

# THE Freethinker

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To conceal the truth from one's fellows is to betray them.—EURIPIDES.

## Some Defenders of the Faith.—III.

“BLATCHFORD ANSWERED.”

WE will now see what Mr. Spurr has to say in defence of the Bible. Mr. Blatchford observed that he was not positive, but he believed that there was “very little moral truth in the Bible which has not been, or will not be, traced back to more ancient times and religions.” This is a modest way of putting it, but Mr. Spurr gives it a peremptory and insolent denial. “Despite what you ‘think,’” he says, “there are moral truths in the Bible which are not found elsewhere.” Mr. Spurr does not mention one of them, however; and until he adduces one (*one will do for a start*) he is simply bluffing. Probably he is well aware of this, for he hedges by declaring that if there were nothing original in the Bible “that would not invalidate Bible morality.” Of course not, but it would invalidate all claim to originality; and if “inspiration” be not original it lacks the first note of authenticity. A divine voice is not necessary to echo the language of men.

After asserting that Mr. Blatchford has “assurance enough to deny anything,” Mr. Spurr declares that:—

“There is absolutely nothing in the Bible account of the Creation that contradicts the teaching of sober science concerning the earth and man.”

Well, it all depends upon what is meant by “sober science.” Such an adjective is, to us, utterly meaningless in front of such a noun. We do not understand how science can be either sober or drunk. By “sober” we suspect that Mr. Spurr means *his own* science, or his own views of science; which, we daresay, are somewhat peculiar, since the authority to whom he refers Mr. Blatchford is a rather obscure gentleman (a preacher, we believe) called Griffith Jones.

Here again Mr. Spurr is simply bluffing. Unless he is inexcusably ignorant, he must be aware of the candid admissions as to the unscientific character of the Creation story made by clergymen like the late Dean Farrar and the living Canon Driver. He may even, if he chooses, read the chapter on “The Creation Story” in our own *Bible Romances*, and answer that. But, after all, there is no necessity to pursue him in this direction. He soon shows that he was speaking with his tongue in his cheek. He says to Mr. Blatchford:—

“You do not know how to read the Bible. The first chapter of Genesis is a religious and not a scientific chapter. Its sole object is to connect God with the universe and man. The form in which it is written is so comprehensive that it can adapt itself to all that true science teaches.”

Passing by the adjective “true,” which may lie beside the adjective “sober,” we ask why, if the first chapter of Genesis be not scientific, Mr. Spurr stands up for its scientific character? Secondly, who told *him* what was the “sole object” of the first chapter of Genesis? Thirdly, how does the “comprehensive” style of that chapter, which says (for

instance) that evening and morning existed three days before the earth revolved around the sun, enable it to “adapt itself” to the scientific truths that the earth is a child of the sun, and that evening and morning are caused by the child’s revolution on its axis in its orbit around the parent? Or how does the story of the Fall of Man “adapt itself” to the truth of the Ascent of Man which is revealed to us by Evolution?

“To read the Bible, and to understand it,” Mr. Spurr says, “requires some delicacy of soul.” We may add that to read the Bible, and tell the truth about it, requires some courage and honesty.

Mr. Spurr rebukes Mr. Blatchford for stating that, according to the Bible, Adam was created some six thousand years ago. He affirms that “the Bible says nothing of the sort,” and calls upon Mr. Blatchford to furnish proof of his statement, or withdraw it.

Certainly the Bible does not say, *in so many words*, that Adam was created some six thousand years ago; but to seek shelter behind *that* fact is not very creditable. Suppose the reverend gentleman were to show us his birth certificate, and tell us that he was married at the age of twenty-five, that his first child was born twelve months afterwards, and that this child died four years ago at the age of twenty; it is true that Mr. Spurr would not be saying, *in so many words*, that he is fifty himself, but he would be saying it substantially, for it is mathematically involved in the chronology of his narrative. So it is with the Creation story. The ages of Adam and the antediluvian patriarchs are given in the Bible; then follow the genealogies after the Flood, until we enter the historic period, after which there is little room for dispute. From the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ the Bible allows about four thousand years. This date (4,004) used to be printed over the first chapter of Matthew in editions of the English Bible in common use twenty years ago. Mr. Spurr and his “accommodating” friends want to burke that date; but their anxiety is not the result of a more candid study of the text, it is the result of a keener appreciation of external danger.

It was natural, perhaps, that Mr. Spurr should be angry at Mr. Blatchford’s statement that the Bible has been praised far beyond its merits, and that “the world has many books of higher moral and literary value.” But this criticism is not disposed of by insulting the critic. Neither is it disposed of by quoting contrary opinions. Vague tributes to the overwhelming greatness of the Bible by Christian writers are, after all, from the very nature of the case, but partisan flattery. Those who regard a book as entirely, or to a large extent, divine, are not going to let it come out second best in any sort of competition. Nor are tributes by semi-Christians of much more value. There is the bias of training to be reckoned with, and the glamor of early association. It is also not very wise to quote—often in an artful, garbled way—what certain semi-Freethinkers have said in laudation of the Bible. Many are capable of seeing, or at least of feeling, the force of Newman’s censure of what he called the “unworthy practice of boasting of the admissions of infidels, as though,” he added sarcastically, “it were a great thing for



a divine gift to obtain praise for human excellence."

A little further on Mr. Spurr gets into a muddle over a great Christian and a greater Freethinker. It was observed by Mr. Blatchford that "Tom Paine left Moses and Isaiah centuries behind when he wrote: 'The world is my country; to do good my religion.'" To this Mr. Spurr replies:—

"Yes! and he also left John Wesley 'behind' in another sense. John Wesley expressed a similar sentiment thirty years before Paine thought of it. It is likely that Paine borrowed it from Wesley."

Observe that Mr. Spurr does not answer what Mr. Blatchford says. He starts another point altogether. Moses and Isaiah are discreetly dropped out of the argument; John Wesley is stuck in; and the question is raised whether he was not plagiarised by Thomas Paine.

Now if it comes to a question of mere originality, a verdict must be given against both Paine and Wesley; for the sentiment about one's country being the world was clearly expressed sixteen hundred years before either of them by the great and noble Marcus Aurelius.

As far as John Wesley is concerned, it is not true that he ever said that the world was his country. When he was told that, as a clergyman of the Church of England, he should stick to his parish, he replied "the world is my parish." He meant that he did right in preaching wherever he could find listeners. Merely this, and nothing more. Wesley never professed himself a citizen of the world. He was so much a citizen of Great Britain that he wrote against the freedom and independence of the American Colonies, which Paine supported with pen, and purse, and person.

There is more originality in Paine's saying that to do good was his religion. Never, we believe, had *that* sentiment been expressed so boldly and tersely. And it never *was* expressed by Wesley. That great preacher was an honest Christian. He would have repudiated the idea that benevolence was the alpha and omega of Christianity. We are well acquainted with his sermons; better, perhaps, than Mr. Spurr is; and we assert, without the slightest hesitation, that the aphorism "to do good is my religion" was foreign and repellent to Wesley's faith. Moreover, Wesley accepted the Articles of the Church of England, and the *Book of Homilies* as a standard of interpretation; and those Articles and that Book distinctly state that good works, without Christian faith, are *not* true religion, and do not enable a man to be "saved."

Mr. Spurr is like a multitude of his kind. He uses language very loosely. Phrases that sound something alike he treats as identical—especially if it serves his turn. But this will not do in a serious controversy.

On the subject of Esau we find Mr. Spurr really amusing. He has such an odd sort of ethical standard. Mr. Blatchford said that "Esau was a *man*," yet God hated him. Not "one bad act" was "chronicled" against him to justify this sentiment. To which Mr. Spurr replies:—

"The chief act chronicled of Esau in the Bible was one of the worst that any man can commit. He sold his birthright, and *with it the rights of his children*, for a single meal. Don't you call that a villainous thing to do? And yet you call Esau a *man*, and italicise the word. It is nice to know your estimate of a *man*."

Mr. Spurr's temper may have betrayed him into writing that; in which case he invites our pity for a hard-pressed controversialist. But if he wrote it in cold blood, and deliberately stands by it, we can only look upon him as an instance of the moral perversion which a dogmatic faith so often engenders. And this has its amusing as well as its tragic aspect; for these moral perverts have a curious itch for admonishing their saner fellow men.

Esau sold his birthright for a meal. Yes, he was starving. And many a man has had to go through the same performance since. Many have to go through it to-day in Christian England.

Who bought Esau's birthright for the price of a meal? Who took advantage of his being ready to perish of hunger? Who dictated the terms of the contract? His own brother, Jacob. And that same Jacob, by a cunning, dirty trick, cheated him also of his father's blessing.

Jacob, like most scoundrels, was a coward. He fled from the wrath of the brother he had defrauded. Many years afterwards he came back, with his uncle Laban's two daughters as his wives, and nearly all the old man's property. He was rich enough to send forward a fine present to his injured brother, in order to mollify him; but Esau declined the fine present, fell upon Jacob's neck, and wept, and forgave him. It was the act of a great-hearted fellow, who would have thrilled at Volunna's appeal to Coriolanus:—

Think'st thou it honorable for a noble man  
Still to remember wrongs?

Esau forgave them, and forgot them. He buried them in oblivion. Not in a cold sense of duty, but in a hot gush of brotherly love. Yet the God of the Bible says, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." And the Rev. Frederic C. Spurr, Defender of the Faith, has not a single word to say in censure of Jacob, but reserves all his censure for Esau, and reviles Mr. Blatchford for calling him a *man*.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be continued.)

### Dr. Horton on Passive Resistance.

THE Rev. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead, is one of the foremost of London Nonconformist preachers. In days when pulpit reputations are built upon so little intellectual ability, this may not be much; but he is in addition a preacher, who, if not "a man after God's own heart," is an individual under the special guidance of the Deity. So, at least, one judges from his own words. The ordinary person has to stand or fall on his own merits, but Dr. Horton is miraculously helped by God. When he was recently seized with an affection of the eyes that involved temporary blindness, it never crossed his mind for a moment that his illness was a purely natural occurrence. No; it was, he was convinced, sent from God for his benefit; and after deep thought he discovered that God, wishing him to think out a certain book, blinded him as a sort of preparation; and so the book was duly published. The credit was given to God; Dr. Horton being content with whatever profits might accrue from its circulation. And on another occasion, while in Norway with a party of ladies and gentlemen, and one of the ladies losing one of her goloshes, Dr. Horton solemnly informs us that he prayed to God to show him where the missing article was, and in answer to his prayer he was providentially guided to the spot where the golosh rested. A man who can enlist the Deity in a game of hunt the slipper is plainly a person of no ordinary calibre.

Some time ago this same gentleman made his appearance in a police-court as one of the gallant army of "Passive Resistance" martyrs. He made the customary speech to the Bench, and was duly polished off in the usual summary manner. The result was just what everyone expected, and, we imagine, what Dr. Horton desired; since it gave him the opportunity of demonstrating that the race of martyrs was not yet extinct, and that here, at least, was one who was willing to sacrifice the family clock or his wife's teaspoons at the shrine of conscientious conviction. But, of course, the matter could not rest here. Presumably the world wished for some further explanation of this gallant defiance of the majesty of the law, and in a sermon covering about eleven columns of the *Christian World Pulpit* this explanation appears.

Divested of a deal of inconsequential talk about conscience, and of a quantity of anti-Catholic



verbiage, Dr. Horton's defence of "Passive Resistance" takes the form of three propositions.

"The first of these propositions is this: That this Act of Parliament gives to the Roman Church an opportunity of obtaining possession of this country such as it never had, and such as it never dreamed of getting. The second proposition is that, so far as I can understand, it was the deliverance from the Roman Church that formed the commencement of our real national greatness, and that for any Englishman to bring England back to the old domination is a kind of treachery. And the third proposition is—and the most important of them all—that Romanism is not only injurious to States, but it is, as I conceive it, injurious to Jesus Christ my Lord and Master."

Such are Dr. Horton's reasons for "Passive Resistance," and they are a queer jumble of ultra-Protestant animus, poor history, and bad reasoning. To say that the Education Act gives Roman Catholics an opportunity of possessing this country such as they never had is downright nonsense, bearing in mind that the Roman Church once had as complete possession as any Church could have. And the absurdity is the more glaring as Dr. Horton goes on to speak of our "deliverance" from that Church. But if it never had such possession as this Act promises, our "deliverance" could never have been a very serious matter; and if it did ever have possession, the Act at most could only restore to the Roman Church what it once lost.

Of course, I am not going to disagree with Dr. Horton when he says the overthrow of the Roman Church was a good thing, or that its re-establishment would be an evil. No Freethinker will canvass these statements; and every Freethinker will derive considerable satisfaction from the sight of a Christian preacher denouncing the oldest and most powerful of Christian Churches as an unmitigated evil. It is certain that for all practical purposes the Roman Church was the only one that existed for centuries, and while I agree with Dr. Horton that under its influence civilisation withered and human nature degenerated, I would also remind him that this was only the inevitable consequence of a Christianity uncontrolled by non-Christian, secularising influences. Any of the other Christian bodies, given the same opportunities as Roman Catholicism, would have had precisely the same influence on civilisation. Allowing for differences of conditions, Geneva under Calvinism was not a bit better than other countries were under Catholicism. And Dr. Horton himself, only three or four years ago, coolly gave it as his opinion that society ought not to tolerate Atheism, and that those who did not believe in a future life ought to be ostracised from human society. It is really difficult for a *Freethinker* to discriminate between the Roman Catholic who punished heretics, and Dr. Horton who would like to do so, but does not because he lacks the opportunity.

Those who know Dr. Horton will not be surprised at his saying that our national greatness commenced from the overthrow of the Roman Church, with the implication that there would have been no development had it not been overthrown and replaced by Protestantism, which supplied the motive power of progress. This is all of a piece with his belief—expressed in another sermon—that the only difference between England and China is a difference of religion; and that, if we possessed their ideas on religion, and they had ours, the Chinese would be as we are, and we should be in their condition. But surely there were some admirable things in English history before the reign of Henry the Eighth? Magna Charta was not drawn up by Protestants. Conscience may only have originated in England during Nonconformist times—Dr. Horton seems to think that we owe this to Bishop Butler, by the way—but if we are to reckon everything by religion, Roman Catholics are clearly entitled to something. As a matter of fact, Italy, which has always retained Roman Catholicism as the dominant religion, for long led the rest of Europe in purely scientific matters; while in literature a very little research would have shown

Dr. Horton how great was its influence on our own writers.

And does anyone but Dr. Horton seriously believe that, had it not been for Protestantism, there would have been no development in England? Had the discovery of America no influence on English life? Had not the invention of printing also its influence? Does our geographical position count for nothing? To ask such questions is to answer them; and Dr. Horton must preach to a congregation as uninstructed as his own mind is narrow if it cannot perceive the absurdity of such reasoning as his.

Dr. Horton's reasons, it may be next noted, are at bottom all theological and all sectarian. The Education Act is to be opposed, not because it gives religious people an advantage over non-religious people—the law has always done this, and Dr. Horton finds it admirable—but because it promises to benefit Roman Catholics. It is to be opposed because Roman Catholics will benefit. Well, if Roman Catholics benefit *as citizens*, no valid fault can be found with an Act of Parliament on that ground. A man whose mind was not thoroughly confused with theology would have recognised that an Act of Parliament should be opposed on social grounds, or not at all. All that we ought to see is that legislation is made for all alike, that none are granted special favors or suffer special disabilities.

As if to emphasize the purely sectarian character of his opposition, Dr. Horton asserts frankly that if it was merely a matter of the legislation reversing "the wheels of progress," that "consideration would not have forced me to what is called resistance of the law.....It would not have touched my conscience to the quick." It is not on social, but on theological grounds he opposes the Act of Parliament. Dr. Clifford would do well to look after his colleague. While this gentleman is stumping the country, and informing the people—with his tongue in his cheek—that it is wholly a citizens' question, Dr. Horton is asserting that it is wholly a theological one. Dr. Horton should be taken in hand by his elder colleague. Such honesty of speech, if persisted in, will certainly bring disaster to the "Passive Resistance" movement.

Above all, Dr. Horton opposes the Act because it is injurious to Jesus Christ. Well, suppose it is? There are other things that have been and are injurious to Jesus Christ besides the Education Act. The printing press, the Copernican astronomy, the Darwinian biology, the Uniformitarian geology, the existence of Freethought, are all injurious to "My Lord and Master." What is to be done with all these things? Are they all to be suppressed? Is everything to be suppressed that does not agree with the theology of Lyndhurst-road Chapel? No doubt Dr. Horton thinks they should be, and the Hortons of other days tried all they could to suppress them. Still it is strange to have in the year 1904 a preacher advocating opposition to an Act of Parliament on grounds of sectarian animosity, and because it is opposed to his form of Christianity.

Finally, Dr. Horton complains that the Roman Catholics are seeking to capture the children. Of course they are; but, then, what is Dr. Horton and the rest of the religious world trying to do? Are they not working for the same end? Is it not with all of them a struggle as to which shall succeed at this work? Have any of them the courage to leave their religion for acceptance or rejection until people are old enough to understand it? Do they not all recognise that the only way to make Christians is to get each to say "I believe" before they are old enough to understand the creed they are accepting? It is with all of them a game of child-grabbing, a trade in infant flesh and blood, mind and character, for the benefit of a creed intellectually incapable of justifying its existence, and of a ministry that dreads nothing more than an unbiassed judgment from educated adults. If children must be preyed upon in the interest of religion, the Freethinker cares little about the shade of theological belief held by



those who do so. His only concern is to shake off the whole crew, to give the child a fair start in life, and leave speculative religious doctrines until it is old enough to understand them.

C. COHEN.

### Matter and Mind.

MATERIALISM is almost invariably misunderstood and misrepresented by those who undertake to oppose it. They contend that its central doctrine is that dead Matter is the sole cause of all physical and psychological phenomena. All forms of life are said to have emerged from the womb of death. But it is an egregious mistake to imagine that this is an accurate account of Materialism. To the Materialist of to-day there is no such thing as death, in the usual acceptation of the term. He believes that Matter is potent; and what is potency, after all, but a form of life? He is convinced that Matter has always had, resident within it, a force capable of producing all that is. What he perceives is, not Matter and Force, but forceful Matter, or Matter that is, in its own eternal nature, potent. In this sense, Matter cannot be inert. It quivers perpetually with glorious possibilities. It has been proved that even iron possesses keen sensitiveness. The assumption that Matter is dead is purely gratuitous. In the last number of the *Edinburgh Review* we are seriously told that "the true teaching of Materialism is that Matter is the expression, or the permanent possibility of the expression, of thought. An undeciphered inscription, such as those of the Mayas found in Yucatan, is a permanent possibility of thought, though the key to the thought has been lost and has not yet been found by us; and so, too, is the material Universe, even though it is as yet but imperfectly interpreted by us." But that definition of scientific Materialism is sadly inaccurate. The material Universe is not an undeciphered inscription. So far as the scientific observer can tell, nothing has been written upon it, and so there is nothing to decipher. The Materialist can discern no writing, hieroglyphic or cuneiform, on the face of Nature, which he is said to be eager to decipher. What he is eager to read and understand is, not any inscription imprinted upon the Universe, but the meaning of the Universe itself as a whole.

The *Edinburgh Review* is fundamentally wrong, therefore, when it says that the Materialist represents the Universe as the expression of thought and then holds that "the thought, of which it is the expression and which he is busy finding out, has no existence and no reality." It is true that science leads us up to Matter; but it is not true that "neither we nor science can stop there." Science *does* stop there, in spite of the fact that Lord Kelvin maintains the direct opposite. It was not as a scientist, but as a theologian, that Lord Kelvin spoke when he said: "It is not in dead Matter that we live and move and have our being, but in the creating and directive power which science compels us to accept as an article of belief." The Materialists vehemently repudiated such a sentiment, and affirmed that there is nothing in the science of the day to support it. It is clear that thought implies a thinker, and a thinker a personal being; but the claim of science is that a thinker is the product and not the producer of the Universe. The only power in which the Materialist believes is the evolving power inherent in Matter itself. No one would dream of denying that "the thought of the thinker is prior to its expression on inscribed monuments"; but there is no trace of "the thought of the thinker in the hieroglyphics of Nature" until a very late stage in her developments; and even then the thinker and his thought appear, not as the cause of Nature, but as her offspring. Philosophy and theology may conceive of Matter as the expression of thought, or of an infinite Thinker as embodying his thought in a material Universe; but to attribute

such a conception to science is an atrocious blunder. Science knows nothing of the thought of the thinker until it comes to man; and man does not claim that Matter is an expression of his thought, but, rather, that both he and his thought are a manifestation or form of Matter.

Whatever an intelligent thinker produces ought to have an intelligent purpose. If the Universe had been created by a being of infinite intelligence, a perfectly intelligent purpose would have characterised all its activities and all its products. But such is not the case. Science can discover no signs of a definite purpose or design in any of the processes of Nature. A writer in the *International Journal of Ethics* vigorously contends that "if we are to have any morality at all in our present life we have to estimate consciousness above a material order pure and simple"; but what is meant by "a material order pure and simple?" Is not consciousness the crown of the material order? Whatever definition of consciousness is adopted, it must be admitted that it has a purely physical basis, without which it apparently cannot exist. But granting that consciousness or personality is to be "reverenced above impersonal force," it is difficult to realise that it has any intelligent purpose. We cannot tell why we are. The writer just quoted makes this further observation: "Nature will appear rational if it provides for the conservation of consciousness as well as that of energy and Matter, and it will not appear adequately rational until we are convinced that it does make this provision." This is a new version of the old "teleology," of which we used to hear and read so much. But there is absolutely no evidence that Nature provides for the permanence of consciousness. On the contrary, there are unmistakable geological and astronomical indications that consciousness is only a passing phase, and that all existing forms of life are evanescent. We know not what or why we are; but we do know that individuals are constantly dropping off, and that our race itself is doomed. Theology comforts us with the assurance that our chief end is "to glorify God and to enjoy him forever"; but of the validity of that assurance there is not a single shred of proof. Consequently, unless it can be certified that man is immortal and that there is a personal God, it is admittedly impossible to be convinced that the Universe has an intelligent purpose; and if the Universe has no intelligent purpose, it cannot be the expression of thought.

Few scientists are willing to be known as Materialists. Even Professor Haeckel himself disapproves of the use of the term. Popularly, Materialism is in bad odor, and there is so hopeless a confusion on the subject that it is no wonder our leading men of science repudiate the word. The confusion results from the general supposition that, according to Materialism, dead Matter is the source and cause of all things. If it were only borne in mind that Matter is in itself potent, and naturally tends to organise itself, much of the prejudice against scientific Materialism would vanish. If what we usually call life is only a higher and more complex manifestation of the power that gives the crystals their exquisite shapes and lovely colors, if all Matter displays a mystic energy which is essentially structural or formative, the materialistic conception of the Universe cannot justly be pronounced gross and humiliating. But *is* Matter endowed with such a power or energy? Some of the greatest scientists have always been convinced that it is, and that nothing is absolutely dead. The evaporation and solidification of a solution of common salt furnish us with an apt and telling illustration of the truth of this. In this strange process there is exhibited an architecture quite as marvellous as that which erected the Pyramids of Egypt. In the language of Professor Tyndall, "we have little pyramids built by the salt, terrace above terrace, from base to apex, forming a series of steps resembling those up which the traveller in Egypt is dragged by his guides."



Professor Tyndall says, further, that "the scientific idea is that the molecules act upon each other without any external intervention; that they attract each other and repel each other at certain definite points or poles, and in certain definite directions; and that the pyramidal form is the result of this play of attraction and repulsion." The same eminent scientist generalises thus:—

"Everywhere, in fact, throughout inorganic nature, we have this formative power, as Fichte would call it—this structural energy ready to come into play, and build the ultimate particles of Matter into definite shapes. The ice of our winters and of our polar regions is its handiwork, and so also are the quartz, felspar, and mica of our rocks..... This tendency on the part of Matter to organise itself, to grow into shape, to assume definite forms in obedience to the definite action of force, is all-pervading. It is in the ground on which you tread, in the water you drink, in the air you breathe. Incipient life, as it were, manifests itself throughout the whole of what we call inorganic nature."

It makes no difference which of the two divergent theories—the kinetic and the pyknotic—we may happen to adopt, because both "agree that we have succeeded in reducing all the different forces of Nature to one common original force." But if we prefer the pyknotic theory, we must believe that the ultimate separate atoms of Matter exhibit "sensation and inclination (or will-movements of the simplest form)," or that they possess what Dr. Haeckel has no objection to call *souls*; and as everybody knows soul means life. Now, in man we see life at its highest and best; but here also we find it as indissolubly associated with Matter as in the very lowest and simplest forms. What is life? What is consciousness? What is thought? No one can tell; but we all know that life, consciousness, and thought are alike manifested in if not by organised Matter. There is no evidence whatever that they ever exist *apart* from Matter. As far as we know, consciousness is a faculty of the body, and thought is a function of the brain, as life is a specific condition of Matter. Innumerable theories of consciousness are entertained by philosophers and scientists. Some contend that it is peculiar to man; some, that it is the property of all animals which have a centralised nervous system and well developed sense-organs; others maintain that all animals possess it; and there are others still who go so far as to say that it is an elementary attribute of all atoms. All these theories cannot be true, and no one can determine which of them is; but, *on any theory*, consciousness is never witnessed apart from Matter. Let the brain be permanently paralysed, and consciousness, thought, soul, spirit permanently ceases to manifest itself, so far as any evidence to the contrary is concerned.

Now, whether we call ourselves Materialists or not is of little moment; but the inescapable fact is that the material Universe is not "the expression, or the permanent possibility of the expression, of thought," but, much rather, the unconscious but efficient producer of thought; not the product of an infinite and almighty Thinker, but the architect of a finite and wonderfully complex though by no means perfect thinking-machine; not the incarnation of an all-wise and all-good Deity, but the fertile soil in which deities innumerable, some wise and some otherwise, have germinated, grown and decayed. The theologian opposes this teaching with all his might, and he may be right; but what we demand from him is positive proof, actual demonstration that Nature does *not* "cover the totality of that which is."

JOHN T. LLOYD.

### The God of the Bible.

WE are told that we must believe in God or be damned. "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is no joke to be damned for ever for not believing in a being that we never saw and never heard, and never can see or hear; for God, according to the Bible, told

Moses that no one can see him and live (see Exodus xxxiii. 20). The same is taught in the New Testament: "No man hath seen God at any time" (1 John iv. 12); "Whom no man hath seen or can see" (1 Timothy vi. 16). If other texts say differently, so much the worse for the Bible and the religion founded upon it. Bible contradictions were not made by Freethinkers; their only service is to discover them and expose them. It is very awkward and annoying to Christians, priests, and their dupes to find wicked unbelievers discovering and exposing errors and frauds in the Holy Bible. It is only natural that men who live in honor and affluence on the assumed inspiration of a book should feel annoyed and lose their tempers and their common sense when men who have ceased to be Christians point to the errors, absurdities, falsehoods, and immoralities in the fetish book. Instead of praising the discoverers of faults and blemishes for their service to truth and morality, apologists abuse and slander and persecute them as if they were great criminals. If sceptics had put all the faults in the Bible, Christians could not treat them worse than they do for being mere discoverers and critics. Christian priests all over the world are in a very trying situation, and we can almost sympathise with them in their dilemma.

As we must believe in God or be damned, it is of importance to know what we are to believe. Belief in God, without any explanation, is a phrase too vague and ambiguous to be of any good in so important a matter. Before we can believe in God we must know something about him—say his pedigree, his age, his home, his size, his attributes, his work, his companions, his thoughts, his commands, his character, and so on. And where are we to get the information? On so important a matter, with results so stupendous, we cannot accept the teaching of fallible and interested men. Creeds and catechisms are the work of men, and are out of the question. Therefore we must go to God himself, the only one who can speak with authority on the subject; and since the Bible is the Word of God, we must go to the Bible for information, as we cannot go to God himself. Of course, we may demand proof that the Bible is the Word of God; but that is another topic. For the present we must assume that the Bible is a divine book, in order to be able to argue with men who believe it. Now, on the supposition that the Bible is the Word of God, the book contains all the will of God, the revelation is completed, the book is closed, and awful penalties are pronounced against any who shall add to it or take from it. This is the teaching of the Bible: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy iii. 16); "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter i. 21). And Paul declares, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts xx. 27). Paul could not have done that unless all the counsel had been revealed and revelation had been finished, and nothing added since is of any authority in matters of faith. The Bible is the only criterion, and all have a right and a duty to go to the fountain head, and not to the teaching of an interested priesthood.

And this is the teaching of the Bible itself. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life" (John v. 39); "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20). Under Bible authority all can discard the priest, with his creed and catechism, and go direct to the scriptures, there to learn and judge for themselves. To the Bible, therefore, we will go, ignoring at present the Church and the priest, with all his teaching.

In the second chapter of Genesis we find God portrayed as a man potter, for he formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Genesis ii. 7). To form a man out of dust, as a brickmaker forms a brick, he must have had hands,



if no other tools; and to breathe into the clay figure he must have had lungs and a mouth. We are left to conjecture how God collected the dust; whether he made a vessel to carry water to prepare the dust, or carried it with his hands; whether he made a table on which to mould the clay into man, or moulded it on the ground; whether he made a design first, or formed the clay figure without a design or model; whether he dried the clay figure in the sun, or made a fire to burn it; and other matters are left to conjecture. The only thing certain is that a God who made man from dust must have been a being possessing flesh, blood, and bone.

In the same chapter God is represented as a gardener. "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Genesis ii. 8). Planting a garden means work requiring tools and time. Holes have to be dug and trees removed. In this case it was not making a garden by sowing seed and giving time for the seeds to grow into shrubs and trees; it was planting a garden with grown trees bearing fruit. How was the work done? Did he make tools to dig the ground and make holes for the trees, or did he do it with his hands? Did he drag the trees on the ground, or carry them on his back? What was the size of the garden, and how long did it take him to plant it? It would have been interesting to have answers to these questions; but they are not given. The only thing certain is that a God who planted a garden must have been a God of flesh and bone.

Further on, in the third chapter, God becomes a tailor. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them" (Genesis iii. 21). Previously Adam and Eve, when they found themselves naked, sewed figleaves together and made themselves aprons (Genesis ii. 7). As Adam and Eve were the only pair in the world, it is difficult to know where they got needles and thread to sew with, unless we assume they became inventors and manufacturers on the spot, for the purpose. But that is only one of many mysteries in the Holy Book. Coats of skin were an improvement on figleaves; but where did God get the skins? Apparently Adam and Eve were vegetarians. Fruit of the trees was their food. They were not likely to kill animals to get clothes. They were satisfied with figleaves. Therefore we are forced to suppose that God became a butcher, to kill some animal, skin it, and prepare the skin, to make coats for Adam and Eve. It would have been interesting to know what animal it was he killed. Was it a horse, a bull, a lion, or a donkey, or what? And how was it done? Did he do it with his hands, or did he make a tool of flint, bronze, or iron for the job? How did he prepare the skin? And needles and thread—did he make them or find them? If he found them ready made, who were the makers? If he made them himself to sew two jackets with, how did he make them, and of what material? In these days it requires very complicated machinery to make needles and thread, and it would be worth something to know how they were made without. But we shall never know. The mysteries of the Bible are incomprehensible.

But one thing is certain—the God depicted in Genesis is a man-God, with legs to walk, mouth to speak, lungs to breathe, hands to work, ears to hear, and eyes to see. He walked in the garden, made a man from dust, breathed into his nostrils, planted a garden, made coats of skin, and spoke with human voice. A spirit cannot be seen; but Adam and Eve could see God, speak with him face to face, and hear his voice, which indicates that he was a person similar to themselves, but of greater power; and this will be further confirmed as we proceed.

We have seen that the God depicted in the first few chapters of Genesis must have been a being of flesh, bone, and blood. He walked, spoke with a human voice, made a clay man from dust, breathed into his nostril the breath of life, planted a garden, made coats of skin to hide the nakedness of Adam and Eve, and so on and on. He must have had a material

human face, for how otherwise could Adam and Eve recognise him and speak with him face to face? He must also have worn clothes, for had he been nude he would not have seen any impropriety in the nakedness of Adam and Eve, and they would have had no reason to be ashamed to be seen without clothing. The God in the Adam and Eve legend is evidently a material being. Other passages, to which I will refer presently, will abundantly confirm that statement. But before I proceed to those, I want to refer briefly to another aspect of the question.

The man-God of the Bible is not the lowest and most primitive idea of him in the Book. And the various pictures of God in Genesis clearly show the composite character of its contents. So many different ideals of God could not have been the belief of the same people or the same age. In the first chapter God is a creator, who made the world by a mere saying of "Let there be," and there was. And man, male and female, was created in the same way: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. i. 27). A God who could create a world and man by a word, must have been almighty, whatever else he was or was not. The ideal of God here is high, and must have belonged to an advanced civilisation.

The ideal of God in the second chapter is much lower, and therefore much older. People, whoever they were, who pictured God making a clay man from dust, planting a garden, making skin coats, and so on, must have been in a low state of civilisation.

But there is a lower ideal still found in the Bible. In the first Samuel, chapters fourth and fifth, we have an account of battles between the Philistines and Israel. The Philistines were victorious, and the Hebrews thought if they had the ark of God with them victory would be theirs. They sent to Shiloh for the ark, and when it came into the camp "all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again" (1 Samuel iv. 5). When the Philistines heard the shout and knew the cause, they were afraid, for they said, "God is come into the camp" (verse 7). However, they fought another battle, and were victorious again. Worse than all, they captured God, and took him in the ark to Ashdod, and ultimately to the house of Dagon, the god of the Philistines, and set it by Dagon (chap. v. 2). The ark made short work of Dagon. On the first morning he was found on his face before the ark. They took Dagon and set him in his place again. But fancy, on the second morning Dagon was found again on his face before the ark of the Lord! "and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him" (chap. v. 4). All the story is very comic and amusing, and interesting as illustrating a low state in the evolution of the God-idea; but it is too long to reproduce here.

I refer to the story to prove that God was nothing more than an idol at one time. The ark was a box, and in the box was an idol-god of stone, wood, or something else. Though the story comes later in the Bible than the legend of the man-God, it is evidently much older in time.

Intelligent Christians are beginning to be ashamed of the myths in the Old Testament, and they never now refer to them unless they are forced by objectors. But as the Christian God is nothing but a development of the idol and man-God, so long as they force the Bible into the hands of children as the inspired Word of God, we must parade its absurdities till its influence is destroyed.

Passages and incidents to show that the God of a great part of the Bible was a material being are numerous. We have already noticed the portrayal in the first and second chapter of Genesis. The story of Cain and Abel indicate the same truth. A spiritual God would have no need of fruit-offering or flock-offering. If God had no respect for the fruit offered by Cain, it must have been because he preferred the mutton offered by Abel, and which he



consumed, as, otherwise, his preference would have been nonsensical. After the deluge, Noah sacrificed a burnt offering unto the Lord, and the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and he was so pleased, that he said in his heart he would not destroy the world any more, for man's sake (Gen. viii. 21). He was evidently a meat-eater, and knew by the smell when a piece of good beef was cooked.

Here is another remarkable passage: "And he gave unto Moses.....two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the fingers of God" (Exodus xxxi. 18). He had hands, and very hard and strong fingers, or good tools, to enable him to write the Ten Commandments on stones. Not only had he hands and fingers, but also back parts. After a long chat, face to face with God, Moses asked him to show his Glory. "And he said, thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen" (Exodus xxxiii. 20-23). As spirit cannot be seen, his parts, front and back, must have been material, and curiosity would like to know whether his back parts were nude or covered with clothing. But that must be left to imagination, and too much comment would not improve the story.

A wrestling match between Jacob and God is too rich and interesting to pass by. The match lasted all night, and Jacob seems to be the winner; but he was punished, as the hollow of his thigh was put out of joint. That the wrestler was God is clear from the following verses: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.....And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved" (Genesis xxxii. 24-30). A God that Jacob could wrestle with all night successfully must have had a material body.

There are plenty of other passages confirming the same view; but enough have been already quoted.

There were more than one God, for they often use the plural in speaking. God was not an only God, for he acknowledges the existence of others. God was not omnipresent, for he moved from place to place. He was not omniscient, for he had to seek information. He was not omnipotent, for there were things he could not do. Here is a verse to prove it: "And the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountains, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron" (Judges i. 19). God had all the passions and failings of man. He was jealous, irritable, revengeful, changeable, partial, and unforgiving, like a man. And no wonder, for he was man-made. All the gods of the world are man-made, and bear the same character as their makers.

A higher conception of God is found in the Old Testament, it is true; but it is a gradual evolution of the old ideal. And the God of the New Testament, if somewhat higher, is only a development, and is founded on the primitive God of savage man.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be continued.)

### Survival of Belief in Witchcraft.

LIKE the voice of some seventeenth century preacher is the late declaration of Professor Herbert L. Stetson, of Kalamazoo College, that "many persons are ruled by personalities other than their own," and that "it is impossible for these victims to dis-enthral themselves. They grow away from their own selves by sheer force of sinister and occult influences over which they have no control. This kind of witchcraft has reached dangerous proportions, and it is one of the most important problems

with which science has to deal to-day. These 'possessions' of demons will never cease until mankind comes to perfect conditions."

Professor Stetson is a long time behind his age, as a large number of newspaper commentators have pointed out; but there could be no greater mistake than to suppose that he stands alone in professing a belief in witchcraft and demoniacal possession. Both those doctrines are plainly taught in the Bible, as the scoffers at the Kalamazoo Professor should remember. It is well enough to ridicule John Alexander Dowie for attributing the uncomfortable weather to millions of little demons in the air, and Stetson deserves to be made the butt of jokes; but the fact cannot be overlooked that Jesus Christ, the alleged founder of Christianity, held to a belief in demons and demoniacal possession, and that the largest branch of the Christian Church, the Roman Catholic, has never abandoned that lunacy or the doctrine of witchcraft. Commenting on the statement of Professor Stetson, Monsignor Lavelle, rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, said:—

"There is no doubt about the fact of diabolical ob- sessions in olden times. The Bible is authority for their occurrence. Whether there are any instances at present I do not know. None has ever come to my personal notice. But that the Church recognises the possibility is evidenced by the rules prescribed for ex-orcisms."

What influence can a Professor in a Kalamazoo College and a disreputable old fraud like Dowie have in darkening ignorant minds compared with the capacity for evil of a great and powerful propagandist organisation like the Church of Rome?

The belief in witchcraft and "possession," upheld by both the Catholic and Protestant Churches, has caused as much human suffering in the past as can be laid to the Spanish Inquisition; and all of the dangers connected with it still threaten as long as it is taught in connection with any religion. We do not suppose that there is an intelligent Catholic priest now alive who believes in witchcraft or possession, but neither is there one with the courage and honesty to denounce them as false.

The Catholic Church never surrenders a superstition. Some years ago it was currently reported that a "beautiful and accomplished nun," immured in some convent, had prayed that her vitality might be transferred to his Holiness Pope Leo XIII. Her prayer was granted, it was said; the variant of the David and Abishag experiment proved successful, and while the nun wasted and died the rejuvenated Pope lived on. A Roman Catholic would deem it necessary to consult his priest before denying that diabolical manifestation, although in the nomenclature of the delusionists it was a sample of "the black art," as Colonel Olcott, the Theosophist, declared at the time.

Witchcraft and diabolism, still taught by the Catholic Church, and harbored in some Protestant minds, was epidemic in Europe at the time of the Reformation, which, under the influence of Luther and Calvin, says Dr. Andrew D. White, "rather deepened than weakened the faith in the malice and power of a personal devil." Dr. White continues:—

"Nor was this, in the Reformed Churches any more than the old, mere matter of theory. As in the early ages of Christianity its priests especially appealed, in proof of the divine mission, to their power over the enemy of mankind in the bodies of men, so now the clergy of rival creeds eagerly sought opportunities to establish the truth of their own and the falsehood of their opponents' doctrines by the visible casting out of devils. True, their methods differed somewhat; where the Catholic used holy water and consecrated wax, the Protestant was content with texts of scripture and importunate prayer; but the supplementary physical annoyance of the indwelling demon did not greatly vary. Sharp was the competition for the unhappy objects of treatment. Each side, of course, stoutly denied all efficacy to its adversaries' efforts, urging that any seeming victory over Satan was due not to the defeat



but to the collusion of the fiend. As, according to the Master himself, 'no man can by Beelzebub cast out devils,' the patient was now in greater need of relief than before; and more than one poor victim had to bear alternately Lutheran, Roman, and perhaps Calvinistic exorcism."

This long extract from Dr. White's *Warfare of Science with Theology* shows where the witchcraft foolishness and crime had its root and source—that is, in religious belief. The priests perpetuated the craze as long as they could because cases of possession and obsession created a call for their services. They could say as the image makers of Ephesus said, "By this craft we have our living."

In exposing these survivals from past ages of ignorance and superstition not much is gained by attacking the Dowies and Stetsons. Their foolish utterances may be used as the occasion for taking up the subject, but the main assault should be made on the stronghold. The thing to be smashed is the authority of the Old Testament, which says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and that of the New Testament, which, as Huxley so conclusively demonstrates in his essays on the "Gadarene Pig Story," plainly and indisputably inculcates the doctrine of demoniacal possession, involving the Christian "Savior" in that belief. Remove these foundations of faith, as such; show that the Bible is mistaken in hundreds of other cases as well as in this, and the whole structure of Christian supernaturalism and imposture would drop. The ignorant and unreflecting are not enlightened as they have a right to be regarding the Bible and the Church by proving certain Bible and Church teachings false unless they are informed at the same time that the Bible and the Church uphold those particular falsehoods. How many devoted believers know that the contempt cast by the press of to-day on the vagaries of Dowie and Stetson falls as heavily and as deservedly upon the "inspired" Scriptures, the creeds of Christendom, and a great part of the message delivered by the Carpenter of Nazareth?—*Truthseeker* (New York).

### The Moral of "Hamlet."

#### I.

THINK not too deeply on man's life and fate,  
For therein lie the seeds of grief and madness;  
The shows of things seek not to penetrate  
Lest what you see fill you with hopeless sadness:  
The world to noble minds is but a hell  
Peopled by lecherous and treacherous creatures,  
With whom true souls may not untainted dwell,  
Since good can ne'er be learned from evil teachers:  
Think not that thought can pierce the mystery  
Of what we are, what purpose we fulfil;  
Know that 'tis vain to strive with destiny  
Which breaks the courage of the strongest will:  
Small comfort doth in thoughts like these reside,  
Yet are they not in *Hamlet* all implied?

#### II.

Yet not too deeply need we take to heart  
The poet's painful lesson: it may be  
'Tis not the whole truth, though 'tis sure a part,  
And we in life some comfort yet may see:  
Were life *all* evil it must soon destroy  
Itself, and thus itself its evils end,  
But there is room in't still for love and joy,  
And good and ill in't oft most strangely blend;  
Nay, evil often will itself transform  
To good by strong compulsion of that power  
Which rages in the earthquake and the storm,  
And yet gives birth to butterfly and flower:  
Evil perchance exists not save for men,  
And did they vanish where were evil then?

B. D.

### A MAN'S DUTY.

According to my belief, the supreme thing for every man to do is to be absolutely true to himself. All consequences, whether rewards or punishments, whether honor and power or disgrace and poverty, are as dreams undreamt. I have made my choice. I have taken my stand. Where my brain and heart go, there I will publicly and openly walk. Doing this, is my highest conception of duty. Being allowed to do this, is liberty.—*Ingersoll*.

## Correspondence.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—An impudent and foolish young parson—whom, once or twice, I have had to instruct, publicly, in Logic, and the Syntax of his native tongue—holds forth occasionally in Hyde Park. I don't know his name.

The other evening he was speaking with all the assurance of ignorance, after the manner of his tribe, and said that "only a Christian had the power to live a good life, and to do to others as he would have others do to him."

After he had "answered" questions from some of the audience, I asked him to state wherein the life of the "Christian" was morally superior to that of the average decent, intelligent non-Christian or anti-Christian; and I said that I could prove that Christ and his teachings were immoral.

Being, of course, unable to answer my question, he distorted my words, grew white and rabid, and yelled out: "I absolutely refuse to answer your question! And, as this is my meeting, I absolutely refuse to allow you to prove that Christ was a bad man; and, if you attempt to do so, I will give you in charge of the police and have you prosecuted for blasphemy!"

As the greater part of the crowd supported him, I left, after telling him that he was intellectually dishonest, and an ignorant, cowardly cur.

Moral pests of this type would, if they could, re-light the fires of Smithfield. It is evident that the Secular school-master has yet a great deal to do.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

### HEINE ON REINCARNATION.

Who knows the divine irony which is accustomed to bring forth all manner of contradictions between soul and body? Who knows in what tailor's body the soul of Plato now dwells, and in what schoolmaster the soul of Cæsar may be found? Who knows if the soul of Gregory VII. may not sit in the body of the Great Turk, and feel itself, amid the caressing hands of a thousand women, more comfortable than of old in its purple celibate's cowl? On the other hand, how many true Moslem souls, of the days of Ali, may, perhaps, be now found among our anti-Hellenic statesmen. The souls of the two thieves who were crucified by the Savior's side, now hide, perhaps, in fat Consistorial bodies, and glow with zeal for orthodox doctrine.....The Hindus are not so stupid as our missionaries think. They honor animals for the human souls they suppose dwell in them, and if they found hospitals for invalid monkeys, after the manner of our academies, nothing is more likely than that in those monkeys dwelt the souls of great scholars, since it is evident enough that among us, in many great scholars are only apish souls.—"Reisebilder."

### LIFE.

Life itself is neither good nor evil, it is the scene of good or evil, as you make it; and if you have lived a day, you have seen all; one day is equal and like to all other days; there is no other light, no other shade, this very sun, this moon, these very stars, this very order and revolution of things, is the same your ancestors enjoyed, and that shall also entertain your posterity. And come the worst that can come, the distribution and the acts of my comedy, is performed in a year. If you have observed the revolution of the four seasons, they comprehend the infancy, youth, virility, and old age of the world.—*Montaigne*.

The Rev. V. B. Carroll, a Southern clergyman, tells the following story: "We were driving out one Sunday from Decatur, when we came upon a negro with a club in his hand and a freshly-killed 'possum on his shoulder. We stopped to examine the prize, and the colonel said: 'My friend, do you know it is Sunday?' 'Sartin, boss.' 'Are you a religious man?' 'I are. I'se jist on my way home fum church.' 'And what sort of religion have you got that permits you to go hunting on Sunday?' 'Religion?' 'Religion?' queried the old man, as he held the 'possum up with one hand and scratched his head with the other. 'Does you 'spect any black man in Georgia is gwine to tie himself up to any religion dat 'lows a 'possum to walk right across the road ahead of him and git away free? No, sah. A religion which won't bend a little when a fat 'possum heads you off couldn't be 'stablished round here by all the preachers in the universe.'"



### Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

September 18 to 25, International Freethought Congress, Rome.  
 October 2, Queen's Hall, London; 9, Queen's Hall; 16, Glasgow; 23, Leicester; 30, Birmingham.  
 November 6, Coventry; 20, Manchester; 27, Liverpool.

### To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—October 2, Manchester; 30, Queen's Hall; November 6, Glasgow; 20, Coventry.
- M. E. PEGG.—We shall be sure to have a good time at Rome if we realise all your good wishes.
- J. SMITH.—A very nonsensical extract. It is ridiculous to argue that there is a God because Atheists do not say that there is not. No one but a Christian would ever condescend to such absurd "logic."
- ROME CONGRESS FUND.—F. Whatcott 2s. 6d., Pioneer 1s., J. Rogers 1s., C. C. £5.
- ERNEST PACK.—Mr. Roger cast no reflections upon you in his letter, and we cannot recognise your claim to reply for the Italians or Mr. Heaford. We may tell you, too, that you are greatly mistaken in supposing that Mr. Roger's letter was too "clever" to have been written by himself. Platform speakers are too apt to underrate the capacity of less talkative persons.
- J. ROGERS.—Glad to know that you are "looking forward to the pleasure of hearing Mr. Foote again at Glasgow"; also that you have enjoyed reading *Bible Romances*.
- W. HEAFORD.—Your letter, with others, was placed in Mr. Foote's hands as he entered the train for Paris. This number of the *Freethinker* was off his hands the day before. You will see, therefore, that your reply to Mr. Roger must stand over till Mr. Foote returns to London. This answer is scrawled in the train.
- J. C. S.—Sorry you are disappointed, but if you had read more carefully you would have noticed that Mr. Spurr is not the only Defender of the Faith that we have to deal with in the present series of articles. The one you mention will follow next.

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*.

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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.

This week's *Freethinker* contains very few paragraphs or other "broken" matter, in consequence of the Editor's being away from England attending the International Freethought Congress at Rome. Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd, his two regular contributors, are away with him; so this *Freethinker* had to be got ready, practically, before the nominal date of the last number. Lecture notices, &c., are left in the hands of Miss Vance, who will "hold the fort" until the Editor brings up reinforcements.

Mr. Foote did not choose to work himself half to death before starting for Rome; otherwise he might have provided his readers this week with something like the usual supply of "Acid Drops." Overtaxing himself would have been a poor preparation for nearly three days' railway travelling, and for doing justice to the Rome Congress afterwards. For a week or so his pen will have a fair rest. This will do him no harm, and in the long run it may do his readers some good. The labor of writing articles and "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums" and "Answers to Correspondents" in the *Freethinker*, week after week, is extremely heavy. It can only be appreciated properly by professional journalists. And this is far from being the whole of Mr. Foote's work. There are his lectures, there is Society and other business, and there is endless correspondence, which goes into the yawning mouth of the Post Office, and leaves no public evidence behind. The fact is, he cannot avoid work except by going right away from it, and at such a distance that it cannot overtake him. His holidays in England are never perfect holidays. The visit to Rome will give him a clear week's escape from the continuous pressure of a wearing burden.

London Freethinkers should give the best advertisement they can to the new course of Sunday evening lectures at the Queen's (Minor) Hall in October. Printed announcements of these lectures, for judicious distribution, can be obtained by applying to Miss Vance, 1 Newcastle-street, E.C. We hope she will have many applications.

Mr. Foote leads off the Queen's Hall course with two lectures on "What Do We Know of God?" and "Who and What was Jesus Christ?" The first of these lectures was very highly appreciated at West Ham a fortnight ago; but the Stratford Town Hall is a long way off the Queen's Hall, and a fresh audience will assemble on October 2. Prior to that lecture, which will be delivered, of course, on the first Sunday evening after Mr. Foote's return from Rome, he will have something to say, which Freethinkers will probably like to hear, about the International Freethought Congress.

Friends desirous of assisting the circulation of the new edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* can do so by carefully distributing copies of separate chapters of the old edition, which can be obtained for this purpose on application to Miss Vance at our publishing office. Each copy, in the form of an 8 or 16-page pamphlet, has a neat slip attached to it, advertising the new edition of *Bible Romances*, and also the *Freethinker*. During the holiday season the "saints" might place copies in likely hands, or leave them in trains or other places where they are likely to be found and read. We hope to hear that some thousands of copies of these pamphlet chapters of the old edition have been circulated in this way.

Manchester Freethinkers will please note that Mr. Cohen opens the new lecture season at the Secular Hall on Sunday, October 2, with two discourses, afternoon and evening. There should be a good attendance on both occasions.

The Red Cross Society of Japan, which is doing such splendid work in the present war, has 920,000 members, an income of £231,000, and a fund in hand of £794,000. The Mikado subscribes £1,000 a year to the Society, and £500 a year to the patients, and some of the nurses are the highest ladies in the land. Mr. O. Eltzbacher, in an interesting account of this Society in the *Contemporary Review*, says that "It did not spring from religious motives at all, but from the very practical though intensely humane sentiment of reciprocity, unmingled with religious feeling."

### A Note from Paris.

JUST a hasty note to the readers of the *Freethinker* in general, and to the subscribers to the Rome Congress Fund in particular. I am writing at Paris on Sunday morning. The weather is brilliant, and I hope it will keep so during the whole of our trip. Some people will say that this is a large order. But we are not in England now.

We had a pleasant journey to Paris. Twelve of us started from Victoria Station, and we pick up two more here. We were to have been fifteen, but one injudicious "saint" went and caught the influenza. He says that the influenza caught him. But that is his version of the matter.

I shall have something to say about our journey to Paris, and other things, later on. I want to say at present that we had a splendid reception at Dieppe. The town was decorated; soldiers, police, and officials were in evidence; the public swarmed; and the band played the Marseillaise. This was a good start on foreign soil.

It was reported that the Mayor of Brighton was on board, and that the festal proceedings were in honor of the *entente cordiale*. Well, I know nothing about that. All I know is that the flags flew, the band played, the Dieppe people cheered, and we landed. These are facts.

We leave Paris at 2 P.M. The special train starts from the Gare de Lyon. The Belgian contingent is some eighty strong. The Paris contingent runs into hundreds. I hear that there will be two train-loads. We are timed to reach Rome at midnight on Monday. Until then—to quote Matthew Arnold and please the Catholics—it will be "On to the City of God."

G. W. FOOTE.



## The Bible as Literature.

"Then we have to bear in mind that the Bible is a national fetish, that such men as Carlyle and Ruskin were taught from their cradles to worship the Bible, and that in later life they spoke of the book as they would speak of something venerable and dear: as men will speak of home, or mother, or of England.

"And I say, with regard to those glowing panegyrics on the Bible, that if Carlyle and Ruskin and the others had taken the Bible, and read it coolly and critically, as they would have read any new secular book, they never would have written of the Bible as they did."—ROBERT BLATCHFORD, *The Clarion*, Sept. 18, 1903.

AT one time the clergy taught that the Bible was inspired by God, that it contained no errors in Science or History. This view, now only held by the Salvation Army and the more ignorant among the other sects, was until quite recently the belief of the vast majority in this country. But now the tune has changed, the progress of physical and historical science has demonstrated the fabulous character of the Bible narratives. The plea for the infallibility of the Bible is abandoned, and the proof of its inspiration is placed in the literary character of its contents. It is inspired, we are told, because it inspires those who believe in it, and we are asked to compare it with the sacred books of other religions, like the Koran for instance, or any of the sacred books of the East, as if the Bible was the work of one man.

The Bible is not a book, but a collection of books bound in one volume; it is in fact practically the whole literature of a nation written by different writers at different times, extending over a period of hundreds of years; it contains all that the Jews knew of history, science, poetry, and drama. We are assured by high dignitaries of the Church that the records of the ancient Jews were collected, altered, edited, and at different times received into the Canon. Ezra made one collection, namely the first five books of the Bible, and labelled it "Pentateuch by Moses." Somebody else—God knows who—collected all the hymns he thought worth preserving and labelled them "Psalms by David," and so on. So that really the Bible contains all that the Jews thought worth preserving of their literature up to the time of the closing of the Canon; the Christians impudently tacking their Gospel on to the end of the book and appropriating the lot. To make a fair comparison we should compare the Bible with the literature of Pagan Greece or Pagan Rome. To take only two authors, Homer is far superior to Moses, and Marcus Aurelius to all the writers in the New Testament.

However, all the Bible is not literature. The genealogies of Genesis would not come under that heading. Exodus again, with its minute description of the Temple furniture, is no more literature than an auctioneer's catalogue. Leviticus, containing the Temple service, directions for killing cattle, or "Every priest his own Slaughterman," with practical directions for curing disease by necromancy, in this style:—

"and the priest shall take of the blood of guilt offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the toe of his right foot." (Leviticus, ch. 14, v. 14).

All this is not literature, neither is the enumeration of the families of Israel in the Book of Numbers, nor the account of monotonous slaughter in Joshua.

That there is literature in the Bible no Freethinker would deny, but it is not inspired, unless God—supposing there is a God—inspired men to write blasphemy. The poem of Job, for instance—for it is poetry, although translated into prose in our Bible—which Luther declared was "magnificent and sublime as no other book of Scripture," and which Tennyson held to be "the greatest poem whether of ancient or modern times," was the work of a thoroughgoing sceptic and Freethinker, who, if he had lived in the Middle Ages, would have been burnt at the stake,

and if he had lived now would probably be writing in the *Freethinker*. "Some of Job's most sublime outbursts of poetic passion," says Dr. Dillon, "must have seemed as impious to his contemporaries as to the theologians of our own country the 'blasphemies' hurled by Byron's Lucifer against the 'Everlasting Tyrant.' There can be no doubt that it is to the feeling of holy horror which his plain speaking aroused in the minds of the strait-laced Jews of 2,400 years ago that we have to ascribe the principal and most disfiguring changes which the poem underwent at the hands of well-meaning censors. It is quite possible even now to point out, by the help of a few disjointed fragments still preserved, the position and to divine the sense of certain spiritfult and defiant passages which, in the interest of 'religion and morals,' were remorselessly suppressed, to indicate others which were split up and transposed, and to distinguish many prolix discourses, feeble or powerful word-pictures, and trite commonplaces which were deliberately inserted later on, for the sole purpose of toning down the most audacious piece of rationalistic philosophy which has ever yet been clothed in the music of sublime verse." Of the celebrated passage in Job beginning, "But I know that my redeemer liveth," Dr. Dillon says: "Now this, it is hardly necessary to say, is not a translation from the poem, nor from any known text of it, but the embodiment of the salutary beliefs of well-intentioned theologians—of St. Jerome among others—momentarily forgetful of the passage, 'Will ye speak wickedly for God?'"† Not only was it found necessary to alter the sense of some, and suppress other passages altogether, but four hundred verses in refutation of Job's blasphemy were added to the poem before it could be brought into anything like consistency with orthodox Jewish belief. "The long-winded discourse of Elihu," says Dr. Dillon, and all scholars agree with him here, "is the elaborate production of some second-rate writer and first-class theologian awkwardly wedged into the poem perhaps a century or more after it had been composed, and certainly before the work was first translated into Greek."‡ So that the finest poem in the Bible is the work of a Freethinker, which had to be altered, parts cut away, and others interpolated before it could be included in the Canon of the Scriptures, and we are now asked to believe that the literary excellence of its composition proves that it was written by inspiration of God; the truth of the matter being that it was the literary excellence of the work which alone saved it from elimination as the work of a pronounced Freethinker.

Nor is Job the only Freethinker who has found a place within the covers of the Bible. The Book of Ecclesiastes—or, as it should be translated, *Koheleth*, which means the Speaker—has undergone a similar alteration in favour of Jewish orthodoxy. So pronounced was the scepticism of this work, and so opposed were the orthodox to the sentiments of the writer, that it was not, says Dr. Dillon—

"until the year 118 A.D. that the protracted dispute on the subject was at last definitely settled at the Synod which admitted *Koheleth* into the Canon. It was natural enough that Hebrew theologians should have hesitated to stamp with the seal of orthodoxy a book which the poet Heine calls the *Canticles of Scepticism*, and in which every unbiased reader will recognise a powerful solvent of the bases of theism; and the only surprising thing about their attitude is that they should have ever allowed themselves to be persuaded to abandon it" (*Sceptics of the Old Testament*, p. 119).

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is the beginning and end of the Preacher's lament. Schopenhauer is the only writer who can compare with him in his downright insistence upon the evils of life and the utter worthlessness of existence. "Happiness is a chimera, birth a curse, death a boon, and absolute nothingness (*Nirvana*) the only real good. The hope of improvement, progress, evolution is a cruel

\* *The Sceptics of the Old Testament*, by E. J. Dillon, pp. 45-46; 1895.

† *Ibid.*, p. 17.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.



mockery; for the present is but a rehearsal of the past." As to the question of a higher and better life beyond the tomb—"To this query Koheleth's reply, like that given by Job, is an emphatic negative.....Of divine promises and revelations Koheleth—who can hardly claim to be considered a theist, and whose God is Fate, Nature, eternal Will—knows nothing." And Dr. Dillon adds: "To say that he believed in a personal God in any sense in which a personal God is essential to a revealed religion is to misunderstand ideas or to play with words." Being here in agreement with Professor Cheyne, who remarks: "To me Koheleth is not a theist in any vital sense in his philosophic meditations" (*Job and Solomon*, p. 250).

Yet another freethinking poet in the Bible is "Agur, son of Yakeh," a fragment of whose philosophy is imbedded, like a fly in amber, in the tenth chapter of the Book of Proverbs—

"which for scathing criticism of the theology of his day, and sweeping scepticism as to every form of revealed religion, is unmatched by the bitterest irony of Job and the most dogmatic agnosticism of Koheleth. Unfortunately, it is no more than a mere fragment, the verses of which are thoughtfully separated from each other by strictures, protests, and refutations of the baldest and most orthodox kind. Indeed, it is in all probability precisely to the presence of the infallible antidote that we owe the preservation of the deadly poison" (*Sceptics of the Old Testament*, pp. 133-134.)

Dr. Dillon is inclined to think that the fragment preserved in our Bibles is "that portion of the poem which the compiler considered to be the most innocent because the least startling and revolutionary" (p. 134). The same author remarks that the keenness of his "humor is excelled only by the bitterness of his satire." He was

"a member of the literary fraternity which boasts the names of Lucian and Voltaire, a firm believer in the force of common sense and rudimentary logic. Agur ridicules the theologians of his day with a malicious cruelty which is explained, if not warranted, by the pretensions of omniscience and the practice of intolerance that provoked it" (p. 8).

The question now arises, Did God inspire these men to write blasphemy? If the answer is Yes, we have a new light thrown on God's character, and it becomes difficult to distinguish between his actions and those of the Devil. If on the other hand Job, the finest poem in the Bible, was the work of a mere uninspired man, why should the rest of the Bible need to be inspired by God?

But it is well known that God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; this accounts admirably for the strange fact that God revealed his holy word in Hebrew to the barbarous Jews, and all other nations have had to translate it into their own language as best they could. A man who had a message for all mankind and had a command of all languages would choose the best for his purpose. However, that is not God's way; in fact, he seems to have chosen the worst, for a learned Cambridge scholar has said of Hebrew that "For its general inconvenience this character seems to me simply detestable." And he adds:—

"As to its alphabet, after forty years' experience I should say that Greek or Phœnician may be read three times as rapidly as the present square Hebrew character, with about one-fifth of the number of errors, and for ease of writing either of them is superior in even a larger ratio than this."<sup>1</sup>

Luther himself states that when translating the Bible: "I sweat blood and water in my efforts to render the prophets into the vulgar tongue. Good God! What work it is! How difficult 'tis to make the Jew writers speak German. They struggle furiously before they will give up their Hebrew to our barbarous tongue" (*Michelet, Life of Luther*, p. 417). Moreover, the Bible owes a great deal of what literary style it possesses to the fact that it was translated during the Golden period of English literature. If it had been left till now it would

present a very different dress. Take, for instance, the Psalms, which are so much praised and so little read. They have been praised far above their merits. If all the adulation spent on the Psalms were collected together it would fill a library, yet it owes most of its literary style to its translators. Dr. Cheyne shows this plainly enough in his lately published book on the Psalms. He remarks:—

"The Old Testament is not altogether in its original form; it has undergone not merely corruption, but editorial manipulation. This is plainer in some books than in others; but nowhere, perhaps, is it more manifest than in the Psalter.

Well, if the Psalms have undergone more "editorial manipulation" than Job and Ecclesiastes, they are not much like the original; but the reader can judge for himself. The following are the first two verses of the twenty-ninth Psalm according to the Authorised Version compared with the original as literally translated by Dr. Cheyne:—

AUTHORISED VERSION.	LITERAL TRANSLATION.
1. Give thanks unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.	Ascribe unto Yahwè, O ye sons of Jerahmeel, Ascribe unto Yahwè glory and strength.
2. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.	Ascribe glory, O ye Ishmaelites, unto Yahwè, Worship Yahwè, Rehoboth and Cush.

Also compare the opening of the 139th Psalm with the original:—

AUTHORISED VERSION.	LITERAL TRANSLATION.
1. O Lord thou hast searched me, and known me.	O Yahwè! thou hast rooted up Zarephath,
2. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off.*	It is thou that hast cut down Maacath; Ashhur and Arabia thou hast scattered. All Jerahmeel thou hast subdued.

So much for the marvellous literary quality of the Psalms.

Even if the Psalms were all that is claimed for them, they are no better than those composed by Pagans before any part of the Bible was written. On this point we have the testimony of Mr. T. G. Pinches, whose work is "published under the direction of the Tract Committee" of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge." He says:—

"Many a penitential psalm and hymn of praise exist to testify to the piety of the ancient nations of Assyria and Babylonia. Moreover this piety was, to all appearance, practical, calling forth not only self-denying offerings and sacrifices, but also, as we shall see further on, lofty ideas and expressions of the highest religious feeling."<sup>†</sup>

Of one of these Babylonian psalms he remarks that "It is noteworthy that the suppliant almost echoes the words of the Psalmist" (p. 52).

But, to come down to modern times, and to literature treating on the same subjects as the Bible; compare the *Hebrew Melodies* of Byron with the Bible. Is there anything in the Bible equal to "The Destruction of Sennacherib," commencing:—

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee?

If this had been in the Bible how it would have been held up to our admiration and veneration. What sermons would have been preached on the divine inspiration of its author! Yet the poem was written by a man who contemptuously rejected the Hebrew God and all his works.

And, after all, what is the value of all this gush about the literary character of the Bible, of all these

\* See review of Dr. Cheyne's book in the *Times* Literary Supplement, July 22, 1904. After citing the literal translation of the 139th Psalm, the reviewer indignantly exclaims: "But enough. It is painful to be compelled to quote such trash, offered in exchange for sacred and ennobling words." However, the reviewer does not dispute the accuracy of the translation.

† *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records and Legends of Assyria and Babylonia*, p. 50; 1902.

\* *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

† Heath, *Phœnician Inscriptions*, pp. 1, 2; 1873.



testimonials of great men to its literary value, which now do duty in place of evidence for its truth? The fact is these great men, Carlyle, Ruskin, and all the others, were taught from earliest childhood to regard the Bible as above and apart from all other books. It is associated in their minds with their mother and their early home, it is transfigured in the light of other days and other memories, as seen through the perspective of "life's fitful fever," even as Shakespeare makes the dissolute Falstaff, in his dying moments, babble of the green fields, where he once played as an innocent child. They have been taught to reverence the Bible before the reasoning faculties were developed, when anything can be impressed on the mind. If they had been taught to reverence the *Arabian Nights* or the *Ingoldsby Legends* they would have been equally biassed in favor of those works and ready to bear the same testimony to their literary value as to that of the Bible.

The Koran is regarded in the same light among Mohammedans as the Bible is among Christians and Jews; they have been brought up to regard it in that light, but we should as soon think of reading the Koran for its literary merits as we should of reading Tupper. And yet the followers of the prophet can show more reason for the faith that is in them than the Bibliolators; for, as Sale, the translator of Koran, points out:—

"The Koran is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language.....It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue, and, as the more orthodox believe and are taught by the book itself, inimitable by any human pen (though some sectaries have been of another opinion), and therefore insisted on as a permanent miracle, greater than that of raising the dead, and alone sufficient to convince the world of its divine original.

"And to this miracle did Mohammed himself chiefly appeal for the confirmation of his mission, publicly challenging the most eloquent men in Arabia, which was at that time stocked with thousands whose sole study and ambition it was to excel in elegance of style and composition, to produce even a single chapter that might be compared with it."\*

If we had been trained up to reverence the Koran from early childhood instead of the Bible, we should find plenty of eminent men ready and willing to give it a testimonial.

As Mr. Blatchford has well said, "It is so easy to gush. It has become a habit with Englishmen to gush over the Bible, as over the British navy or the twentieth century civilisation. But gush and reason are very different things."† And when we apply the test of reason to the literature of the Bible we find that some of it is contemptible trash. Some of its finest poetry was the work of Freethinkers and unbelievers, whose work has been basely perverted to the use of religion. Much of the polish of other parts, like the Psalms, has been bestowed upon it by the translators. And, lastly, it derives much of its power over some minds by its being impressed upon their minds from earliest infancy as the greatest and best book in the world, and its associations with childhood's days.

We have dealt with the Bible merely from a literary point of view, without touching upon the unscientific, unhistoric, and obscene parts of the Book. But we claim to have shown that the Bible has been immensely overrated as a work of literature.

W. MANN.

#### THE SUPERIOR MAN.

Men are not superior by the accidents of race or color. They are superior who have the best heart—the best brain. Superiority is born of honesty, of virtue, of charity, and, above all, of the love of liberty. The superior man is the providence of the inferior. He is eyes for the blind, strength for the weak, and a shield for the defenceless. He stands erect by bending above the fallen. He rises by lifting others.—*Ingersoll*.

\* *The Koran*. Preliminary Discourse by George Sale, p. 47, Chandos Edition.

† *The Clarion*, Sept. 18, 1903.

#### Bible Ghosts.

(From the New Edition of "Bible Romances" by G. W. Foote.)

THE belief in ghosts is rapidly dying out. They are scarcely ever heard of in towns, except in a forlorn condition at Spiritist *séances*, where they are at the beck and call of professional mediums, and reduced to playing tricks for their sport and profit. Most surviving ghosts lurk about villages and lonely homesteads. The reason of this is obvious. Life and society quicken the intellect in towns, while the quiet and solitude of the country stimulate the imagination. And ghosts are entirely a matter of fancy. Like miracles they depend upon faith. If you believe in them you may see them; if you do not you never will.

The Bible abounds with these phantasms. They are of various kinds, from little spectres to the great Ghost, commonly called Holy, who himself appears in a variety of forms. Such a fact is not surprising when we consider that this book is full of the grossest superstitions. When its author came on earth in the person of Jesus Christ, he actually thought that mad people had devils in them, and were to be cured by the exorcist instead of the doctor. Nothing unscientific or absurd, therefore, should surprise us in his writings. We ought rather to be thankful, in reading them, for the smallest mercies in the shape of knowledge and common-sense.

We are very early introduced in the Old Testament to a ghost. The second verse of Genesis says that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." But as there were no eyes to view this ocean traveller, the very fish not being then in existence, we have no notion of its form or feature. All we can say is that it was the loneliest ghost on record, with the most miserable occupation. It was worse off even than Noah, for although he sailed the seas for twelve months without sight of land, and must have been heartily sick of so much water, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had a drop of "something short" inside his floating menagerie; especially when we reflect that the first thing he did after the Flood, directly he had offered his burnt offering to the Lord, was to get dead drunk.

The next ghost was "the Lord God," whom Adam and Eve heard "walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Scripture states that they heard his voice, so he was probably holding a conversation with himself; which is a common thing with persons of weak intellect. This is quite in keeping with the sequel, which displays him in a dreadful passion at occurrences which anyone but a fool would naturally have expected. Yet this ghost is, in a manner, an advance on the first, having passed, as Herbert Spencer would say, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous state, from the simple to the complex. The "Spirit of the Lord" appears to have been a gaseous body, if we may so speak of a ghost; but the "Lord God" has a voice and a walking apparatus, and is therefore organic. We wonder how long this process of development took. The ghostly biologist who answers that question will settle a puzzling problem in chronology; namely, the length of time between "in the beginning" and the creation of Adam.

After the Flood, and until the Jews settled down in Palestine, the Lord frequently appeared again. He visited Abraham several times, and on one occasion stopped to dinner. Two of his angels, or himself divided into two, called on Lot at Sodom, and put up with him for the night. He met Jacob near Jabbok brook and held a wrestling match with him, in which, after many hours' rough sport, he was at last defeated, although he dislocated his adversary's thigh. Moses saw him in a burning bush, in a public-house, and on a mountain, where he spent forty days with him and had a panoramic view of his "afterwards." Altogether Jahveh was a pretty



busy ghost, until he found it more respectable and prudent to cultivate a retiring disposition.

There were many angelic ghosts in the Old Testament who played various parts, such as heavenly messengers, promisers of children to barren wives (these were doubtless young and good-looking), lying prophets, and wholesale murderers. But the most remarkable angels were the sons of God who saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and who were apparently the progenitors of a mongrel race of giants. It has, however, been suggested that this narrative was written by a subtle satirist who sailed as close to the wind as he could; that these sons of God were priests, who are always fond of the fair sex; and that the mongrel offspring were the bastard children they procreated.

The first Bible ghost, in the more modern sense of the word, is that of the prophet Samuel, who was raised by the witch of Endor. This old lady kept a "familiar spirit," and no doubt a bristly tom-cat. Her trade was summoning ghosts in the dead of night. She was one of the survivors of a numerous tribe of witches and wizards whom Saul had rooted out of the land in his vigorous and sensible reign; but in his decline, when the priests and conjurers were all against him, and he was himself troubled with fits of melancholy and superstition, he paid this old Hecate a visit. Apparently ashamed of his weakness, he went in disguise, and asked her to bring up Samuel. There was much haggling before she would begin the performance, for according to the law her life was in danger, but at last she brought the old fellow up. Probably as business had been dull of late, she had grown unused to ghosts; at any rate, when she saw Samuel she screamed, and fancied she saw streams of spectres issuing from the ground.

Samuel wore a mantle, so there are clothes in the spirit world, as the Spiritists of to-day aver, although some of their lady mediums have been detected playing the ghost themselves with devilish little on.

Samuel's ghost spoke, and all other ghosts indulge more or less in the same diversion. They generally talk utter nonsense, although Samuel's language was rather wicked than absurd. We should like to know what sort of a voice he had. Superstition generally ascribes to ghosts the ghost of a voice. Savages describe the spirit-voice as a chirp or murmur, and the classic descriptions of Homer and Ovid are very similar. Shakespeare makes the King's ghost in *Hamlet* speak monotonous lines which we naturally associate with subdued accents; and the low, mysterious tone is still affected by the "familiar spirits" of modern mediums. A screaming ghost would be a screaming farce. Those who wish to find the explanation of this and many other facts of Animism should consult Dr. E. B. Tylor's magnificent work on *Primitive Culture*.

Let us make a leap to the time of Elijah, who played an extraordinary trick with a ghost. He was lodging with a widow at Zarephath, and living on her miraculous barrel of meal and cruse of oil, which never failed, but gave forth perennial supplies of pancakes. This fortunate lady's boy fell ill and died, and she reproached the prophet with being the cause of her loss. Elijah in turn gave the Lord a lecture on the subject, and asked what he meant by slaying the poor woman's son. He then carried the little corpse up into the garret which he occupied rent free, laid it on his bed, "stretched himself upon the child three times," and besought the Lord to let its soul come back. His prayer was heard, the third stretch was lucky, "the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." Curiously, there is a similar feat recorded of Elisha, who inherited Elijah's mantle, and the goodwill of his business. Elisha's hostess, however, was not a widow, but a wife. Her husband was old, and she had no child when Elisha first came to their house, but that little deficiency was soon remedied. Presently she had a son and heir, who grew big enough to carry his father's dinner to the reaping field, where, alas! he was killed by a sunstroke. Elisha operated on the corpse

as Elijah had done before him. He stretched himself on the child, mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, and hands on hands, gave it a good warming, and then went downstairs to get up the steam again, perhaps over a bottle of inspiration. Being well primed, he ascended and gave the corpse another cuddle. This effort was crowned with complete success. The child's soul returned, he sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes, no doubt thinking Elisha had given him snuff.

What a fine example of barbaric superstition! Among savages, such as the ancient Jews undoubtedly were, it is a common belief that the soul leaves the body when a man faints or dies, and may sometimes be brought back by calling on it; and thus, says Tylor, "the bringing back of lost souls becomes a regular part of the sorcerer's or priest's profession." Elijah and Elisha seem to have been in this line of business, and these two cases may have been recorded merely as specimens of their skill.

And how interesting and instructive is that incident of the child sneezing seven times! The breath and the soul were the same thing, and both passed through the nose. God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life. At the Flood all in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. Jacob, as Tylor says, prayed that man's soul might not thenceforth depart from his body when he sneezed. It has been a general custom to utter a pious ejaculation on sneezing; and when, after a good sneeze, Christians say "God bless me!" they are unconsciously performing an ancient religious rite. Sternutation is widely associated with demoniacal possession. The idea appears among peoples so diverse as the Hindus, the Persians, the Kelts, the Kaffirs, and the Jews, not to mention a number of other races. The Mes-salians, an heretical sect, used to spit and blow their noses to expel the demons they might have drawn in with their breath. There are pictures of mediæval exorcists driving out devils through the patients' nostrils; and centuries earlier Josephus told of his seeing a certain Jew, named Eleazar, cure demoniacs by drawing the demons out through the same channel. Yes, the nose is as prominent in religious history as it is on our faces, and its intimate connection with the soul may explain why the priests have always led us by this particular organ.

Elisha's bones, although they could not resuscitate themselves, had the power of reviving others. A corpse dropped hurriedly into his sepulchre stood up alive and kicking. Ezekiel saw a whole valley of dry bones start into life again. Probably the old ghosts were ready to resume their bodies at a very short notice, for they were supposed to haunt the place of their burial. Quite another kind of ghost was the one that passed before the face of Eliphaz in the dead of night and made the "hair of his flesh" stand up like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Unfortunately we have no description of it; yet, as it preached a long sermon, we may conjecture that it was the ghost of a parson looking out for a fresh pulpit.

(To be continued.)

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#### THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Here the holiest book of prayers,  
Weal and sorrow, see:  
At its portal stands and stares  
God's adultery.

—Nietzsche.

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#### THE FEAR OF DEATH.

Perhaps the best cure for the fear of death is to reflect that life has a beginning as well as an end. There was a time when we were not: this gives us no concern—why, then, should it trouble us that a time will come when we shall cease to be? I have no wish to have been alive a hundred years ago, or in the reign of Queen Anne: why should I regret and lay it so much to heart that I shall not be alive a hundred years hence, in the reign of I cannot tell whom?—*William Hazlitt*.



**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.****OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park, 3.15, R. P. Edwards.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, "The Bible in the School."

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, T. J. Thurlow, "The Bible as a Guide."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Stratford-grove): 7, G. Parsons.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Hammersmith, 7.30, W. J. Ramsey.

**COUNTRY.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Visit to Hampstead Colliery, Great Barr Station, 2.57. Thursday, September 29, at 8, Coffee House, Bull Ring, Miss M. Ridley, "The Gospel of Character."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Coffee Tavern, Fleet-street): 7.30, A. G. Lye, "The Principles of Secularism."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "Why Sunday should be Secularised"; 7, "An Impeachment of the Church of England." Monday, 8, Social.

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