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*Nature proposes to herself no aim in her operations, and all final causes are nothing but pure fictions imagined by men.*—SPINOZA.

## Campbellism.—IV.

### XIII.

MR. CAMPBELL'S inability to find, in strict logic, any place for the freedom of the will, is in a sense, although he does not seem to perceive it, the necessary consequence of his doctrine that God and man are the same thing, only differing as great from small. To speak the plain language of the man in the street, Mr. Campbell believes that every human being is a detached bit of God, and will ultimately be a part of God again. "Being one substance with the Father" is as true of every one of us as it is of Christ. "There is no substance but consciousness," and "when our finite consciousness ceases to be finite there will be no distinction whatever between ours and God's." This is not Pantheism, we are told, but of course it is; and it is as ancient as the history of religious thought.

Man is as independent of God, therefore, as the moon is independent of the earth, or the earth is independent of the sun. Neither could God himself have a free will in the common sense of the words, for even God must act according to the eternal necessity of his own nature. This, indeed, is what Spinoza set forth as *real freedom*. Freedom cannot possibly mean an ability to act in all sorts of contradictory ways; it can only mean freedom to act according to one's nature. That freedom man has to a certain extent, and God (by the theory of his existence) has it completely.

What the oracle of the New Theology does not explain is how man's personal identity can be preserved after his absorption by God. This is what he says:—

"The being of God is a complex unity, containing within itself and harmonising every form of self-consciousness that can possibly exist. No one need be afraid that in believing this he is assenting to the final obliteration of his own personality; if such obliteration were possible, our present personality could possess no permanent value even for God. No form of self-consciousness can ever perish. It completes itself in becoming infinite, but it cannot be destroyed."

Orientalists know better than this. With all their grandiose metaphysics and subtle theosophy, they think more clearly than Mr. Campbell does. Absorption by the Infinite does mean, to them, the annihilation of their individual personalities. Their particle of "mind-stuff," as Professor Clifford called it, returns to the universal source from which it came; and its finite consciousness will be lost in the infinite consciousness, which may be entirely different.

Mr. Campbell makes a number of statements that are certainly not axiomatic. We have no hesitation in calling them inconceivable, and therefore incredible. And when he is asked for evidence he replies with fresh statements. In fact, he talks like an oracle; and we have no doubt that he believes himself to be one.

### XIV.

The relations (whatever they are) between God and man naturally bring Mr. Campbell to the problem of evil. How a man treats that problem is a test of his mind and character. He may favor this or that solution, or he may regard the problem as insoluble; but the spirit in which he confronts it tells us whether he is profound or superficial, both in thought and in feeling; whether he is one of nature's aristocracy or one of her common herd. And I am sorry to say that Mr. Campbell comes out very badly from this ordeal.

Mr. Campbell opens his chapter on this subject with a paragraph in which he gives himself away. A competent reader knows precisely what to expect after it. The substantial part of the paragraph is as follows:—

"It is still the fashion to declare this problem insoluble; but I have the audacity to believe that it is not so; mystery there may be, but it is not chiefly mystery. I will even go so far as to assert that the problem had been solved in human thought before Christianity began. What I have to say about it now is ancient thinking confirmed by present-day experience."

It must be admitted that Mr. Campbell has "audacity" enough for anything. The note of complacent egotism is the dominant one from end to end of his *New Theology*. There is something quite grotesque in his reference (p. 86) to "Professor Ray Lancaster, and such as he." "I think," he says, "I could convince them that I am right if I had them face to face." He evidently thinks his personal presence is irresistible. But what a man thinks of himself, and what he can persuade others to think of him, are very different; as Mr. Campbell has apparently discovered, with a good deal of painful surprise.

It may be allowed that if the problem of evil has ever been solved it was solved before Christianity began—for Christianity brought no new thought to any of the riddles which the religious doctors of antiquity were fond of discussing. But surely the statement that "there may be mystery" implies that the problem is *not* solved. The truth is, that the only person who does solve the problem of evil is the Atheist; and he solves it (to use an Hibernicism) by denying the existence of the problem. His position is that there is no problem of evil in the nature of things; the problem is created by a theory which is out of harmony with the facts. It is as natural for a tiger to catch and eat a man as for a man to catch and cage a tiger; as natural for a shark to eat a sailor as for a sailor to shoot a shark. There is no mystery in either case; the mystery begins when Nature, or the God of Nature, is represented as wise and benevolent; and clearly this mystery is one of the theologian's own creation. To the Atheist it does not exist. "There nothing good or ill but thinking makes it so." What is good from the man's point of view is not good from the shark's or tiger's point of view. Good and evil are not absolute, but relative; and what is good at one time and place may be evil at another.

### XV.

Mr. Campbell dismisses the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Fall. He says it has "played a mischievous part in Christian thought." He refers to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as "the

Genesis myth." He declares that "no orthodox theologian of any repute now believes in an actual historical fall of the race." "Modern science," he remarks, "knows nothing of it, and can find no trace of such a cataclysm in human history. On the contrary, it asserts that there has been a gradual and unmistakable rise."

Sin there is, but not original sin; and even sin is not an injury to God except as it is an injury to man. The only real sin is selfishness. So says Mr. Campbell, following in the footsteps of Ingersoll.

Sin or no sin, however, there is misery in the world. Mr. Campbell quotes Huxley's statement that "there is no sadder story than the story of sentient life upon this planet," and adds that "in so saying he has the testimony of modern science behind him." In a later chapter Mr. Campbell admits that "Nature is indeed cruel." "There is a tragedy," he says, "under every rose-leaf, there is unceasing conflict to the death going on in every hedgerow." He says this. But he does not appear to feel it. That is the trouble. And that is why he solves the problem of evil in such a simple and easy manner.

Mr. Campbell's argument is shallow because he has no real depth of feeling. He is a fit companion for Sir Oliver Lodge, who talks the same sort of sentiment, and is just as lacking in true emotion. No man with a tittle of the sensibility and sympathy of (say) a Shelley could have written the monstrously false and foolish sentence that "Evil is a negative, not a positive term." Darkness is certainly the absence of light; but to say that evil is only the absence of good, and pain the absence of pleasure, simply betrays an intellectual flippancy based upon a moral weakness.

Mr. Campbell has the "audacity" to say that pain is not, properly speaking, in itself evil, but rather the evidence of evil. "Pain," he says, "is life asserting itself against death." Very likely. But, when all the explanations are done with, pain is pain. When a victim is being slowly tortured to death by religious persecutors, it is doubtless true that the pain he suffers is an aspect of the struggle of his life against their death; but how does that lessen his agony?

Evolution has destroyed the fond illusion that evil is partial and evanescent. It has proved evil to be of the very texture of things. What has natural selection worked through? The struggle for existence. And that struggle has made Nature "red in tooth and claw." Moreover, it has bred a human nature which, in itself, is the great obstacle to the beautiful dreams of Utopia.

#### XVI.

Mr. Campbell lights upon another fine argument. He affirms that we are misled by our estimate of the quantity of suffering there is in the world. "We only suffer individually," he says, "and therefore all the pain of the world is comprised within the experience of the being who suffers most, whoever that may be." He might as well say that all the wealth in the world is comprised within the experience of the man who has the biggest income. The intensity of pain is one thing; the extensity of pain is quite another thing; and it is absurd to attempt to resolve the latter into the former. Pain is a positive evil—and the multiplication of pain is another positive evil; and Mr. Campbell will not get rid of adamantine facts by verbal jugglery.

#### XVII.

Those who feel deeply never talk about evil and pain as Mr. Campbell does. Perhaps the most impressive passage in Wordsworth's one drama is that in which he directly contravenes Mr. Campbell's easy-going philosophy:—

"Action is transitory—a step, a blow,  
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—  
'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy  
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:  
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,  
And shares the nature of infinity."

Compared with that great utterance, Mr. Campbell's cheap and fluent rhetoric is like the noise of dried peas in a bladder to the solemn music of a mighty organ.

It is often said that pain and sorrow are our educators and developers, and Mr. Campbell argues so by implication. But there are plenty of cases in which this is entirely false. Here is one that was noted by George Eliot when she was writing "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" in *Scenes of Clerical Life*:—

"Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial, erring life which we visit with our harsh blame, may be but as the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered."

And what people consciously suffer is but half the tragic story. There is another half of it which Ruskin so eloquently referred to in the *Stones of Venice*:—

"I do not wonder at what men Suffer, but I often wonder at what they Lose. We may see how good rises out of pain and evil; but the dead, naked, eyeless loss, what good comes of that? The fruit struck to the earth before its ripeness; the glowing life and goodly purpose dissolved away in sudden death; the words, half spoken, choked upon the lip with clay for ever; or, stranger than all, the whole majesty of humanity raised to its fulness, and every gift and power necessary for a given purpose, at a given moment, centred in one man, and all this perfected blessing permitted to be refused, perverted, crushed, cast aside by those who need it most,—the city which is Not set on a hill, the candle that giveth light to None that are in the house;—these are the heaviest mysteries of this strange world, and it seems to me, those which mark its curse the most."

The awful disappointments and failures of history are enough to strike one dumb.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## Religion and Unrest.

DISCOVERY and invention are the great characteristics of modern times. They are more or less the outstanding qualities of man as man. Man goes everywhere and pries into everything—too often in the spirit, which Ruskin said was typical of the modern Englishman, "Wherever we are, to go somewhere else, and whatever we have, to get more"; but still the fact remains. We create new arts and new inventions, and we make new discoveries. But there is one art we have yet to develop, one discovery we have yet to make. We have to make the discovery—not so that it is accepted by one here and there who is duly labelled as crank or faddist by the rest of the community, but so that it is really shared by all—that all our discoveries and inventions are quite valueless, or worse, unless they duly serve the end of promoting rational happiness and enlightened well-being. In other words, the one art we have hitherto failed to pay proper attention to is the art of living. One cannot promise the promoter of such an art a handsome return in the shape of solid cash—more of that commodity he might easily get in a hundred and one other directions—but in the end, the return for his labors may easily be as satisfactory to himself as any gained by other means.

Such would seem to be the real philosophy of Dr. C. W. Saleeby's last work *Worry: the Disease of the Age*, and I do not think many readers of the *Freethinker* will quarrel with it. Worry is certainly common enough in modern life. People worry about their health, and so pave the way for disease; they worry about their future, their past, their financial prospects, and finally, when all else fails, worry over their worries. Dr. Saleeby has thus no lack of material for his subject, although it is just as likely as not that the afflicted ones may discover a fresh source of worry in the book that is written for

their benefit. Dr. Saleeby has much to say on the subject of worry that is interesting, and much that is wise as to the need of avoiding unnecessary worries, and so live a useful and at the same time, a happy life. It may be questioned, however, whether the advice will have much effect in the case of those who need it most. The truth is, one suspects, that worry is a general disease rather than a particular one, and is created by the prevailing conditions, chief of which is the current outlook on life. While the greatness of nations continues to be measured by mere power, and the greatness of individuals by cash; while the gospel of getting on is preached to the young, and by getting on is implied getting money—honestly, if possible, but getting it at all costs—we have all the conditions for an unhealthy nervous tension, and for the “worry” against which Dr. Saleeby writes.

The most interesting portion of Dr. Saleeby's book to Freethinkers are the concluding chapters in which he deals with the relation of “worry” to religious belief. Much of what he says in these chapters will command their assent, although they will probably feel that there is a useless distinction between “true religion” and religion in general. I say useless because either “true” or “false” seem quite out of place in such a connection. Religion either is, or it is not. If it is, it is, *ipso facto*, true for all who believe it; and, if it is not, there is no need for any qualifications. After all, true religion only means *my* religion, while false religion means that of some other person. Any religion is true for anyone who believes in it; and in a matter where proof is impossible, it is sheer dogmatism to talk of one religion as true and another as false. I do not believe Dr. Saleeby intends to be dogmatic; it is simply a loose and popular way of stating the matter.

Some little justification, however, for the distinction is attempted in the last chapter, entitled “The Triumph of Religion,” but I do not think the matter is improved thereby. In one respect it is worsened by quotation—cited with approval—from Hoffding, concerning “many freethinkers whose attitude to the religious problem proves how little sense they have of the deepest human needs.” I do not think that Freethinkers have any less sense of “the deepest human needs” than have other people; on the contrary, I should be inclined to place their estimate as somewhat higher. But as this opinion may be ascribed to prejudice, it may be pointed out that, rightly or wrongly, it is because Freethinkers believe religious beliefs to frustrate the proper development of man's higher nature that, they are opposed. And further, that our deepest needs do not really involve what are properly religious beliefs. The essential and historical significance of religion is contained in the one word—supernaturalism. Divest religion of this, and there is nothing left but a mere name. Accidentally this supernaturalism has been associated with our “deepest needs”; but it is a casual connection only, and is in process of dissolution. Naturally, religious organisations nowadays lay chief stress on these accidental associations, because the supernatural does not nowadays appeal to people with the same force as of old; but this is a policy that can impose only upon such as are too careless or too prejudiced to work out what is the true relation between religious beliefs and the really important things of life. If Dr. Saleeby, instead of repeating such vague statements as the one quoted, would set himself the task of finding out precisely which of our “deepest needs” were dependent upon religion, it would certainly be helpful to his readers, and possibly to himself. There is nothing like a general statement for concealing vagueness of thought, and its most potent corrective is a definite statement of fact.

Dr. Saleeby is on much safer and more solid ground when he is dealing with “worry” as a maker of religions. In this instance, worry is practically synonymous with fear, and it is pointed out what a large part this plays in the development of religious beliefs. In truth, all primitive religion is permeated

with fear. Ancestor worship—one of the roots, if not the root, of all religions, springs out of the fear the savage feels for the wandering doubles of the dead. Their subsequent development into gods fully justify the description of them as “creations of worry.” Dr. Saleeby is also correct in pointing out that mental types cannot be confined to period in time. The same essential type meet us in almost every period of human society, and under conditions where the superficial would least expect to find them. The primitive type of mind may be discovered as easily in civilised London as in uncivilised Central Africa, and “the primitive mind must have a primitive religion.” Between an Australian black fellow and a modern Englishwoman there is, outwardly, no resemblance; yet when we examine the broad mental characteristics of many of the latter and compare them with the former—

“They might walk down Regent-street arm-in-arm. It is true that she can play bridge; whilst he, perhaps, can only count up to five. There has been a superficial development of the reason in her, which opportunity has denied to him; but that is a trifle. Get deep down into the mind of each, and you will find the same outlook upon life, the same fear of the invisible.”

And the predominant note of this type of mind is—fear. It is the same whether we take religion in savages or in a comparatively civilised age. Right through the history of Christianity, with rare exceptions, the strongest and deepest feeling evoked has been fear. The evil produced thereby is, in the nature of the case, incalculable; but it is none the less immense. And to those who argue that falsehood, or false belief, is to be let alone because some are content with it, Dr. Saleeby rightly gives the reply that the content furnished is as naught to the demoralisation produced. He asks:—

“Would not the world stand appalled if someone were to estimate in centuries or in hundreds of thousands of years the total amount of time spent by human beings.....in praying for mercy to non-existent gods, in agony of soul at the anticipation of punishments and tortures and unslaked fires which do not exist, never have existed, and never will exist; in murder and poison and actual torture on behalf of doctrines which every educated man of to-day knows to have been lies, rotten from end to end; in sacrifice, sacrifice of life, of the lives of others, of sheep and cattle and children and little babies demanded to appease the wrath of deities *that were nothing*; sacrifices, too, of slaves and wives and warriors sent after some chief or king in order to serve his ghost; or most pathetic of all, the agonies endured by loving souls who have thought that those who were dearer to them than life itself had earned eternal doom by the infringement of some divine decree—a decree made by men, and for which there is no ‘credible god’ to answer.”

All this is perfectly true, and it is not unconnected with the various kinds of worry treated by Dr. Saleeby in the earlier portion of his book. The civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome had its faults, but at least they took life as something good in itself, to be valued as an end in itself, and to be perfected by human endeavor. With historic Christianity, on the contrary, this seems to have been the last conception it would tolerate. Life had to be lived, true; but only as one fulfils a duty that it is an offence to shirk, but which gives little or no pleasure in the execution. The joy of living was a phrase which the Christian Church would for centuries have looked at suspiciously. The joys of life were for the unregenerate, for the saved it was pilgrimage of misery only rendered bearable by the felicity promised elsewhere. Ruskin has pointed out how the diversion of art in the service of religion was directly responsible for its sensualism and extravagance. The same principle holds true of the influence of Christian belief on life. The normal life of men and women, not being treated with the dignity and consideration it deserved, was handed over, almost unreservedly, to lower ideals. Its asceticism not only led to sensualism by way of reaction, but was itself often only sensualism in disguise. The general result being that men and women were for generations without any instruction of importance, so far

as their religious beliefs were concerned, as to the real nobility of life. Something has been done of late years to correct this, but much more remains to be done. Before life can be lived at its best it must be exhibited as complete in itself, with its "deepest needs" springing from human nature and finding their proper expression and realisation in human society. With this ideal realised, many of the ills complained of by Dr. Saleeby will disappear. And with them will disappear those supernaturalistic beliefs which have encouraged their preservation.

C. COHEN.

### Archebiosis.

*The Evolution of Life.* By H. Charlton Bastian, M.A., M.D., F.R.S. (Methuen & Co.)

ARCHEBIOSIS means what is generally understood by the inaccurate and somewhat misleading phrase, "spontaneous generation"—"the origin of living things from not-living materials." According to Dr. Bastian, innumerable living things originate in that manner even to-day. Thirty-five years ago this great scientist published a remarkable work, entitled *The Beginnings of Life*, in which he promulgated that doctrine. The central proposition of that work was thus worded: "Both observation and experiment testify to the fact that living matter is constantly being formed *de novo*, in obedience to the same laws and tendencies which determine all the more simple chemical combinations" (vol. ii., p. 633). *The Beginnings of Life* gave rise to a long and heated controversy in the scientific world, the echoes of which are still with us. Archebiosis, as taught by the author, was vehemently opposed by many of the most distinguished scientists of the day. While frankly admitting that originally and under conditions which have never occurred since, living things appeared as the result of the operation of natural law, they stoutly maintained that, ever since, life has only come from pre-existing life, and pronounced spontaneous generation an exploded hypothesis. Chief among these resolute opponents stood M. Pasteur, of the Paris Institute, who boldly declared that spontaneous generation was "a chimera." This declaration was made public in 1862, and was a deduction from certain experiments conducted by the illustrious *savant*. Evidently influenced by Pasteur's experimental work, Professor Huxley categorically announced, in his Presidential Address to the British Association in 1870, that the doctrine of Biogenesis, or life only from life, was "victorious along the whole line." Professor Tyndall also took up his parable in defence of the same thesis, saying that, whilst wishing the evidence were the other way, he was compelled to confess that not "a shred of trustworthy testimony existed to prove that life in our day has ever appeared independently of antecedent life."

Naturally, the theologians were in high glee over Dr. Bastian's apparent discomfiture. From pulpits and platforms, in books and magazine articles, they gave the glad assurance that spontaneous generation had received its quietus at the hands of Science itself. "Spontaneous generation," they shouted triumphantly, "has to be given up. And it is now recognised on every hand that Life can only come from the touch of Life." Here is a sample of the theological dogmatism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By the utter collapse of the theory of spontaneous generation—

"Is meant that the passage from the mineral world to the plant or animal world is hermetically sealed on the mineral side. This inorganic world is staked off from the living world by barriers which have never yet been crossed from within. No change of substance, no modification of environment, no chemistry, no electricity, nor any form of energy, nor any evolution can endow any single atom of the mineral world with the attribute of life. Only by the bending down into this dead world of some living form can these dead atoms be gifted with the properties of vitality; without this preliminary con-

tact with Life they remain fixed in the inorganic sphere for ever."

We may ask, Why such heat? Why such zeal in asserting that "Nature, to the modern eye, stands broken in two"? It all leads up to and is explained by this concluding shot: "It is as if God had placed everything in earth and heaven in the hands of nature, but reserved a point at the genesis of Life for His direct appearing."

But the theologians were radically mistaken when they asserted that Archebiosis had been given up. Whilst Pasteur, Huxley and Tyndall so violently opposed Dr. Bastian, Sanderson, Huizinga and Cohn enthusiastically supported him. So far was spontaneous generation from being scientifically abandoned that several first-class experimentalists kept consistently advocating it. For six or seven years Dr. Bastian himself took a very active part in its advocacy. Referring to this in his new volume, *The Evolution of Life*, he says:—

"I was at the time sanguine of good resulting from a discussion concerning Archebiosis. Much controversy, therefore, followed with some very formidable opponents; and as a result, I continued to do further work in reference to this question up to the year 1877. During that and the previous year, a very heated controversy was carried on with Professor Tyndall, in this country, and with M. Pasteur, in France. Both were excessively dogmatic, and one at least showed little courtesy to his opponent; so that, at last, a time came when, in my capacity as a comparatively young physician, I felt compelled to renounce these investigations for a time and to devote all my energies to professional work. The last article written by me on the subject of Archebiosis appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1878, in reply to one from Professor Tyndall."

In 1898, however, Dr. Bastian returned to his favorite subject and began a most searching re-investigation of the whole position. For five years he devoted all his spare time to the subject of Heterogenesis, and in the year 1903, published his valuable work entitled *Studies in Heterogenesis*. Then, for a whole year, Archebiosis occupied his attention, and as a result, the book now under review has appeared, which is a restatement of the whole case for spontaneous generation.

The fact that we have not had any experience of life being produced from non-living materials is no proof that it is not so produced. Long ago, John Stuart Mill warned us that "though we have always a propensity to generalise from unvarying experience, we are not always warranted in doing so. Before we can be at liberty to conclude that something is universally true because we have never known an instance to the contrary, we must have reason to believe that if there were in nature any instances to the contrary, we should have known of them." Dr. Bastian argues that "it was only by an utter inattention to this latter all-important proviso that the 'past experience of mankind' could ever have appeared to warrant the truth of the induction *omne vivum ex vivo*" (life only from life) and then adds:—

"Living matter may have been continually coming into being all over the surface of the earth ever since the time of man's first appearance upon it; and yet the fact that no member of the human race has ever seen (or is ever likely to see) such a birth, need throw no shadow of doubt upon the probability of its occurrence."

Granting the *probability* of such an occurrence, can even the slightest proof of its *actuality* be adduced? No; but let us see how its *probability* is made out. In his Biology article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Professor Huxley, though an opponent, states the case for Archebiosis in the following syllogistical form:—

"All living matter is killed by being heated to  $n$  degrees. The contents of the closed vessel A have been heated to  $n$  degrees.

Therefore, all living matter which may have existed therein has been killed.

But living *Bacteria*, etc., have appeared in these contents subsequently to their being heated.

Therefore, they have been formed abiogenetically [not from pre-existing life]."

The experiments made by Dr. Bastian were of the completest character possible. The solutions, of various kinds, were enclosed in sealed glass tubes, and heated to temperatures of 115 deg. C. to 150 deg. C., in which temperatures, all bacteriologists agree, all life is utterly destroyed. And yet when examined, after some weeks' exposure to the action of light, most of them showed the presence of living micro-organisms. Now the inference is that Bacteria, Torulæ, certain Fungi and Monads are produced "under conditions which render it impossible that these organisms should have proceeded directly from living matter." Now if under artificial conditions, with their numerous disadvantages, living things spring up independently of antecedent life, why should not the same result take place under natural conditions in lakes, ponds, ditches and on the shores of oceans? If life can be generated in the laboratory, in the entire absence of pre-existing life, what is to prevent Nature from calling life into being in the same way?

If life does not appear *de novo* to-day, what explanation can be given of the continued existence of the lowest life-forms? Why did they not disappear long ago? Does not their persistence prove that there is a flaw in the evolutionary process? Dr. Bastian is convinced that the doctrine of spontaneous generation throws a flood of light on the past history of our earth, "as well as upon the meaning of the existence almost everywhere at the present day of swarms of the lowest forms of life, which ought otherwise [that is, apart from the processes in question] to have wholly disappeared ages and ages ago." It is worthy of notice that this point is raised by Professor Haeckel in his *Wonders of Life*. Referring to these lowest living forms, the Professor says:—

"There are only two ways of explaining this fact either the simplest living organisms have remained unchanged or made very little advance in organisation since the beginning of life—more than a hundred million years; or else the phylogenetic process of their transformation has been frequently repeated in the course of this period, and is being repeated to-day."

*The Evolution of Life* is a book that will amply repay careful study. The detailed description of the various experiments, especially the "final decisive" ones, is intensely interesting and instructive. One cannot but admire a student who has persisted, for the space of forty years, in the experimental investigation and the dauntless advocacy of the theory of spontaneous generation.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Making of the Gospels.—IX.

(Continued from p. 262.)

### JUDAS THE TRAITOR.

THE story of the betrayal of Jesus by one of his disciples is the next matter to be elucidated. This, like all the other recorded events of Gospel "history," was suggested by so-called "prophecy." The words of Psalm xli. 9—"Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me"—was interpreted as a prediction of a traitor amongst the disciples. One was therefore selected from the legendary list of names of the apostles in the person of Judas Iscariot, and a story of the betrayal was invented. That the words of the Psalmist referred to some event which had already taken place—and if written by David, might be applied to the action of his false friend Ahitophel—did not matter in the least: a history of Jesus had to be written. No such betrayal was known to the first-century writers, Paul and the author of the Apocalypse. Had such a story been current in the days of these two writers, one or the other could not well have avoided referring to it and holding the traitor up as a warning to posterity—and if the story were true it must have been known to both. That it is purely mythical receives further confirmation from a recovered fragment of an early

uncanonical Gospel—"the Gospel of Peter." In this Gospel the writer, who claims to be Peter, says that after the alleged resurrection of Jesus "we, the twelve apostles of the Lord, wept and lamented, and each went mourning over what had happened to his own home." This was a week after the supposed Resurrection, when, according to the present Gospel accounts, Judas was not alive. Furthermore, if we take the narratives in the canonical Gospels, we find that the Jewish leaders could have laid hands on Jesus at any time. They had but to send someone to watch when he retired at nightfall, and then go and take him. A betrayal of Jesus by Judas, or by any other disciple, is simply ridiculous: the story, from beginning to end, is pure fiction.

The kiss given by the traitor to Jesus in the garden was, no doubt, suggested by that of Joab to Amasa when about to stab him (2 Sam. xx. 9). Joab's treacherous greeting was: "Is it well with thee, my brother?" Judas was represented as saying "Hail, my Master" (Matt. xxvi. 49). It may also be noted that throughout the Gospel narratives there is no instance recorded of the disciples treating their Master with such familiarity; they are depicted as standing in great awe of him, and as reverential to an excess. Nowhere is it stated that it was the custom of the disciples to kiss their "Lord"; yet if this were not their customary manner of saluting him, the kiss of Judas, as a sign, is inexplicable.

With respect to the fate of the mythical Judas, there appear to have been several stories in circulation, each flatly contradicting the others. One of these is preserved in the First Gospel, another in the Acts of the Apostles, and a third by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis. According to the first account, Judas, as soon as he saw that Jesus had been condemned to death, brought the price of his treachery to the priests in the temple, and then "went away and hanged himself." Some time *after his death* the priests applied the money to the purchase of a potter's field (Matt. xxvii. 5-7). According to the second account, Judas *himself* bought a field "with the reward of his iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts i. 18-19). According to Papias (A.D. 150) "Judas walked about in the world a sad example of impiety; for his body having swollen to such an extent that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily, he was crushed by the chariot, so that his bowels gushed out."

Now it is evident that Papias knew nothing of the stories in the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and also that the Acts account is a later version than that known to Papias. The latter fact is certain, for the story preserved by Papias explains that in the Acts. The last-named account simply tells us that Judas purchased a field, and then without any explanation says that he "burst asunder in the midst," etc. There is clearly something omitted. Obviously, the purchasing a field was not the cause of his "bursting asunder." If, however, that ill-fated man had swollen to the extent mentioned by Papias, the wonder is, not that he ultimately "burst asunder in the midst," but that he held together in that condition for a single moment. The fate assigned to Judas was probably suggested by that recorded of a wicked king who slew his six brothers, and "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." This more ancient "example of impiety" was smitten with an internal disease, and "his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness" (2 Chron. xxi. 19).

The story of the betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and the purchase of a potter's field with the money (Matt. xxvi. 15; xxvii. 7), was suggested by Jeremiah's purchase of a field (Jer. xxxii. 9) and an ambiguous passage in the Book of Zechariah (xi. 12-13). That these two passages were the source of the story is evident, for the latter is referred to as a prediction which was fulfilled in buying the field, though it is erroneously attributed to Jeremiah (Matt. xxvii. 9). The word "potter" in the Old Testament passage is either an error or a falsification; in the Syriac versions the word is "treasury." That

the latter is the correct reading is self-evident. The passage reads:—

"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my hire.....So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the potter in the house of the Lord."

There was no *potter* in the temple, but there was a *treasury*. Moreover, there is no sense in Zechariah giving his salary as prophet or preacher to a *potter*, even if one were permitted to take up his residence in the house of the Lord; but that he should cast his money into the *treasury*, more especially at a time when it could not be very full, is not at all extraordinary. Yet on the erroneous reading "*potter*" was constructed the Gospel story of a potter's field. It was, no doubt, the words "the goodly price that the Lord was valued at" which suggested the betrayal of the Lord Jesus for the sum mentioned by Zechariah.

The selection of another apostle in the place of Judas Iscariot is also stated to have been made as a fulfilment of "prophecy." In the fictitious story in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter is represented as saying to the other apostles:—

"Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas.....For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be made desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and His office let another take" (Acts i. 16-20).

The passages in the Book of Psalms which, according to the Gospel-makers, were written by David "concerning Judas" are the following:—

Ps. lxxix. 25.—"Let *their* habitation be desolate; let none dwell in *their* tents."

Ps. cxi. 8-12.—"Let his days be few; let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.....Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children," etc.

In the first of these passages the word italicised shows that, whoever may have been referred to, it most certainly was not Judas Iscariot. In the second passage—which is but a small portion of a Psalm that may be taken as a beautiful sample of Bible morality—no one save a professional Christian apologist will be able to point out where Judas comes in. For when we get to the end of the long string of curses, we find that the offence for which the terrible punishments mentioned are invoked consists only of the following: "Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man" (verse 16)—an offence common to all ages, peoples and tongues since man has lived upon this planet.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

#### DEVIL DODGERS.

By their own confession, the Devil Dodgers are perfectly useless. They take our money, but they do little else. Honesty would make them disband. But they will never do that. They will have to be cashiered or starved out by cutting off the supplies. The real truth is, they never were useful. They were always parasites. They gained their livings by false pretences. They dodged an imaginary enemy. The Devil is played out in educated circles. Presently he will be laughed at by everybody. Then the people will dismiss the priests and there will be an end of Devil Dodgers.—G. W. Foote, "*Flowers of Freethought*."

A new perception, the smallest new activity given to the perceptive power, is a victory won to the living universe from Chaos and old Night, and cheaply bought by any amount of hard fare and false social position. The balance of mind and body will redress itself fast enough. Superficialness is the real distemper. In all the cases we have ever seen where people were supposed to suffer from too much wit, or, as men said, from a blade too sharp for the scabbard, it turned out that they had not wit enough.—Emerson.

#### Acid Drops.

Mr. George Harwood, M.P., seems to have mistaken his vocation. We are at a loss to understand how he became a legislator—if members of the House of Commons are really entitled to that designation nowadays. But we can quite understand why he preaches so frequently. He is born for the exhorting business, and ought to be filling a pulpit regularly. No doubt he would do it with "great acceptance." And the Churches are running short of preachers who can "draw."

Preaching (he calls it delivering an address) at Bridge-street Wesleyan Chapel, Bolton, recently, Mr. Harwood said some nice Christian things which got reported in the *Daily Mail* under the heading of "Atheists and Charity." We reproduce the following passages:—

"Christian folk were better than other folk on the average. The best work in the world was done by people who claimed to have some religion. He had never heard of an Atheistic hospital, an Atheistic reformatory, or what one would call an Atheistic institution of any kind for doing good to other people. There might be such a place, but he had not heard of it. On the whole, they would find that the bulk of the decent-living, kindly, good and respectable people were people who were more or less associated with religion."

Now we don't like playing the Pharisee, but since Mr. Harwood begins the game he shall be answered.

Where is the evidence that Christian folk are better than other folk? It is Christians, not Freethinkers, who fill the prisons of this country. Mr. Harwood will scarcely have the "face" to deny the statement. If he does, we will print the official statistics. We don't want to be always doing this, but we must do it as often as it is necessary.

One of the "suffragettes" who went to prison after the last raid upon the House of Commons said that she suffered a good deal of ill-treatment in Holloway Gaol because she stated that she had no religion. She was told that she must have *some* religion. And when she persisted in stating that she had none they asked her what was the religion of her parents, and said they would put her down as that. Which clearly proves that *some* religion is a matter of course with the inmates of our criminal establishments. Indeed, it is a well-known fact, as Lombroso and other criminologists have shown, that the two most religious classes of the whole community are criminals and prostitutes.

The best work in the world is *not* all done by people claiming to have some religion. Mr. Harwood belongs to a political party which has just begun to promise that it will try to deal with the most important question in England—the land question. Some twenty years ago Charles Bradlaugh tried to begin dealing with it in parliament, and met with very little support. He was even laughed at. Of course he was guilty of the crime of being in advance of his time. And what was Charles Bradlaugh? He was an Atheist. Mr. Harwood's party limps slowly after that great man. Of course Mr. Harwood is a Christian. So are most of his party. But that is only what you might expect. Christians are always limping slowly after Atheists.

Mr. Harwood wants to hear of "an Atheist hospital." He never will. Atheists do not believe in sectarian charity. Neither do they believe that hospitals should be "charities" at all. Hospitals should be municipal institutions. Perhaps the Christians would claim them even then. But they don't claim the workhouses and lunatic asylums. Which is odd. For they fill them.

We are not amongst the worshipers of Andrew Carnegie. But he has spent millions on public objects—including scores of free libraries. And he is well known to be an "Agnostic"—which is a parliamentary word for an Atheist. "Agnostics" like Cecil Rhodes, Samuel Laing and the Marquis of Queensberry, gave handsome cheques to General Booth's "Darkest England" scheme. We believe the money was thrown away. But our point is that they gave it. We may add that we never heard of subscribers to the Hospital Saturday Fund being asked whether they are Atheists. All citizens give to the Fund, and the Christians claim the whole thing as *theirs*. Which is just like them.

As for the "bulk of the decent-living, kindly, good and respectable people," we dare say they are "more or less associated with religion." More or less—chiefly less. For

the bulk of the people in this country still profess some sort of religion; consequently the bulk of the decent-living, kindly, good and respectable people must belong to them. But the bulk of the criminal and vicious people belong to them too. No doubt Mr. Harwood would like to pass them over to the Atheists. But he won't succeed in that amiable enterprise. He will have to keep his own refuse in his own dustbin.

Mr. Harwood wound up by referring to the necessity of doing something to stave off "social revolution." No wonder. When foolish people like himself have the management of things, the wonder is that "social revolution" doesn't hurry up.

The Christian Evidence Society has been holding its annual meeting—this time at the Holborn Restaurant. According to the *Daily News*, which was not likely to be unfavorable, there was a "meagre attendance." "When the Bishop of Southwark took the chair," we read, "there would not be more than three dozen persons present, and at no part of the afternoon did the attendance rise to sixty." The financial report showed a "considerable diminution," and "a special effort is being made to raise £500 to clear off the liabilities of the society." As the Bishops of Winchester and Manchester have joined the Council this ought to be done. We see that the Rev. F. Ballard has also joined; but on the other hand, the Rev. R. J. Campbell has cleared out.

The Bishop of Southwark's address "pointed out that faith was part of a man's life." It must be so in the case of every man who believes in the Christian Evidence Society.

A new Bishopric of Essex is being manufactured. Naturally the article takes a lot of money. There appears to be £35,000 raised already, or promised; and a dead-lift effort is being made to raise the £35,000 to £40,000 on a day set apart for that holy purpose. Meanwhile there are plenty of destitute people in Essex, and some perishing for want of food.

Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham wants to know why (after the Riga horrors) English journalists and platform people don't refer to "the unspeakable Russian" instead of always referring to "the unspeakable Turk." Our readers will be glad to see the following extract from Mr. Graham's letter in the *Daily Chronicle*:—

"Can it be that the precedent established by the bombardment of Alexandria is to be the only one followed in regard to the down-trodden and oppressed in foreign countries, by the strongest Liberal Government that England has ever known? Can it be that the indignation evoked in the British people by the Armenian atrocities was only cheap swagger, and of the same nature as that of the philanthropist who indignantly interferes when a little boy is thrashing his sister, but when a hulking ruffian is half-murdering his wife discreetly passes by on the other side, without even taking out the traditional twopence, and with his eyes fixed on vacancy in an ecstasy of prayer?"

Of course there is another aspect of the case which Mr. Graham, perhaps, thought it best to ignore. The Turk is a Mohammedan, and the Russian is a Christian; and Christians are always more indignant at cruelty when it is not perpetrated by their co-religionists.

Some people have been astonished to hear that the Bishop of Worcester has been preaching to miners in a coal-pit. But why? Christianity was born in the dark.

The Bishop of Manchester is going to preach on Blackpool sands again this summer. Other entertainments are prohibited on that day, so he will probably get an audience.

Principal Henderson, the new President of the Baptist Union, expressed himself in favor of "the secular solution" in education. Although he expressly stated that he spoke for no one but himself, there were strong marks of dissent. Subsequently a letter was sent to the *Baptist Times* by two ex-presidents, the Rev. J. R. Wood and the Rev. F. B. Meyer, protesting against "the secular solution." These gentlemen are opposed to dogmatic religious teaching, but they are equally opposed to no religious teaching at all. They desire "the reading of the Bible" in elementary schools "with such simple explanatory comments as may be needed." "We hold," they say, "that the Bible is its own sufficient witness, and that the Spirit of God may be trusted to elucidate and enforce the message which its pages are designed to teach." Messrs. Meyer and Wood are playing a losing game. This bastard Nonconformity does not any longer

impose upon fairly intelligent people. Cliffordism is being found out. The policy of Nonconformists on the education question is coming to be recognised as a "rat" policy. The form of religious teaching which they prefer is to be taught at the public expense. The form of religious teaching which others prefer is to be taught at their own expense. Churchmen and Catholics, as under the new M'Kenna bill, are to pay twice for religious teaching; once for what the Nonconformists want, and again for what they want themselves. And this is what the dear good Nonconformists consider honest and equitable. Bless them!

The Bishop of Southwell (the *Daily Express* reports), speaking at a confirmation service at Carrington Church, Nottingham, said that there were fewer baptisms, fewer confirmation classes, fewer communicants, and fewer ordinations for the ministry. We are glad to hear it. Bishops tell the truth occasionally.

"Doctrinal Unrest" is the heading of an article by "A. C. C." in the *Manchester Evening News*, which plainly criticises the Rev. Dr. J. H. Moulton's recent address to the South Manchester Evangelical Free Church Council. Dr. Moulton is told that it is simply not true to say that people who accept the results of modern criticism "do not find their reverence for the Bible diminished." Many have to reject much of its teaching. And when Dr. Moulton says that the only vital distinction is between those who believe that Jesus of Nazareth is divine and those who do not, he is reminded that "many of the most excellent of his fellow-citizens do not believe this," and that "among these people there are many ministers of religion." This is straight from the shoulder.

Prophet Baxter is busy again. He has prophesied the end of the present world so many times, and postponed it when it didn't come off on date, that everybody ought to laugh in his face whenever he opens his mouth. But the fool-crop, as Heine said, is perennial, and old Baxter has always a fresh set of dupes. They have just been holding a sort of annual meeting in London, and the Prophet informs the newspaper men, who duly inform the evergreen British public, that great events may be expected in 1919, and greater events still by 1931—when we dare say Baxter will be safely planted in some cemetery or churchyard, and beyond the reach of further detection.

There was a good letter by C. R. Morton in last week's *Academy* on "The Fetish of the Introduction." After referring to Sir Oliver Lodge, without actually mentioning him, as the writer of the introduction to a Ruskin volume in "Everyman's Library," in which that great writer was said to be "visionary and impracticable," the writer went on to refer to his introduction to the Huxley volume in the same Library:—

"Then, again, just lately, I have come across a reprint of some of Huxley's essays, introduced curiously enough (and published in the same series) by the same introducer, wherein he seeks to alter and belittle the message of Huxley, and wherein he scruples not to make it an excuse for bringing forward yet again his own unsupported views on life's great issues. Fancy, too, Huxley, who felt and wrote so strongly against those religious people who continually give up the supposed truths of their faith and then turn round and say they have won the day, being introduced by a scientist who helps them to do this, and by a scientist who affects to know of things beyond the material universe by means of 'intuitions.' Could the inanity of 'introductions' go further? Could, in the eyes of those who have the writings of Huxley fresh in their mind, a greater sacrilege—I use no smaller word—be committed? If these writers of introductions have anything to say about the author of any 'classic' let them say it elsewhere and not thus seek to prejudice the uninstructed reader."

Sir Oliver Lodge, indeed, is becoming a bit of a nuisance.

Rev. R. F. Horton, a dear friend of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, has been preaching in the Manchester Central Hall on Temperance. We should imagine that the sermon was needed. An acquaintance of ours, who keeps an hotel in the neighborhood, says that the riff-raff of Manchester go to the Central Hall, and that he dreads having any of them enter his doors. He adds that they keep the "pubs" around there busy on Sunday evenings.

Dr. Horton's text was, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit." This is temperance, but not teetotalism, which the reverend gentleman was driving at. According to the report in the *Manchester Guardian*, he "also went to the Old Testament for an

injunction to temperate living." Dr. Horton gave one. We will give more:—

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart."—Ecclesiastes ix. 7.

"And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink."—Deuteronomy xiv. 26.

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."—Proverbs xxxi. 6-7.

Had the reverend gentleman quoted these Old Testament texts, the "pubs" in the vicinity of Central Hall might have done uncommonly good business that night.

Towards the end of his sermon, Dr. Horton said that "conversion" was the only sure way of reforming drunkards. "Conversion," he said, "provides an emotional substitute for drink." Of course, there is a certain truth in that. Any form of excitement is a substitute for drink, and conversion acts in this way simply because it *is* excitement. Its connection with church or chapel has nothing to do with the matter.

"The best treatment for the inebriate," Dr. Horton concluded, "is to bring him to Christ." Indeed! Christ was no teetotaler, anyhow. He appears to have imbibed whatever liquor was going. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking," and they said, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber." His first miracle was turning a vast quantity of water into wine to maintain the liquid refreshment at a wedding party, which was running short of that article. The lowest estimate of the quantity is some seventy gallons; but this is enough to show the *temperance* character of the miracle. Nor was the wine poor, thin stuff—the merest *vin ordinaire*. The guests were already well supplied; what they had drunk was sufficient; it almost looks as though they were getting what is called "well on." Anyhow, the head man of the spree complimented the host on the quality of the fresh supply. "Every man," he said, "at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." Which means, at any rate, that the guests were not in a hypercritical condition; and if they recognised that it was really good stuff, its merits must have been of a positive character. Dr. F. A. Paley, the author of a classical work on the Fourth Gospel, noted this very point:—

"The quantity of wine (and good wine) made between sixty and seventy gallons, after the wine at first provided had all been consumed, is a difficulty that may be left to 'Total Abstiners' to explain."

Evidently, therefore, bringing the drunkard to Christ, and leaving him there, would hardly have the effect which the Rev. Dr. Horton imagines. We may add that a practical proof of this is afforded by the state of Christendom. Christian nations are the drunken nations.

The Axbridge magistrates, by what law we know not, have fined William Rees, a laborer, of Tatter's-hill, Cheddar, five shillings and costs for "holding a mock religious service in the public streets." It appears that a new mission hall has been opened near his residence, and to his annoyance; so he stood outside and held a service of his own, reading portions of the Bible, and expounding them in his own way. But he seems to have lacked reverence for Abraham and Moses, whom he spoke of as having "no connection with the old firm." Henceforth he will know that he lives in a Christian country, and that Christians have a way of making it hot for people who displease them.

Moses was the "meekest" man on earth. Jesus was "meek and lowly." He so loved meekness that he said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"—though he forgot to add, "in coffins." Christianity is the religion of humility. The great mass of Christians are as 'umble as the late Mr. Uriah Heep. Even their pastors and masters (in the Lord) appear to be just as 'umble, if we may believe the leading article in last week's *Christian World*. "It would be difficult," our contemporary says, "to find more brutal selfishness, more sheer unmitigated egotism, than that displayed time and again in religious and philanthropic assemblies. Men will denounce the greed of the land-grabber while they are grabbing without scruple the priceless half-hour of the speaker who has to come next. They proclaim the rights of the poor and oppressed while they are ruthlessly trampling on the rights of the man sitting behind them.....There are well-known speakers who are terrors to their associates. Wrapped in impenetrable conceit, they consider themselves as always first and the rest nowhere. With others to follow of equal or superior

capacity, they treat the meeting as their own monopoly, which they must exploit to the full, however the rest may fare. Their speech may be in defence of Christian orthodoxy; but there is no more hateful heresy than that of the spirit in which it is being delivered."

One of our readers passed a copy of Mr. Cohen's "Salvation Army" Tract on to his uncle, who is a provincial S. A. worker, and one of the local officers had it sent on to headquarters in London. An explanation was requested, and it was given—in the *War Cry*. Here it is:—

"In reply to 'Inquirer's' question concerning a recent pamphlet in which The Salvation Army is adversely criticised, it should be remembered that the author is an infidel, and that the pamphlet is published by an infidel paper, supported by infidel contributions."

Could anything be meaner, or more hypocritical? Instead of answering legitimate questions, shout "Infidel" at the person who asks them. That is the Salvation Army method. And its honesty is easily estimated.

Mr. L. Wooldridge, inquiry officer and collector at the Charing-cross Hospital, drowned himself at Ramsgate, and the jury brought in a verdict of suicide during temporary insanity. In his pocket was a paper bearing the words, "Only God and I know the reason." Evidently he was no Atheist.

The Prince of Wales has laid the foundation-stone of the new buildings of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. His Royal Highness made a little speech. But he forgot to say that, as nobody believes the Gospel in England, its propagation in foreign parts was a judicious piece of business. Perhaps he mentioned it afterwards to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Lord Mayor presided over a Mansion House meeting on behalf of the Church in Jamaica. It appears that "Providence" knocked about a lot of churches in the recent earthquake, and £30,000 will be needed to repair the damage. The resolution of sympathy, etc., was moved by the Archbishop of Canterbury (£15,000 a year), and seconded by the Bishop of London (£10,000 a year). How much they contributed does not appear. "Providence" contributed nothing.

Rev. Robert Hudson, of 9 the Drive, West Brighton, formerly chaplain of the Children's Hospital, left £87,218. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth."

A friend of ours sent a copy of *Facts Worth Knowing* to Mr. G. K. Chesterton, after writing "Please read and reflect" across it. Mr. Chesterton supposed that it reached him direct from the Brooklyn Philosophical Association, and set to work on a column about it for the *Daily News*, which appeared on Saturday, April 6. Mr. Chesterton's chaff is not mingled with many grains of wheat, and we do not propose to use a chaff-machine upon it. Incidentally, he remarks that Napoleon was not a Christian, and that Frederick the Great was a Rationalist, besides being "an utterly cynical aggressor and usurper." Such is the Chestertonian method of writing history. Snap-shot newspaper matter may be all very well, but snap-shot portraits of great men are not satisfactory.

Gratitude is a pleasant thing. Marie Corelli returns thanks to the "Eternal Power" that placed her in "a world so lovely in its natural beauty" that she "can imagine nothing lovelier—save Heaven." This means that Marie Corelli has never been in want, never suffered much from illness or bereavement, and never been too near a playful earthquake or a skylarking volcano. But she might remember that "there are others"—as the holy proverb saith.

Canon Horsley, writing in the *Daily Chronicle* on "The Liquor Habit Cure," says: "I have known men to leave retreats cured—and considerably worse. Clergymen are especially in my mind." Oh!

A newspaper gives the games that bishops affect. One plays golf, another tennis, another billiards, and so on. We believe they all play the fool. Look at their get-up.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Keir Hardie is better, and we hope he will soon be himself again—minus the old chatter about Christ. It would be a pity if he were too old to improve in this respect. Bad habits, we all know, are difficult to break at his time of life.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 5, Picton Hall, William Brown-street, Liverpool; at 3, "Christianity and the Woman Question"; at 7, "The Rev. R. J. Campbell's Spring Cleaning."

May 19, N. S. S. Conference.

### To Correspondents.

- G. T. LAWSON.—Sorry we cannot enlighten you. On the face of it, though, curing a man of a compound fracture of the leg is not a miracle. Perhaps you could forward us the Catholic book in which you read of the case. Thanks for your good wishes.
- J. BURRELL.—(1) Thanks for your kind thoughtfulness. But we do take physical exercise. Our system is one that requires fairly heavy exercise; by that means we keep in good muscular condition. We also practise deep breathing, and always have windows open day and night; and we go out into the open air as much as possible. Most of the things you suggest have been tried. The real remedy for insomnia is to give the brain a rest and vegetate; and this is easier said than done. (2) Glad you were so pleased with our Shakespeare lecture. We note your suggestion that "A Night with Shakespeare," rendering great passages in our own way (which is certainly not the stage way), would be "a memorable occasion." (3) The man you mention is one we have had an eye upon for some time. He told a member of the Camberwell Branch the other day that the late Mrs. Wheeler never had any of the money we collected for her nine years ago, on the death of her husband. The full amount was paid over to her by cheque by Mr. Hartmann, the treasurer of the Fund, at that gentleman's office, in the presence of ourselves and Mr. George Ward, who checked the *Freethinker* lists on her behalf; and a note of thanks from her own hand subsequently appeared in our columns. Mrs. Wheeler and Mr. Hartmann are both dead now. That is why the lie is started. If we hear any more of this scoundrel's malice, we shall print his full name and address and leave him to the judgment of honest men and women. To "take the law of him," as they say, would only be a waste of time.
- R. PARKIN.—We note that Mr. Sutton, newsagent, West-street, Fareham, supplies the *Freethinker*, although so many others were too bigoted to do so. Glad you find the light is spreading, even if slowly.
- C. F. S. BARKER writes: "Referring to your 'Acid Drop' regarding the late Mr. Thomas Beecham, of pill fame, I believe you are mistaken in saying that his domestic affairs were before the courts some time ago. It was Joseph Beecham (son of the recently-deceased Thomas Beecham) whose affairs were before the Court." We regret the blunder.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Cuttings received with thanks.
- H. B. ADBERLEY.—It is safer to send cuttings than papers. Thanks. See "Acid Drops."
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome batch of cuttings.
- T. A. K.—There is more indignation than poetry in your verses.
- J. DOUGLAS.—See "Acid Drops."
- J. BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings. Glad you were so pleased with our Manchester lectures.
- P. W. M.—Much obliged for your trouble in the matter. We see no reason why you should not disclose your identity to the gentleman. He may as well know the real facts.
- T. FORSYTH.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks. We hope you were pleased with the Manchester lectures.
- J. M. DAY.—Very sorry; are posting you the *Freethinker* for six weeks.
- R. I. P.—The five volume edition of Shelley which you mention has the advantage of including the prose writings. The best single-volume edition of the poems is the Oxford Shelley, published by the Oxford University Press.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £19 3s. 9d. Since received; J. Douglas, 1s.
- JAMES NEATE.—Will prove useful. Thanks.
- C. W. STYRING.—Shall be noticed in our next. Thanks for good wishes.
- N. LEVEY.—Sorry to hear the Edinburgh open-air meeting was broken up by organised rowdies on Sunday, and that the police refused protection on the ground that "atheistical speakers" were the cause of the disturbance. You cannot compel the police to interfere, but you should take the number of the constable (or constables) who refuses—with a view to what may follow. For the rest, let the speakers be reasonably discreet, and let the "saints" rally round the platform.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had fine audiences on Sunday at Manchester. The afternoon meeting was exceptionally good, and there would probably have been a great crush at night if the rain had kept off; as it was, the hall was full in front and crowded at the back, where the standing-room was all occupied. Mr. Foote was in excellent form, as both chairmen noticed, and the audiences were extremely responsive and enthusiastic. Many questions were asked and answered after the evening lecture.

Liverpool and district "saints" are reminded that Mr. Foote visits their city again to-day (May 5), after an absence of exactly twelve months. He will deliver two lectures, afternoon and evening, in the big Picton Hall. Admission to both lectures is free, but there will be collections towards the expenses; and the "saints," at any rate, should come prepared to act generously as the boxes are passed round. Mr. Foote's subjects are up-to-date, and should prove attractive. No doubt the hall will be crowded in the evening, and there should be a good attendance in the afternoon. We hope the "saints" are advertising the meetings energetically amongst their friends and acquaintances.

Mr. Cohen will be doing open-air work on Sundays for some time. He lectures in Victoria Park this afternoon and evening (May 5). Local "saints" will please note—and tell their Christian friends.

The Camberwell Branch will resume its open-air lectures at Station-road this morning (May 5) at 11.30. The Brockwell Park lectures in the afternoon will also be held throughout the season.

The North London Branch commences operations on Parliament Hill at 3.30 p.m. this afternoon (May 5) with a lecture by Mr. F. A. Davies on "Whitewashing Christianity." The *Freethinker* and other literature will be on sale at all meetings.

Principal Henderson, President of the Baptist Union, has declared absolutely in favor of Secular Education. "Our present system of undenominational teaching," he tells the *British Weekly*, "is undoubtedly the State establishment of religion." He takes no stock in the idea of teaching the Bible as an English classic, nor does he believe that "there is any desire among the public for the teaching of the Bible in our schools for literary reasons alone." He thinks that "the cause of Secular Education is making progress among the Baptists."

A fortnight hence—that is, from the date of this number of the *Freethinker*—is Whit-Sunday, and on that day the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society is always held. This year it takes place in London. The morning and afternoon business meetings will be held in the Chandos Hall, near Charing-cross, which is a very central position; and the evening public meeting will be held in the Queen's (Minor) Hall. Addresses will be delivered by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, and perhaps other speakers. Before the speech-making there will be some music, in which Mr. Foote's eldest and second daughter will participate.

Many of the provincial Branches complain of that want of pence which vexes advanced bodies. We hope, however, that a fair number will find it possible to be personally represented at the Conference. Individual members, also, will be cordially welcomed from any part of the country. Those who require hotel or other accommodation in London should lose no time in communicating with Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Difficulties may arise if the matter is left till the last moment.

Miss Vance, as general secretary, has the arrangements in hand for the Whit-Monday foregathering. We are not able at the moment to make a definite announcement, but it is probable that brakes will be engaged to take the delegates and visitors, with such London "saints" as may join them, to places of interest in the metropolis. Those who wish to join this party should also communicate with Miss Vance as soon as possible.

## Religion of the "Black Fellows."

THE Australian Blacks, contemptuously called "Black Fellows," are rapidly disappearing. I have not seen fifty of them during my twenty-two years' residence in Victoria, though I had the honor once of a conversation with a black "king" and "queen" at Corowa or Ruthurglen, I forget which. That was my only contact with royalty, an article I have always despised, and I wish others would do the same.

What I have to say of the religion of the Australian Blacks has not been learnt direct from them, but from books and conversation. I came to the country too late to find the Blacks in their uncorrupted condition, and have had no time for travel and exploration in the interior of the continent. Still, I have thought that a few facts about those primitive people might be acceptable to the readers of the *Freethinker*, who, presumably, do not often come across notes on the subject.

Without in the least wishing to reflect upon Israelites—many of whom I have always respected—I cannot help perceiving in the Australian Blacks, whose persons or whose busts and portraits I have studied, a decided likeness in features and hair to many Jews I have seen. I knew one in Birmingham, a very intelligent and thoughtful man; and I never see a Black or a portrait of one without being strongly and suddenly reminded of that gentleman. To be sure, the Jews are a very much mixed race, of many types. Don't imagine that I am at all smitten with the craze for discovering remnants of the "lost ten tribes"; but that there is a blood relationship between these Aborigines and some of the Jews I am unable to doubt, though there can have been no connection between them during historic times. The skin of the Blacks is far darker than any Hebrew skin I have ever seen. But I will not pursue that subject, as I have more important fish to fry.

Before me is a little book published in Melbourne in 1889, which I read on its appearance with very great interest indeed, and have recently re-perused it with undiminished pleasure. It is *The Aborigines of Victoria and Riverina as Seen by Peter Beveridge*. The author spent about forty years among the Blacks in the north of Victoria and the adjoining part of New South Wales. He was a squatter, not a missionary, though a highly developed and devout Scotch Presbyterian, who left the old country when about ten years old. His brother was a missionary to the Blacks, and for reasons I never knew, they murdered him.

I have never so heartily despised the Australian savages as many do, nor am I satisfied to place them lowest in the scale of humanity. Peter Beveridge did not despise them, or he could not have written this book. And I am confident that, had he ever doubted his own creed and yet clung desperately to it, he could not have reported all he found amongst the native tribes. He thinks them very "destitute indeed" in matters of religion, but his book confutes him. True, they had not been drilled in the Westminster Confession or the Shorter Catechism, and their native clergy had never been at university or college; and yet I venture to affirm that no race could ever boast of more divine revelations or of more faith in spirits. They had amongst them religion enough and to spare; indeed, they were full of it, and always had been. And I am unable to see that Mr. Beveridge had anything religious to offer them better than their own native article. Indeed, the Australian Blacks were far more logical than their Christian exterminators, as we shall presently see. Following Mr. Beveridge's lead, I may say the Victorian tribes he knew had—so they said—a good spirit or god called Ngoudenout, who gave or provided for them all good and agreeable things. He helped them and gave them all their success or luck in hunting, fishing, etc. On the contrary, there was a bad spirit or devil called Ngambacootchala, and he did them all the mischief in his power. Everything that went amiss with them was attributed

to this spirit. But it appears that, while the two spirits dealt out good and evil respectively to mortals, there never was any personal contest between themselves. Unlike their equivalent or alter-ego in Christianity, they were not rivals, and never quarrelled; while Yahu and Satan are always at daggers drawn.

Mine author calls the above an absurd belief, and I shall not dispute it, although it is almost identical with his own belief in a good God and a bad Devil. And the Blacks he knew so well were as touchy on their religion as he and his co-religionists are on theirs. He says: "They cannot bear the least ridicule which tends to impugn in the slightest degree this absurd belief of theirs; indeed, they become very irate should anyone have the temerity to attempt such a thing." Mr. Beveridge had evidently tried the effects of ridicule upon them, and found them exceedingly Christian in the temper in which they regarded it. Nothing is dreaded by the Christian so much as ridicule turned against his own pious fads; but Christians never hesitate to apply ridicule to the beliefs of other people. The Australian Black can see nothing, of course, in his creed that deserves to be laughed at, nor does the Christian perceive that his own creed is stuffed with stupid and laughable nonsense.

It appears that Mr. Beveridge tried upon the Blacks the virtues of argument, as well as those of ridicule; and he is not so Christianly blind that he does not suspect that he got the worst of it in the encounter. Before I quote his own report I should observe that the natives take the same sublime stand in dealing with the whites that Christian priests take in defending themselves against non-clerical opponents.

"The Aborigines hold it a matter utterly impossible for a white man to understand things which are purely aboriginal; they do not fail to retaliate either when asked to produce their good and bad spirits by asking us to show them ours, of whom we tell them so much. This, of course, we cannot do, any more than they can show us theirs; thus, it is therefore a hopeless task endeavoring to discuss matters having the remotest theological tendency with them; and when (by chance more frequently than design) we have been drawn into arguments of the kind, we have mostly had to acknowledge to ourselves our signal failure, and if we could retreat gracefully from the wordy encounters, we esteemed it something to be particularly grateful for. The Aborigines, however, are quite sharp enough to observe our discomfiture on such occasions, however much we may strive to disguise the humiliating fact."

Strange that Mr. Beveridge did not perceive that his defeat resulted from the nature of the dispute, that both parties were talking nonsense, and that the one religion was as baseless as the other.

He proceeds:—

"When we endeavor to impress upon their savage minds that our Deity made the whole universe, they simply say, 'Nothing of the kind; it is not so. The world was never made by any being; it was not made at all. But if, as you say, one supreme being did make it, from whence came the *pimble* [stuff] from which it was formed?' They do not say in terse and classic speech that nothing is from nothing, but they argue out that truth in much detail and in a very common-sense manner too. The Christian doctrine of creation and providence is to them no better than old wives' tales, and their own beliefs, they insist, are much better, and they know them to be true. 'When we go on a hunting or fishing expedition,' say they, 'we usually invoke the aid of Ngoudenout, not by playing music, singing, and much talk, as you do when you ask a favor from your good spirit. We simply say, 'Pray, let us be successful.' And on most occasions we are so.'"

I need not remind the reader that in the Bible and in Christianity there are invisible beings who, or which, kill those who are opposed to the priests and other agents of the God. Thus the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up by an express earthquake for daring to claim a share in the priestly plunder; those who tried to arrest Elijah were devoured by fire from heaven, and Mr. and Mrs. Ananias were murdered by the Holy Ghost, *alias* the apostles, for nothing worse than a common, everyday lie. Well, the Australian Blacks have a handy spirit of similar

character, and he is as eager to defend his agents, the banyals, as God and Ghost were to defend Aaron, Elijah, and Peter & Co. This Australian Holy Ghost is called Konikatnie, and whoever resists his will, expressed by the banyal, is sure to die a premature death. He grants interviews to the banyal in the bed of the river, where the holy man can live as long as Moses did on the mount; and although Konikatnie is quite invisible to all others, the banyal can see him as well as Moses could Yahu.

I might proceed further, but I have said enough to show that the Australian Blacks had as good a revelation as the Christians can show, and all the elements of salvation too, long before the white man, with his horrid black gospel, ever visited them.

As to morals, the Blacks are certainly no worse than the Whites, nor half as bad. They do not make loud professions of goodness; there seem to be no Pharisees among them, no ruling band or church of rascal priests. Consequently, they have no Inquisition, no blasphemy laws, no witch or heretic burners. Their priests or medicine-men do not utter so many lies in a lifetime as a Christian priest does weekly. Christian prostitution and illegitimacy they had none. And Mr. Beveridge gives them a high character for honesty. They have a fair outfit of vices, but not a tenth of those the civilised man practises. Of course, missions, grace of God, gospel influences, have never improved the Blacks, and those who brought them the "good tidings of great joy" have robbed them of their country, their all, and have exterminated most of them. Even so late as twenty years ago, a gentleman from Cook Town assured me, as a matter of personal knowledge, that some of the young men of the best families in Queensland used to go out shooting Blacks, just as others do wild birds or beasts. But fortunately for the "souls" of those murderers, they were, or might at any time be, "washed in the blood of the lamb"; and as they were of the dominant class, their crimes were never judicially investigated.

I hold no brief for the Blacks, but I think it would have been well for the Whites here if the Aborigines of the country had been as difficult to conquer as were the Red Indians of America. In that case, our people could not have given themselves up to an effeminate life as they have done, for war must have occupied the time and energy now devoted to politics, races, gambling, and other destructive vices.

Be that as it may, when I feel the want of a religion I will adopt the simple one of Blacks, not the cumbersome, unwieldy burden of Christianity. The one is quite as "divine" as the other, and equally safe. The cult of the Blacks will land souls in heaven or purgatory as expeditiously as any that I know. And what more can be wanted of a religion?

JOS. SYMES.

Cheltenham, Victoria, Dec. 25, 1905.

### The Rev. Pius Piffle's Correspondence.

PERPLEXED.—This correspondent asks, "Did Christ die for all, or only for those who shall be saved? If for all, why should any be lost? If not for all, why should all be called to salvation?" As everything in connection with the gospel scheme of salvation is written so plain that "he who runs may read," our friend's difficulties must be attributed to his lack of faith. The efficacy of "faith" is so great that it will remove mountains, provided, of course, that its exercise corresponds in point of time with the necessary cosmic upheaval. This is an indispensable condition, and is the reason why the mountain failed to move in response to the faith of Mahomet. If the cosmos be not in a "moving" mood, "your faith is vain." To regard faith alone as dynamic is to misunderstand its function. However, the following apt quotation, which has proved of real help to numbers in a similar state of difficulty, may act as veritable "balm of Gilead" to our friend's troubled soul. We refer to that inspired statement, "Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do or die!" Or perhaps it is our friend's nervous system that needs bracing up a little. If this be the true diagnosis of his perplexities, he might repeat, six times, striking a tragic attitude, especially at the last: "Into the

jaws of death rode the Six Hundred." We fear, however that our correspondent is inclined to be careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful—to be a theologian. While anxious to give every consideration to our correspondent's difficulties, we would raise a gentle warning against diving into the mysteries of the Eternal Mind and Purpose without the necessary scholastic qualifications. The danger of persons, who are not theologians, meddling with these mysteries, is painfully illustrated in the case of our erring and misguided brother, the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Envious of the attainments of his academical superiors, he presumed to interpret to the common mind the mysteries that belong to the theologian, and the attempt only resulted in "a farrago of nonsense." For although many may be called—to the ministry, yet few are chosen—to be theologians. Mr. Campbell, presumptuously rushing in where angels and theologians fear to tread, was obliged to beat an ignominious retreat. "He has withdrawn his claim to be a philosopher and a theologian" (*Vide British Weekly*). In the meantime, souls are perishing, and General Booth has gone abroad. Mr. Campbell, not recognising that he was treading upon holy ground, actually kept his sandals on his feet. His "academical inferiority," of course, disqualified him from giving that comprehensive consideration necessary to approximately decide just how many score of angels could dance on the point of a needle, and other similarly subtle questions in theology. Indeed, we may say that Mr. Campbell misunderstands theology in its fundamental aspects. In his book he professes to use "plain speech," a thing that a real, academical theologian would not be guilty of. To our young correspondent (for we feel that he must be young in intellect, if not in years) we would recommend the consideration of the weighty and meaning words of our beloved brother-in-Christ, the Rev. A. J. Guttery, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Speaking of Mr. Campbell's book, he said: "The man who is going to use plain speech in dealing with the ineffable, eternal, and divine mysteries, is to be regarded with suspicion." I am sure that our perplexed brother will see—at least, it is to be hoped that he is not so impenetrably dense—that to use plain speech would resemble the act of those too-careful lovers who put paper in the keyhole—as the vulgar song says, it would "give the game away." Still, we are anxious that our correspondent should have the benefit of the highest wisdom, and the following clear and concise statement from a real theologian may help him to see things. Speaking in reference to this very question, Dr. John Brown made a shrewd distinction in a speech to the Synod of the United Secession Church in 1845. Theology, we may add, has not progressed any since that date. He said: "In the sense of the Universalist that Christ died so as to secure salvation, I hold that He died only for the elect. In the sense of the Arminian that Christ died so as to purchase easier terms of salvation and common grace to enable men to comply with these terms, I hold that He died for no man. In the sense of the great body of Calvinists that Christ died to remove legal obstacles in the way of human salvation by making perfect satisfaction for sin, I hold that he died for all men." The interpretation of which thereof is this: you pay your money and you take your choice. To drag in Election is a mere evasion. Of course Election is a fact, and Free Will is a fact. They constitute, in Kant's phrase, "an irreconcilable antimony," and it is the duty of reasonable men to accept both. I recommend that famous old book, *The Marrow Bone and its Divine Possibilities*. It has greatly refreshed me.

BALAM.—You have a sceptical friend who urges the objection that "before Christ came there were benevolent institutions, hospitals, etc." Of course your friend is wrong; a knowledge of ancient literature, and especially the Scriptures, would have prevented him thus making an ass of himself. Disease "in those days" was quite a different thing from disease in these days. It was then always a divine visitation for individual or national sin, and the care of its unfortunate victims would have been equivalent to "fighting against God." It could only be successfully dealt with by a person "equal with the Father," or by some especial favorite of the Deity. The germ theory of disease had not then been formulated, the germs then being of a much larger kind—the size of devils, in fact; and only about seven of these devils could find lodgment in one human organism. The doctor, or exorcist as they were then called, usually fixed his eagle eye on the diseased person, and in stentorian tones cried, "I command thee to come out of him" (or her). And, of course, these devils would immediately skit, and if there happened to be a herd of swine about they would—regardless of the "pearls" in their path—enter into these innocent animals with a sound "as of a rushing mighty wind," and devils and swine together (leaving the pearls behind them) would set off at a break-neck pace for the nearest sea. The swine were rarely heard of again, but the effect of the cold bath on the devils (having been accustomed to a higher temperature) was to cool their

excited ardor and bring them to their senses. And if you chanced to walk along the seashore, you would find numbers of them sitting upon the rocks, "clothed and in their right mind." Sometimes they would institute a scientific expedition to search among the sea monsters for lost Jonahs. So that you see the very need for hospitals did not exist. Sometimes, again, if a person went on a journey, it happened that he fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment and left him half dead. And if a priest or a Levite chanced to come along and see a brother man "nigh unto death," did they send for ambulance and have him conveyed to a hospital? No! they "passed by on the other side." Does this not show conclusively that priests and Levites were unacquainted with even the notion of such a thing as a hospital? And further, it sometimes happened that a business man passing that way would come across the same victim, and having a heart of sympathy (not one of stone, like the priests and Levites), he would pour oil and wine into his friend's wounds, would mount him on his own beast, and bring him to an inn. Here we have further evidence that there were no hospitals; for is it conceivable that such a humane person as this good Samaritan would have taken his friend to an inn, to be surrounded with all its vile and contaminating influences, if there had been any hospitals? Common sense, reason, Scripture, and history all give a decided answer in the negative. The ancient world, despite its high civilisation, was very cruel. There were thieves in those days—and priests and Levites—but no hospitals. It is the crown and glory of Christianity that it has rid the world of thieves, small and large, and erected hospitals. The romance of highwaymanship has given place to the "simple piety" of the Rockefellers'—its modern representatives. So great has been the moral influence of Christianity that the modern banditti do not leave their victims wholly to fate, nor to the evil influence of inns, but subscribe largely to Christian hospitals and Churches—especially when they have no further use for their ill-gotten gains. It is true, of course, that thousands of little children (of such is the kingdom of heaven) go breakfastless to school in the same town where archbishops are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day on £15,000 a year; but these little irregularities will occur in the best regulated State. The ancient world was very cruel. Take one instance. Weakly or superfluous children were destroyed. Christian civilisation, however, makes no such cruel distinction; it destroys the healthy and the weak, and ruins body and mind alike. Get your friend to read that excellent little booklet, *Suffer the Little Children*. It has greatly refreshed me.

OLD TESTAMENT.—The chariot in which Elijah ascended up into heaven was not a Roman chariot.

Communications to be addressed "Rev. Pius Piffles," care of the undersigned.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

## National Secular Society.

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

CHANDOS HALL, MAIDEN LANE, CHARING CROSS

London, W.C.

WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 19, 1907.

#### AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.  
Motion by Kingsland and Bothnal Green Branches:—  
"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
6. Election of Vice-Presidents.  
(a) The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: J. G. Bartram, J. Barry, Victor Charbonnel, H. Cowell, R. Chapman, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, R. G. Fathers, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, R. Johnson, W. Leat, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, C. G. Quinton, J. H. Ridgway, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, F. Schaller, W. H. Spivey, Charles Steptoe, S. Samuels, S. R. Thompson, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, E. M. Vance, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood, G. White.  
(b) Motion by Executive:—  
"That Messrs. J. T. Lloyd, W. T. Pitt, W. G. Schweizer, G. Roleffs, H. Silverstein, G. Scott,

and James McGlashen be elected as Vice-Presidents."

(c) Motion by Manchester Branch:—

"That Mr. J. G. Dobson and Mr. S. L. Hurd be elected Vice-Presidents."

7. Election of Auditors.
  8. Sub-Committee's Report *re* a Badge for the Society.
  9. (a) Motion by the Manchester Branch:—  
"That an Organising Lecturer be appointed by the N. S. S. Executive, for the further promotion of the Society's propaganda, especially in the provinces."  
(b) Motion by Kingsland Branch:—  
"That the Conference recommend to the Executive the appointment of an Organising Secretary."
  10. Motion by North London Branch and Kingsland Branch:—  
"That the Executive should resume the Organising of Out-door Demonstrations."
  11. Motion by Bethnal Green Branch:—  
"That this Conference is of opinion that the time has arrived for the N. S. S. Executive to urge upon the London County Council the desirability and need of the People's Parks being made more recreative on Sundays by allowing all such games as are allowed on week-days, and under the same rules and regulations."
  12. Motion by North London Branch:—  
"That the Society's Report, together with the List of Officials, Principles, and Objects, be published annually in a separate form."
  13. Motion by T. J. Thurlow:—  
"That it be an instruction to the N. S. S. General Secretary to append to the Minutes of each Conference any correspondence resulting from its resolutions; and that such Correspondence be taken, at the President's discretion, in connection with the Minutes at the ensuing Conference."
  14. Motion by the Executive:—  
"That the Conference decide whether and how the N. S. S. shall be represented at the International Free-thought Congress to be held at Buda-Pest on September 8-11, in the present year."
  15. Motion by Mr. C. Cohen:—  
"That this Conference records its satisfaction at the failure of the Birrell Education Bill, which would have deliberately established Simple Bible Teaching—that is, Nonconformist religion—in the Elementary Schools of England and Wales; and that this Conference hopes, as a matter of principle, that the new M'Kenna Bill will meet with a similar fate, seeing that it is merely another move in the ecclesiastical war between the Nonconformists and the Church of England, and seeks the same object as the Birrell Education Bill by means of a more hypocritical policy."
  16. Motion by G. W. Foote:—  
"That this Conference hails with delight the formation of the Secular Education League, heartily approves of its Manifesto, rejoices at the number of distinguished public men and women who have consented to join the General Council, and trusts that the League will be enthusiastically supported by Freethinkers throughout Great Britain."
  17. Motion by Executive:—  
"That Freethinkers in all parts of the country should be prepared to take an active part in repelling the attack on such Sunday Freedom as now exists by the proposed combination of all the Churches for this particular object."
  18. Motion by Executive:—  
"That this Conference express a profound hope that the approaching Peace Congress will not waste time and energy in fruitless discussion of impossible projects, but will concentrate its efforts on strengthening and extending the policy of arbitration in international disputes, as the only feasible method of minimising the danger of war."
- The Conference will sit in the Chandos Hall; the morning session lasting from 10.30 to 12.30, and the afternoon session from 2.30 to 4.30. Both are business meetings for members of the N. S. S. Only members of the N. S. S. can speak and vote. A public meeting will be held in the evening at 7 o'clock in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place. The President of the N. S. S. will occupy the chair on each occasion. A luncheon for delegates and visitors will be provided at the Ship Restaurant, Charing Cross, at 1 o'clock.
- By order of the Executive,  
G. W. FOOTE, *President*.  
E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*

## The Truth of History.

BY THE LATE COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL.

THOUSANDS of Christians have asked: How was it possible for Christ and his apostles to deceive the people of Jerusalem? How came the miracles to be believed? Who had the impudence to say that lepers had been cleansed, and that the dead had been raised? How could such impostors have escaped exposure?

I ask: How did Mohammed deceive the people of Mecca? How has the Catholic Church imposed upon millions of people? Who can account for the success of falsehood?

Millions of people are directly interested in the false. They live by lying. To deceive is the business of their lives. Truth is a cripple; lies have wings. It is almost impossible to overtake and kill and bury a lie. If you do, someone will erect a monument over the grave, and the lie is born again as an epitaph. Let me give you a case in point.

A few days ago, the *Matlock Register*, a paper published in England, printed the following:—

### "CONVERSION OF THE ARCH-ATHEIST.

Mr. Isaac Loveland, of Shoreham, desires us to insert the following:—

November 27, 1886.

DEAR MR. LOVELAND,—A day or two since, I received from Mr. Hine the exhilarating intelligence that through his lectures on the "Identity of the British Nation with Lost Israel," in Canada and the United States, that Col. Bob Ingersoll, the arch-Atheist, has been converted to Christianity and has joined the Episcopal Church. *Praise the Lord!!!* Five thousand of his followers have been won for Christ through Mr. Hine's grand mission work, the other side of the Atlantic. The Colonel's cousin, the Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, wrote to Mr. Hine soon after he began lecturing in America, informing him that his lectures had made a great impression on the Colonel and other Atheists. I noted it at the time in the *Messenger*. Bradlaugh will yet be converted; his brother has been, and has joined a British Israel Identity Association. This is progress, and shows what an energetic, determined man (like Mr. Hine), who is earnest in his faith, can do.

Very faithfully yours,

H. HODSON RUGG.

1 Grove-road,  
St. John's Wood, London.' "

How can we account for an article like that? Who made up this story? Who had the impudence to publish it?

As a matter of fact, I never saw Mr. Hine, never heard of him until this extract was received by me in the month of December. I never read a word about the "Identity of Lost Israel with the British Nation." It is a question in which I never had, and never expect to have, the slightest possible interest.

Nothing can be more preposterous than that the Englishman in whose veins can be found the blood of the Saxon, the Dane, the Norman, the Pict, the Scot and the Celt, is the descendant of "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." The English language does not bear the remotest resemblance to the Hebrew, and yet it is claimed by the Reverend Hodson Rugg that not only myself, but five thousand other Atheists, were converted by the Rev. Mr. Hine, because of his theory that Englishmen and Americans are simply Jews in disguise.

This letter, in my judgment, was published to be used by missionaries in China, Japan, India and Africa.

If stories like this can be circulated about a living man, what may we not expect concerning the dead who have opposed the Church?

Countless falsehoods have been circulated about all the opponents of superstition. Whoever attacks the popular falsehoods of his time will find that a lie defends itself by telling other lies. Nothing is so prolific, nothing can so multiply itself, nothing can lay and hatch as many eggs as a good, healthy, religious lie.

And nothing is more wonderful than the credulity of the believers in the supernatural. They feel under a kind of obligation to believe everything in favor of their religion, or against any form of what they are pleased to call "Infidelity."

The old falsehoods about Voltaire, Paine, Hume, Julian, Diderot and hundreds of others, grow green every spring. They are answered; they are demonstrated to be without the slightest foundation; but they rarely die. And when one does die there seems to be a kind of Caesarian operation, so that in each instance although the mother dies the child lives to undergo, if necessary, a like operation, leaving another child, and sometimes two.

There are thousands and thousands of tongues ready to repeat what the owners know to be false, and these lies are a part of the stock-in-trade, the valuable assets of superstition. No church can afford to throw its property away.

To admit that these stories are false now is to admit that the Church has been busy lying for hundreds of years, and it is also to admit that the word of the Church is not, and cannot be, taken as evidence of any fact.

A few years ago, I had a little controversy with the editor of the *New York Observer*, the Rev. Irenæus Prime (who is now supposed to be in heaven enjoying the bliss of seeing Infidels in hell), as to whether Thomas Paine recanted his religious opinions. I offered to deposit a thousand dollars for the benefit of a charity if the reverend doctor would substantiate the charge that Paine recanted. I forced the *New York Observer* to admit that Paine did not recant, and compelled that paper to say that "Thomas Paine died a blaspheming Infidel."

A few months afterward, an English paper was sent to me—a religious paper—and in that paper was a statement to the effect that the editor of the *New York Observer* had claimed that Paine recanted; that I had offered to give a thousand dollars to any charity that Mr. Prime might select, if he would establish the fact that Paine did recant; and that so overwhelming was the testimony brought forward by Mr. Prime, that I admitted that Paine did recant, and paid the thousand dollars.

This is another instance of what might be called the truth of history.

I wrote to the editor of that paper, telling the exact facts, and offering him advertising rates to publish the denial, and in addition, stated that if he would send me a copy of his paper with the denial, I would send him twenty-five dollars for his trouble. I received no reply, and the lie is, in all probability, still on its travels, going from Sunday-school to Sunday-school, from pulpit to pulpit, from hypocrite to savage—that is to say, from missionary to Hottentot—without the slightest evidence of fatigue—fresh and strong, and in its cheeks the roses and lilies of perfect health.

Some person, expecting to add another gem to his crown of glory, put in circulation the story that one of my daughters had joined the Presbyterian Church—a story without the slightest foundation—and although denied a hundred times, it is still being printed and circulated for the edification of the faithful. Every few days I receive some letter of enquiry as to this charge, and I have industriously denied it for years; but up to the present time, it shows no signs of death—not even of weakness.

Another religious gentleman put in print the charge that my son, having been raised in the atmosphere of Infidelity, had become insane and died in an asylum. Notwithstanding the fact that I never had a son, the story still goes right on, and is repeated day after day without the semblance of a blush.

Now, if all this is done while I am alive and well, and while I have all the facilities of our century for spreading the denials, what will be done after my lips are closed?

The mendacity of superstition is almost enough to make a man believe in the supernatural.

And so I might go on for a hundred columns. Billions of falsehoods have been told, and there are trillions yet to come. The doctrines of Malthus have nothing to do with this particular kind of reproduction.

"And there are also many other falsehoods which the Church has told, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 26.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. J. Barry, C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, W. Leat, J. Marshall, J. Neato, S. Samuels, H. Silverstein, F. Schindle, J. T. Thurlow, F. Wood, and E. Woodward.

The minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. The President reported that arrangements had been made for the Conference to be held in London.

The motions for the Conference Agenda from Branches were then examined and remitted to the Agenda Committee, together with those to be moved by the Executive.

The President reported a grant of £100 to the Society from the Secular Society, Limited.

Messrs. F. A. Davies and C. Cohen were elected as an Agenda Committee.

It was unanimously resolved that a donation of £5 5s. be made to the Secular Education League.

Other business having been transacted, the President expressed a wish to meet his colleagues of the past year again after the Conference, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

**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.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 7.30, Conversazione.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, 27 Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, H. S. Wishart, "New Gods but Old Priests."

**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15 and 6, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Where Angels Dwell." Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Whitewashing Christianity."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, F. A. Davies, "Whitewashing Christianity."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, a Lecture.

**COUNTRY.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Picton Hall, William Brown-street): G. W. Foote, 3, "Christianity and the Woman Question"; 7, "Rev. R. J. Campbell's Spring Cleaning."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Stuart Young, "Marie Corelli a National Menace."

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, W. H. Wise, "Rationalism: its Aims and Objects."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Conference Agenda, etc.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Business Meeting.

**OUTDOOR.**

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3 and 7, Lectures.

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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