

only a repetition of the familiar argument from experience—an argument fallacious and inconclusive.

Mill said, in reply to the argument of the utility of religion, that such a device is never resorted to until that of its truthfulness has ceased to convince. While people believe that religion is true, and that it rests upon producible evidence that appeals to all educated minds, few trouble about the plea of utility. It is when the former argument has ceased to convince that the latter is resorted to, and in the hope that a bribe may accomplish what reason cannot. The same may be said of the argument from subjective personal experience. If the religionist could produce any kind of objective evidence in defence of his beliefs, he would not trouble about this other and highly-questionable kind. But, seeing that the objective evidence for religion breaks down wherever it is submitted to scrutiny, the personal feeling of believers is used to fill the gap.

The reason for the use of this argument is very ingenuously stated in a quotation from Dr. Dale, because it rests "on foundations which lie far beyond the reach of scientific and historical criticism." Why are Christians so very anxious to rest their faith upon evidence that does not come within the bounds of criticism? Obviously because they feel that *within* the region of criticism any defence is hopeless. Given an argument for religion that can be placed in relation to facts, and it falls to the ground. The only chance remaining is to put forward a defence which, it is hoped, *cannot* be brought into such relation, and so depend for its acceptance upon personal prejudices and prepossessions. A scientific teaching is unanswerable because it overcomes all contrary reasoning, and absorbs all facts bearing upon it. The religious argument is "unanswerable" because it cannot—so it is believed—be brought to the test of evidence at all. And a man with a university degree at the end of his name might reasonably be expected to see that an argument that is not open to disproof shuts out proof in exactly the same degree.

Mr. Hughes has all the familiar juggling with the word "experience." All politics, all science, he says, rest upon experience. Why, then, should not experience be equally valid in religion? Well, it would be if the same name covered the same thing. But there is this vital distinction between the two. The experience of the scientist is exclusively his only until such time as it is made public. After that it becomes the property of all who are able to appreciate it. Mr. Charles Booth asks us to believe certain things concerning the London poor, not because of his own incommunicable experience, but because of an experience that, by his agency, becomes ours. But the "experience" about which Mr. Hughes speaks no more resembles this than a horse-chestnut does a chestnut horse. It is something that is the exclusive property of a section of the religious world, it cannot be communicated, and large numbers of people who are morally and mentally sane find it impossible to acquire it. And, in addition, all the moral and mental characteristics which Mr. Hughes cites as proof of this experience are shown by those who are destitute of the experience of "God in the soul."

It is these two considerations, and particularly the latter, that knocks the bottom out of the religious argument from experience. Mr. Hughes makes much of the many men and women who have in all ages based their belief in Christianity upon this subjective experience of Christ. He says "An experience common to multitudes of men living in various ages and circumstances cannot be airily dismissed as a delusion," nor will it do to dismiss it as all due to "religio-mania." But if we except the phenomena of revivalism, which is unquestionably "religio-mania," there is really no need to explain away this "experience" as due either to delusion or insanity. If a man asserts that he is influenced by certain feelings to go forth and do a certain work, there is no need whatever to question his statement. Every individual is an absolute authority as to his own feelings. But if he goes on



to say what is the *source* of these feelings any other person is as much an authority as he is, and may be even a better one. It is not a question of the *reality* of feelings, but of what is their origin and significance. This consideration never crosses the religious mind.

Mr. Hughes cites Professor James' dictum, "The significance of certain states of mind must be tested, not by their origin, but by their fruits," as though that were conclusive. This is very far from being the case; the truth being that the significance of a state of mind from either point of view alone is one-sided and inconclusive. If we are judging states of mind from an objective social standpoint, their outcome in action is of primary importance. But if we are judging them from the standpoint of their subjective worth, then their origin is of primary importance. Bodily states, class sympathies, educational influences, all have their weight in determining states of mind, and to ignore these is in the highest degree foolish.

Mr. Hughes cites Wilberforce as proof of the power of religion in one direction, and Raikes, the founder of Sunday-schools, as an instance in another direction. Well, but Paine, who was not under the influence of Christianity, wrote against slavery before Wilberforce, and the educational efforts of Raikes are poor indeed at the side of those of Robert Owen, who said that all the religions of the world were only so many forms of geographical insanity. If the conduct of the first two was due to Christianity, to what are we to attribute the work of Paine and Owen? Either we must admit that the results which are attributed to Christianity may be achieved without it, or we must find a common cause for both classes of men.

Another instance cited is that of the moral influence exerted on English life by the Wesleyan revival in the eighteenth century. Mr. Hughes, following John Richard Green, greatly exaggerates this influence; but this does not now matter. The important point is that these waves of enthusiasm, moral and non-moral, are the commonest of social phenomenon. We have recently passed through one in connection with the South African war. Abroad, in Russia, Mr. Hughes can read of numbers of devoted men and women—Freethinkers for the most part—who, whether they be wise or unwise in their conduct, are risking life and fortune, braving the terrors of Russian prisons and Siberian exile, in the hopes of achieving the freedom and happiness of their fellows. Another instance is found in the French Revolution, when, on a celebrated occasion, the nobles relinquished voluntarily the privileges of centuries in response to the moral contagion of the moment. What does Mr. Hughes make of all these instances? Here is the same moral enthusiasm, the same devotion to an ideal, found apart from Christianity that is asserted to be one of its characteristic products.

We can go even further. What does Mr. Hughes make of the numbers of men and women who brave social ostracism to-day, and who have in the past braved imprisonment and death, in attacking Christianity? We, of course, can understand their action; but can anyone in the position of Mr. Hughes? He can understand the Christian playing the evangelist; he is ordered to do so, and expects reward in the next world for his obedience. But the Freethinker, from his point of view, must be a downright lunatic. Yet for moral enthusiasm on behalf of a cause believed to be a good one, the Freethinker can safely challenge comparison with the Christian world.

A further instance still. Myriads have found rest in Christ, says Mr. Hughes. Well, but myriads have also found rest in Mohammed, in Buddha, in Confucius, or in Zoroaster. Mr. Hughes meets this by saying that under Christianity a higher life is reached than under Buddha. But this is a sheer evasion of the point at issue. The point is not under which belief the highest life is reached, but whether under other influences there is any impulse to a higher life. If there is, the case for Christianity breaks down.

Although one may point out in passing that it is highly questionable whether Christianity makes for a higher life than Buddhism. Certainly Buddhism has kept its followers free from at least one vice, and Mohammedanism has kept its followers free from at least one other. But Christianity has not during the whole of its history managed to keep its followers free from a single vice of any description. Every vice under the sun has flourished from time to time under Christian influences, and Christianity has been altogether powerless to cope with them. And a very good proof of the ineffectiveness of Christianity may be found in the fact of its teachers ignoring every circumstance of race, climate, or social institutions, and attributing everything, *in a non-Christian country*, as due to its religion.

In fact, what Mr. Hughes offers to the Freethinker as an "unanswerable argument" is no argument at all. The problem is not that of a person possessing feelings that are not possessed by others, but that of certain individuals who ascribe their feelings to a religious source and cover them with a religious cloak. And this, far from being a surprise to the Freethinker is exactly what he would expect. The Mohammedan, brought up in one environment, describes his feelings in terms of the current creed. The Jew does the same, the Christian does the same. The Freethinker, who looks at life from a healthier point of view, dismisses the discordant element of religion from all these instances, and finds as a residuum the common influence of social fellowship and humanitarian development. There are many proofs that might be offered of the stultifying influence of religious beliefs; but to the thinker, the most conclusive is that its votaries cannot rid themselves of the anti-social attitude of estimating conduct from the standpoint of a sect, and judging life from that of unverified and unverifiable dogmas.

C. COHEN.

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### Thetford.

SAID to be older than London, the birthplace of Paine stands on the confluence of the Little Ouse and the Thet, one half of the town being in Norfolk, the other in Suffolk; but whether the one county or the other may claim the honor of producing the great reformer, is a point which may never be satisfactorily settled, although such evidence as can be garnered favors the Norfolk side; and, indeed, warrants Dr. Conway going so far as to place the exact spot—viz., Bridge-street (now White Hart-street) in a house, since demolished, and replaced by a garden—an ideal site, by the way, for the erection of some kind of permanent memorial. Local traditions, however, differ respecting the particular house, and the absence of record renders it difficult to reject one story in favor of another. An old inhabitant will assert that the old-English house, an Elizabethan domicile in a fine state of repair, in White Hart-street, first sheltered Paine; another is just as certain of a cot in Guildhall-street, while a third points to Bury-road (No. 41), on the Suffolk side.

Whatever doubt there may be as to Paine's natal shire, it seems pretty certain that his parents were of Suffolk, as their marriage took place at Euston Church on June 20, 1734, the record giving the name as "Joseph Pain." It would appear, therefore, that this county gave to the world the forbears of two of the greatest enemies of the Christian religion, Thomas Paine and Charles Bradlaugh; the grandfather of the latter, James Bradlaugh, being a contemporary of Paine, and hailing from Brandeston, some twenty miles from the village of Euston.

The assigned date of Paine's birth is January 29, 1737; and, in Thetfordian tradition, this year stands out prominently for another event—that of taking of a 200lb. sturgeon by the paper-mill, on the Ouse, April 15. This river afforded boating exercise for the boys of the grammar-school, and it is said that



our hero frequently coxswained a crew of his brother scholars in roystering expeditions to the neighboring town of Brandon. Another diversion consisted of races down the "Castle Hill," which is a huge beacon-like eminence of Norse or Saxon construction, with sides almost perpendicular; and the "games" took the form of runs down these sides and arresting the impetus half-way—a feat that one would imagine were impossible; yet local folklore has it that two boys, in their day, excelled at this play—Tommy Paine and Roger North. In the schoolroom, legend relates that Thomas proved an apt and ready pupil, not, however, by any means tractable or docile.

Apart from its famous son, Thetford appeals in many ways to the casual visitor; and, to the archaeologist, it must surely be a place of delight. Originally, it is said to have borne the name of the "Mighty City in the East"; by the monks' historians it is designated "Hierapolis et Monachopolis," also "Sitomagus"; with conquest by the Anglo-Saxons, the name became "Theodford," this being rendered "Tetford" or "Tetfort" in Domesday. And it once boasted of twenty-six churches; these are now reduced to three—"two too many," as a local clergyman smilingly explained to me. Interesting enough in their way are these remnants; but of all, the little Quaker meeting-house, with its thatched roof, in Cage-lane, where Paine first worshipped, at once excites the imagination. Here it was that the author of the *Age of Reason* began to suspect the Christian religion; and the thoughts which a sombre superstition here inspired were destined to blossom into written words that have spread throughout the world, converting thousands. That this little chapel should have survived the American Rebellion, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic epoch, and the Victorian era is somewhat extraordinary. Its very insignificance saved it, doubtless; but hardly in the poetical fitness of things was it that its vicissitudes should have culminated in the housing of the Salvation Army, yet such occurred. They are now cleared out, the structure being pronounced unsafe; and demolishing operations promise shortly to obliterate the last link of Thetford Quakerism.

To lovers of Dickens it may not be uninteresting to mention that the Eatanswill of the *Pickwick Papers* is identified as Thetford, and that Mrs. Leo Hunter, Mr. Pott, and the rest were derived more or less faithfully from local prototypes of the early thirties. That the rowdiness of the period, as depicted in the election scenes, is not overdrawn may be inferred from the circumstance that the mayor prohibited a meeting of Cobbett's fixed to take place March 22, 1830, on the ground that the town was crowded, owing to the assizes. Cobbett had frequently lectured in these parts, and naturally often referred to the author of the *Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance*. Following is typical (*Rural Rides*, p. 61):—

"Spent the evening among the farmers at their market room at Holt. They heard me patiently, and, I believe, were well convinced of the truth of what I said. I told them of the correctness of the predictions of their great countryman, Mr. Paine, and observed, how much better it would have been to take his advice than to burn him in effigy."

Speaking of Dickens suggests a closer inspection of this (the Bell) hotel, where these rough notes are penned. A cursory glance shows it to be quite ancient, the yard being the counterpart of the picture that usually fronts a volume of *Pickwick*. Almost certainly no builder's hands have touched it since Paine's time; and, conceivably, he often used the now lonely smoke room in which I sit. All this incites a train of reflection; and in imagination I see the smockfrocked boy careering up and down Bridge-street, just outside. His first lessons in staymaking provoke laughter, inasmuch as I had been assured to-day that "stay" in this case had reference to corsets, not to ships' ropes, so that the Carlylean phrase, "rebellious needleman," much to my mortification, held good; and—what an occupation for a Paine! The industry appears to have died out in

this town long since; and the making of traction engines, instead, forms the staple trade. Singular, this, since iron and coalfields are so remote from this part of East Anglia; yet the tramp of the workmen to and from the forges disturbs the sleeper here just as much as at Rotherham, in Yorkshire, where Paine had his bridge built.

Agriculture hereabouts flourishes, and the cost of living probably stands unequalled in England for cheapness, a decent house and plot running to three or four pounds a year, free from rates and taxes. The great landlords, such as Lord Iveagh (Guinness, of Dublin), it is gratifying to learn, do much towards the prosperity and well-being of a contented tenantry. Farmers and the like, on occasions, naturally assemble in the bar parlors of Thetford; and to the close observer of local customs one trait, noticeable here, would, if generally adopted, most certainly make for temperance, and that is that each man, however friendly the assembled company may be, pays for his own drink. It is not, however, in such places that anything can be gleaned respecting the great deist; true, they know the legend of his being a rank Atheist, a drunkard, and a bad character generally, and the introducing of the name in casual conversation merely revives what is now regarded as an old grandmother's story. Altogether different is the impression conveyed by a few minutes' conversation with a cultured inhabitant of the place. He can point to the cottage wherein Paine's aged mother was supported by her son, whether domiciled in America, France, or England. The same man will tell you that on such and such a wall in the National Portrait Gallery, Trafalgar-square, hangs Romney's best portrait of the writer of the *Rights of Man*; and that the astronomical orrery referred to in the *Age of Reason* may be seen in the Army and Navy Museum, Whitehall. "It was the argument from the orrery" said he, "that first convinced me." "Strange," I remarked, at the conclusion of an evening's chat, as my guest was about to leave the hotel, "strange that you haven't got a single tablet or memorial to him in the whole town?" "Hush!" he replied, "it's not even yet respectable!"

Left alone, I called for a newspaper; the obliging waitress returning, said all were engaged, but here was one a few days old. Glancing down the columns I read the Reuter's telegram announcing that, after the final contest, *Reliance* and *Shamrock* anchored at New Rochelle, Long Island Sound. And that reminded me that the little Thetford boy, who became the engineer, the thinker, the writer, the statesman, and the MAN, and to whose memory I had made these few days' pilgrimage, anchored, after many contests, nearly a hundred years ago, at the same New Rochelle, Long Island Sound.

W. B.

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#### THE DEFECT OF DEISM.

The common people are wont to crave a revelation, or else they find atheism a rather better synthesis than any other. They either cling to the miraculously transmitted message with its hopes of recompense, and its daily communication of the divine voice in prayer or sacrament, or else they make a world which moves through space as a black monstrous ship with no steersman. The bare deistic idea, of a being endowed at once with sovereign power and sovereign clemency, with might that cannot be resisted and justice that cannot be impugned, who loves man with infinite tenderness, yet sends him no word of comfort and gives him no way of deliverance, is too hard a thing for those who have to endure the hardships of the brutes, but yet preserve the intelligence of men.

—John Morley.

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#### TRUE AND FALSE EDUCATION.

By this you may recognise true education from false. False education is a delightful thing, and warms you, and makes you every day think more of yourself. And true education is a deadly cold thing, with a Gorgon's shield on her head, and makes you every day think worse of yourself.

—Ruskin.



## Acid Drops.

The controversy between Dissenters and Church people over the Education Act, we are pleased to see, continues. We emphasise our pleasure for the reason that a continuance of the quarrel seems, under present conditions, about the only thing that will induce Christian leaders to act honestly in the matter. Events are, in fact, working in this direction, and, given time, a consummation of a kind that will give justice to all will be reached. Mr. George W. E. Russell's letter to the *Daily News* is referred to elsewhere, and we have noted one or two other expressions of opinion of the same kind. But, meanwhile there is the same nauseous cant from purely Nonconformist circles. Mr. White, President of the Baptist Union, said the other day that "The Nonconformists of 1870 held two principles with great tenacity; first, that religious training must be an integral part of all education; and second, that as it was no function of the State to teach religion, education must be a national and not a State work." We are well aware that Nonconformists *professed* these principles in 1870, but we are also aware that they ran away from their professed principles directly a chance occurred of benefiting the Chapel at the expense of the public Churchmen were acting consistently in supporting religious teaching in State schools; the conduct of the others showed that they would stick to no principle when sectarian interests would be promoted by deserting it. It should be borne constantly in mind that this shameless recreancy to principle of Nonconformists has been one of the chief causes of the comparative backwardness of English education.

Mr. White showed either his own want of reasoning power or want of justice in the further statement that, "Consistently with their objection to State teaching of religion, the Bible could be taught in the State schools as the vehicle of instructing children in those moral truths which every citizen desires his child to learn." This statement is either foolish or dishonest, or both. Mr. White knows full well that what he and his supporters want is a certain *religious* instruction based upon the Bible; and the man who cannot see that this is in direct conflict with the principle that the State should not teach religion must be much more stupid than the President of the Baptist Union appears to be. We may as well be quite plain, and say that we do not believe that any man of average intelligence can fail to see that these two things will not, and cannot, harmonise. It is too much to expect us to believe that when a man like Dr. Clifford asks for *any* form of Christian instruction in public schools, and at the same time says that he is opposed to the State teaching religion, that he is not conscious of the insincerity of the profession. And the expression about using the Bible as the vehicle of moral instruction may also be dismissed as a hypocritical desire for getting the Bible into the schools under false pretences.

Mr. White also poured contempt upon the old Christian dogma of the total depravity of the child, with which we, of course, agree. But it is well to remember that this was a peculiarly *Christian* teaching, and is only one of many which Christians now treat with contempt, and declare to have had a demoralising influence. Now, suppose someone were to draw up a kind of profit and loss account, putting on one side all the good that Christianity is *supposed* to have done, and all the evil it has admittedly committed in the shape of teaching false science, false history, and demoralising ethics, what kind of balance would be left? A poor one for Christianity, we expect. It is a curious thing that while Christians are always trumpeting the good influence of Christianity, yet, when they come to concrete instances, they are forced to denounce the principal historic teachings of their faith as unsound and immoral. A strange commentary upon the sanity of Christian judgment!

Freedom of speech is more important than any political or social party—and we are amongst its resolute defenders. For this reason we hope a certain report is exaggerated. It is said that the Social Democratic Federation men went to a meeting of the Stratford Co-operative Society in the Town Hall, at which Mr. Fred Maddison was to be the chief speaker; that they kicked up a row there, insisted that Mr. Maddison should not be heard, and finally stormed the platform and compelled him to escape by a side door; this being followed by several free fights in the audience. Now this, if it all happened, is sheer political hooliganism. Mr. Maddison is standing as the Liberal candidate at Burnley, and Mr. Hyndman is standing as the Socialist candidate. But why should the battle be fought out at Stratford? And why should Social Democrats, of all people in the world, stop men's mouths with violence?

Mr. Allen Upward, the novelist, who went out and fought on the Greek side in the late war with Turkey, protests against "the growing tendency to treat the Liberal Party as a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, instead of as a secular union for secular purposes." We hope the warning is not too late.

Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad. If the ancient proverb still holds good the fighting Free Church party must be pretty near destruction. They are so besotted as to declare they will have their own way or nothing. Dr. Clifford waxed hot at the Baptist Conference against Mr. Birrell's "right of entry" proposals in the new *Independent Review*. Mr. Birrell's way out of the present difficulty is that the children in elementary schools should all have "a good sound secular education," and that "at the close of each day's secular work, for which alone the tax and rate payer will be responsible," they should "receive in the school-house the religious instruction their parents desire them to have." No, no! says Dr. Clifford; we will have no priests in the schools at all; the religion shall be taught by the ordinary teachers under public control. In other words, it must be Nonconformist religion, for that is what undenominational Christianity comes to. If Churchmen and Catholics accept this the reign of justice will obtain; if not, the Nonconformists are basely oppressed. What a comedy!

Mr. Birrell warns both the Church and Chapel parties that they stand to lose a good deal unless they come to an agreement. "If no such compromise is possible," he says, "the fight must continue, with consequences to the cause of religion which some day will startle both Churchman and Dissenter." We believe this is quite true.

Nature endows all animals with the instinct of self-preservation, and self-preservation makes them extremely cunning in looking after their own longevity. This is the true key to the clever hypocrisy of the Free Churches—that is to say, really, the Free Church ministers—in the present Education struggle. There is, indeed, an admirable illustration of this truth in the recent action of the Birmingham Evangelical Free Church Council. This body, consisting, we believe, entirely of Nonconformist men of God, has drawn up a series of questions to be submitted to candidates at the November municipal elections; and every one of these questions, however decorated with fine phrases of affected citizenship, turns upon some point in the war between the so-called Free Churches and the Church of England. Let us look at these questions closely, and we shall see this as plain as a pikestaff.

The first question is whether the candidate "favors a national system of education, giving complete and popular control to the elected representatives of the people; abolition of sectarian tests for teachers; and the omission of sectarian teaching from the curriculum of State-supported schools." Now the first part of this question means, Will you help to abolish the Voluntary schools? And as most of the Voluntary schools belong to the Church of England, it is easy to perceive what the Nonconformists are driving at. The second part of the question is, of course, a bit of solemn humbug. Free Churchmen only want to abolish "sectarian tests" as between themselves and the Anglican Church. They want to keep them up as between themselves and all non-Christian denominations. The third part of the question, about "sectarian teaching," is of precisely the same character. They do want sectarian teaching, for they want a special form of Christianity which suits *them* (in the circumstances) taught in the State-supported schools. Churchmen want *another* special form of Christianity taught there. And that is all the difference between these two bodies.

We need not trouble about the second, third, and fourth questions, with their hypocritical play upon the word "denominational"—as though Christianity itself were not denominational nowadays—but just take the fifth (and last) question. It asks the candidate whether, in the selection of teachers for provided schools, he is prepared to "appoint persons of character and efficiency without inquiring into their opinions on ecclesiastical questions." Now that word "ecclesiastical" lets the cat out of the bag. The quarrel between Church and Nonconformity is an *ecclesiastical* quarrel. We are not aware of any important points of *doctrine* on which they differ. They are at loggerheads chiefly about *discipline*, or *organisation*, or whatever else they like to call it. And it is really as rival *ecclesiasticisms* that they are fighting each other in regard to national education. Each party sees that the trump card in the game is "catching the kids." This is what they are after. Keep your eye on that. All the rest of the controversy is mere verbiage—and deception.



The *Christian World* rejoices that the education authority of the Isle of Wight have found a solution of the religious difficulty. With the sanction of the Bishop of Winchester, all the Voluntary schools at Cowes are to be taken over as provided schools, the Free Churches and the Church of England to take equal times each week in teaching religion. The *Christian World* hopes that this example will be copied elsewhere. This quite bears out what has been said above. The Nonconformists protest in the name of outraged conscience against there being definite religious instruction in State schools; but when a chance offers of each religious party praying upon the public to an equal extent it is called an honorable compromise, and it is hoped other places will follow suit. Herder said Christian truth might rank with Punic faith, and one might add sectarian honesty, and so complete the trinity.

The *British Weekly* grows quite hysterical. In a recent article, by Dr. Robertson Nichol presumably, reference is made to a supposed combination of "Churchmen and Agnostics against the Free Churches." The belief in this combination can only arise from a bad attack of religious hysteria. The Freethinker does not support one body any more than the other. He may point out that in maintaining religion in the schools the Churchman is consistent and the Nonconformist inconsistent, and he delights in seeing them at loggerheads. That way safety and progress lies. Beyond this he simply says, "A curse on both your houses." And when the *British Weekly* goes on to say that, "It is partly as the friends of liberty that Nonconformists are hated by Agnostics of a certain class, and that 'they have joined the clergy in an attempt to wrest from our hands the key to our influence—to make the shadow go back upon the dial,'" the hysteria becomes downright mania. Perhaps it is only a Presbyterian organ that could make such a statement with gravity. Or perhaps this is only a sample of Nonconformist humor. We shall next hear that the Bishop of London has been conferring with the N. S. S. Executive as to the best method of teaching the doctrine of the Trinity to school children.

So it seems that St. Paul's is safe after all. The latest report is that, if no further excavations are made in the vicinity, it may last for a thousand years. One wonders what kind of a religion, if any, will be preached there in another thousand years' time. It will certainly not be Christianity. The excavations that really undermine churches are not those made for tube railways, but others of a more impalpable but far more dangerous character. And hitherto no effective safeguard has been found against these.

Poor men of God! They will go astray like common persons who are not endowed with the Holy Ghost. The Rev. Henry Edward Smith, vicar of Weston, near Crewe, has been found guilty, by a special Consistory Court held at Chester, of drunkenness and attempting to obtain money by false pretences.

The Vicar of Romford fixed 2.30 as the time for a funeral, but he never turned up, and the district had to be scoured for another clergyman. The delay was two hours' long. Of course it was expected that the Vicar would offer an apology or an explanation. He said nothing, however; and the Urban Council expressed some strong sentiments on the matter.

Mary Bosworth was charged at Coventry with attempting to murder her two children and afterwards attempting to commit suicide. Some men brought the three out of the water, the mother begging them to let her throw herself in again, saying, "I thought me and the children would be in heaven to-night." She also expressed a conviction that the Lord would forgive her.

Dr. Dowie, who has just organised a mission to the wealthy of New York City, expects that he will receive as a result of his mission no less than fifty million dollars. This is a much more profitable game than saving the souls of ordinary citizens. It may be, however, that "Old Dowie" will be disappointed at the cash results of his mission.

Jesus Christ taught "Resist not evil," and "If one smite thee on the one cheek turn unto him the other also." Now this is a Christian country, and the most Christian part of it is believed to be north of the Tweed. Yet there was immense applause at Greenock when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain said, "It may be something wrong with my constitution, but when I am hit I am never satisfied with hitting again." Christians attend their places of worship on Sunday—or the Sabbath, or the Lord's Day, as the Scotch call it—and worship the meek and lowly Jesus, who stood abuses and buffetings like a lamb. Every other day in the week they admire and cheer

a fighting man. And this after nearly two thousand years of Christianity! Does it not show that Christianity is never more than skin deep?

The Bishopric of Manchester is not one of the richest, yet it is a very good plum for any preacher of "Blessed be ye poor." Eighty pounds a week would have been riches almost beyond the dreams of avarice to Jesus Christ and the twelve Apostles. It will not be thought quite so much of, however, by the new occupant of the Manchester see Dr. Knox is succeeding Dr. Moorhouse, and will hold the fort at Cottonopolis until he succeeds someone else. Dr. Knox agrees with Paul that a Bishop should be the husband of one wife (the Mormons add *at least*). He has been twice married.

The late Mr. Gladstone, writing from the safe shelter of Hawarden Castle, in a country long under cultivation, observed how beautifully Providence had fitted up the earth for man's habitation. He might have written differently in India. According to the latest figures, no less than 23,166 persons died in that country last year from snake bites. Many more, of course, were killed by wild animals. "Our Father which art in heaven" appears to have neglected his children in Hindustan.

It has been often pointed out in these columns that Nonconformists are as ready to take State help as are Churchmen—when they can get it. A typical instance of this is the way in which Nonconformist places of worship avail themselves of the opportunity of not paying rates, and thus throwing the rateable value of their property upon the rest of the community. A writer in the *London Argus* comments upon the "singular anomaly that, while certain Nonconformist ministers are making the country ring with their denunciations of the 'iniquity' of granting aid out of the rates for the support of secular schools at which religion is taught, they are themselves accepting aid from public funds for the upkeep of establishments in which their own form of religion is exclusively inculcated."

This writer then goes on to point out that the City Temple receives from the State in this way £1,077 a year. Mr. F. B. Meyer's church receives £1,041, and Dr. Clifford, who so passionately denounces the State helping other churches, takes £316 a year. Altogether, it is estimated that Nonconformists receive from the State by this means no less than £67,708 per year. And this is contributed, it must be remembered, by all classes of the community towards the maintenance of buildings over which they have absolutely no control whatever. We wonder, if someone were to refuse to pay all the rates on the grounds that Messrs. Campbell, Meyer, and Clifford were receiving therefrom £2,500 annually for purely religious purposes, what amount of support he would get from these gentlemen! The picture of these three conscientious Passive Resisters declining to pay rates, any portion of which goes to Churchmen or Roman Catholics, and, at the same time, bleeding the community of £2,500 annually for their own chapels, is quite rich in humor—and humbug.

In a letter that excited the indignation of the *Daily News*, Mr. Balfour pointed out that in Macedonia to remove the rule of the Turk in Macedonia would only be to prepare the way for the Christian sects butchering each other. The other day the *Daily News* gave, perhaps unconsciously, a proof of the truth of this portion of Mr. Balfour's letter. A young Greek priest seeing the Turkish troops approaching, "rushed out to bid them welcome, thinking they would molest the exarchists only." He was mistaken, and the first one killed was the Christian priest who had gone forth to incite the Turk to butcher his fellow Christians. The story, appearing where it does, forms a fine commentary upon the noble humanitarianism of these Eastern Christians.

P. Fabyan, of Trinmore, Clifton Down, sent some extraordinary rubbish to the *Daily News*, which that journal was witless enough to print. It was an extract from old Richard Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* (2nd edition, 1651), and ran as follows:—"Mahomet's law runs thus: Avenge yourselves of your enemies; take as many wives as you can keep, and spare not. Kill the infidels. He that fighteth lazily shall be damned, and he that killeth the most shall be in Paradise." Fancy such stuff as this solemnly advanced as the teaching of Mohammed sixty years after Carlyle's famous lecture! And in a newspaper which boasts of being the most progressive in London!

Another correspondent of the same newspaper gravely states that he is informed by a gentleman who has spent his life in the East that "the word 'conscience' is not to be



found in the languages of any of the countries where Mohammedanism is professed, nor is it to be found in the Koran." This reminds us of Swift's objection to Homer that he was grossly ignorant of the British Constitution and the Thirty-nine Articles. Certainly we have the word "conscience" in these parts, and sometimes the word is all we have.

The question of bogus degrees came up for discussion before the Baptist Union meetings at Derby. The Rev. S. Hirst said that one institution at Carolina, U.S.A., that conferred degrees, upon inquiry turned out to be a "School for Backward Boys." There was much laughter at the parsons who had received their degrees from this institution; it strikes us as a rather good example of the "eternal fitness of things."

Professor Goldwin Smith falls foul of President Roosevelt's theory of a "strenuous life," which he characterises as an ideal based upon the life of a "valiant rough rider." The mass of us, he says, are destined to a life not "strenuous," but to the quiet earning of our bread and the performance of our social duties. Besides, "We are not a herd of animals crowding each other, but a co-operative community of men." This last sentence is cruelly contemptuous, and hits off the Rooseveltian theory to a nicety.

The *Academy*, which started under a new editor last week, printed a letter from its scientific contributor, C. W. Saleeby, asking, "Does Mr. Brock really think that Shelley had intellect?" We will not answer for Mr. Brock, but if the question were put to us we should answer "We do." It is quite a comical idea that intellect was not required to write a drama like the *Cenci* or a lyrical drama like *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley's intellect, of course, did not have time to mature. He was drowned before he was thirty. How absurd it is, then, to make a comparison, merely as to intellect, between him and Shakespeare, Milton, Browning and Wordsworth—as Mr. Saleeby does! The youngest of these four lived to be over fifty. It was not Shakespeare's intellect that was conspicuous in his youthful work. His intellectual power was displayed in the great tragedies of his maturity. Shelley was maturing, and maturing rapidly, when the waves closed over his marvellous brain and stilled it for ever.

Judging from a passage in the *Academy's* review of Mr. Morley's *Life of Gladstone* it seems likely to be fairly liberal on the religious side. For this very reason we hope it is also going to be accurate. Reviewing Canon Ainger's new volume on Crabbe, an article signed by Mr. Francis Thompson refers to the poet's first visit to London, and says, "Why he did not starve, Canon Ainger now first reveals through a letter of the poet's to Burke." Nonsense! That letter was printed in full in the old edition of Crabbe brought out by his son. A few weeks ago the daily organ of the Nonconformist Conscience referred to that very letter as "particularly grovelling." More nonsense! Crabbe's letter in his extremity to Burke, which turned the tide of his fortunes in an hour, was as manly as it was pathetic. We do not envy the person who can read it unmoved.

Imperialism has been in the air for some time, but it was left for the Hampstead philosopher, the Rev. R. F. Horton, to give it the finishing touch. This profound thinker declares that, unless "the Imperialism of our expansion is to be the extension of those ideas that we connect with the Bible, with Protestantism, and with Puritanism, our Imperialism will be only a curse and a ruin." Really, this gentleman ought to be invited to a seat in the Cabinet of the next Liberal Government. It is a thousand pities that such profound political philosophy should be locked up within the four walls of a chapel.

Mr. Horton is very fond of bracketing together Materialism, Immorality, and Drink. We wonder what he, or any other Christian preacher, would think if Freethinkers habitually referred to Christianity, Housebreaking, and Prostitution, as though the three were inseparable? There would doubtless be a howl about the scurrility of Freethought speakers and writers. It is, of course, nothing when a Christian preacher indulges in this species of blackguardism. And the pity of it is that, so long as they stop short of advocating that Atheists should be hung or imprisoned for life, there can always be found some would-be "respectable" Freethinkers ready to give them a certificate of liberality.

There was a lively scene the other day at a Primitive Methodist Sunday-school in Bargoed, a Glamorganshire village. It appears that one of the teachers was accused of inculcating infidel doctrines, but the school passed a vote of confidence in the libelled one. That was not the end of the

trouble, however; for a regular shindy took place on a recent Sunday afternoon. One lady said of another, "I will turn her out. I will screw her neck off. I will strangle her." Things went to such a pass that the school had to be closed for the day. But the trouble continued outside. A lady struck a gentleman in the face, it is alleged with a Bible. Her excuse was that the gentleman called her "a black-faced liar." Eventually the affair came before the magistrates, who described it as "most disgraceful." What a lot would have been made of it if the offenders had been Secularists. As they were Christians it doesn't matter.

The *Daily News* seems to have changed its Paris correspondent with the new departure. The letter of "our own correspondent" from Paris is now signed "J. M." What has become of Mrs. Crawford? Was she too liberal minded, too tainted with freethought, for the Christianity and Cocoa combination?

How catching is cant! Here is George R. Sims writing in the *Referee* that "To honest Nonconformity England owes her freedom; to the Puritans, who were the early fathers of the Nonconformist Conscience, we are indebted for all that is best in our national character." All that is best! Why this is out-Heroding Herod with a vengeance. Puritanism can hardly claim to go further back than the seventeenth century, and there really was something worth talking about in England before that date. Drake, Frobisher, Bacon, Shakespeare, Jonson, Raleigh, Sidney, More, Spenser, can scarcely be classed as Puritans, and surely these men did something for England worth having. We should much like Mr. Sims, instead of indulging in such sweeping and utterly groundless generalisations, to indicate precisely what it is that Puritanism has contributed of value to the English character. If he sets himself to the task, he will find that much of the sour view of life he so often protests against is due to the Puritanism he now extols. He will also find a distinct retrogression in the higher branches of life during the Puritan supremacy, and that even its own leaders had to fight against Puritan narrowness and intolerance, as soon as they found themselves in responsible positions, just as a large portion of our subsequent history has involved an anti-Puritan contest for a healthier view of human life. Cant is catching, however, and we can only attribute "Dagonet's" lapse to the hypnotic influences of phrases that are flying about so freely just now.

According to the French correspondent of one of our London papers, the conversion of M. Combes, President of the French Republic, from Christianity to Freethought was brought about in the following manner. The story is told in his own words. Born of poor parents, and compelled to earn his own living after his father's death, "I found means to earn a little money at the Assumptionists' College at Nimes without interrupting my studies. It was there that I prepared my thesis on St. Thomas of Aquin—a thesis which, by the researches it occasioned, opened out to me unknown horizons in human philosophy. When I got my doctor's degree I was no longer a Christian. That I think is the greatest miracle *le bon Saint Thomas* ever worked." The "miracle" is not quite so unusual as M. Combes seems to think. There is nothing so dangerous to Christianity as an unprejudiced study of its history and teachings.

The Principal of King's College is convinced that the more wonderful a thing is shown to be, so much the more did it lead back to the necessary belief in a Creator. We have heard the same many times, and all it seems to come to in plain English is that the more ignorant people are about certain things the more likely they are to drag in God in connection therewith. In reality one thing in nature is not any more "wonderful" than another. Some things are familiar, and some are not. Some we understand, and some we do not. Mr. Headlam does not find the grounds for belief in a God in the first class, but in the second. And this is only another way of saying that the ultimate refuge of fundamental religious beliefs is ignorance. We have always said this, and the clergy recognise its truth—only they express it differently.

A correspondent writes to a religious contemporary, protesting against the "appalling" manner in which a few poetical quotations are overworked. This correspondent wanders about from church to church, and so has an opportunity of judging. Mr. Campbell, he says, goes on repeating "Flower in the crannied wall." A number of others tie themselves to "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet." But the number used is very limited. We suppose the reason of this is that very few of the clergy have any knowledge of literature worth talking about, and the scraps one meets in their sermons are such as hang about for anyone to grasp.



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, October 18 (North Camberwell Hall): "The Comedy of Passive Resistance."  
 October 25, Liverpool.  
 November 1, Birmingham; 8, Queen's Hall, London; 15, South Shields.  
 December 6, Leicester.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton. October 25, Leicester. November 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, South Shields.

OWING to a mishap connected with the post and Mr. Foote's absence in Scotland, the bulk of correspondence and acknowledgments to "Cohen Presentation" must stand over till next week.

W. D. MACGREGOR.—Your letter, dated October 5 (Monday) was probably posted later; at any rate, it did not reach our office until Wednesday—too late for the *Freethinker*. We are glad to hear that you had such an "acceptable" lecture from Mr. John Pryde at the opening of the winter session at Edinburgh.

A NEW READER.—See paragraph. Cuttings are always welcome.

A. K. DOUGHTY.—Thanks for cuttings. See "Acid Drops." Pleased to hear you thought our paragraph about teaching children the ten commandments "very neat." We prophesy that no clergyman will ever answer it.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street Farringdon-street, E.C.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.

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

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's visit to Glasgow was eminently successful. There was an unprecedented crush at the Secular Hall in the evening. People were packed as close as possible in the seats, every inch of standing room was occupied, and a large number of people had to be turned away from the doors. Mr. Turnbull, who took the chair, expressed unbounded satisfaction at the sight of such a glorious meeting. Mr. Foote was in good form and held his audience alive for nearly two hours, receiving a perfect ovation at the close. Several new members were enrolled afterwards, and we hear that Mr. Baxter, the Glasgow Branch's newsagent, did an amazingly fine business at the bookstall.

Mr. Foote takes the second lecture this evening (Oct. 18) of the special course of lectures at Camberwell. His subject, "The Comedy of Passive Resistance," is one to which he has devoted particular attention, and the lecture is calculated to be both instructive and entertaining. South London Freethinkers should try to bring Liberals along to hear it, in order that they may learn what sort of an ally they really have in the Nonconformist Conscience. The Secular Hall ought to be packed on this occasion.

Tyneside Freethinkers are requested to note that three special courses of Sunday lectures, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, will be delivered in the great Empire Theatre of Varieties, South Shields, on November 15, 22, and 29, the lecturers being G. W. Foote, C. Cohen, and J. Lloyd (ex-Presbyterian minister). Bills containing full particulars will be posted and otherwise circulated in the locality.

London Freethinkers will please note that a new course of Sunday evening lectures, under the auspices of the Secular

Society, Limited, has been arranged to take place at the Queen's (Minor) Hall on November, 8, 15, 22, and 29. The lecturers will be Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd. A fuller announcement will appear in next week's *Freethinker*.

We are having issued, with the imprint of the Pioneer Press, which doesn't sound as bad to some ears as the Freethought Publishing Company, *A Christian Catechism* by the late Colonel Ingersoll. It has never been published in England before, and we believe it will have a big circulation when people find out what it is like. It is really one of the cleverest and most effective things Ingersoll ever did. Under the form of Question and Answer, it carries on a brilliant attack against Christianity. Some passages will make a Christian writhe; others will make him laugh in spite of himself. Immense good would be done by circulating it widely. Mr. Foote, who has seen it through the press, contributes a brief (necessary) Introduction.

Mr. George W. E. Russell's letter to the *Daily News* on "The Church and Education" is so good, and so much to the purpose, that we venture to reproduce it in full for the benefit of our readers:—"In glancing at this subject, you mention my name in connection with some 'dilemma' which I do not clearly understand. Please allow me to re-state in your columns what I have often said elsewhere about the relation of the Church to public education. The only way out of the difficulty is, in my judgment, the way recommended by the Education League thirty years ago, and delined by the Church in favor of the wretched "Compromise" which has brought all our educational troubles. Let me once more re-affirm it. The State, with its 138 sects—its 'Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics'—ought not to meddle with religious teaching. In every school, maintained or helped by public money, only those subjects should be taught about which the whole State is agreed. In other words, secular schools should give only secular teaching. 'Then,' say my clerical friends, 'you do not want the children to be taught religion.' But this is a clerical delusion. I wish that each child should receive, through the voluntary agency of church or chapel, exactly that religious teaching which its parents desire for it. If the clergy of the Church of England would only consent to do in this matter what the Church orders them, the religious education of Churchmen's children would be safe enough. The Church orders that on Sundays and holidays, after the second lesson at evening prayer, the parish priest shall instruct the children in some part of the Church Catechism—that is, in the Creed, the Sacrament, and the laws of right living. But this, though fulfilling the Church's order and providing for the religious education of the children, will not satisfy the Bishops and their henchmen. They insist on having their own religious opinions taught at the expense of the whole community. Under the system lately terminated, 'Un denominationalism' (which is quite as distinctive a religion as Calvinism) was taught at the expense of people who believed in denominational education. This was palpably unjust, and Churchmen ought to have been 'Passive Resisters.' But now a new form of tyranny is set up. My money is taken by force for teaching Romanism and Wesleyanism; my Roman and Wesleyan friends are taxed for teaching Anglicanism. Jews and Unitarians are taxed for teaching the Divinity of our Lord. Quakers are taxed for teaching the Sacraments. Infidels and Agnostics are taxed for teaching the existence of God. And all this delights the clergy, who say, in reply to my complaint: 'If you are taxed for teaching what you don't believe, see how many of your fellow-citizens are taxed for teaching what they don't believe!' In vain I reply that two iniquities do not, in this, or any other case, make one equity. The clergy are enraptured, and declare that it all works out beautifully, inasmuch as in virtue of this unjust taxation, they get the public money for their Voluntary schools. No italics or capitals are emphatic enough to express the absurdity of the word 'Voluntary' in this context. I return them to the only possible way out of the difficulty. Let the religious bodies teach religion, and let the State teach the rest."

Mr. John Lloyd is happily recovering from the attack of influenza he suffered after his first Freethought lecture at the Queen's Hall. It was sharp while it lasted, his temperature running up to 104. Fortunately his recovery promises to be rapid too, and South London friends may look forward to seeing him on the Secular Hall platform next Sunday (Oct. 25).

The controversy initiated by Mr. J. W. de Caux in the *Yarmouth Mercury* threatens to degenerate into a rambling, useless correspondence. Mr. de Caux continues to stick to his point, but what is one level-headed man amongst 10



many wobblers? Mr. de Caux's letter in last week's *Mercury* was directed mainly against Mr. Engström. He asks once more—and we suppose he may ask till doomsday—whether Mr. Engström does really believe in the story of Adam and the apple; and, if not, what is the sin from which each member of the human race requires to be saved through the death of Christ? Mr. Engström has had this plain question before him for three months, and has not attempted to answer it yet.

Mr. George Meredith's admirers—and he must have many amongst Freethinkers—will be glad to hear that he is now in better health than he has been for some time. He is not, however, engaged on any literary work.

The *Secular Annual* for 1904 is now in hand. Will all Branch secretaries, lecturers, and others who have any items of information as to modes of working, meeting-places, Branch officers, addresses, etc., to forward, please do so at once? These should be sent without delay to Miss Vance. This will then save complaints afterwards as to matters being omitted that might have been, and ought to have been, inserted.

At the Leicester Secular Hall last Sunday evening a very large audience listened with close and appreciative interest to an address by Earl Russell on Divorce Reform, and were much amused at the ironical style in which he expressed his pleasure at being able to quote a Bishop's speech (fifty years ago!) in favor of his proposal to remove divorce jurisdiction to County Courts. As reasonable causes for divorce, Lord Russell named cruelty, desertion, imprisonment of either spouse for a long term of years, and permanent lunacy of either wife or husband.

Mr. F. Goodwin also has a very good and straightforward letter in the *Grays and Tilbury Gazette* on the same subject. He insists that the "religious question is at the bottom of the present upheaval. The Passive Resisters are as much (and no more) justified in objecting to pay rates for certain subjects than I and a daily growing number object to pay for anything but purely secular education." This struggle between rival Christian bodies bids fair to realise the old adage, "When rogues fall out," etc.

*Searchlight*, Texas, reprints (with acknowledgment) Mr. W. Mann's article on "The Myth of Moses," which appeared in our issue of July 23.

## We Take Life Too Seriously.

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS

(Minister of the Church of This World, Kansas City, Mo.)

THESE things are certain: We are here in this world; if we have lived before we do not know it; whether we shall live again we cannot surely tell. It is therefore the business of intelligent people to get the best possible out of this life. If we get it, we must get it as we go along. No man ever had a second chance at the same day. A yesterday was never born again. This may be the one and only chance we shall have at life. How can we make the most of it?

Almost without exception, religions have been pessimistic. As far as this world is concerned, they have been keyed to sorrow and despair. More than one-third of the population of the globe belongs to the Buddhist and allied religions. The dream of that mighty multitude is to escape at last from life. They "grunt and sweat and fardels bear," soothed and sustained by the contemplation of the oblivious bliss of annihilation, the benediction of the dreamless and unawaking sleep. The Christian religion was founded upon sacrifice, pain, and the tragedy of death. Without exception, its founders believed in the speedy coming of the end of the world. There was not among them a mind nor a genius that had the greatness and the foresight to conceive of a world improved. Not one of them for an instant indulged the thought that even God in his almightiness could add completeness to a world incomplete, supplant its ugliness with beauty, and make it a place where men would be glad to stay. For all the centuries the Christian religion has lured its adherents by teaching of a better world hereafter. The

Church has sought to compensate for the ills and burdens of this world by holding out the glittering promise of sensuous and endless joys in the world to come. It has been the aim of religion to prepare men to die; none of them has been inspired with the idea of preparing men to live.

As a consequence of these teachings, nearly everybody takes nearly everything too seriously. There never has been a religion with a dash of humor in it. We have been taught to take solemnity for piety and stupidity and dulness for faith. Religion has taught the blessedness of feeling bad and the happiness of wretchedness and misery. It has been proclaimed that whom the Lord loveth his hand was heavy upon, he chasteneth. When, therefore, a man became utterly and abjectly miserable he could console himself with the fancy that he was one of God's darlings.

There has never been a religion that has had running through it the strain of genuine human nature. The teachings have been in the air—fanciful, speculative, hypothetical. The average man or woman has thought that the great being who is called God must be feared. We are told that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of an angry God; but suppose there is no angry God, suppose the infinite calm is never stirred or ruffled by the waves of heat and passion!

The last thing in this world to be feared is God, if there is one. Religion has done the world an unspeakable injury in making a bugaboo, a bogey man, of the Infinite. Religion has come to be a series of self-infliction and the bearing of burdens in order to please someone imagined to be infinitely solemn, and likely at any moment to fly into a passion. The future life has been represented as a criminal court. Death has been regarded as the act of arrest when a soul is overhauled and handcuffed and hauled up before an incensed and offended magistrate. The worst thing that civilisation thinks it can do to a man is to kill him and send him swift and unshriven into the presence of the great Father.

This is taking God too seriously. I can think now, if there is a God, of no more safe or welcome place for a man or a woman to be than in his presence, standing face to face, reaching out to touch the hem of his garment.

We take too seriously the matter of duty. A man is never well-developed morally until he loses the idea of duty altogether. He is yet in the period of development. He who sets before him, and keeps there always, as a menace, a duty or an obligation, never can be highly or greatly moral. He is only well-developed when duty and obligation are lost sight of and become a habit, a delight, radiant joy. The man or woman who undertakes to love the child because it is the duty of the parent to love the child, does not know what love is. There is no duty to love God or man. Love is not a thing of will, compulsion, or force; it is a thing of responsiveness. Though a man were to be damned this instant, he could not force himself to love God; he could only be religious and force himself to lie about it.

I am persuaded that we take the things called our sins too seriously. That has been a great leverage of the church—man's sin. It has been represented to us that we were such outcasts in the sight of God that if we didn't pay our pew rent promptly we were in danger of eternal destruction. Religion has laid it upon us that we were simply doing a kind of a virtue to contemplate our sins and weaknesses, to repeat them over and over, and confess them to the great congregation. I say, if a man has sins, forget them. There is no virtue in contemplating a man's mistakes and brooding over his failures. There is no inspiration, nor help, nor strength in it. The thing is to turn over the page and begin a new record. The consequences will take care of themselves.

Going on down through life, for one reason or another, we are putting unnecessary burdens upon ourselves by taking things too seriously. Some people I know are wonderfully distressed about how to train their children. As long as there are



any children upon the earth, and heaven grant that there may never come a time when they are not here, and plenty of them, that question will come up again and again. The average parent makes a mistake by taking himself or herself too seriously. Rules—and the only ones that have the perfect rules are the people that have no children—are all useless. Love is not a thing of mathematical calculation; it has no rules, no duties, no obligations; it is simply itself, and it gives itself. Love is the genius of the heart, the illumination of the whole being, the joy and exultant glory of a man's combined self.

Everybody knows that wretched line in the Bible that has wrought havoc with childhood for thousands of years, the line which is construed "Spare the rod and spoil the child." It ought to be remembered always that the man who said that was the gentleman who had seven hundred wives and three hundred co-respondents. He is represented as having been the wisest man. However that may be, a man that can get along with that kind of a situation certainly is entitled to some credit as a diplomat. There have been parents, and there are still multitudes of them, who, because that line is in the Bible, think they ought to whip their children. Happily the time is going by, although it has not yet passed; it is going, not gone.

I have been appealed to with great earnestness and much consternation by a good friend of mine who wanted to know how to bring up her child. I told her, "Don't bring him up; love him, teach him, and let him grow up." I asked her if she whipped him. "Oh, yes." "On his bare skin?" "Why, certainly." And then I discovered this refinement of cruelty. She said she let down the basement of his trousers and made the child hold up his shirt while she striped his flesh in pink with the blows of a whip. Now, if a child has to be whipped, he has one sacred, inalienable right, and that is to hold his two hands where they will do the most good.

It is my conviction, positive and unshakable, that no child in this world was ever made better in any way or degree by the infliction of corporal punishment. The child only needs to be loved and trusted. He may stray a little; he will come back. The child growing, or the child grown, ought to know one thing—that whatever the rest of the world may say or do, whatever that boy or that girl may do, however far into the darkness and night of mistake and evil they may stray, however deep into degradation and shame they may fall, there is one door that never will be shut in their face, one heart that will ever yearn to welcome them back, and that is the heart and the door of the parent.

We take ourselves too seriously, the most of us, in our work. That it is the reason it is drudgery, it is slavery. Take men and women as they go, not one in ten can be found with their heart and soul in the thing that they are doing. Oh, they think, if they had some other job, if they could be promoted, if they could change places with somebody else, how sweet and delicious labor would be. But it would not; it would be the same thing, because it would be the same person, only another kind of work. And then men and women do not accomplish the most that is possible, because they are burdened with that sense of doing it. Work never can be done at its best, nor the toiler be at his best, until he gets away from the idea of what he is doing and gets back to the idea of himself. Now, I am preaching just at this point a great deal better than I practice. I have thought a thousand times, if I could get away from the fear of you people that are sitting here now, if I could divest and divorce myself from the anxiety and trepidation, from the apprehension, the agony and shrinking from it all, I could preach like thunder. But when I walk on this stage, it doth "unfix my hair, and make my seated heart beat at my ribs, against the use of nature." I can't get over it. I simply live in fear, terror, and agony of this audience. The only time I am not afraid of is when I am not here. We take it too seriously. A man ought to be

able, somehow, to put himself into his work, no matter what it is. Then there would be no drudgery, no trepidation, no fear. It would then make no difference how common, how humble, or how menial the labor in which he was engaged. That lowly toil would be glorified because of the way it was done and the thing it was done for. How great and splendid is the man, though he break rock on the street or dig clay out of the ditch, that is doing it for the love of wife or child. How fine and beautiful is the toil of the young man or the young woman who works ho urby hour through all the weary days for the love of the mother that has sacrificed so much for them. We should be illuminated with the thought, the heart, the spiritual element.

More than men know they are influenced by suggestion and example. Let the newspapers of a great state continue for a space of years to hint and insinuate about legislation being bought and sold, and in due time, by the sure and inevitable law of suggestion, the thing will come to pass. That is why corruption and malfeasance in office tend always to reach climaxes. It is a grave and serious thing to indulge in a suspicion of any man's wrong doing. It is a more serious thing to utter that suspicion in words. By some law that I do not understand, but believe most firmly in, every uttered prophecy tends to fulfil itself, every spoken word tends to organise or externalise itself in act and fact, and every deed done, every act performed, seeks to duplicate itself in another act. It is by this same law that familiarity with wrong-doing minimises the odiousness of the wrong. Let the familiarity continue for a sufficient length of time and a community or a nation will arrive at the point where men, otherwise honorable or incorrupt, will justify iniquities by saying, "It is the general custom." "It is general and generally known, therefore it is right for us." That is the result of the law of suggestion and familiarity with iniquity. It is a disheartening circumstance when an eminent and influential man can refer to gross iniquities as "conventional crimes." By the same law, the gallows tends to produce murders, instead of to deter the murderer's hand. Through the eyes of mothers, babes unborn look upon that legal barbarism and are viciously tainted. If the state takes life, it is accepted that it is right to take life under certain conditions. Then the weak or the passionate man, under the stress of a tremendous provocation, will conclude, without the formality of argument, that the state never had such provocation, in the nature of things, never can be so thoroughly justified in taking life as he himself is at the given moment, and then he kills. The time will surely come when civilisation shall remember with horror that it ever built the gallows or swung a man from the trap door.

There are some things that we may look to for encouragement, something that tends toward the betterment of human life and society. One of these is the evolution of public opinion. Probably, in the long run, that is the great lever to lift mankind up. Against public opinion, sufficiently aroused, nothing can stand. It blasts like lightning, it sweeps away like a tempest, it destroys like a flood, it blights like death. In the creation of public opinion, in the elevating and illuminating of it, the pulpit has exerted a little influence—not a great deal, but some. The average minister talks too much, and can't talk about things that people are interested in, or, if he tries to, does not talk intelligently. Then, his training is against him. So he touches public opinion only slightly. The great instrument for the clearing of public opinion is the printing-press. We have reason to be glad in this country of ours that we have reached a time when the press, the powerful and influential newspapers and periodicals are substantially independent. They are subsidised no longer by parties or cliques. They are fearless and incisive; they pander to no class, and they fear none. They are doing more than much in making public opinion better and better, and against that, when it has once reached its climax, there is no corruption,



no wrong doing that can stand for an instant. It will be swept out of sight. That is our ultimate hope.

The other is the elevation of the individual moral standard. No man is moral until he has a standard of his own. He who is simply governed by conventional standards and controlled by conventional morals is like a child who imitates, and imitation is the prerogative of childhood. No man ever despaired of the morality of humanity who was himself moral. No man ever thought all men were corruptible, or that all men had their price unless he himself was conscious that he could be bought. No man ever bowed in reverence and worshipped at the shrine of the woman he loved who said all women were susceptible of temptation. A man's judgment of this world, after all, is but a reflection of himself. As long as a man has within his own breast the consciousness of morality he never despairs of this world. So long as man has within himself the consciousness of being right as near as he knows, he will never despair of legislatures, state or national, or municipal; he will believe in the future, in the oncoming, in the forward stride of humanity.

Now, then, these are the things to know—that no wrong can be escaped from, not one. Understand, I do not think God punishes anybody. I think a wrong punishes the man who does it. It brings its consequences, it cannot be escaped. No violation of what a man thinks is right can, in the last analysis, be profitable, however it may seem in the first. A man may do wrong and keep out of hell, but he cannot do wrong and keep hell out of himself. There is no shuffling, nor evasion, nor cheating, nor escape. Heaven cannot be bought nor bribed; it must be fairly won. And the second thing is that the man is best when he is most himself. Nature never made duplicates, even when she produced twins. She saw to it that about each one there should be that same inaccessible line of individuality, and I believe she holds it as a trespass against her laws when any man seeks to ignore or obscure the lines that mark out his own personality. And the other thing is that the greatest thing in this great world is man.

Sunrise and sunset, the seasons with their subtle change, springtime and harvest, birth and death—these are but the circumstances and incidents of life; above them all is man. Combine the intelligent and the moral and all things work together for man's good, all conspire for his benefit and well-being. Then on his effort waits success. Then in his veins sweet health flows. Above him, like a benediction, broods peace, while love and joy, transforming, mantle all his life.

### Moses and Hammurabi.

SO-CALLED Mosaic laws are transmitted to us in two comparatively late revisions, separated from each other by centuries, whence all the differences are easily enough accounted for. And we know this also, that the so-called Mosaic laws represent regulations and customs part of which had been recognised in Israel from primitive times, and part of which had not received legal recognition until after the settlement of the people in Canaan, and were then attributed bodily to Moses, and later, for the sake of greater sacredness and inviolability, to Yahveh himself. The same process we see in connection with the laws of other races—I will mention here the law-book of Manu—and it is precisely the case with the law-making of Babyon.

In my first lecture on this subject I pointed out the fact that we find in Babylon as early as 2250 B.C. a State with a highly developed system of law, and I spoke of a great Code of Hammurabi which established civil law in all its branches. While at that time we could only infer the existence of this Code from scattered but perfectly reliable details—the original of this great Law Book of Hammurabi has now been found, and therewith a treasure of the very first rank has been conferred upon science and especially upon the science of law and the history of civilisation. It was in the ruins of the acropolis of Susa, about the turn of the year 1901-1902, that the French archaeologist de Morgan and the Dominican monk Scheil had the good fortune to find a monument of King Hammurabi in the shape of a diorite

block 2.25 meters high. It had apparently been carried away from Babylon along with other plunder by the Elamites. On it had been engraved in the most careful manner 282 paragraphs of law. As the King himself says, they are "laws of justice which Hammurabi, the mighty and just King, has established for the use and benefit of the weak and oppressed, of widows and orphans." "Let the wronged person," thus we read, "who has a case at law, read this my monumental record and hear my precious words; my monument shall explain his case to him and he may look forward to its settlement! With a heart full of gratitude let him then say: 'Hammurabi is a lord who is like a real father to his people.'" But although the King says that he, the sun of Babylon, which sheds the light over North and South in his land, has written down these laws, nevertheless he in his turn received them from the highest judge of heaven and earth, the Sun god, the lord of all that is called "right," and therefore the mighty tablet of the law bears at its head the beautiful *bas-relief* which represents Hammurabi in the act of receiving the laws from Shamash, the supreme law-giver.

Thus and not otherwise was it with the giving of the Law on Sinai, the so-called making of the Covenant between Yahveh and Israel. For the purely human origin and character of the Israelitic laws are surely evident enough! Or is anyone so bold as to maintain that the thrice holy God, who with his own finger engraved upon the stone tablet *ló tirzach* "thou shalt not kill," in the same breath sanctioned blood-vengeance, which rests like a curse upon Oriental peoples to this day, while Hammurabi had almost obliterated the traces of it? Or is it possible that anyone still clings to the notion that circumcision, which had for ages before been customary among the Egyptians and the Bedouin Arabs, was the mark of an especial covenant between God and Israel?

We understand very well, according to Oriental thought and speech, that the numerous regulations for every possible petty event in daily life, as, for instance, the case of a fierce ox that kills a man or another ox (Exodus xxi. 28f., 35f.), that the prohibitions of foods, the minute medicinal prescriptions for skin diseases, the detailed directions regarding the priest's wardrobe, are represented as derived from Yahveh. But this is altogether outward form; the God who prefers the offerings of "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart" (Psalms li. 17), and who took no pleasure in the worship by burnt offerings after the fashion of the "heathen" peoples, certainly did not ordain this worship by burnt offerings with its minute details, nor devise the recipes for ointment and burnt incense "after the art of the perfumer," as the expression runs (Exodus xxx., 25, 35).

It will be the business of future investigators to determine to just what extent the Israelitic laws, both civil and levitical, are specifically Israelitic, or general Semitic, or how far they were influenced by the Babylonian code which is so much older and which had certainly extended beyond the borders of Babylon. I think, for instance, of the law of retribution, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, of the feast of the new moon, the so-called "shew bread," the high priest's breast-plate, and many other things. For the present we must be thankful that the institution of the Sabbath day, the origin of which was unclear even to the Hebrews themselves, is now recognised as having its roots in the Babylonian *sabattu*, "the day par excellence."

On the other hand, no one has maintained that the Ten Commandments were borrowed even in part from Babylon, but on the contrary it has been pointed out very emphatically that prohibitions like the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh spring from the instinct of self-preservation which is common to all men. In fact the most of the Ten Commandments are just as sacred to the Babylonians as to the Hebrews: disrespect for parents, false witness, and every sort of covetousness are also punished severely in Babylonian law, generally with death. Thus, for instance, we read in the very third paragraph of Hammurabi's code: "If in a law suit anyone on the witness-stand utters falsehoods and cannot support his testimony, he shall himself be punished with death if the life of another is involved."

The Second Commandment is specifically Israelitic, the prohibition of every sort of image-worship, which in its direct application seems to have a distinctly anti-Babylonian point.

But in connection with the eminently Israelitic First Commandment, "I am Yahveh, thy God; thou shalt have no other gods beside me," may I be permitted to treat more fully one point which deeply and permanently concerns all who are interested in Babel and Bible—the monotheism of the Old Testament. From the standpoint of Old Testament theology I can understand how, after it has unanimously and rightly given up the verbal inspiration of the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, and thus recognised, perhaps unintentionally but quite logically, the wholly unauthoritative character of the Old Testament writings as such for our belief, our knowledge, and our investigations—I say I can understand how theology



now claims as divine the spirit that pervades them and preaches with so much the greater unanimity the "ethical monotheism of Israel," the "spirit of prophecy" as "a real revelation of the living God."

Great consternation seems to have been produced by the names mentioned in my first lecture, which we find in surprisingly great numbers among the North-Semitic nomads who immigrated into Babylon about 2500 B.C.: "El (*i.e.*, God) hath given," "God sits in control," "If God were not my God," "God, consider me," "God is God," "Jahu (*i.e.*, Yahveh) is God." I really do not understand this uneasiness. For since the Old Testament itself represents Abram as preaching in the name of Yahveh (Genesis xii. 8), and since Yahveh had already been the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those old names, such as Jahu-ilu (*i.e.*, Joel), ought really to be welcomed with joy. And these names should prove very opportune, particularly for those theologians who regard themselves as affirmative, and who hold that "all divine inspiration has undergone a gradual historical development," thereby turning the orthodox notion of inspiration upside down, as it seems to me.

However, the great majority of theologians feel and fear rightly that these names, which are more than a thousand years older than the corresponding names in the Old Testament, which attest the worship of a single god named Jahu, "the permanent" (whether a tribal god or what not), and which, moreover, might indicate the initial point of an historical development of the belief in Yahveh as existing in very much wider circles than merely among the descendants of Abram, will thereby throw serious doubt upon its claim to be a special revelation. And therefore they are laboring and tormenting themselves in the effort to explain away these names, hesitating at no means. But though the waves spew and foam, like a lighthouse in the dark night stand fast the names of the descendants of North-Semitic Bedouins from 2300 B.C., "God is God," "Jahu is God."

—From Professor Delitzsch's Second Lecture on "Babel and Bible."

### Religious Roguery in France.

A CONVENT of Clarisses nuns was evicted yesterday [September 21] near Nimes. This time the eviction did not take place under the instructions of "Diocletian-Combes"—as the Clerical papers call the Prime Minister—but in pursuance of certain specific paragraphs of the civil and criminal codes.

The story of the rise and fall of this Clarisses Convent is too characteristic of the methods by which religious orders have "grabbed" £40,000,000 of real estate in fifteen years to be passed over in silence. If you want to learn a dozen similar stories—all of them authenticated as this one is by decisions of the Law Courts—read the book, *La Congrégation*, by M. Brisson, for many years President of the Chamber of Deputies. Experience has taught me I can never too often give chapter and verse, because the most patent facts are met by audacious denials, Clerical writers acting according to the motto: "The greater the truth, the greater the libel." In the village of Foussignargues, near Bessèges, in the Gard, stands the old manor of "La Nouvelle." It was occupied by an old spinster, Mlle. de la Nouvelle, a wealthy miser. The legacy-hunting proclivities of monastic orders are notorious in France, and even in England I could give you some curious instances to this point. A priest of Nimes persuaded the lady to leave her fortune to the Church, and to make sure she did not change her mind (she had a number of first cousins) he set up a convent of Clarisses nuns in the manor. Mlle. de la Nouvelle was, in fact, persuaded to join it, and she was over eighty years of age when she took a perpetual vow of chastity! She died in May, 1900.

The heirs-at-law of Mlle. de la Nouvelle were anxious to know what had become of their relative's fortune. They wrote a polite letter of inquiry to the "Mother" Superior, who did not reply. They insisted, whereupon a notary-public, M. Costier, produced the lady's will and a lease for ninety-nine years. Mlle. de la Nouvelle, the will recited, left her château to "Sisters" Aminthe Gratreau and Léontine Doré, nuns of the Order of Santa Clara, on condition they let a Mass be said every fortnight for her soul. She left the rest of her estate to her cousin, Col. de la Nouvelle, on condition he gave the nuns every year: 100 pounds of cheese, 200 gallons of wine, 22 pounds of wax candles for the Masses, 110 pounds of oil for the lamp of the manor chapel, 220 pounds of apples, 110 pounds of chestnuts, five tons of coals, 50 pound of flour, and—every day—25 pounds of bread and a gallon of milk. M. Brisson, in his book *La Congrégation*, has shown that this is a favorite manner of drafting wills by the legacy-hunting orders, the object being to avoid certain difficulties of French law. The Colonel saw

he was tricked, and that after supplying the wants of the nuns he would have very little left. He refused to apply for probate.

Other cousins stepped in. They pointed out that there was a perfectly illegal clause in the will. I wish to lay stress on this. Every reader of the *Daily News*, if he wishes to understand what is going on in France, must remember that this illegality is to be traced at the origin of every monastic order in France. It can be stated in a nutshell: French monastic orders have fraudulently revived the institution of entail, which was abolished in this country 100 years ago. Mlle. de la Nouvelle's will stated that the executor would be "compelled to see to it that after the death of the two aforementioned nuns the estate should be handed over to two nuns of the same order," and so on.

After three years of litigation, the Court of Appeal of Nimes has decided that the will is null and void, and the nuns were ordered to leave the manor. Those who are acquainted with the ways of monastic orders will not be surprised to hear that the nuns treated the sentence of the Court of Appeal as dead letter. The heirs were anxious to know what had become of Mlle. de la Nouvelle's personalty. The nuns signed affidavits that she did not leave a penny; the notary Costier made a statement to the same effect. Inquiries in Paris elicited the fact that "Sister" Aminthe drew every quarter coupons of 63,000 francs of rente registered in the name of Mlle. de la Nouvelle.

The notary received a "warning" from the Court of Appeal. Sister Aminthe, called upon to return the stolen scrip, says she has handed it over to a parish priest of Nimes, Abbé Galaffre. He refuses to hand it over to the lawful heirs, alleging—the old excuse—that it is God's money."

The whole story, which I could cap by many more, is characteristic of the thieving propensities of certain religious orders in France.

—Daily News (Paris Correspondent).

### Correspondence.

#### DE VERITATE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Having received a copy of your paper I have read it carefully. The ground you cover is not new—indeed familiar enough to me by frequent conversations with my former pupil at Oxford, Mr. Winwood Reade. Practically you demand mathematical proof for that which is incapable of it. You assume the Darwinian hypothesis as axiomatic, and you ignore the salient fact that Christianity, like Cicero, offers no more than the blessed *hope* of everlasting life.

Further, you set to work to slaughter Sundry minor Dissenting orators, and the methods of the Salvation Army. Is it equitable to identify Christianity with either? I am quite aware that the unreasoning man in the street assumes that these are the exemplars of religion. Are they? Can you not recall Tennyson's canon:—

The Highest is the measure of the man,  
And not the Kaffir, Hottentot, Malay?

Personally the zeal of the Salvationists appeals to me, for in this dead-alive world enthusiasm possesses an inherent element of beauty. But as for your popular orators, they are mere actors, and sometimes buffoons.

Surely the old faith has better and worthier champions than these. Even subjectivity, which Huxley defined as a "reflex action of the brain," possesses a noble protagonist in the late Henry Drummond, Darwinian as well as believer. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. Let me remind you that the service of man has never been performed with such splendid self-sacrifice as by the Religious Orders, and the enthusiasm of humanity has hitherto found its sole expression in Christian devotion. To be logical, your earthly paradise should be in Paris, and Paris is the paradise of prostitution—the moral miasma of the world! COMPTON READE.

[We insert this letter, which we judge to be from a well-known gentleman, although he omits (perhaps accidentally) to give his address. The only points we think it necessary to refer to are the following:—(1) It seems very absurd to confine the "enthusiasm of humanity" to such work as the Religious Orders do. There may be as much of it, and even more of it, in fighting for truth, liberty, and justice. (2) Our "earthly paradise" would never be in a crowded city—not even in Paris. Still, we do not believe that Paris is the paradise of prostitution. In any case, there seems to be an abundance of it in Christian London, judging from police reports and the state of thoroughfares like Piccadilly.]



**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 postcard.

**LONDON.**

**NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL** (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Comedy of Passive Resistance."

**EAST LONDON BRANCH** (Stanley's Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 7.30, E. B. Rose, "Should Labor Combine with Liberalism?"

**FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY** (Hope Coffee Tavern, Font-hill-road, N.): 7, Debate, "Red Herrings and Tariff Reform."

**EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Miss Margaret McMillan, "Child Life in the Towns."

**SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Lord Kelvin on Providence."

**WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Coleridge."

**WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay Park Station): 7, G. E. O'Dell, "The Worth of Life."

**OUTDOOR**

**CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.:** Station-road, 11.30, G. Green, Brockwell Park, 3.15, A lecture.

**KINGSLAND** (Ridley-road): 11.30, E. B. Rose.

**COUNTRY.**

**BRADFORD** (Town Hall-square): Sunday, October 18, at 11, Ernest Pack, "The Birth of Jesus."

**EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY** (Temperance Hall, 84 Leith-street): Meeting at 6.30.

**GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY** (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Ignatius McNulty, "The Morality of the Bible"; 6.30, Miss A. Margaret Muirhead, "India."

**LEEDS** (Woodhouse Moor): Ernest Pack, 3, "The Bible and Woman"; 6, "A Defence of Freethought."

**MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL** (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 6.30, Miss Hodgson Bayfield, "Women and Freethought."

**NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY** (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Oct. 22 at 8, T. Mills, "Mr. Chamberlain's Proposals and Trades Unionism."

**SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY** (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A lecture or Reading.

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

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