

# THE Freethinker

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Religions are like glow-worms; they require darkness to shine in.—SCHOPENHAUER

## The Slump in Belief.

NOT very long ago, the religious press was filled with accounts of the numerous accessions that were daily being made to the Christian ranks. At that time the Torrey-Alexander Mission was in full swing, and it had been preceded by the Welsh revival under Evan Roberts, as that had been preceded by the United Free Church Mission and similar movements. And since these missions, that were, so it was reported, securing souls by the thousand, leading to a great spiritual revival, etc., there have been numerous assurances that materialism is quite discredited, and that the higher spiritualistic philosophy has been winning all along the line. Of course, those who had any conception of the facts of the case took all these statements for what they were worth, and were quite content to let Christian romancists get all the satisfaction possible from their imaginative productions. Facts remain facts when all is said and done, and the tendency of the age is not likely to be reversed by the ill-timed jubilations of hysterical religionists. It is less than a hundred years since the Catholic Church admitted the revolution of the earth around the sun, but schoolboys knew it to be so nearly a couple of centuries before.

Outsiders knew all along what these Christian captures were worth. While Messrs. Torrey and Alexander were preaching at the Albert Hall to sparse congregations, many of the daily papers published the lie about packed audiences and crowds turned away. The same journals repeated the tales of Torrey's converts, although one or two of the papers reported that Torrey seemed to be the only one present who could see them. He discerned them with the eye of faith. Those who know how this mission business is run know how worthless these statistics of conversion are. Apart from the positive lies which hardly any of these professional missionaries shrink from telling, the genuine responses to the call for souls comes from those who visit mission after mission, getting saved at each, much as a confirmed drunkard would make a round of the public-houses, did a system of free drinks exist. The monotony of the "experiences" recounted, and the identical phraseology used, are alone enough to show that we are dealing with experienced hands at the game. The net result of which is that all these missions are run to provide a little mental dissipation for a variety of Christians who are too mentally flabby to seek it in other directions, and far too lacking in soundness of character to develop the outlet of a healthy vice. Apart from this, their only function is to provide employment for a number of specialists in revivalism, a class of men who would certainly not be tolerated in a healthily-organised community.

Sooner or later the Churches must take their courage in both hands and face facts; and the *Christian World*, in a leading article on the subject, takes a gloomy view of the situation. It points out that the figures of the Wesleyan Methodist Church,

showing a decrease of 2,000 full members, 2,000 junior members, and over 6,000 on trial, are disquieting to all believers; the more so because the Wesleyan Church is symptomatic of the rest. The most successful cannot keep pace with the growth of population; the least successful show an actual decrease. When Freethinkers are asked for evidence of the success of their propaganda they might well point to these figures and these lamentations. Every person who drops out of the ranks of the believers does not chronicle his defection—very few do; and we have no penitent form and offer no encouragement to personal "testimony." But the result is there, and is shown in the figures and in the laments. We fight with time and evolution on our side, and can afford to look with confidence to the result.

When it comes to deal with the causes of the Church slump, the *Christian World* appears to have some dim perception of their real nature, but obviously lacks the courage to press its suspicions too closely. It thinks that the rush from village to town, and even the migrations within the city from centre to suburb, may be responsible for much of the leakage. So, too, it may immediately, but not ultimately. If religious belief was nowadays a matter of genuine conviction, and Church membership more than a social convention, these would not be at the mercy of a migration from village to town, or from city to suburb. It is really because religious belief is nowadays little more than a social convention, often supported from sheer mercenary motives, that when a man finds himself released from the social leash fuller play is given to his real feelings and opinions. It means that people can only be kept up to the religious standard so long as coercion of some sort is applied. Abolish this, give each person perfect freedom of action, and churches and chapels would soon become howling wildernesses of empty benches.

So, too, with the cause found in the unpopularity of preachers or of sermons. Of course, the man and the message will always have its influence. Still, no one can study the modern pulpit without realising that what the people want is to be entertained, and what the most popular preachers do is to try and entertain them. The entertainment being given, people will go to church, other things equal, as they go to a music-hall or a theatre, and frequently stay away for the same reason.

The things named by the *Christian World* are not causes, but symptoms. The real causes lie much deeper than anything touched on by the writer of the article, and these are that the churches no longer possess any social or intellectual validity. Even ordinary people are beginning to realise that on no single subject of importance has any of the churches an independent message to deliver that is worth hearing. For all their science, their philosophy, or their sociology, they have to turn elsewhere. All they gets within the churches is a very faint echo of the best that can be got outside. They are so accustomed to this that they have ceased to regard it as in any way remarkable. Even in matters of religion they have to go to outsiders for the truest knowledge on the matter. Still, accustomed as people are to this, and assenting to it as they do, the absurdity of maintaining an army of men with nothing important to teach, and nothing of any value to do, gradually forces itself upon them. People are no longer easily



imposed upon by the supposed learning or power of the clergy. Outside influences teach them how much this is worth, and their own experience endorses it. If people read they would find that more can be got from a good book in an hour than can be gathered from sermons in a month. If they think, they realise what a game of make-believe the whole thing is; while a growing number agree with Ruskin that—

"In general, any man's becoming a clergyman in these days implies that, at best, his sentiment has overpowered his intellect; and that whatever the feebleness of the latter, the victory of his impertinent piety has been probably owing to its alliance with his conceit, and its promise to him of the gratification of being regarded as an oracle, without the trouble of becoming wise or the grief of being so."

The *Christian World* writer thinks the position demands a search for remedies rather than causes. But to get true remedies one must have a knowledge of causes, otherwise little that can be done will be of avail. And in this case, the only remedies that would be of use are impossible. If the united action of the churches can possibly convert the globe into a plane, and set the sun travelling round it instead of it travelling round the sun; if gravitation can be abolished, and mystical affinities reintroduced; if causation can be replaced by miracle, and natural forces by spirits; if evolution can be replaced by special creation, and brain disease by demoniacal possession; if education can be abolished, and heaven and earth repopled by the army of supernatural beings and powers destroyed during the development of modern science, then the churches have a remedy, and one they would not hesitate to use if they could. But if these things cannot be done, then the case is truly hopeless.

For, really, nothing less than a revolution of this kind can ever give back to religion its lost power. All religion is built upon the belief that the world is ruled by arbitrary supernatural intelligence, and has no real validity apart from that conception. The clergyman is fundamentally the miracle-worker, the intermediary between man and the supposed supernatural—for a cash consideration. This function is seen plainly enough in the savage medicine-man, it is almost equally evident with the Catholic priest, and it can be seen in the ordination of the Protestant clergyman and in the "call" of the dissenting preacher. All the power and influence of the clergy depends upon this belief, no matter how modified or disguised it may be. But really educated people no longer believe in the intercessory power of the clergy. Nor can they look up to the clergy on account of their superior learning. This might have been done while education was the privilege of a few, and the ability to read or write suggested something of an occult quality. But reading and writing is now universal. The clergy are no longer looked up to, they are rather looked down upon. No one of any standing values their opinion as clergymen, while as a class they are mentally inferior to any other body of educated men in the community. They have had their day, and can only maintain themselves by pandering to passion and prejudice, and acting as the protectors of interest that, but for them, might have long since disappeared.

The problem for the *Christian World* to solve if it would save Christianity is, then, simple—in statement. It is to find out how to turn back the whole tide of civilisation and to re-create the mental and social conditions of the Dark Ages. Only this, and nothing more.

C. COHEN.

### "Nature's Insurgent Son."

SUCH is the present title of the Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1905, delivered by Professor Ray Lankester, and now included in a volume just issued under the general title, *The Kingdom of Man*. It is worthy of notice that as an appendix to the lecture appears the

famous letter which Professor Lankester contributed to the *Times* on May 17, 1903, in criticism of certain notorious statements made by Lord Kelvin to the Christian Association at University College. Lord Kelvin had asserted that "modern biologists are coming once more to a firm acceptance of something, and that is a vital principle," and that "there is scientific reason for believing in the existence of a creative and directive power." The Professor met the first assertion in these words:—

"I will not venture to doubt that Lord Kelvin has such persons among his acquaintance. On the other hand, I feel some confidence in stating that a more extensive acquaintance with modern biologists would have led Lord Kelvin to perceive that those whom he cites are but a trifling percentage of the whole. I do not myself know of anyone of admitted leadership among modern biologists who is showing signs of coming to a belief in the existence of a vital principle."

The second assertion was disposed of thus:—

"The whole order of nature, including living and lifeless matter—from man to gas—is a network of mechanism the main features and many details of which have been made more or less obvious to the wondering intelligence of mankind by the labor and ingenuity of scientific investigators. But no sane man has ever pretended, since Science became a definite body of doctrine, that we know or ever can hope to know or conceive of the possibility of knowing, whence this mechanism has come, why it is there, whither it is going, and what there may or may not be beyond or beside it which our senses are incapable of appreciating. These things are not 'explained' by Science, and never can be."

Such extracts would be needless, at this time of day, were it not for the fact that the New Theologians are continually telling the public that the Science of to-day is decidedly on their side. But here is a biologist, of first-class distinction, who unhesitatingly and most emphatically repudiates their claim, and boldly affirms that "Science proceeds on its path without any contact with religion, and that religion has not, in its essential qualities, anything to hope for, or to fear, from Science." Professor Lankester adds the following significant statement:—

"Modern biologists (I am glad to be able to affirm) do not accept the hypothesis of 'telepathy' advocated by Sir Oliver Lodge, nor that of the intrusions of disembodied spirits pressed upon them by others of the same school. We biologists take no stock in these mysterious entities. We think it a more hopeful method to be patient and to seek by observation of, and experiment with, the phenomena of growth and development, to trace the evolution of life and of living things without the facile and sterile hypothesis of 'a vital principle.' Similarly, we seek by the study of cerebral disease to trace the genesis of the phenomena which are supposed by some physicists who have strayed into biological fields to justify them in announcing the 'discovery' of 'telepathy' and a belief in ghosts."

In the light of the above quotations, we are quite prepared for the proposition that "Nature," as understood by Professor Lankester, is "a name for the entire mechanism of the universe, the cosmos in all its parts," and that consequently living matter and man have proceeded from an orderly evolution of Nature, and are in no sense "super" natural. We are not surprised to read of "the origin of man by the process of Natural Selection," or that "Natural Selection, in the remote period known as the lower miocene, began to favor that increase in the size of the brain of a large and not very powerful semi-erect ape which eventuated, after some hundreds of thousands of years, in the breeding-out of a being with a relatively enormous brain-case, a skilful hand, and an inveterate tendency to throw stones, flourish sticks, protect himself in caves, and in general to defeat aggression and satisfy his natural appetites by the use of his wits rather than by strength alone—in which, however, he was not deficient." In some such way as that did the human race emerge "from the terrestrial animal population," which was "strictly controlled and moulded by natural selection." Man emerged "with an educable brain of some five or six times the bulk (in proportion to his size and weight) of that of any other surviving Simian."



Now man's origin by the process of Natural Selection is only one chapter in his history. As soon as we begin to consider his further development and his diffusion over the surface of the globe, we open another chapter of immense interest and importance. At this point, however, we are struck by the close resemblance between Professor Lankester's lecture and the one given by Professor Huxley, under the same auspices, in 1893, on "Evolution and Ethics." The two discourses are in essential agreement on every essential point. In both, man is considered as part and parcel of Nature. It was Nature that produced him, and it is by Nature he is sustained. And yet, strangely enough, each lecture detaches man from Nature, sets him apart from and above the cosmos, and speaks of him as opposing and setting aside many of Nature's laws, as interfering with and materially checking the cosmic process. Professor Lankester calls him "Nature's insurgent son," whose one ambition in life is to defy his mother to her face and trample her laws under his feet. Listen to this:—

"Nature's inexorable discipline of death to those who do not rise to her standard—survival and parentage for those alone who do—has been from the earliest times more and more definitely resisted by the will of man. If we may for the purpose of analysis, as it were, extract a man from the rest of Nature of which he is truly a product and part, then we may safely say that man is Nature's rebel. Where Nature says 'Die!' man says 'I will live!'"

But why should man, even for the purpose of analysis, be extracted from Nature, "of which he is a product and part?" To be so dealt by, is fair neither to Nature as a whole nor to man as one of her products. To call him her "insurgent son" is an insult to both. All Nature's laws are absolutely inexorable. Not one of them has ever been or ever can be broken. When Nature says to man "Die," he has no choice but to obey. If man manages to live under conditions that are always fatal to animals lower down in the scale, it is not because he is powerful enough to successfully set the law at defiance, but simply because his superior intelligence has discovered new methods of meeting its demands. Like all other animals, he lives because, and only as long as, he possesses the requisite fitness; lacking this, he must die like the rest. He survives in excessive heat and cold, where other living things must perish, simply in consequence of having found out means of protecting himself against them. His wits have shown him how to comply with, not how evade, the law.

Professor Huxley said: "Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less on running away from it, but on combating it." But what is the cosmic process? You have no right to select a certain section of Nature's mechanism and say of it, "This is the cosmic process." That chosen section may represent the cosmic process up to a certain point in the history of its evolution; but if man is a product and part of Nature, his ethical progress must represent the cosmic process at its highest and best. The cosmic process is a thing of innumerable ascending or descending degrees. In the wilderness you see it in a low stage of its development, while in the garden it has considerably risen in the scale. Among the lower animals, it is imperfect and cruel and disastrous; but in man it has reached a much higher degree of development, though still far from perfect. Surely advocates of evolution fall into grievous error when they "extract man from the rest of Nature," and then treat him as an outsider in perpetual conflict with her. Such a separation cannot be made, even in thought, except at the expense of doing endless injustice to the universe, which is one and indivisible.

No; man is not Nature's rebel, except to his own hurt. Whenever he becomes insurgent it is himself that he fights against. It is not true that "at every step of his progress man has receded further and further from the ancient rule exercised by Nature." Nature is just as much man's ruler as she is a

moth's or a pigeon's. Professor Lankester says that to "suppose that man can 'return to Nature' is as unreasonable as to suppose that an adult animal can return to its mother's womb." We say, on the contrary, that Nature's rule is absolute, whether "earlier" or "later," only she rules all her products, her children, according to their respective constitutions. The inevitable penalty of rebellion is death. Man's normal relationship to Nature, according to George Meredith, is one of glad submission and active obedience. "Obedient to Nature," he says, is man's true attitude—

"Obedient to Nature, not her slave:

Her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows;

Her dust, if with his conscience he plays knave,

And bids the Passions on the Pleasurers browse."

Professor Ray Lankester's discourse bristles with beautiful and most valuable suggestions, especially in regard to the subject of education; and his observations in the sections on "Man and Disease," and the "Influence of Oxford," are both timely and practical, and ought to be seriously laid to heart. But the whole lecture is vitiated, like that of his illustrious predecessor, by the fallacy that man has triumphed, or is in the process of triumphing, over Nature, in that he has risen above the law of Natural Selection. The truth is, however, that man is, as far as we know, Nature's crown and flower, and that his greatness is in proportion to the degree of his conformity to her laws:—

"Deepest at her springs,

Most filial, is an eye to love her young."

And her message to her son, Man, comes as the "Voice of the conscience of Life," saying:—

"Keep the young generations in hail,  
And bequeath them no tumbled house!"

J. T. LLOYD,

## Campbellism.—V.

### XVIII.

I WAS pulled up last week, by want of space, in criticising Mr. Campbell's treatment of the problem of evil. I meant to wind up with a reference to Professor Walter Raleigh's masterly and beautiful book on Shakespeare, which is the newest volume in the "English Men of Letters" series, having been published on April 23—the Master's deathday as it was also probably his birthday. In his noble pages on Shakespeare's supreme achievements, the great Tragedies in which all his highest and most characteristic qualities are displayed, Professor Raleigh says that in them "Shakespeare comes at last face to face with the mystery and cruelty of human life." "A profound sense of fate," he says, underlies them all; the mighty tides of being bear man with them, whether he swim this way or that. When the greatest of poets, and therefore the greatest of men and thinkers, came to grapple with "the ultimate problems of life he had the help of no talisman or magic script." "All doctrines and theories concerning the place of man in the universe, and the origin of evil," Professor Raleigh says, "are a poor and partial business compared with that dazzling vision of the pitiful estate of humanity which is revealed by Tragedy." And surely he is right. The pulpit rhetorician's talk about the positiveness of good and the negativeness of evil, sounds like a dull and even impudent impertinence when Hamlet goes to his doom for others' sins, when Othello sobs out his passionate great heart over the dead body of Desdemona, or when the tortured old King Lear breathes his last upon the silent lips of Cordelia. These things raise in us not only the pity, but also the terror, which Aristotle saw was the proper work of tragedy. They remind us of "the mystery and cruelty" of human existence. Before them the pessimist's questioning eyes fall upon the blanched face of the optimist. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in his philosophy.



## XIX.

Let us now turn to Mr. Campbell's views on the Bible. He takes the position that God inspires men, not books. He says that "the true seat of authority is within, not without, the human soul." He affirms that "God has never stopped speaking to men." "The Bible," however, "is not infallible, for the simple reason that the human nature, even of wise and great men, is not infallible." Mr. Campbell thinks the Bible helps us more than other books; by us, of course, meaning himself and his fellow Christians. "But when a modern preacher," he says, "dramatically declares that he takes his stand and bases his gospel on the infallible book, he is either a fool or—a rhetorician." The "supposed authority of the letter of Scripture" is the most "serious hindrance and stumbling-block to spiritual religion to-day."

"Never mind what the Bible says about this or that if you are in search of truth, but trust the voice of God within you. The Bible will help you in your quest, just as any good man might be able to help you; but you must judge, test, and weigh the various statements it contains, just as you would judge, test, and weigh the opinions of the best friend you ever had."

This is creditable, and sound enough, except for the theological phrasing. Mr. Campbell says "trust the voice of God within you." I should say "trust the voice of Reason within you."

In his concluding chapter Mr. Campbell speaks out still more creditably about the average Protestant's attitude towards the Bible. After reading this passage I am not surprised at his joining the Secular Education League:—

"The way the Bible is taught to young people at present is most regrettable, for in after years it leads them to doubt and distrust the very foundations of Christianity. If the teachers only had a little more intelligent acquaintance with the sources of the Scriptures this danger would be avoided, and the Bible would become a far more interesting book both to young and old. At present it is interpreted by many people in a way which is an insult to the intelligence and harmful to the moral sense. Will anyone seriously maintain that the trickeries of Jacob, and the butcheries following the Israelitish invasion of Canaan, not to speak of the obscenities which are to be found in so many parts of the Old Testament, are healthy reading for children or a mark of Divine inspiration? Is it not time we adopted the more excellent way of facing the truth about the Bible records, and presenting what is valuable in such a way as to help and not hinder the growth of a true knowledge of the relations of God and man."

There are some strong words here. *Trickeries—Butcheries—Obscenities*. When these terms were used in the *Freethinker*, as they have been for twenty-five years, they were called false, ill-mannered, or blasphemous. Now they are adopted by the New Theology.

## XX.

Mr. Campbell is to be congratulated on the easy freedom with which he can say hard things of the Old Theology. "If the New Theology controversy," he says, "had arisen a few hundred years ago, theological disputants would not have wasted time in writing newspaper articles; they would have met in solemn conclave and condemned the heretic to be flayed alive, or hung over a slow fire, or treated in some similarly convincing manner." He even hints that "some of them would like to do it now, but public opinion will not let them." Yes, that is true; but this public opinion has been created by men who went before Mr. Campbell, and who were made of sterner stuff than he is. The men who were flayed and roasted a few hundred years ago; the men who went to prison afterwards, from Woolston and Annet to Holyoake and the last sufferers under the Blasphemy Laws; these men made it possible for the New Theologians to go about safely—in motor cars.

## XXI.

Mr. Campbell is frankly heretical on many other points. He refers to heaven and hell, for instance, not as places, but as "states of the soul." He scorns

the cruel "tender mercies" with which "theologians have credited the Almighty." He declares that the "worst sin that was ever sinned does not deserve everlasting punishment." "Everlasting punishment," he says, involves God's "everlasting failure." Besides, he asserts, "no one really believes it, and the Churches will have to give up professing to believe it."

It does not require much courage to say these things nowadays. But it does require some sincerity to say them from what has hitherto been accounted an orthodox pulpit. Mr. Campbell is not exactly a hero; yet he is a far more honorable figure than so many of his fellow preachers who believe as much, or as little, as he does, but are too cowardly to say so.

## XXII.

Everything ends, and so must this review of Mr. Campbell's book. I shall proceed at once, therefore, to the central point of the New Theology. This is not the "immanence" of God, but the "divinity" of Jesus. Never has the world been divided up into hostile sects over questions of abstract theology. Whether God is this, that, or the other, is an academic question. It is the revealed religions—religions based upon Scriptures—that have set mankind by the ears and drenched the earth with blood. And those religions are always the most bigoted which, in addition to written revelations, have the personality of a dead man, or a man-god, at the heart of their worship. This gives the human and passionate element to such faiths.

Jesus, commonly called Jesus Christ, is the vital core of Christianity. Take him away, and Christianity becomes unthinkable. Fortunately in the past, but unfortunately in the present, the personality of Jesus is associated with ancient fairy-tales. His career was miraculous from beginning to end. He came into the world by a miracle, he left it by a miracle, and he was a miracle-worker during the whole of his life on earth—or at least during the part of it which is recorded in the Gospels. The Jesus of the New Testament is not a natural but a supernatural personage. And in that one fact you have the key to the success of Christianity in the ignorant past, and the pledge of its doom in the educated future.

Mr. Campbell sees the peril in which Christianity stands. His restatement of it in the form of the New Theology is an attempt at rescue. No doubt he believes he will succeed. I believe he is certain to fail.

## XXIII.

There is a certain acuteness in Mr. Campbell's method of defence. He approaches his object from both sides—like a general who wishes to surround the enemy. First, he sets up a golden bridge between God and man. God and man are really one; man came from God, and to God he will return. This is not new, but by constantly emphasising it Mr. Campbell gives it an air of novelty. "What is our life but God's?" he asks. "The spirit of man and the Spirit of God," he says, "are one." Well, I have the honor to agree with him. I accept the statement—but I give it a different interpretation. Mr. Campbell believes that man came from God. I believe that God came from man. Man has worshiped a Creator, but he created the object of his worship. Yes, the spirit of man and the spirit of God are one.

"Because man's soul is man's God still,  
What wind soever waft his will—

Save his own soul's light overhead,  
None leads him, and none ever led."

Thus sings the splendid poet of the *Songs Before Sunrise*. And thus the cultivated mind of Europe is coming to believe.

But this, of course, is not Mr. Campbell's view. He teaches the ultimate identity of God and man, as source and emanation; and his object is to establish the "divinity" of Jesus without any appeal to the supernatural. For, if we are all God, it follows that Jesus was God too. Mr. Campbell would add "and more so"—though the statement is an odd one. In



a poetical sense one person may be more "divine" than another; but is this possible in a metaphysical sense? Mr. Campbell thinks that "it can hardly be seriously contended that a crocodile is as much an expression of God as General Booth." But why not? The mere statement does not carry conviction. It would, indeed, be flatly contradicted in oriental countries, where human egotism is less rampant than it is in the West. To the eye of dispassionate reason it would seem that, if God is the only eternal reality, one thing must be as much an expression of him as another. Whether it is a better or a worse one is a quarrel amongst the expressions.

Let us come closer to Mr. Campbell's point. God, he says, is "essentially man." He is "the fount of humanity." "With what God," he asks, "have we to do except the God who is eternally man?" God is "the eternal Divine Man." Can we do better, therefore, than "think of him in terms of Jesus," who is "the fullest expression of the eternal Divine Man on the field of human history"?

"Jesus was God, but so are we. He was God because His life was the expression of Divine love; we, too, are one with God in so far as our lives express the same thing. Jesus was not God in the sense that He possessed an infinite consciousness; no more are we. Jesus expressed fully and completely, in so far as finite consciousness ever could, that aspect of the nature of God which we have called the eternal Son, or Christ, or ideal Man who is the Soul of the universe, and 'the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'; we are expressions of the same primordial being.....the human and Divine were blended in Jesus without making Him essentially different from the rest of the human race."

Mr. Campbell may not know it—for, as a rule, Christians do not seem to be well versed in Christian literature—but the primary substance of this extract was stated more thoroughly and passionately by Martin Luther—who would have looked upon the author of the *New Theology* as a damnable heretic. This is what the great "Reformer" said in his *Commentary on the Psalms*:—

"Whosoever doth not embrace and by faith lay hold on this man which was born of a virgin, they can never believe in God; but although they say they believe in the Maker of heaven and earth, yet they do indeed believe in the idol of their own heart, for without Christ there is no true God."

And again:—

"For this cause I do so often admonish you, that without Christ ye should shut your eyes, and say ye know no God besides him which was in the lap of the Virgin Mary and sucked her breasts. Where this God Christ Jesus is, there is a God wholly, there is the whole divinity, there is the Father and the Holy Ghost. Without this Christ there is no God."

Luther accepted the whole Gospel story. Mr. Campbell does not. Luther deduced God from Christ. Mr. Campbell deduces Christ from God. There is an immense difference between these two positions. Yet they both agree in one thing—the transcendent, the overwhelming importance of Christ to Christianity.

#### XXIV.

Mr. Campbell well says that "the greatest subject that at present occupies the field of faith and morals" is that of "the personality of Jesus and his significance for mankind."

"The ultimate question for the Christian religion is that of the place occupied by its Founder. Who or what was Jesus? How much can we really know about Him? What value does he possess for the religious consciousness of to-day? All other questions about the Christian religion are of minor importance compared with these, and if we are prepared with an answer to these, we have, by implication, answered all the rest."

What, then, do we know about Jesus? The orthodox answer is that we know all that is written in the New Testament. But this is not Mr. Campbell's answer. When people quote Paul against him, he says "That is only Paul's opinion." When they quote the Gospels with respect to the Virgin Birth and other wonders, he says "I don't believe

it." He declares that the Nativity stories contradict each other, and that "no ingenuity can reconcile them." He says that they "belong to the poetry of religion, not to history." He goes farther:—

"It seems strange that a belief in the virgin birth of Jesus should ever have been held to be a cardinal article of the Christian faith, but it is so even to-day. There is not much need to combat it, for most reputable theologians have given it up, but it is still a stumbling-block to many minds."

Mr. Campbell goes farther than that. He asserts, not only that the Virgin Birth is immaterial to Christianity, but that it really "operates as a hindrance to spiritual religion and a real living faith in Jesus." Accordingly he puts on record his own conviction that "Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary." Tolstoy, it will be remembered, is even more merciless, and boldly declares *his* conviction that Jesus was the bastard child of Mary and a Roman soldier. And the joke is that Luther, Mr. Campbell, and Tolstoy are all *Christians*.

Mr. Campbell does not, apparently, believe the Resurrection story either. He says that the "Gospel accounts of the physical resurrection of Jesus are mutually inconsistent, and no amount of ingenuity can reconcile them." But *something* happened. The disciples were "convinced that they had seen Jesus face to face after the world believed him to be dead and buried." There is a "widespread tendency among liberal Christians" to try to account for this in some natural way:—

"Thus we have the hallucination theory, the apparition theory, the swoon theory, and others of a similar character. I suppose that most thinkers who take the point of view of the New Theology would hold one or other of these explanations or some modification of them; but I confess I have never seen the overwhelming necessity for doing so."

The risen body of Jesus "apparently possessed some new and mysterious attributes." This gives Mr. Campbell the clue for a very windy theory, composed of questionable metaphysics, and what seems to me to be quite nonsensical talk about "the fourth dimension." The whole page shows what Mr. Campbell's mind comes to when it works "on its own." It would be more to his credit if he betrayed a consciousness of the fact that behind all the rationalistic theories of the Resurrection is the vastly more important theory that the whole Gospel story is a dramatic fiction, a work of religious imagination, gradually wrought into its present shape during several generations, and finally set forth in the Four Gospels by unknown literary artists. Most of the great cathedrals of Christendom were built during several generations, and we do not know the names of their architects. It is not surprising, therefore, that the authorship of the Gospels should be unknown. In any case, it is this theory of the Four Gospels that towers over all the others, and does away with the necessity of reconciling, or even discussing, the interpretation of different texts. Mr. Campbell recognises that the Virgin Birth belongs to the poetry of religion, not to history. All he has to do is to extend this idea to the rest of the Gospel narrative. It is very simple. And after all, as the French proverb says, it is only the first step that costs.

#### XXV.

Mr. Campbell seeks to establish the "divinity" of Jesus by unlimited and uncritical laudation. "He was God manifest in the flesh," we are told, "because His life was a consistent expression of Divine love." He was not "only a man." He was "the only Man"—the word being spelt with a capital M, as though that altered its meaning. "We have only seen perfect manhood once," Mr. Campbell says, "and that was the manhood of Jesus."

Christian apologists have indulged in these asseverations ever since the attack on the supernatural Jesus became too obviously irresistible. Suppose he was not born of a virgin, suppose he did not rise from the dead, suppose he did not work miracles; still, he was a miracle himself—his character was superhuman.



Such is the old argument, and Mr. Campbell does but give it another turn.

Now it is flattery to call this an argument. It is nothing but assertion, and it only satisfies those who are already convinced. But this, indeed, is a common characteristic of Christian "arguments."

Freethinkers have always denied the "perfection" of Jesus. Even a devout Theist, like the late Professor F. W. Newman, wrote a studied impeachment of that "perfection." And how was he answered? By silence. Christian apologists went on with their asseverations, as if nothing had been said to the contrary.

How was Jesus the only Man? It can be proved from the Gospels—and there is no other authority—that he violated his own teaching; that he sometimes very foolishly lost his temper; that he used the bitterest language of hatred towards his religious opponents; that on one occasion he resorted to downright violence, whipping the money-changers and dove-sellers out of the unsanctified precincts of the temple, where they were carrying on a necessary and reputable business; and that, at the age of thirty, when he was old enough to know better, he spoke unlovingly and disrespectfully to his mother. Had any other son said to his mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" the Christians would have turned from him with loathing and disgust.

This may be called negative criticism. Let us, then, apply positive tests. The character of a Man (capital M, please) is displayed through the normal relationships of life; as a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a friend, and a citizen. Jesus had no experience as a husband and a father. These are the most exacting relationships of life; they make constant demands on intelligence and character; and until he has experienced them no man is adequately known, either to others or to himself.

It may be contended that the best sayings of Jesus could only have emanated from a pure and lofty character. But he did not originate them. They were floating about in the East; they were the common possession of Jewish and Pagan moralists.

#### XXVI.

When we are told by Mr. Campbell that "the greatest moral and religious force in the world is embodied in the name of Jesus, and this by general consent," the obvious reply is that the "general consent" of Christians proves nothing in favor of Christianity. For it is certainly not true that the "general consent" of the outside world supports Mr. Campbell's tribute to his Savior.

Similarly, when Mr. Campbell says that "history" has settled the "uniqueness of Jesus"—that "the civilised world has already made up its mind on that point" and "recognises Jesus as the unique standard of human excellence"—it is obvious that by "history" he means Christian history, and by the "civilised world" the Christian world.

Mr. Campbell knows he is writing for Christian readers. He would never venture to write in that way for unbelievers.

#### XXVII.

It may be admitted that Mr. Campbell is sincere. It may be admitted that he is not consciously intolerant. But the root of bigotry is in him, as it is bound to be in all Christians. He denounces the doctrine of salvation by belief; he affirms that "the absence of a formal creed" will not "shut any good man out of heaven." He is above the more vulgar bigotry of the orthodox. But he has a bigotry of a more subtle, and perhaps a more odious, character. "Take out of the world," he says, "what Christian saints have owed to their fellowship with Jesus, and there would be comparatively little of hope and inspiration left." While admitting Mr. Blatchford's "moral earnestness," he claims him as an unconscious Christian; which is one of those insolent compliments that Christians are so fond of perpetrating. Mr. Campbell goes to the length of declaring that it is "in the nature of things impossible to sustain a belief in a moral ideal with-

out some kind of belief in God." All this means that Godites are necessarily more moral than Atheists. It is no use mincing matters; Mr. Campbell either means that or he is writing mere verbiage. And we tell him that this is bigotry—that he is playing the Pharisee—that he is shutting his eyes to the facts. Men of the loftiest character, both in England and on the continent of Europe, have been Atheists. I will give Mr. Campbell their names if he asks for them; and he will find, if he does not know, that they were also distinguished for intellect and in the van of human progress. But I will end by referring him to the writings of Auguste Comte, who proposed to reorganise the world, without God, by the systematic cultus of Humanity. Whether that great thinker was right or wrong is not the point. I draw attention to the fact that no one ever taught more firmly the sovereignty of ethics. His very watchword was "Live for others." He has even been called a fanatic of morality. To him the intellect was the servant of the heart; all thought and action should have a social purpose; and the highest duty was the service of man. The last phrase was employed by one of his English disciples, the late J. Cotter Morison, as the title of a remarkable book. Since then it has passed into general use, and many Christians appear to think it comes from the New Testament. But it really comes from a French Atheist—the founder of the Religion of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Acid Drops.

A Liverpool exhorter, the Rev. T. E. Ruth, was in London lately and preached at Westbourne Park Chapel, as one of the supplies for the Rev. Dr. Clifford, who has gone abroad to spend that £400 cheque presented to him for a holiday. We have been favored with a report of Mr. Ruth's sermon, which appeared in the *Daily News*, where we must have overlooked it. Of course it is going back a bit to notice it now, but there are a few things in it that are too good to be neglected.

Mr. Ruth's first sentence was this—"The Christian is the true Agnostic." According to the reporter, these words "attracted attention." We should think they did. It was something like standing on your head to draw a crowd. Mr. Ruth might as well have said that "The Agnostic is the true Christian." But that might have sounded "too too"—though it is just as accurate.

The reverend gentleman's second sentence rather qualified his first. "The reverent Agnostic," he said, "is the man who receives revelations." Very likely. The "reverent" Agnostic is commonly a milk-and-water or a make-believe person, and as likely to have "revelations" as any professed religionist. But that, after all, is not the principal point. We wish to observe that Mr. Ruth's theory about the "reverent" Agnostic and "revelations" appears to involve the position that all the old Bible prophets, who certainly had "revelations," must have been "reverent Agnostics." We begin to understand the origin of the tribe now.

Mr. Ruth rejoices in being a "reverent Agnostic" himself. It is such a relief to be able to say "I don't know" and yet to keep up the reputation of a philosopher. "Ask me," the reverend gentleman says, "if God could not have forgiven everybody without making Christ die, and I can only give the wise Christian reply: 'I do not know.' I know that God holds the key of the unknown, and I am glad." God holds the key—and Mr. Ruth and his like trade upon the mystery.

The "reverent Agnostic" game seems very ingenious and very convenient. It saves the preacher from the difficulty of having to be definite. "I do not know much," Mr. Ruth said, "of hell or heaven. If you had asked me here to preach five years ago, I could have told you all about both places with accuracy and confidence. But now!" Yes, but now! Five years ago Mr. Ruth would have paraded his ignorance as knowledge. Now he parades his knowledge as ignorance. For he knows very well that heaven and hell are pious dreams. "Reverent Agnosticism" spares him the duty of telling the truth.



"I know that here and now, in this service," the reverend gentleman said, "there is heaven and hell." Quite so. Heaven and hell are not places, but states of mind. The happy man is in heaven; the miserable man is in hell: or, rather, heaven is in the one, and hell is in the other. But what has that to do with Christianity? That is pure and simple Naturalism.

Mr. Ruth wound up with these blessed words: "All God has shall one day be yours." Evidently the business of the men of God is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. They issue promissory notes—and their dupes cash them.

May Meetings are now in full swing. One of them was the triennial conference of the Liberation Society. It was held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, with Mr. John Massie, M.P., in the chair. The menu opened, after the preliminary soup, with a *hors d'œuvre* in the shape of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Clifford, who dated from Les Praz, near Chamounix. It was one of those Nonconformist epistles which the "Passive Resistance Cromwell" must almost have stereotyped. It started off with the usual blarney about "England" and "liberty," and ended up with some Christian talk about the rival Church of England being "the chief ally of the publican, the tipster, and the jerry builder." Which shows how they love one another.

Here is the Rev. Dr. Clifford's top note:—

"England needs her liberty. She cannot have it whilst her Parliament is entangled with the complex affairs of the Church, and dominated by the bishops. She is not free to speak her mind or execute her will or do her best so long as her hands are chained to political clericalism. It is the chief barrier to social progress. It blocks the way to the amelioration of the condition of the poor. It hampers the reign of justice. It prevents beneficent legislation."

Dr. Clifford could go on like that for hours, saying the same thing over and over again. All he means is, "Damn the Church of England." When that Church is disestablished and disendowed—that is to say, when the Nonconformists knock her down and go through her pockets—and Nonconformist religion, in the form of Simple Bible Teaching, is established and endowed in the State schools—all will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

We want to see England freed from Cliffordism as well as from Anglicanism. One is just as much an enemy of real progress as the other. And it is the plain truth that Cliffordism is in one respect worse than Anglicanism; it adds hypocrisy to all its other vices. For years Dr. Clifford has been talking about "Secular Education." Of course he never meant a word of it—and we always said so. It was simply designed to keep the real Secular Educationists from attacking his "Progressive" policy as a rival usurpation to that of the "Moderates." When the Secular Education League was started he wrote to say that he could not join it, as the Secular Education he was in favor of included the religious use of the Bible! His hand was forced, and he had to show his cards.

Mr. Lloyd-George, who could not attend the Liberation Society's Conference, sent an "important" letter, in which he announced that "the Prime Minister has definitely promised to take up the question of Welsh Disestablishment at the earliest possible moment." Such an announcement, made at such a gathering, shows that we have a Nonconformist Government in power. That is the real reading of the present situation.

Mr. Lloyd George went on to speak about religious equality. He is great on this subject—after the fashion of his pious idol, the great Dr. Clifford. Hear him:—

"The friends of religious equality throughout the kingdom should be prepared to redouble their efforts. The schools of the land are not yet free..... We must secure religious equality in all the relations of the State."

What he really means is that the Anglican Church must be "dished," and that Nonconformist religious teaching must be established in all State schools. This, of course, is not what he says; but professional politicians are masters of ambiguous language.

We have repeatedly said that the "glorious free press" is about the greatest fraud of modern times. Both adjectives are absurdly false. The press is not glorious—for it has no convictions, only party policies; and it is not free—for behind the editor and his staff are the business manager and the proprietors. The "glorious free press" is a glorious institution for "burking" every vital idea and boycotting every vital cause. But now and then a journalist sneaks in a word of his own, which should act as Samson's brands in

the foxes' tails amidst the Philistines' corn. We noticed one such the other morning in the *Daily Chronicle*. It was in a review of a Japanese book about Formosa, just translated into English. The reviewer started in this way:—

"Japan retained her character as a barbarian nation so long as she merely excelled in art, literature, and the graces of social life. When, however, she proved her capacity for killing more Russians in a single battle than England and France could destroy in a year of fighting during the Crimean war, she was promptly admitted into the charmed circle of civilised nations."

This is the plain, sober truth. And what a satire it is on "Christian civilisation"!

The late William Whiteley's grave in Kensal Green has been overlaid with a sumptuous white marble monument, which will make it very difficult for him to get up when Gabriel blows the resurrection trumpet. The inscription gives his name, date of birth, date of death, and the text "The Lord Helped Me." Not at the finish! A little help from the Lord during that interview with Rayner would have been very acceptable. But the help of the Lord could never be counted upon. For this reason, no doubt, when people say, "The Lord help you," they mean you will probably have to pass in your checks.

"Living Statuary"—a very nonsensical phrase—is exciting a good deal of controversy. Perhaps it is owing to Mr. Stead's absence in America. He went there in the interest of peace, and war has broken out behind him. Before he left England he wrote out a nice certificate for "La Milo." Her performance was elegant, artistic, and pure; which we dare say it is, though we have not seen it. But all the puritans are now up in arms against this form of popular entertainment. Of course the newspapers are printing the opinions of "eminent" people on the subject. Perhaps the neatest thing came from Mr. James Welch, the actor. "When I see the same huge crowds round a piece of statuary in a gallery or the British Museum," he said, "I will then be convinced that the crowds which nightly gather to see the so-called living statues do so with no other idea than that of a love of art." Perhaps the most characteristic thing came from the Rev. Scott Lidgett, the Nonconformist preacher. "I am entirely opposed to living statuary," he said. Of course he is. That goes without saying. If the truth were told, he is "entirely" opposed to all but religious entertainments. He reminds us of a *mot* of Charles Lamb's. A lady poured into his ears the praises of her favorite preacher; and noticing the look upon his face, she said, "Ah, Mr. Lamb, you do not know him." "No," said Lamb, "but d-d-damn him at a venture." Mr. Scott Lidgett is ready to damn any music-hall performance at a venture.

Lord Hugh Cecil and the High Church Party very properly inform the Premier that if the M'Kenna Bill is carried they will be obliged to refuse payment of the Education rate, just as the Nonconformists have been doing. And we shall be very glad to see them playing the game. It will hasten the victory of Secular Education. We should not be surprised, indeed, if the High Church Party were to go straight for Secular Education, if the M'Kenna Bill is carried, as their one way of dishing the Nonconformists, and dishing them triumphantly.

A fatuous letter on this subject appeared in the *Daily News*, evidently from a Nonconformist pen, though the writer concealed his identity under initials, which may or may not be his own. This gentleman asks why the Church Party are waiting; if it is a matter of conscience, and not of convenience, they should act at once; just as Free Churchmen did, who "had resource to Passive Resistance in obedience to conscience and not through mere dislike to the existing law." Now this is untrue. Nonconformists paid their rates and taxes for thirty-two years, although the same teaching went on in Church schools that goes on now. They simply struck when their leaders saw that the Tory Government was weakening, and that there was a prospect of a general election putting a Liberal Government in power. The price of their assistance was the promise (behind the scenes) of a Nonconformist Education Bill, to take the place of the Church Bill of 1902. And that price was laid upon the table; only the House of Lords intervened, and prevented the Nonconformists from taking it up. But it was the expectation of turning out the Tory Government, and returning a House of Commons with a Liberal majority, containing a majority of Free Churchmen, that was the real inspiration of the Passive Resistance movement. Had it been a pure matter of conscience, some of the Nonconformist leaders would have found their way to prison; whereas they have all stopped outside the gates and prayed for their dupes who have gone inside.



When the Armenian atrocities were on the carpet the calls from the religious press for the British Government to apply forcible measures to the Sultan were loud and frequent. Following the revelations of the tortures in Russian prisons—far worse from many points of view than the "Turkish atrocities"—the *Life of Faith* sees in it "a call to earnest and urgent prayer that God would interpose." Which is all the difference between dealing with Christians and non-Christians.

Much the same thing is observable over the Congo troubles. All the May Meetings are protesting on the matter, and growing wildly and indignantly enthusiastic over the villainy of that Christian monarch, King Leopold. The House of Convocation said the other day that the outrages on the natives were the greatest obstacles to missionary work on the Congo—which reveals the business interest these gentlemen take in the matter. They can rouse the meetings to a pitch of enthusiasm over the doings on the Congo. They could do the trick equally well over the Armenians; and they would be equal to repeating the performance if it was imagined that the inhabitants of Mars were being ill-treated. But did anyone ever hear of these gatherings being equally aroused over any injustice or wrong-doing at home? *That* is a horse of quite another color. The one subject on which these clerically-organised meetings have "enthused" has been the question of an Education Bill, and that only because it has a purely professional aspect which appeals to them. If it were not for this they would show just as much interest in education as they do in sanitation or housing.

The Archbishop of Canterbury invites everybody to make the Hague Peace Conference the subject of their prayers. We regret to see his Grace taking so hopeless a view of the situation.

"The Salvation Army and Trade" is the title of a leading article in a recent number of the *Drapers' Record*—with special reference to Mr. John Manson's scathing book. Our contemporary says that the Salvation Army "blend of religion with business is most objectionable." And it wonders why the "Army" doesn't reply to grave criticism.

Colonel Lamb, of the Salvation Army Emigration Department, replying to a charge of the Army having left a party of emigrants stranded until attention was called to the matter, says that the Army does not guarantee work for anyone, except on the land or in connection with the railways—which, we believe, can be obtained without any assistance from the Army. Colonel Lamb also says that last year the Army sent out over 12,000 people. Probably; but what many of the public would like to know is, how many of these people paid their full fare, and what was the amount pocketed by the Army in the shape of commission? We do not believe the Army will reply, because a truthful answer would show that only an insignificant number were financially helped, and that the Army is doing a large emigration business, and collecting funds by fostering the impression that it is a charitable affair. We should also like to know from Colonel Lamb precisely what advantages are offered by the Army Emigration Department over those offered by any other shipping or emigration agency. Many of the shipping agents have challenged General Booth to say what these advantages are, but no answer has been forthcoming. All the public gets is a statement of how many have been sent away—without being told that, except for one here and there, all have paid full fare out—while the odd case or so that has been assisted, by money lent, is held up as typical of the whole. Good old General Bluff!

On the boat on which Mr. C. F. Aked went to America a concert was given in aid of a benevolent institution. When the question of a chairman was raised, Mr. Aked suggested to the committee that the most self-important man on board should be elected to the office. Whereupon the committee gave a unanimous vote for Mr. Aked. And the rev. gentleman duly presided.

Brother Jonathan and Brother Bull are very much alike in some things; and it is not to be expected the revelations of "high life" in connection with the Thaw trial, and of those concerned with the municipal corruptions of San Francisco, Chicago, and elsewhere would be without consequences. So profound an influence have these things exerted that public dinners have been held, and drawing-room meetings organised, all with a view of initiating a national laymen's movement for the extension of the *foreign missionary movement*. Fifty men are to set out, at their own expense, to discover in what way the poor benighted heathen can be converted into a passable replica of the American Christian, and report to their anxious fellow-countrymen who

remain at home. We have no doubt that an appeal for funds to Mr. Harry Thaw or to ex-Mayor Schmitz would bring a ready response in the shape of a substantial donation.

When Mr. Wilson Barrett produced *Hamlet*, it will be remembered he added to the gaiety of the country by describing how, when a mere boy, he went down upon his knees outside a theatre and swore to play the part of the Prince of Denmark. He not only swore to do so, but, worse still, did it. Now the Rev. F. B. Meyer says that when *he* was a little boy he swore, after listening to a certain preacher, to become a Baptist minister. And, in his case too, the ambition—at the side of which the resolve to play *Hamlet* shrinks into nothingness—was realised. Both vows must have been taken at somewhere about the same time—which reminds one of the independent discovery of the nebular origin of the solar system by Kant and Laplace, or of natural selection by Darwin and Wallace, or of the discovery of Neptune by Adams and Leverrier. Great minds often run in couples. By the way, there were some people who did not believe the Wilson Barrett story.

We breathe again! The atrocious charge against the Socialists, who carry on Sunday-schools in certain County Council school buildings, of teaching Atheism is utterly false. Mr. Russell informs his fellow Councillors who are on the Education Committee that "there is not an atom of truth in the report that these people encouraged atheistic teaching." He has been through the Labor hymn-book, and it contains "thirty-eight hymns in which a direct reference to the name of God is used," while "in one of the hymns the name of God is mentioned twelve times." That is once for every month in the year. What more do they want? As we said before, we breathe again.

Several ministers inform the editor of "The Churches" column in the *Daily News* that they "invariably present petitions to the Almighty on behalf of writers for the Press." But did not General Booth once say that they were past praying for?

The *Highland Times* reports the annual meeting of the Free Church Synod of Moray. The subject of "Religion and Morals" was dealt with by the Rev. Murdo Mackenzie, who declared his candid opinion that "religion was not making progress, but rather it was decaying." When he was a boy he was afraid to be out on the Sabbath unless he was going to church. Matters were very different now. Here the speaker must have dropped a tear. As soon as he recovered he denounced cycles and motor-cars as "the greatest desecrators" of the Sabbath unless (mark this!) "they were used for going to the worship of God." Any amount of labor is legitimate on the blessed Sabbath if *that* is the end in view. Well, the Rev. Murdo Mackenzie has our sympathy. We are sorry for his sake that religion is decaying. For other reasons we are glad.

Jesus Christ must look to his laurels. One of his titles is the Prince of Peace. This title Herr Stolberg Wernigerode, President of the Reichstag, accords to Emperor William.

Rev. Henry Frederick Hopkins, of Haddon Hall, Christchurch, Hants, of the Church of England, left £188,647. We shudder to think of the *warmth* of his reception in the other world.

In the May number of the *Christian Clarion*, we read:—

"The *Freethinker* has opened its columns to a virulent attack upon our Pastor, and at this we are not surprised, for Mr. Guttery does not shrink from denouncing infidelity as rankest folly." But if "atheism is going out of vogue" why is our pious contemporary so upset? *Virulent*, indeed! Mr. Guttery wants a few more lessons in criticism.

The Church Missionary Society held its annual meeting at Exeter Hall. Its accounts showed a deficit of £21,000. Sir John Kennaway, the chairman, moved a long resolution "noting with sorrow the continued insufficiency both of income to meet expenditure and of the greatly reduced capital fund." Unless this is remedied thousands of heathen will go to the wrong place. What is worse, many missionaries will lose a good job.

London Congregationalists are going to organise a big Missionary Exhibition for 1908. There will be everything there but converts.



## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

May 19, N. S. S. Conference.

## To Correspondents.

- G. WINTREB.—Determinism and Predestination are very different things. One is natural causation, the other is supernatural volition. You might as well say a man is as free in prison as he is outside, because in either case he is subject to the "laws" of nature. Of course you have a right to believe determinism to be false and injurious, but you have no right to expect that the mere repetition of your belief will make any impression on us. As to "paralysing human effort," has determinism paralysed our effort? Did it paralyse Voltaire's, or Bradlaugh's, or Ingersoll's? Did it paralyse Shelley's, or Robert Owen's, or John Stuart Mill's? Aren't you talking nonsense this time? With regard to Mr. Campbell's book, we don't consider it of any more intrinsic importance than you do, and we said so at the outset; but we also gave our reasons, which you overlooked, for dealing with it at considerable length. If we confined our attention to great Christian utterances, we should not lead a very active life.
- WALTER FITTON.—We are sorry to hear that the Porth Branch could not make headway. Something could be done for South Wales now if the local "saints" would pull themselves together; we mean that assistance could be rendered from headquarters. If you come up to London at Whitsuntide you will be able to hear Mr. Foote at Queen's Hall without any "permission," and if you tell the Secretary that you are certainly coming she will have a seat for you at the meeting. We cannot alter the rule as to the Conference. It is a business gathering for members of the N. S. S. only. You can qualify for admission by joining the Society through headquarters.
- H. J. SHARP.—The "eastward position" in churches is a relic of ancient sun-worship. The east is where the sun rises. Some say that the "eastward position" means looking towards the Holy City, but that is all nonsense, for the custom is of immemorial antiquity—and Jerusalem isn't exactly east of every spot in Christendom.
- J. R. H.—Your letter got overlooked. We hope this will meet your eye. Glad to hear that you started reading the *Freethinker* at the beginning of the present year, that you think it "splendid," and that you expect by its aid to become a more useful member of society than you have been. With respect to your queries, there is no biography of Ingersoll published yet, but there is one of Bradlaugh by his daughter, and a small useful Life of Voltaire by J. M. Wheeler—the latter published at our office. There are many sketches of historic Freethinkers in our *Infidel Death-Beds*.
- M. B.—The brain sensates through the sensory nerves; that it has no feeling in itself, simply means that it cannot sensate without them. Write whenever you wish to.
- G. E. QUIRK.—You can get back numbers of this year's *Freethinker* from our office. Pleased to have your interesting letter containing an account of your experience at Mr. Lee's meetings at Aberdeen. We never heard before that he boasted of "infidel" converts. It seems to be a common practice in his profession.
- T. ELLIOTT.—See paragraph. Thanks.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—We have often referred to the Christian nonsense about Miller's Orphanage, which no doubt does good in its way. It is said that he never advertised his wants. He did better. He set hundreds writing about him as the man who never advertised, and got the best advertisement in the world for nothing. It was a policy that could only be pursued successfully by one person. Dr. Barnado saw that, and advertised his Homes in the ordinary way.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—We could wish a better authority for the paragraph. The paper you took it from is notoriously—inaccurate.
- T. H. ELSTOB.—Shall be very happy to see you, and any of your Newcastle colleagues, at the Conference. Your notes on the Sunday Observance meeting shall appear in our next. We had to settle all the space for this number before going to Liverpool.
- G. BAZIN.—We think the price is 10s. 6d.
- G. G. SHARMAN.—The C. D. Thomson, who is paraded as a convert from Atheism, is a young man of no particular importance. We never heard of his "lectures and speeches" before. Christians seem thankful for very small mercies.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- G. JACOB.—The subject is rather off our beat.
- J. BROUGH.—We had already written to Mr. Blatchford. Thanks all the same. Cuttings are welcome.
- P. H. PERKINS.—Glad to hear you say, after twenty-five years' experience, that the *Freethinker* is "once used always used."
- LIVERPOOL FRIEND.—The "authorities" do not allow the Secularists (like other bodies) to sell literature at the Picton Hall meetings. Twelve hundred copies of the *Freethinker* were given away outside. Expensive—but necessary!
- J. J. WALKER.—Shall be sent as desired. Glad you are enjoying the Campbell articles "immensely," and think Mr. Lloyd's last article "really fine." We cannot say at present whether Abrahamadabra's new series of articles will appear in a separate form.
- E. J. JONES.—Thanks, but too late for this week; some will do next week.

N. LEVEY.—Pleased our notice brought you over two stalwart "saints" from Falkirk.

G. DAVIS.—He never wrote for us. A man does not "write for us" because we print his letter in "Correspondence."

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

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

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

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

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## Sugar Plums.

This week's instalment of our review of Mr. Campbell's *New Theology* is the last. It is unusually long, but there were reasons against breaking it. One reason is that we are glad to have done with it, and to get on with something else. Another reason is that we did not want it to run beyond the present number of the *Freethinker*. Next week's is the "Conference" number, and we want it to be special, as far as possible, from beginning to end.

The sudden warm weather on Sunday was not favorable for indoor meetings; nevertheless Mr. Foote had fine audiences at the Picton Hall, Liverpool. The large gatherings were more than sympathetic, they were enthusiastic, and the Branch was delighted with the day's proceedings. Many questions were asked after both lectures and there was also some opposition. Mr. Foote's replies seemed to give great satisfaction. These very successful gatherings end the Liverpool Branch's public work for the present. Lectures will be organised for next winter, beginning in September. Meanwhile the Branch meetings will be only occasional and confined to members.

Mr. Foote's attention was drawn by a questioner after the evening lecture to a statement in the *Clarion* to the effect that he had suggested that Mr. Robert Blatchford was an Agnostic "because it paid him better." Mr. Foote flatly contradicted the nonsense amidst general applause. Subsequently he obtained a copy of the *Clarion* and found the following, which he had not noticed, in "Notes to Clarionettes":—

"GEORGE SIMPSON, JUN.—You do not seem to realise that in asking us whether Mr. Blatchford is an agnostic 'because it pays him better,' you are guilty of blackguardly impertinence, as Mr. Foote was if he really suggested such a thing; but this we cannot believe."

On returning to London on Monday morning Mr. Foote sent the following letter round to the *Clarion* office:—

"A SILLY FALSEHOOD.

2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

May 6, 1907.

DEAR MR. BLATCHFORD,—

I see that a man called Simpson—but perhaps it is a boy, for he calls himself Simpson, junior—has been writing to you and taking my name in vain. Apparently he informs you that I have suggested that you are an Agnostic 'because it pays you better.' Allow me to say that I do not deal in suggestions; if I had to question your motives I should do so straightforwardly. As a matter of fact, I have not questioned them, and I do not question them. I have repeatedly said that you gave a great pledge of your sincerity when you went out from the *Sunday Chronicle* and started the *Clarion*. In any case, I could never have said that you oppose Christianity for personal profit. I am not exactly an idiot, and I know something about the financial advantages of preaching 'infidelity.'

No doubt George Simpson is a Christian; he seems to have the characteristic manners and accuracy.

Yours faithfully,

G. W. FOOTE."

No doubt this letter will appear in the *Clarion*. We think it advisable to print it also in the *Freethinker*.



The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday in London. The business meetings, morning and afternoon, will be held at the Chandos Hall, Maiden-lane, Charing-cross. The proceedings will, of course, be confined to members of the N.S.S. There will be an evening public meeting at the Queen's (Minor) Hall. Addresses will be delivered by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Davies, etc. Before the speech-making there will be a musical program, in which two of Mr. Foote's daughters will participate. No doubt the "saints" will rally in strong force on this occasion. Admission to most of the hall will be free (with a collection), but some front seats (at 1s.) will be reserved for those who wish to secure one beforehand.

On Whit-Monday there will be an excursion by brakes starting from Chandos Hall. Provincial delegates and visitors will be driven round to places of interest in London. London friends who wish to join, and there should be a good many, will be accommodated at a small charge, but they must let Miss Vance know by the previous Friday at the latest.

Delegates and visitors to the N. S. S. Conference, who want Miss Vance, the general secretary, to obtain hotel or private accommodation for them in London, should lose no time in communicating with her. She could not promise to make arrangements for those who do not write to her by May 14. Provincial "saints" will please note.

Stewards wearing the old Bradlaugh colors will meet trains by which delegates and visitors expect to reach London, if due notice is given. Of course it is impossible to do more than this in London.

Members of the N. S. S. attending the Conference will in all cases be required to show their membership cards.

The prime movers in the Newcastle-on-Tyne "Sunday Observance" meeting at the Town Hall must be sorry that they ever started the affair. It was a Town's meeting with the Mayor in the chair, and all sorts and conditions of men were represented, including the Church of England, the Catholics, the Nonconformists, the local Branch of the Independent Labor Party, the local Socialist Society, the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society, the Newcastle Sunday Music Society, and the local Branch of the National Secular Society. Mr. Martin Weatherburn, a veteran Secularist, was, indeed, one of the speakers. The resolution that was carried read as follows:—

"That this meeting is of the opinion that it is absolutely necessary to ensure to the people one day in seven for adequate opportunity for worship, rest, and recreation, and that Sunday being obviously the day on which these purposes can best be achieved by the large majority of the people, this meeting further expresses the opinion that all good citizens should unite in maintaining Sunday as the weekly day of rest, and pledges itself to use its influence to secure this inestimable boon for the people, unrestricted by law."

Just as the Lord Mayor was about to put this resolution to the meeting, the Rev. James Jack asked what was meant by "recreation," for he was against Sunday amusements. The Lord Mayor explained that people were left to choose their recreations for themselves. Councillor Cowell then moved the omission of the word "recreation" and of the phrase "unrestricted by law." This was seconded by the Rev. Joseph Rorke, who loved liberty but hated license—what-over that may mean. Happily the meeting was not to be turned off the right road. The amendment was lost, and the resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority. But of course it was not what the Sabbatarians had been fishing for. This was disclosed by the Bishop in moving a vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor. He said that he had voted for the amendment himself. He was in favor of the Christian Sabbath. Listening to music on Sunday, gazing at beautiful pictures, and visiting museums, were all very well, but they were "the thin end of the wedge." Thus the right reverend Father-in-God maundered on, after the resolution was carried. He could not help letting them see that it was not what *he* wanted.

In proportion as the homes of the people become more happy and more attractive, and in proportion as Sunday excursions on sea and land become more common, the churches will suffer. But, after all, the health and happiness of the people are the supreme consideration. The churches say to the people, "You will be happy hereafter." But the people reply, "Thank you. We prefer to be happy here." And that is the real explanation of our empty churches.—*Daily News* (Perth, W.A.).

## The Making of the Gospels.—X.

(Continued from p. 278.)

### THE CRUCIFIXION.

THE Gospel narratives recording the alleged sufferings and death of Jesus Christ are, like the rest of the Gospel "history," pure fiction. No such trial as that narrated ever took place. All the various incidents connected with the Crucifixion were suggested by so-called "prophecies" in the Hebrew scriptures. Foremost among these "prophecies" was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—or, more correctly, Isaiah lii. 13—liii. 12. Anyone who reads this chapter will perceive that it is not a prediction at all, but a narration of disastrous events that had come upon the Jewish people, whom the Lord here calls his "servant." The same appellation is applied to the nation in many other passages, including the following: Is. xli. 8-9; xlii. 1; xliv. 1; xlix. 3, 7. The first of these reads:—

"But thou, Israel, *my servant*, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.....Thou art *my servant*, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away."

The afflictions which the nation had suffered "at the hand of the Lord" in his "overflowing wrath" and "fury" are referred to in the following passages: Is. li. 17, 22; liv. 6-8, 11-14, 17; lx. 14-15; lxx. 8-9. There can thus be no doubt as to the meaning of the great fifty-third chapter which the early Christians, without exception, interpreted as a grand prophecy respecting Jesus Christ. The Gospel fictionist, in fact, makes Jesus apply the chapter to himself.

Luke xxii. 37.—"For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled *in me*: And he was reckoned with transgressors; for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment."

In the unhistorical Acts of the Apostles we are treated to a story of an Egyptian eunuch reading this chapter seated in his chariot (vii. 27-35), and of one of the apostles misinterpreting it to him. "And Philip.....beginning from *this scripture*, preached unto him Jesus."

The Gospel-maker's idea of an atonement through the death of Jesus is placed by one of the evangelists in the mouth of the high priest Caiaphas. This reads:—

"But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them.....It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. Now this he said not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation," etc. (John xi. 49-52).

The author of the Fourth Gospel thought that the office of high priest was held for one year only, like that of the Roman consul, and that while filling that office he had a foreknowledge of coming events. The same author represents Jesus as saying that his death must be by crucifixion, as typified by the Brazen Serpent (Num. xxi. 9).

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up" (iii. 14).

There being no account in the Old Testament of anyone having been crucified, the Gospel-maker, in default of a "prophecy," had to fall back upon a "type." But apart from a few brief statements in the Pauline Epistles—*e.g.*, "Jesus Christ and him crucified"—we have no evidence that a historical Jesus who suffered death by crucifixion ever lived. Moses' brazen serpent on the top of a pole, however, placed the matter beyond all doubt: this was certainly a type of Jesus Christ; Jesus was therefore crucified, and a detailed narrative of the event had to be written.

In this narrative Jesus was represented as silent before his accusers in accordance with the statement in Isaiah liii.—"He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth," etc. False witnesses were brought against him at the trial (Mark xvi. 56) in order to fulfil a "prediction" of what had already occurred—Psalm xxxv. 11. The



council, we are told, had sought for other witnesses against Jesus, but "found them not." Had the last-named personage really destroyed a herd of swine without recompensing the owners, as narrated by all three Synoptists, someone would certainly have been forthcoming to depose to such a wanton destruction of property, more especially since an account of the alleged occurrence is stated to have been published by the herdsmen "in the city and in the country."

Jesus was next represented as having been mocked, scourged, buffeted, and spat upon, in order to fulfil another "prophecy" of Isaiah (l. 6)—indignities stated to have been suffered by Isaiah himself. That the Gospel-maker had his eye on this passage is proved by the fact that, some time before, Jesus was described as saying to his disciples:—

"Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. For he shall be delivered up to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon; and they shall scourge and kill him," etc. (Luke xviii. 31-33).

A passage in the Psalms (xxii. 7-8), in which the writer described the treatment borne by himself, was likewise brought into requisition. This passage reads:—

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him."

After reading this passage the Gospel-maker had no difficulty in describing the treatment of Jesus by the imaginary Jews he represented as present at the Crucifixion.

"And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying.....He trusted on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him" (Matt. xxviii. 39-43).

The words put in the mouth of Jesus on the cross in the First and Second Gospels—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—were copied verbatim from Psalm xxii. 1. Those given in the Third Gospel—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"—were copied verbatim from Psalm xxxi. 5. Whether Jesus had said them, or not, they were at least suitable to the occasion, and the Gospel history had to be written.

A second saying in the Third Gospel—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"—appears to be a later interpolation; for it is not found in some ancient MSS. Jesus was described in the Gospel story as crucified between two robbers. This was done to fulfil the statement in Isaiah liii.—"He was numbered with the transgressors." It was the continuation of this statement—"and made intercession for the transgressors"—which suggested the second saying placed in the mouth of Jesus—"Father, forgive them," etc.

The piercing of the hands and feet by the nails in the cross, and the giving vinegar and gall to drink, were suggested by the following passages in the Psalms:—

Ps. xxii. 16.—"They pierced my hands and my feet."

Ps. lxix. 21.—"They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

The author of the Fourth Gospel made his Lord say "I thirst," in order that they might give him the vinegar and gall, and so fulfil the "prophecy"; and when this was done, and everything fulfilled, he made him say "It is finished." The latter exclamation referred, not to the work of redemption, but to the fulfilment of prophecy.

The same conscientious writer fabricated two new incidents as a further fulfilment of prophecy. According to this story, the soldiers received orders to hasten the death of the three men crucified by breaking their legs; but when they came to Jesus they found he was dead already, and so "brake not his legs." One of them, however, pierced his side with a spear. The veracious narrator of these incidents then says:—

"For those things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."

The language of the first passage quoted (Psalm xxxiv. 20) is metaphorical, and signifies that "the righteous" who trusted in Yahveh would not be allowed to perish under afflictions. The reference in the second passage (Zech. xii. 10) is uncertain.

The words of Psalm xxii. 8—"They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots"—contributed to the making up of the history of the Lord Jesus. These two sentences are an example of Hebrew parallelism, the second being simply a varied repetition of the first. The "vesture" was but another name for the "garments," and the division was made by casting lots. The three Synoptists were aware of this, and say: "And they crucify him, and part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take." The author of the Fourth Gospel, however, took the two parallel sentences as independent statements of fact, and framed his narrative in accordance.

John xix. 23-24.—"The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to each soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

We may assert, without much fear of refutation, "These things therefore the soldiers did" *not* do.

The darkness which is alleged to have taken place at the Crucifixion was, like all the other incidents, suggested by prophecy—a genuine one in this case.

Amos viii. 9.—"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in clear day."

Luke xxiii. 44.—"And it was now about the sixth hour, and a darkness came over the whole earth until the ninth hour, the sun failing." (The "sixth hour" was noon.)

The story of the burial of the body in a tomb belonging to a rich man, Joseph of Arimathæa, was invented to fulfil a statement in Isaiah liii.—"They made his grave.....with the rich in his death."

The fable of the watch at the sepulchre (Matt. xxvii. 62-66) is one of the few incidents in the Gospels not derived from the Hebrew scriptures. The story was fabricated as an answer to deniers of the alleged Resurrection, who contended that if the tomb was found to be empty, it was because the disciples had secretly removed the body (Matt. xxviii. 15).

ABRACADABRA.

(To be concluded.)

## Church Bells.

Of all insensate accompaniments to public worship bells are the most so. They neither produce harmony nor peace of mind, but incite the most wicked and desperate feelings of positive resentment at their harsh clangor.

The writer recently moved into a spacious old house, unfortunately directly opposite an old church, with a loud and heavy peal of bells, which strike the hours and quarters, and for Sundays and holy days ring out the chimes with discordant madness. "O the bells, bells, bells," sang the poet, "at a safe distance, when the dying sound falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear." But near by, and under the very shadow of the church tower, their din is terrific.

Some years ago, in Philadelphia, a worthy, highly-respected citizen, Mr. Geo. L. Harrison, obtained an injunction against St. Mark's Church, Locust-street, forbidding the ringing of its bells. Mr. Harrison was a sufferer from acute nervous troubles, and the ringing of the bells, almost opposite his windows, nearly drove him to distraction.

And all forms of religion have them—the big bells in China, Thibet, and Russia, the monstrous chimes



in Europe, carillons in Bruges, the peals and chimes in England and other countries, testify to the love of noise in worship—senseless, unnecessary noise—which must “go up to the Throne” in turbulent disharmony night and day. It reminds one of Aristophanes, who tells in the “Clouds” of a persistent worshiper whom Jove complained never “let up” on him but deafened and continually tormented him with ceaseless, unnecessary prayers—a trick yet in vogue among the religious of all lands and all forms of faith.

What is it all but foolish, weak importuning of a Deity who, if he is minded to grant a petition, will not be hurried into it by any amount of noise? and if he is not so minded, can only provoke him to anger. And we read how often the Deity is provoked to anger, and rises up to smite; and it does not display much mercy or consideration on his part to note how easily he gets excited, how dreadful his wrath can be, “even the wrath of the Lamb”—a strange contradiction in terms, as if a Lamb or one of like nature could be wrathful!

Therefore let us seek to abolish the Gospel of Noise, whether in church bells, revival meetings, or any turbulent demonstrations of piety. “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength,” O zealot! Better the simplicity and calm demeanour of the Quaker than the ravings of the religious enthusiast. One is quiet, self-possessed, and tranquil; the other is noisy, unpleasant, and aggressive. One works steadily and quietly to peaceful results; the other shouts, “We’re gaining ground,” and gains but little. He slips back on his forward track, while incessant peals from countless church towers only emphasise the fulness of his complete defeat.

GERALD GREY.

## Sense and Superstition.

BY JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS.

WHAT is superstition? To believe without evidence, or against evidence; to dogmatise about the unknown, to accept myths as fact, miracles as realities, fables as history, allegories as actual events; to put caprice in the place of law; to supplant the natural by the supernatural; to ignore the relation between cause and effect; to believe in the impossible, the ridiculous, the idiotic, or the absurd; to raise faith above fact, tradition above science, revelation above demonstration, credulity above honest doubt; to ignore reason, insult intelligence, and crucify common sense—this is superstition.

It is a fact well known that, in passing from infancy to maturity, the child repeats and epitomises the story of the race. He has his period of ignorance, credulity and unreasoning faith; he does not know the world. He does not know the meaning of distance, perspective, force and motion. He is utterly ignorant of cause and effect. Everything is real to him. The babe will stretch out its hand as eagerly to clutch the moon shining through the window, or a star, as he will to clutch a shining toy held just above his cradle. Fairy-tales, to him, are facts and realities. Santa Claus and his reindeers are things of flesh and blood. The child has not yet learned the meaning of illusion and deception. He takes the world in simple and unreasoning faith. He has not learned, alas, its falsehood and deceit. Beautiful, blessed simplicity of the child, cradled in its mother’s arms, couched upon her breast, “blue-veined and fair, where perfect peace finds perfect form,” irradiated with the glow of her love-lit eyes, in the dreamy beatitude of a cherub before God.

When we recall the superstitions which, in ages past, have held the minds of men enthralled, we must, in justice, remember that those people, for the most part, could have known no better. The earth was not yet understood. The solar system had not been discovered. The pinnacled heaven had not been explored. The light of science had not been kindled. The causes of disease were not known.

The printing-press had not been invented. The art of writing was known to few. There were no books, there was no knowledge, there was nothing but priests, magicians, soothsayers, necromancers and revelations. In that ominous and abysmal night, fear and terror frenzied the imagination, and shuddering horror crouched in the brain of man. Having no tests, no standards, no accepted formulæ by which phenomena and events could be explained, one theory was as good as another. Out of ignorance and fear superstitions grew and thrived in intellectual night. Superstition is the one plant that grows best in the dark.

The belief in the supernatural declined as science arose. Natural causes were discovered for the things that had been mysterious and occult. Things that wanted explanation, and were counted with the supernatural, ranged themselves in line with order, sanity and law. The devils have disappeared. The dark is no longer thronged with imps. The spirits mutter and moan no more in the twilight gloom. No more do naiads bathe in moonlit streams, or fairies dance, or gnomes come out of caves, or ghouls revel in graveyards, eating the flesh of the dead. Ship captains no more bribe witches not to raise storms at sea, or purchase from them fair weather. Angry gods no longer send plagues and disease; offended deities no more threaten to destroy the world with comet or eclipse. It cannot be denied that the interests of the Church led her to foster this belief in the supernatural. Possessing, as she claimed, all possible knowledge, being capable of settling any question that might arise among mankind, assuming all responsibility for the temporal and eternal welfare of man, it was to her interest to keep man obedient, to keep him in ignorance, subserviency and fear. For this reason she resisted the advance of knowledge; she kept back the day; and man would be still dwelling in the night, he would be still living in huts to enrich the priesthood, he would be still kissing the crucifix and mumbling prayers, he would be still prostrate in the dust, he would still be seeking healing shrines for the cure of disease, the world would still be a mad-house, had it not been for the few brave, intrepid souls who dared to explore, to enquire, to reason and to doubt. One telescope, pointing towards the sky, with a man like Galileo looking through it, did more to civilise mankind and make man free than all the priests that ever wore robes, and all the altars that ever pandered to the rich, or filched their substance from the poor. One thinker, brave, self-poised, confident and unconquerable, dying unshriven at the stake, like Bruno, constitutes the death-warrant of religious oppression. One unparalleled and resistless man like Voltaire, letting fly the arrows and shafts of sarcasm at her hypocrisies, and hurling thunderbolts of denunciation at the Church’s crimes, was the herald of dawn. And when the mighty Humboldt came, proudly declaring the universe is governed by law, the dawn widened to the morning, the morning broadened into day.

In our own time there are not so much of what might be called active superstitions, as residuary superstitions. We have not yet quite escaped from the past. There are some common names and terms that carry over a suggestion of other ages with their strange beliefs.

Superstitions are manifest now and then in our modern life. It was not many years ago that the governor of one of the north-western States, finding the land overrun with grasshoppers, solemnly called a day for fasting and prayer, that the good people might beseech the Good God to take away the grasshoppers.

This is superstition pure and simple, from the fact that there is no possible evidence, there is no possible proof, there is no legitimate course of reasoning that can, by any sort of ingenuity, attach the effect to the alleged cause. Prayer itself, in its ordinary manifestation, is based solely upon an ancient superstition. If anybody believes that by bending down and imploring the infinite he can change a fact, he is



simply a victim of superstition. Any prayer, if it were answered, would be a conviction of the infinite. It would be an arraignment of his own wisdom, a confession that his knowledge, from the beginning, was insufficient, and needed the prompting of the finite mind. It is not susceptible of proof that a prayer was ever answered since men first began to bend the pregnant hinges of the knee.

In two departments of human thought, superstitions most abound. Those departments are theology and medicine. In this respect they present a glaring contrast to all other fields and phases of human activity. Manufacturers are not prone to vagaries and weird imaginings; trade and commerce do not beget superstition. The artist in his studio, the inventor in the shop, the farmer in the field, none of these are given to hallucinations to believe in the irrational and the absurd, but in the case of theology and medicine the situation changes. Here men experiment and guess. Here fear and hope enter as factors; emotion and ecstasy, terror and despair, warp the judgment, distort evidence and foster hallucinations. In these two fields most of our current superstitions have their roots.

Why are superstitions harmful? Any superstition is, by its nature, a menace to human welfare, a hindrance to human progress. And this is true, notwithstanding a given superstition may be believed in by multitudes, or may affect an air of superior wisdom, or may wear the robe of respectability or religious sanctity. Religious superstitions have cursed every land in every age in which they have become dominant in the minds of men. Religious superstitions and fanaticisms have retarded the progress of Scotland by almost a century. They have kept Ireland in ignorance and servility. They have impoverished Italy, blighted Spain, made of Russia the horror of the age, and they would have destroyed France, beautiful France, if the Radicals had not arisen to extirpate the foul monster and rescue the Republic from priestcraft.

In our own country, the effect of religious superstition is measurably harmless, from the simple fact that few people take religious dogmas seriously. The old-time preachers are gone. The old hair-raising sermons that made you feel "hair-hung and breeze-shaken over hell," are heard no more. We hear no more about angry Gods, and the wrath of the judgment to come. Though the creeds, for the most part, remain formally unchanged, yet they are so deftly concealed that they are no longer offensive to the pew-holders, nor anybody else. Indifference to religion is the salvation of the people. The sincerity and earnestness of the Christian Scientists is likely to be their undoing. No man can, without peril, forswear reason. Who ever turns his back upon common sense invites his feet to take the path that leads to madness.

A woman died in this town some time ago as the result of a gasoline explosion. She was a Christian Scientist. The healers soon arrived, and while the woman writhed in the death agonies, they stood around saying: "There is no pain, there is no death, there is no gasoline; God is all." That was insanity. Whatever else it may be, whatever those people may be, that was an exhibition of lunacy.

What is meant by progress? The application of intelligence to the affairs of men. Intelligence implies and includes the experience of the race, the accumulated knowledge of mankind, the common sense of the world. All is natural. There is no room nor place for the supernatural. The miracle does not exist. Prodigies and wonders are either the exaggeration of facts, or plain and baseless fabrications and falsehoods. All is governed by law. Every effect is the child of some cause, and becomes in turn the parent of some other effect. There is no break, no gap, no hiatus. Not priests and popes, not prejudices and prepossessions, not rituals nor revelations, not miracles nor wonders, not faith nor fanaticism, not altars nor oracles, but reason and common sense. Whenever these other things do aught but

interpret nature and teach men so, they become deceivers or destroyers of mankind.

How have men struggled and endured? How have they suffered, sacrificed and aspired? How have they stumbled in ignorance, been deluded by their fears, mocked by their faith, cheated by their hopes, robbed by the altar and deluded by the priests? How has man struggled, suffered and endured, and not all in vain? Behind him is the age of myth and miracle, of faith and fear, of unreason and superstition. Before him is the future inviting, with its possibilities, his highest endeavor and noblest achievements. Around him is the universe governed by law, and within him, strong and brave, is the conviction, rooted deep and unextinguishable, that reason is the only guide.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## Correspondence.

CAMPBELL v. NICOLL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was much amused by a remark quoted by Mr. Joseph Bryce in last week's *Freethinker*, in his amusing skit, "The Rev. Pins Piffle's Correspondence." Referring to the Rev. (or Mr.) R. J. Campbell, it seems that the *British Weekly* (*British Weekly* would be a more appropriate title) has declared that "he [Mr. Campbell] has withdrawn his claim to be a philosopher and a theologian." This is really delightful! Personally, I do not see how anyone can be a philosopher and a theologian; but this is probably what Mr. Campbell would claim to be. His position is not intelligible at present, but he may progress. In time he may become a Materialist with ideals. Perhaps the great Sir Oliver Lodge, who is one of the wonders of the age, may follow (or precede) him. Many curious things will happen. Perhaps the *Daily Mail* will issue a Freethought journal. It probably would do so now if there were money in it. But I am digressing. The remark quoted by Mr. Bryce was probably made by the omniscient Rev. Robertson Nicoll, the editor of the said *British Weekly*, to which the Rev. R. J. Campbell used to contribute. He conducted a Correspondence column, which was just about as amusing as the skit published in your journal. The brain of a theologian is fearfully and wonderfully made. There is nothing logical or even coherent about it. The following pitiful rubbish was uttered by the Rev. Robertson Nicoll, who now "loves" Mr. Campbell. It was published in the previous *British Weekly*. The great man said:—

"If you proved to me that there were a thousand Isaiahs, I should answer, 'It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in my eyes.'.....I am fearfully and wonderfully made, said the Psalmist, and so it may have been with the Bible for aught we know. One thing we know—the Word of God is quick, powerful, and alive.....I think that God will ask us at last, 'Did you read the Book itself, my own tuneful, redeeming sentences?' Read it, for it is the food of the soul. Whoever knows the Bible has received a liberal education. Many read all sorts of books about it. Let them read it without notes or commentary."

This is strange advice, coming from one who has probably written more about the Bible than any man living; and the publishing firm he represents has issued tons of Bible commentaries. When will the farce cease?

Mr. Campbell evidently cannot swallow the Bible now, and is trying to say so diplomatically. He is in a difficult position. But if he is honest, he will have to go out into the wilderness sooner or later. Your commentary on his recent *New Theology* would make a good pamphlet.

J. A. REID.

It is very certain that speculation is no succedaneum for life. What we would know, we must do. As if any taste or imagination could take the place of fidelity! The old Duty is the old God.—*Emerson*.

The Saints!—the Bigots that in public spout,  
Spread phosphorus of zeal on scraps of fustian,  
And go like walking "Lucifers" about  
Mere living bundles of combustion.

—*Tom Hood*.

Many people boast of being masters in their own house. I pretend to be master of my own mind.—*Hazlitt*.



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

### LONDON.

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, F. A. Davies, "Freethought in the Bible."

### 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, Guy A. Aldred, "Heresies of Orthodoxy." Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Common-sense Christianity v. Common Sense"; 6, "Divine Nonsense."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Salvation."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, S. E. Easton, a Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, H. B. Samuels and F. Schaller.

### COUNTRY.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Annual Business Meeting, Election of Office-bearers, etc. All members invited. 6.30, Social Meeting.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): H. Percy Ward, 3, "The Vote for Women Farce"; 6.30, "Sir Oliver Lodge's Catechism: The Fancies of Faith and the Facts of Science." Tea at 5.

### OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; 7, a Debate.

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