

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

The religion of one age is the literary entertainment of the next. We use in our idlest poetry and discourse the words Jove, Neptune, Mercury, as mere colors, and can hardly believe that they had to the lively Greek the anxious meaning which, in our towns, is given and received in churches when our religious names are used.

—EMERSON.

“Life’s Little Ironies.”

THERE is nothing I more detest than having to say anything unpleasant about other “advanced” journals, but the unpleasantness cannot always be avoided, and I am face to face with such an occasion.

Some weeks ago there was an ugly reference to me in the *Clarion*, which might easily have been a provocation to a man less schooled in patience than myself. Some fool of a correspondent, probably a Christian, had written to say that I had stated that Mr. Blatchford advocated Agnosticism for reasons of self-interest; and he was told that he was guilty of “blackguardly impertinence, as Mr. Foote was if he really suggested such a thing; but this we cannot believe.” I wrote a brief letter to the *Clarion*, denying all knowledge of its correspondent, and branding his assertion as a lie; and there I left the matter. But I should have been quite justified in adding that it was a foolish and ill-conditioned thing to print my name at all in such a connection. Had I been ever so malicious, I could hardly have been such an idiot as to suggest that any man of brains and literary capacity had taken to advocating Agnosticism “because it paid him better.” Merely on the ground, therefore, that I was not an imbecile, that correspondent’s letter should have been tossed into the waste-basket. But if it had to be dealt with at all, I should have been communicated with before it was printed, in order that my denial—if I had one to make—might be printed with it; for everybody knows that poison of that kind is never completely counteracted unless the antidote is administered immediately—and any lie that has a week’s start is sure of a respectable longevity. However, I let my brief letter of contradiction suffice. I have been a fighting man because I cared for principles, but I am naturally a lover of peace and quietude.

There was another reference to me in last week’s *Clarion*. My own readers will recollect that I quoted the following passage in last week’s *Freethinker* from one of the lively Prefaces in Mr. Bernard Shaw’s new volume of plays:—

“Connoisseurs in irony are well aware of the fact that the only editor in England who denounces punishment as radically wrong, also repudiates Christianity; calls his paper *The Freethinker*; and has been imprisoned for two years [should be one year] for blasphemy.”

This sentence was quoted—and quoted inaccurately, by the way—in Mr. A. M. Thompson’s review of Mr. Shaw’s book. Mr. Thompson is one of the ablest writers on the *Clarion*, though he does not always do himself justice. He certainly did not

do himself justice last week. This is what he chose to write:—

“There must be latent humor in the statement that ‘the only editor in England who denounces punishment, also repudiates Christianity, calls his paper *The Freethinker*, and has been imprisoned for two years for blasphemy.’ This reference to our Editor clearly must be facetious, because he does not really call our paper ‘*The Freethinker*,’ and has not yet—so far as we know—been locked up. It is also funny to find no other or more direct reference to Blatchford in a series of essays so largely devoted to Determinist discussions.”

If this is meant for humor it misses the mark. I regard it as a clumsy effort to hide a ridiculous affectation.

It has been the policy of the *Clarion* all along to pretend to be ignorant of the existence of the *Freethinker*, or of any organised popular Freethought movement in England. We, on this side, welcomed Mr. Blatchford’s attack on Christianity. It had a long paragraph all to itself at the end of the National Secular Society’s annual report in 1904. I spoke upon Mr. Blatchford’s book in many parts of the country, and expressed pleasure at his having broken through a miserable conspiracy of silence on the great question that underlies all others. But there was no reciprocation on his part. He could not ignore us altogether, but he did it as nearly as possible. Absolute silence might have provoked questions; so he discovered me as the writer of a penny pamphlet—although I could easily demonstrate that he had found my larger works serviceable. New publications sent from the *Freethinker* office were never noticed in the *Clarion*, nor even acknowledged. This reticence must have had an object. What was it? I am sorry to say that I believe it was to prevent the old Freethought movement in this country from being too well known. Mr. Blatchford had done a good work, but was not content to let it speak for itself. He seemed mortally afraid of being considered as the captain of a first-rate Atlantic liner. He appeared to wish to be regarded as Christopher Columbus. When he came to deal with Determinism, which he would have understood better if he had only made himself acquainted with what great thinkers had written on the subject, especially during the past two hundred years, he took to calling it “my argument,” and congratulated Mr. Campbell on “agreeing with me.” Of course it was not his argument; it was hoary with antiquity before he was born; and his discoverer’s attitude could only mislead those who are ignorant of the literature of this controversy.

Mr. Thompson does not appear to know that literature any better than his chief; otherwise he would never expect a man of Mr. Shaw’s attainments and capacity to regard Mr. Blatchford as any more than a brilliant populariser of the most obvious aspects of Determinism.

Mr. Shaw made a mistake in referring to me as the only editor who denounces punishment as radically wrong. Mr. Blatchford denounces it too. But it is not difficult to understand how the mistake was committed. Mr. Shaw heard me speak, and probably read something of what I wrote, on this subject ten, fifteen, or even twenty years before Mr. Blatchford took it in hand. It was the case of a long memory against a short one, and the long memory won. That is all.

I believe I am an older man than Mr. Blatchford, and I have been fighting for Freethought ever since I was nineteen. I will venture, therefore, to warn the newer soldier of Freethought against the worst danger of personally-conducted journalism. When a *Clarion* correspondent is told to "Study the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Blatchford, and the Bible," there is evidently something wrong at the editorial office. The saddest part of it is that it is so easy to give way to that sort of thing; the dose has to be continually increased to produce the desired effect; and the end is irretrievable ruin. It is a stern law of life that everyone who has no master must be a master to himself.

I hope Mr. Blatchford, and Mr. Thompson likewise, will take all this in good part. I entertain no sort of ill-will against either of them; on the contrary, I respect and admire them for their gifts and courage, while not bowing to their authority on questions that I have studied longer than they have, or following them where I see that they are wrong. There ought to be no petty jealousies in the great army of progress. It has many divisions, and they should all respect and co-operate with each other. The important thing is not ourselves, but the cause. And it will be better for the cause if we maintain a sane and honorable attitude towards each other. When we do not love, we can be just; when we do not like, we can be fair. We are all here for but a little while; the grass will soon be growing over our ashes; it is only the better part of us that will live beyond the dust of death; and that will survive in the progress of the ideas for which we have labored. If we sow the seed in different furrows, let us greet one another with a smile, before the night falls and the darkness hides us from each other—for ever.

G. W. FOOTE.

What is the Use of the Clergy?

"WHAT is the place," asks Canon Hensley Henson, "which the Christian clergy ought to hold in the general life of the nation to which they are accredited as religious teachers and pastors?" How far the clergy are accredited persons may be a matter of dispute. To the outsider, it would seem that their authorisation to play the part of teachers comes entirely from themselves; but the part that is, or that ought to be, or might be played by the clergy in our national life, is a question that concerns everyone. For, directly or indirectly, we are all compelled to support them, and both directly and indirectly we all feel the results of their existence. No body of men, as numerous as are the clergy, and appearing in a public capacity, could be without some effect on life, whether the effect be good or bad.

What is the legitimate function of the clergy does not admit of much discussion. The real and only honest function of the priest, whether in savage or civilised times, is that of an intermediary between man and presumed supernatural forces. It cannot be over emphasised that this is the only legitimate function for the priest to fulfil. In its simplest form it is seen in the magic-worker of savage tribes. In a more complex form it can be seen with the priesthood of the more developed religions, notably among the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. Among more modern bodies it is to be seen in the expressed belief of the Anglican clergy that the candidate for the priesthood is moved by the power of the "Holy Ghost," and in the "call" of the dissenting clergy to the priesthood. It is the one quality that the priesthood of all times have in common; all else is a mere addition assumed by the priest because of this primitive occult function. Divorced from this function the priest stands on the footing of an ordinary citizen, and is to be judged from the point of view of simple social utility. But

putting on one side the Roman Catholic clergy—and even of them the statement contains a large measure of truth—the belief in the occult power of the clergy is practically defunct. No intelligent person believes that the initiation of a man into the ministry gives him any greater knowledge of, or control over, cosmical forces than would his apprenticeship to a simple handicraft. And, for this reason, the clergy are driven to assume certain functions which are not theirs by right, and which, as a matter of fact, they are ill qualified to perform.

So much for what the function of the clergy ought to be, although not many of them would admit as much. Canon Henson says the clergy are primarily charged with the task of teaching and exhortation. As a matter of practice to-day, yes. As a matter of historic fact, no; for, even though teaching and exhortation have for long been associated with their functions, their selection for these tasks was dependent upon the belief that they possessed an occult influence denied to ordinary men. What the function of the clergy is, is also clear. Canon Henson says "Experience in many lands, and in almost every age, tends to show that the fault of the clergy, as a direct influence in politics, has been that of servility to the reigning political force, whatever it may be"; and he also refers to the Socialistic sentiment now current in the churches as merely an illustration of "this great law of official parasitism which has prevailed in history."

That the clergy have at all times—with very rare exceptions—pandered to the political force that happened to be the most powerful—so long as it was not directly and avowedly antagonistic to themselves—is one of the plainest and best-supported truths of history. Their attitude upon the recurring questions of peace and war serves as a good illustration of this. The innumerable sermons preached on the un-Christian and essentially barbaric nature of war during the peace propaganda—just before the South African War—only threw into greater distinctness the unanimity of the clergy in fanning the war-flame during that outbreak. During both periods they were not teachers, but echoes; and, although they exhorted, their exhortations took the direction of puffing an already over-inflated and immoderate sentiment instead of counselling wisdom and moderation. And this, too, was only an illustration of the law of clerical parasitism, a phenomenon so constant, that there is scarcely a single social or political movement which has not been originally ignored or opposed by the clergy, and afterwards supported when it had attained "respectable" dimensions.

There are, indeed, two causes for this "official parasitism" of the clergy. The first is, that the clergy, as clergy, and in a civilised community, at least, are, by nature, parasitic. They carry out no useful purpose that could not be performed equally well in the character of an ordinary citizen. They are to the body politic what a rudimentary organ is to the individual organism, demanding nutriment and giving no serviceable equivalent. But the clergy are not irremovable parasites, and this fact, coupled with the dying out of the primitive function of miracle worker, in virtue of which they once ruled, makes them peculiarly dependent upon the popular good will. Hence the pandering to the prejudice of the moment as a means of retaining their hold upon the people. Nor is this all. With the decay of their proper function, the clergy have played to the gallery for an audience. But they have by no means ignored the stalls and boxes. On the contrary, while they have postured for the entertainment of the former, their performance was intended for the benefit of the latter. As Canon Henson says, they have been servile to the dominant force, whether it may have been absolute government, autocracy, aristocracy, or constitution. They have been the hereditary bulwarks of vested interests and class privilege. Their training of the mind was only the preparation for the exploitation of the body. And the manner in

which the privileged classes and the clergy have gone hand in hand, the way in which one has encouraged religious belief among the people, while the other has preached obedience to authority and contentment under injustice, are phenomena full of significance to such as read history aright. Thus, from both causes, the clergy have been impelled along the lines of playing to the passions of the moment. First, because their whole welfare is dependent upon the success with which they can gain the support of the more powerful, if sinister, interests in the State, and secondly, because the only way they have of making their advocacy worth purchasing, is to demonstrate the existence of a large following among the mass of the people.

Judged from a purely social point of view, the existence of the clergy as an organised body is wholly without justification. It would, perhaps, not be quite fair to say they contribute nothing to any of the arts or sciences, as the reply might be made that this is not their function. But as regards morals and religion, we are surely meeting the modern clergy on their own selected ground. Yet what are the facts? So far as religion is concerned almost, if not quite, all that we know of the real nature, origin, and development of religion is due to the labors of people outside their ranks. While the clergy have stood forward as the only accredited authorities on religion, others have stepped forward and, in defiance of clerical opposition, taught the world all that it really knows of the true nature of religion. The efforts of the whole of the clergy as a body has been given to hiding, suppressing, or—when this was not possible—minimising or distorting the truth of the matter.

The influence of the clergy on ethics is equally clear and striking. One need only consult any accessible history of morals to see how insignificant is the part played by the clergy in developing a science of ethics. They have invariably hailed as a victory any thesis that aimed at demonstrating the impossibility of reducing human conduct to a science. In the field of actual teaching, their record is hardly more praiseworthy. They have, of course, taught the common forms of the common virtues—virtues which, in some form at least, are condemned by none and praised by all. But they have generally ignored those finer developments of character upon which a healthful application of the common virtues depend, with the result that failure is written all over their efforts. Centuries of power and authority have not enabled them to make the people under their control conspicuously truthful, honest, sober, or industrious. Such success as they have met with has been far more in the direction of causing people to refrain from bad conduct through sheer moral cowardice than as an expression of healthy, moral development. It is, indeed, too often forgotten that an outward conformity with accepted ethical standards may be as much due to a deficiency of moral character as it is to strength of conviction.

Of the clergy themselves, perhaps the less said the better. Still, it may be safely said that as clergymen—and I am not concerned with them in any other capacity—their general standard of conduct is as low as that of any other educated class of the community—if it is not lower. Mr. John Morley once said that the morals of the Anglican clergy were generally on a level of those people who could see no harm in swindling a railway company or defrauding the revenue. There really was no need to single out the Anglican clergy, since the same qualities characterise all. In their general dealings, in the treatment of opponents, in the circulation of false statements, in the art of saying one thing and meaning another, or of taking payment for preaching one set of doctrines and teaching another, the clergy practise a code of morals that would not be tolerated in the professional world, and which would in business ruin a man's credit. Catholics and Protestants, Episcopalians and Dissenters, are alike in this. The large portion of the sectarian press devoted to disproof and counter charges is evidence of its widespread

character. And the fact that such conduct is taken as a matter of course, as what one ought to expect, is proof of the real influence of the clergy in their capacity of public teachers.

What the clergy might be is another question. The presence of forty or fifty thousand educated men honestly striving for social improvement would be a force before which no abuse or injustice could stand for long. Whether they were right or wrong in the particular social remedy advocated, their concentration of attention on any aspect of social life would be enough. An attempt on the part of such an army to direct attention to any pressing social or political or educational problem would almost alone be enough to ensure the emergence of a satisfactory solution. As it is, such solutions as are found have to be sought in the teeth of prejudice and opposition largely fostered by clerical time-serving and bigotry. The irruption of the clergy into political life means an intensification of all those bitternesses, hatreds, and petty dishonesties that make public life wellnigh intolerable. Lord Beaconsfield is reported as saying that the House of Lords would have reminded him of heaven but for the presence of the bishops. So one might say that the regulation of life would be a tolerably simple affair but for the influence of our self-elected moral guides and counsellors.

C. COHEN.

The Lord's Supper.

IN a remarkably lucid and eloquent sermon, which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for June 19, the Rev. Newton H. Marshall, M.A., Ph.D., minister of the Heath-street Baptist Church, Hampstead, expatiates on the spiritual contents of the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. Dr. Marshall is regarded as a great bulwark of orthodox theology. He has published a book, entitled *Theology and Truth*, which is advertised as "a complete answer to the New Theology." He is said to be an accomplished scholar, deep-read in literature and science, as well as in theology. But, in the present sermon, only his theology is conspicuous, while there is no evidence whatever of his critical acumen. Of the truth of this observation there is ample proof. The discourse opens with the statement that "Jesus never wrote a book, nor drew up a creed." Of course, Baptist ministers do not *sign* a creed, but they all *hold* one, and woe be to them if they depart a hair's breadth from it. So, likewise, though the Jesus of the Gospels did not frame a formal creed, yet his confession of faith was both clear and emphatic. From a partly erroneous statement, the preacher passes on to one that is wholly false and misleading. He says: "If Jesus Christ did not draw up a creed, he did something of vastly greater power in instituting ordinances which express, in living and beautiful symbols, eternal truths, limitless hopes, and mighty forces." Did Jesus Christ institute any ordinances? Can such a claim be formally demonstrated? Is it not undeniable that all sacrificial sacraments took many centuries, if not millenniums, to develop, and are most closely co-related? One would infer from Dr. Marshall's language that the Christian Lord's Supper is a perfectly unique ordinance, the only one of the kind in the world, whereas, in reality, there never has been a great religion without its sacrificial banquet.

Let us examine this point in detail. First of all, we must bear in mind that the Lord's Supper is a ritual, eating and drinking of the Lord's body and blood. The literalness of the language is most significant: "Take, eat; this is my body"; "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood." We may be told, as the Fathers of the Church were never tired of maintaining, that the phrases are figurative. That may well be; but the question is, why were such loathsome figures adopted? And the answer is, because the eating of the God was common to all religions. Some may remember that the early Christians were

charged with the vile practice of child-eating at their sacred feasts. Probably, the charge in that form was false; but there is fairly clear evidence that they did partake of the baked image of a child. Whether the charge was true or not, it is a well-authenticated fact that the sacrifice and the consequent eating of infants were common practices in many old religions. It is freely admitted, however, that in some of the early churches, it was customary at Easter to eat the baked image of a lamb. Now, the lamb symbolised God, and so, also, did the child. It is well known that the God-man was usually represented by the Child, and that to partake of an actual slain child, or of the model of a child in dough, was regarded as equivalent to partaking of the God-man himself. In the Lord's Supper, as depicted in the New Testament, bread and wine symbolise the sacrificed God-man, who is reported to have called himself the bread of life. But this kind of Holy Supper was observed countless centuries before Jesus Christ was born. Even in Judaism, unrebuked by the prophets, eucharists were eaten and drunk in the name of Jehovah. They were denounced only when partaken of in honor of foreign deities (Jer. xiv. 15-23). Professor Robertson Smith could offer no other explanation of the sacred shewbread in the temple than that the partaking of it constituted a sacramental meal of some sort. In Mithraism there was an eucharist practically identical with the Christian, at which bread-round cakes and water served as the elements. Justin Martyr, after describing the Christian Eucharist, says: "Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same things to be done." Tertullian says that the Devil, "by the mystic rites of his idols vies with even the most essential things of the sacraments of God." Thus the early Fathers admitted the priority of the Mithraic Eucharist, and that it differed from the Christian only in its origin. Even Paul, it will be remembered, recognised the existence at Corinth of Pagan Holy Suppers. He said to his converts: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have communion with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils (1 Cor. x. 20-21). Here, again, the feasts are acknowledged to be the same in all save their victims.

Is it not now perfectly clear that the Lord's Supper is in no sense original and unique? As Mr. John M. Robertson says (*A Short History of Christianity*, p. 22): "A sacrificial banquet of this kind was one of the most universal features of ancient religion, being originally the typical tribal ceremony." Indeed, a careful examination of all the facts known to us leads to the conclusion that Christ must be put in the category of corn and wine gods, such as Adonis and Osiris.

Now, let us look at the evolution of sacrificial sacraments, which the comparative study of religions enables us to trace. There are at least five distinct stages in it. In primeval times, there was no such thing as sacrifice in the proper sense. The slain, or the victims, animal and human, were eaten, the Gods and the dead sharing in the feast. During the next period, offerings to the Gods, consisting of flesh, blood, fruits and libations, incense, firstfruits, and latterly of corn and wine, were made. Then animals were slain at the graves, and sacrifices were made, in which the victim was eaten as the God. It was now also that human sacrifices began, which were eaten in company with the God as thank-offerings, or as propitiatory offerings on account of sin. In the third stage, we witness the introduction of the priest, whose function was to bless the ritual sacrifices eaten as sacraments. In the fourth stage, human sacrifice being forbidden, we find the priest presiding at the celebration of the Eucharist in various religions. And, last of all, comes the Lord's Supper, at which simple bread and wine, or water, were used as symbols of the sacrificed God-man partaken of by all the faithful. Surely, this brief historic sketch

robs the Christian Eucharist of all the uniqueness and superior value claimed for it by theologians.

In the Lord's Supper, Dr. Marshall discerns, "enshrined in its noble simplicity, these three vital realities: First, the primacy of the spiritual; second, the supremacy of Christ in the spiritual world; and third, the penetration of the material things of life by the spiritual under the supremacy of Christ." From a homiletical point of view, these are capital divisions; and it must be frankly conceded that Dr. Marshall deals with them in an able and effective manner. But how, in the name of wonder, does he derive them from his text, "This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me"? Take "the primacy of the spiritual," and tell me in what corner of the text it lies. All that Jesus is reported to have said is, "This do, eat the bread and drink the wine, in remembrance of me"; but on the basis of that supposed saying, Dr. Marshall favors us with a vehement eulogy on the human soul, "with its hopes and fears, its ambitions and cowardices, its leaps heavenward, and its slow slippings towards sin, its infinite possibilities of purity, and its endless craving for satisfaction." But what does he mean by the soul? Is it an entity, distinct from, and independent of, the body? Whatever it may be, he assures us that our first and foremost duty is to get it duly saved, whatever that may mean: scarcely any two divines are agreed as to what it does mean. Then he angrily rails at Carlyle for his "nonsense of contempt for a man 'saving,' as he puts it, 'his own miserable soul.'" Well, not long ago, a popular preacher and novelist repeated Carlyle's "nonsense of contempt" from the pulpit of the City Temple, and the late Dr. Parker frequently did the same. Dr. Marshall has a perfect right to his own opinion; but others who differ from him are not, on that account, guilty of uttering nonsense. Many people, whose souls have been "saved," are worthless citizens of the earth; and not a few of them have been heard to swear that if it were not for their hope of personal immortality beyond the grave, it would not be worth their while to attend to so mean a thing as morality.

Equally irrelevant are the second and third divisions of the sermon, which treat of the "supremacy of Christ" and of the penetrative power of the spiritual. In the Supper, the God-man appears as food and drink; but Dr. Marshall dwells on his absolute sovereignty in the spiritual world. Here are his own words:—

"Our souls are like children—unable to make their own way through life. We may be masterful in business, liberty-loving in politics, independent in research, but when we enter the spiritual realm we need definite divine guidance, a power not ourselves to make for our righteousness. And, in the parable of his Supper, our Savior set himself before us as this Divine authority."

Is not that an exceedingly stupid passage? Here is drawn a broad line of demarcation between religion and morality. In business, in politics, and in society we are to be our own guides, we are to be ruled by our own reason. It is only in "the spiritual realm" that Christ is to be the supreme authority; but what and where is this "spiritual realm"? Is it the Church? Christ is supreme in the sermons, hymns, prayers, and lessons of the sanctuary. It is a lip-supremacy. Nothing is easier than to sing, and with glowing fervor too—

"In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

But of what use is it? At present, whatever we may be in some hypothetical future state, we are citizens of the earth; and it is as such, if at all, that we need guidance; but this preacher tells us that, as regards this life, we are self-reliant and independent. It is alone as spiritual beings that Christ should bear rule over us. In the only intelligible sense, however, *spirituality* is a purely secular quality, a grace of this world. Shelley had it; and Shelley was an Atheist. Shakespeare had

it; and Shakespeare was a Freethinker. In a lesser degree, Goethe had it; and Goethe was an Agnostic. The only piety worth having is natural. All the food and drink that we require is within our reach as children of the earth. Holy Suppers are but relics of bygone ages. Gods and god-men have had their day, and are only in the way in the twentieth century. To the majority of us they are already non-existent, and therefore silent. Mind-food is knowledge, heart-drink is love, and the supreme guide of life is trained intelligence. The grand desideratum of our time is, not a reconstructed theology, not a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost, but a genuine revival of interest in education—physical, intellectual, and moral.

J. T. LLOYD.

“Christian Evidence.”—I.

“He who will not reason is a bigot,
He who cannot is a fool,
And he who dares not is a slave.”

It is a fact that Freethinkers study the Bible more thoroughly than Christians; consequently, a Freethinker is often privileged to correct Biblical quotations and to give Scripture-knowledge lessons to an opponent.

A case in point occurred quite recently, when the Cambridge University Press declared the Bible “correct.” Their attention was respectfully directed to Acts xvii., verse 18: “And some said, What would this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods.”

The phrase “other some” is wrong, nonsensical; and the publishers, together with others responsible for the production of the Revised Version, were told so. And here is their reply: “Compare your own Bible with some other or others of a different size, and if the reading is the same in them all, you may depend upon it that it is correct.”

Correct, indeed! Why, the Revised Version, “the pure Word of God in the purest English,” contains hundreds of errors against truth and morals; and an office-boy knows grammar better than the whole company of over a hundred “learned divines,” who resorted to voting in order to determine right from wrong. Consequently “37,000” renderings were decided differently, but all of them printed as “correct.” Those figures are given by one of the revising company, the Rev. Professor Moulton, D.D., sometime Master of the Leys School, Cambridge, and he ought to be “correct.”

With such information, we understand now why there is so little of that precious faculty of the mind, *common sense*.

It is because “this well of pure English,” with its thirty-seven thousand muddling renderings and hundreds of other pernicious teachings, contaminates both parent and child. But the sign of the Cross is always the sign of an ignoramus.

Fraud, cowardice, vice, and ignorance are grave charges. These are deliberately levelled at “the right reverends” and their puny progeny. The Right Rev. Samuel Thornton, D.D., Assistant Bishop of Manchester, deliberately stated that men of letters have “access to the original”; as if its existence were a verity. Why, of the sixty-six books constituting the Bible, there is not one “original.” The earliest MS. of the Old Testament of which the age is certainly known, is dated A.D. 916, and no “copies” agree.

In the Authorised Version we read that a man was born two years before his father (2 Chron. xxi. 20 and xii. 2), but the revisers had not the courage to expunge this monstrosity. The clergy also condone their predecessors’ disgusting teaching (1 Cor. vii. 36), which actually advocates incest; adding, *it is not a sin to practise a most degrading obscenity*. This revolting and “inspired” vice is placed indiscriminately in the hands of youths and maidens by clergymen whom the nation tolerate and the State encourage with payments!

With regard to ignorance, university prelates have yet to learn that pronouns in the English language refer to nouns nearest to them of the same number and person; this is very elementary grammar, but they do not know it.

In John i. 6 we read: “There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.” That sentence gives God a new name—JOHN GOD! Again, “Jesus answered.....he that delivered me hath greater sin” (John xix. 10-11). Now, remembering that Jesus was *delivered up by God* (Acts ii. 23), Jesus therefore not only declares that act a sin, but deliberately charges God as the great sinner. Also, according to Acts xii. 21-23, God was eaten by worms: “He gave not God the glory, and he [*i.e.*, God] was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” “What blasphemy!” exclaims the man who puts his collar on backwards. Maybe, Christian, but these are evidences from your own “blessed” book, which also states that *God has a big brother!* Such is the rendering of 1 John iv. 21, and it necessarily follows as a duty binding all Christians who loveth God to love God’s brother also.

The Bible expressly states these ideas with utmost clearness. They could not possibly be rendered in plainer language, as the “learned” revisers declare in the preface: “As to pronouns and the place they occupy in the sentence, we have been particularly careful.”

W. A. V.

(To be concluded.)

CRYING FOR THE MOON.

There is still too much other-worldliness about the Army. Like Frederick’s grenadier, the Salvationist wants to live for ever (the most monstrous way of crying for the moon); and although it is evident to anyone who has ever heard General Booth and his best officers that they would work as hard for human salvation as they do at present if they believed that death would be the end of them individually, they and their followers have a bad habit of talking as if the Salvationists were heroically enduring a very bad time on earth as an investment which will bring them in dividends later on in the form, not of a better life to come for the whole world, but of an eternity spent by themselves personally in a sort of bliss which would bore any active person to a second death. Surely the truth is that the Salvationists are unusually happy people. And is it not the very diagnostic of true salvation that it shall overcome the fear of death? Now the man who has come to believe that there is no such thing as death, the change so called being merely the transition to an exquisitely happy and utterly careless life, has not overcome the fear of death at all: on the contrary, it has overcome him so completely that he refuses to die on any terms whatever. I do not call a Salvationist really saved until he is ready to lie down cheerfully on the scrap heap, having paid scot and lot and something over, and let his eternal life pass on to renew its youth in the battalions of the future.—G. Bernard Shaw, *Preface to “Major Barbara.”*

He saw a ghost.
It occupied—that dismal thing!—
The path that he was following.
Before he’d time to stop and fly,
An earthquake trifled with the eye
That saw a ghost.
He fell as fall the early good;
Unmoved that awful spectre stood.
The stars that danced before his ken
He wildly brushed away, and then
He saw a post.

—Ambrose Bierce (“Dod Grile”).

I know the path I ought to go;
I follow fearlessly,
Inquiring not what dooper woo
Stern duty stores for me.

So foes pursue, and cold allies
Mistrust me, every one:
Let me be false in others’ eyes,
If faithful in my own.

—Emily Bronte.

Acid Drops.

The foundation-stone of the new wing of the British Museum was laid by the King. We have no objection to that, but we do object to the silly religious ceremony and the sillier religious language used on the occasion. Prayers were read by the Archbishop of Canterbury before the King officiated as an amateur stonemason. The papers did not report what his Grace said to the Almighty, but we presume he asked the divine blessing on the new building, though nobody really believes that the Archbishop's incantations are of the slightest importance. Then the King took the trowel and smoothed out the mortar carefully; and, the stone being lowered, he gave it three smart taps—one for each person of the blessed Trinity—saying, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I declare this stone well and truly laid." A performance of that kind is about worthy of Central Africans. We can hardly believe that the King himself fancied that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had anything to do with that foundation-stone.

President Roosevelt has accepted the presidency of the American committee which is being formed to do honor to the memory of John Calvin, the four hundredth anniversary of whose birth will be celebrated in 1909. Roosevelt admires John Calvin. He would. Such admiration is worthy of the man who called Thomas Paine a "dirty little atheist"—three lies in three words—and let the calumny stand though he was told of its true character. A much greater man than Roosevelt held a different opinion of John Calvin. Ingersoll said that John Calvin and John Knox fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast. Calvin was the persecutor of Castalio and the murderer of Servetus. A greater bigot never lived. And we are not exactly displeased at seeing his memory honored by the libeller of Thomas Paine.

The *Westminster Gazette*, which isn't likely to exaggerate in such matters, says that there are at least 300 Christian sects in London. Which of them, we wonder, has the true Christianity? Perhaps not one. Two hundred and ninety-nine of them haven't got it, anyhow. Which is a pretty state of things, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, and in "the most Christian country in the world."

The Right Reverend Arthur Thomas Lloyd, late Bishop of Newcastle, who died at South Kensington on May 29, left estate valued at £16,264 gross and £15,859 net. How will he get through the needle's eye with a hump like that?

Mrs. Ormiston Chant, discoursing some time ago at the Woolwich Tabernacle on the living statuary question, said that there were not the God-fearing men on the County Council there were when she made her protest years ago. She must be of a different opinion now. The County Council has given its vote in her direction. But one of the lady's arguments was rather odd. She said that she had sat in a music-hall and had to keep her tongue clenched between her teeth to keep silent while one of her own sex stood as God made her. Where was that? There will be a run upon the place if Mrs. Chant will name it. And lots of men of God will be there—if only to be able to preach against the wickedness. We suspect, however, that Mrs. Chant is romancing. None of the living statues appear in *purus naturalibus*. At least, we understand so, for we haven't been to see the show. Even if they did, their appearance as God made them should be an act of piety. To throw a lot of millinery over God's handiwork seems profane.

Miss Ada Ward answers the question "Can an actress be a Christian?" in the negative. If she meant what she says we should be glad. But it appears that what she means is, "Can an actress be a good woman?" She answers this question in the negative. Yet she admits that many actors and actresses live simple, beautiful, quiet lives, working hard as bread-winners for poor relatives. Then her negative answer is all nonsense. What some can do is not impossible to others. The truth is, we take it, that when loose-minded people go upon the stage they run to the devil a little faster than they would otherwise—owing to the diminished external restraint. That is all. It is simply a question of pace. They would go to the devil anyhow.

Miss Ward branded the *Sign of the Cross* as "one of the most immoral plays." Poor Wilson Barrett! He posed as a Christian reformer. There are conflicting accounts as to what he was behind the scenes.

A writer in the *Church Times* is much concerned over the increase of civil marriages in this country. He points out that since 1870, civil marriages have increased from 18,024 to 47,768 in 1905—the last published statistics. He has also ascertained that during 1906, there were more marriages in the single registry office in Hereford than in the whole of the seventy-three churches of the district. The writer thinks this is a sign of the times, as do we. He also deploras it, and there we must leave him to mourn alone.

The Irish Methodists are following the general lines of Christian development. Their last statistics show a net decrease of 166 on the membership roll.

The ending of a sermon, says the *Methodist Times*, is almost as difficult as the beginning. That may be; but it is often much more satisfactory to the audience.

What profound faith Christians have in the overshadowing care of the "Heavenly Father"! The Primitive Methodist Chapel Insurance Company has no less than 5,950 policies issued to cover risks connected with their own praying-shops. They could scarcely take more care if they were Atheistic lecture-halls. "Trust in God" is their motto; "Protect yourself in case of accident" is their practice.

This same Christian body has recently given a beautiful example of how much Christians—particularly the Nonconformist variety—love freedom of thought and speech. This year, the Rev. J. D. Thompson was selected to give the Hartley Lecture on Immortality. Hitherto, it has been the invariable practice to publish the address soon after its delivery. Mr. Thompson's lecture was, we gather—we have not seen a report—of a too advanced character to suit Primitive Methodists, and the Committee has decided not to publish this one. The *Christian Commonwealth* wrote Mr. Thompson, offering to publish the lecture, but the Committee now claim that the lecture is its copyright, and decline to allow it to be printed. Whether the claim is a sound one or not remains to be seen; but it is, at any rate, a striking instance of what Christians really understand by liberty of speech, and how they would act if circumstances were different from what they are.

America, that land of religious cranks, has not had to wait long for a successor to "Prophet Dowie." A new prophet has arisen, who claims to have had a heavenly vision revealing a new rule of life, which includes a new language. Part of this rule of life is that disciples are to live on one meal a day—presumably so that the result may be more profitable to the prophet. The sect is, so runs the newspaper report, increasing in strength, and converts are arriving from Europe as the result of the work of agents sent over some time ago. We have no doubt the new "prophet" will find plenty of followers. There is nothing too stupid for some people, and the long reign of Christianity has developed a wide field on which cranks and impostors may exercise their peculiar talents.

What wonderful sceptics Christians do meet with, to be sure! The Rev. J. Tolfree Parr informed a congregation that "a well-known sceptic" once paid a visit to an "eminent divine" of the eighteenth century. All went well for a few days, and then the sceptic ordered his carriage and left in a hurry, his excuse being, "If I stop another night under your roof I shall be a Christian in spite of myself." Now, as the sceptic was "well-known," and the divine was "eminent," it should be fairly easy to trace the truth of the story. We, therefore, invite Mr. Parr to favor us with the names. Probably, Mr. Parr's authority is some book of anecdotes compiled by a Christian for Christians, and with the usual Christian regard for truth. Anyway, we should like to know who the sceptic was.

The following is too good to be spoiled by any comment, particularly as it appears in a religious journal:—

"A tradesman in a south-western suburb had his window broken by a stone. He pursued the culprit—of course, a boy—to his home, and complained to the mother. He did not require her to pay the damage when he learnt that she was a widow, but asked her to warn her son against stone-throwing in the streets. 'Ah, sir,' she said tearfully, 'it's all that religious teaching in the schools. They have been having a lesson about David and Goliath, and now its nothing but slings and stones. I've had to pay for three windows already.'"

The *Christian World* is improving.

More Christian progress. The Monmouthshire Baptist Association reports a decrease of 149 members and an

increase of 116, leaving a net loss of 116. The secretary finds consolation in the fact that the decrease has been heavier with other associations.

The irresponsible rashness of Christian apologists is beneath contempt. A writer in the *Christian Commonwealth* makes this reckless assertion: "The Socialists, whether they know it or not, are seeking, as the end of their endeavor, the practical realisation of the Christian religion. All logical minds will concede that point." Nothing of the kind. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of Socialists are a non-Christian, and many of them anti-Christian, while, as a matter of logic, Christianity and Socialism are irreconcilable. The government of the world, as described in the New Testament, is purely monarchical. God is a sovereign whose decrees are inexorable, and Christ is a king to whom uncompromising and unquestioning obedience is due. There is here positively no room for Democracy in any shape or form. This is sound logic.

The same writer observes that "the ministers who are most successful in stemming the rush of working-men from the churches, are those who preach a broad, social gospel." That is doubtless true; but ministers get to preach this "broad, social gospel" when they find out that the old and strictly evangelical gospel no longer pays. They see the people rushing away from them in ever increasing numbers, and, in the hope of checking this outward flow, they adopt such a gospel as they think will be acceptable to the masses. They have given up theology because it was rapidly emptying the churches. To keep or win back the people, they are prepared to sacrifice the gospel of Christ, and yet are unscrupulous enough to still call themselves Christian ministers.

Mr. Samuel Healy, of the Church Socialist League, is of opinion that the poverty, overwork, and degradation of the people is responsible for their alienation from the Church. If Mr. Healy means by the Church, Christianity, we can assure him that he is in error; and even of the Church proper the statement would only be true in part. The divorce between the people and Christianity is fundamentally due to moral and intellectual causes. The order of development is, in the main, dissatisfaction with Christian teachings first, and afterwards a perception of the way in which these teachings are utilised for the exploitation of the people. If all the people were well fed, well clothed, and overwork non-existent, it would not bring them a step nearer Christianity, and might even have an exactly opposite effect. If Mr. Healy studies history more attentively, he will discover that it is not periods of widespread distress or depression that foster Freethought, but the reverse. All that happens is that such distress and degradation is used by intelligent Freethinkers to point a moral or adorn a tale.

We regret that the political necessities of Mr. J. M. Robertson's position have compelled him to throw Secular Education into the background. At the Huddersfield by-election he worked for the orthodox Liberal candidate, who was in favor of religious education in the State schools, and against the Labor candidate, who was in favor of Secular Education. Mr. Robertson has been doing the same thing at Jarrow; supporting Mr. S. L. Hughes, the official Liberal candidate, who accepts the Nonconformist ticket of "simple Bible teaching"—and opposing the Labor candidate, Mr. Peto Curran, whose program includes Secular Education. The strangeness is increased by the fact that Mr. Robertson is a Socialist as well as a Secularist.

We are aware, of course, that Mr. Robertson may reply that other questions are at present more vital than Secular Education. We should not agree with him, but we need not argue the matter. We are rather concerned to point out how right we have always been in saying that Freethinkers must not cherish great expectations from Freethinkers who enter the House of Commons. Look at John Morley, look at John Burns, and now look at John Robertson. Is there something unpropitious in the name of "John"?

Rev. A. Donovan, vicar of Garton, Hull, who seems to be a liberal-minded clergyman, has written a letter to the *Daily News*, in which he refers to the resolution passed by the House of Commons in February, 1649, "That the House of Lords is useless and dangerous and should be abolished." "This," says Mr. Donovan, "put an end to the 'Upper' House for eleven years until Peers and Bishops came back with Good King Charles." We beg the reverend gentleman's pardon, but that resolution of the House of Commons did not put an end to the House of Lords. Those who carried the resolution out put an end to that Chamber. It was a revo-

lutionary act. Behind it was the victorious Army, which had fought the King in the name of Parliament for years, and had at last cut his head off outside Whitehall. With the King beheaded in January, it was not difficult to send the Peers packing in February. Of course, the circumstances are very different now. And the principal difference is that there is no Cromwell.

Mr. Donovan refers to the Long Parliament—which, by the way, outlived its welcome—as "the great national Assembly to which we mainly owe our civil and religious liberties." We owe it nothing of the kind. This is one of the commonplace falsehoods of the Puritan party in England. Cromwell himself, who put an end to the Long Parliament by force when it was impudently seeking to make itself perpetual, was far ahead of his party in the matter of religious toleration. He had a great generous nature, which was averse to bigotry and persecution. But the Puritans generally were bigots and persecutors of the first water. They fought Church tyranny simply because it was Church tyranny. They had no objection to tyranny as long as they practised it and other people were the victims. There was no religious liberty in England under *their* rule. Catholics were hunted down like wild animals, Episcopals were robbed and banished, and even the harmless Quakers were whipped and mutilated. Cromwell's second Parliament, instead of making wise and just laws for the people of England, as he begged them to do, spent day after day in discussing what should be done with James Nayler—a mad Quaker with a vein of genius in his strange composition. They decided that he was to be imprisoned, branded on the forehead with hot irons, and tortured in other ways; but the great question was, Could they burn him alive? They gravely put the question to Commissioner Whitelocke. Is it any wonder that a storm of indignation swept through the breast of the great Lord Protector, and that he shut that Parliament up and told the members to go home? Cromwell dismissed them in the name of God. That name is nothing to us, but we stand by his side all the same. We approve his action. Better be governed by a great man with a big head and a big heart than by a lot of sanguinary little bigots who want to torment and kill everyone who affronts their infallibility.

Another fact has to be borne in mind. It was precisely the period of the Puritan triumph, and especially during the so-called Commonwealth, that the witch-mania reached its worst proportions in England. We commend this to Mr. Donovan's attention. And perhaps, if he will study the case more closely, he may come to see that England does not owe her *religious* liberties (anyhow) to the Puritan Parliament.

And now a final word. Where was the religious liberty in England until quite recently? Less than a hundred years ago, dozens of men and women rotted in English goals for publishing such books as Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. Catholics were excluded from citizenship, Jews were not allowed to enter Parliament, and the mildest Freethought that went beyond the most respectable Unitarianism was punishable with fine and imprisonment—not in mere theory, but in actual fact. Religious liberties, forsooth! Englishmen hadn't any. Mr. Donovan is dreaming.

Detroit has declined Mr. Carnegie's offer of three quarters of a million dollars for a new public library building. The city has decided to find the money itself, and is issuing municipal bonds to the amount. Some people will think Detroit's action foolish; others will think it shows self-respect. Carnegie buildings, advertising the plutocrat's name, are getting so terribly common. Of course, the main cost of a public library is the furnishing and upkeep—which is not found by the advertising philanthropist. Moreover, the necessity for free libraries, except in regard to reference books, is not what it used to be; for the cheapening of books has made it possible for all but the poorest of the poor to buy nearly all they want.

"Why be moral if there be no God and a hereafter?" asked a well-known clergyman the other Sunday afternoon. A sillier question cannot be asked. Every student of history knows that belief in God and immortality has never produced moral exaltation. Nay, more, he is also aware of the incontrovertible fact that when the world was religiously at its best it was morally at its worst. Nor can he be blind to the further fact, that in proportion as religious belief declines in any country, the moral tone of the inhabitants improves. These facts show the perfect absurdity of the reverend gentleman's question. The true man knows no other inducement to be moral than the knowledge that morality makes for the welfare of society, while immorality inevitably brings about its disintegration and destruction.

Nonconformists are complaining bitterly that the Moderate majority of the London County Council is using its strength in order to replace Nonconformist school managers by Anglicans. Well, it is part of the game and only what one might expect. So long as Nonconformists and Anglicans regard an election—parliamentary or municipal—as merely a means of getting level with a religious rival, it is absurd to expect any different state of affairs. Dr. Clifford himself has complained that the government has failed in its duty, inasmuch as it has not yet satisfied those Nonconformists who voted for it at the last election; and if the principle is good for the goose it should also be good for the gander. In the mouth of a Christian, progress usually means sectarian advancement, and until the general public is able to take a sufficiently sensible view of affairs, we must expect to see each of the Christian camps alternately drubbing the other, with a combination of both for the purpose of thumping the outsider.

The Government had to promise the Nonconformists something—after the failure of the Birrell Bill and the withdrawal of the M'Kenna Bill. Accordingly, the Congregational Union has been assured by Mr. Lloyd George, with the full assent of the Premier, that a Welsh Disestablishment and Disendowment Bill shall be pressed through all stages in the House of Commons. But the right honorable gentleman says he doesn't know what the Lords will do with it. Alas for the poor Nonconformists! They began so swaggering when their friends came into power, but they found they could do nothing, and they are now even begging Mr. M'Kenna to save the Cowper-Temple clause for them; otherwise they will be overridden by the Church party from one end of the country to the other.

What will not a godless education lead to. The *Catholic Times* gives a frightful example of its pernicious results. Just read the following:—

"A couple of weeks ago, at Saint-Léger-sous-Bréviandes (Aube) in the absence of the priest, two little children named Crevost, brother and sister, aged nine and eleven, entered the church and cut in bits the vestments and adornments of the sanctuary. But this was not the worst. When the priest returned, he commenced a careful examination of the altar and found to his horror that the youthful miscreants had broken into the tabernacle, emptied the ciborium and consumed the Sacred Species! They admitted the offence, but when the Mayor was notified of the crime he declined to take any action. So shocking a demonstration of the results of Godless education has caused a deep feeling of horror among all honest people in the place, and many are the questionings as to what kind of youth the secular education will produce in France."

Children of nine and eleven, who are dosed with religion in school, never get into mischief. Such a case was never heard of. We have nothing to say on behalf of these two abandoned little criminals, who certainly ought to be imprisoned for life, at the very least. But we venture to make a suggestion; namely, that French churches should keep bottles of powerful emetic in stock, so that children who break into the tabernacle, empty the ciborium, and consume the Sacred Species, may be compelled to disgorge the holy elements on the spot.

The Bishop of London is going to pay a visit to the United States. We suppose he wants to explain how he takes £10,000 a year for being a bishop—and loses heavily on the job. Perhaps the Americans understand that sort of thing better than we do.

What is the greatest play of modern times? According to a handbill circulated in a London suburb it is *When it was Dark*. We know now. Shakespeare's nose is quite put out of joint; and Pinero, Jones, Barrie, and Shaw hide their diminished heads. "Public, Press, and Pulpit," the handbill says, "pronounce it a marvellous play." We can well believe that. For it is founded upon the most marvellously silly book we ever saw. This book has been loudly praised by the Bishop of London. Every sensible person, therefore, may guess its real value.

The *Christian World* is greatly shocked at the Rev. R. C. Fillingham's statement that the Bishop of London has "no more brains than the average rabbit." Our contemporary does not, however, make it quite clear on whose behalf the protest is made. Perhaps the editor is a member of the Dumb Friends' League.

Guerin, in his evidence before the magistrate at Clerkenwell Police-court, said: "I have done thirteen and a half months' solitary confinement. When a man has done that his memory is pretty well eaten up." And the magistrate said: "I can quite understand that." What a horrible state of things! It is infamous to treat the worst criminal on

earth in that way. No wonder the Devil's Island is one of the awful names on this planet. Some day—and the sooner the better—the French will have to overhaul their prison system. They have allowed it to remain unaffected by the general progress of the nation, and, in some respects, it is now an absolute scandal.

A whole week has just been spent in special prayer for the conversion of Japan. Four honorary secretaries of the Circle of Prayer for World-wide Revival issued an earnest request that all Christian people should unite in "asking God graciously to bestow a blessing suitable and adequate to the present need of Japan." No cablegram has yet been received announcing a favorable answer to that prayer. Either God did not hear it, or else he did not think that conversion to Christianity would be "a blessing suitable and adequate to the present need of Japan." At any rate, the recent bombardment of the Heavenly Throne has not resulted in any perceptible change in the spiritual condition of the Land of the Rising Sun.

After dealing with denominational gains and losses in America, even the *British Congregationalist* observes: "So far as statistics show, our denomination is practically standing steadfast in its place, but not moving forward at home." The evidences of decay steadily accumulate.

The same journal deplures the serious decline in missionary enthusiasm which has undoubtedly taken place in Christendom, and admits that the great argument upon which the founders of modern missions so largely relied has lost its force with the majority of Christian people. The heathen will not burn everlastingly in hell-fire, it is now believed, even if they never hear the name of Christ before they die. Here is another proof that theology is becoming extinct.

Lord Kensington has collected £900 towards buying the Bishop of St. David's a motor-car. We wonder how much the thing will cost altogether. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven." It's enough to make a dying cat laugh.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer does not lack self-conceit. He is always advertising his mighty achievements in the religious journals. In bidding farewell to Christ Church, the other evening, he said: "The Divine voice which has guided my life, year by year, has told me, that first a provincial town, then London, then the great world-wide ministry, would be the three steps of my career." He has now entered upon that "great world-wide ministry," and, in the exercise of it, he is going to take a hand in "the federation of the Free Churches of all English-speaking races for peace, righteousness, and freedom." He hopes to do something to "knit them together." Of course, he safeguards his sweet humility by adding, that of himself he can do nothing. He is only the instrument of the Holy Ghost, as the Holy Ghost is the instrument of the Son, and as the Son himself is the instrument of the Father. How beautifully simple! How indescribably lovely!

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, carries his optimism to absurd extremes. In the existence of the sorrow and the evil of the world he sees "one of the greatest arguments for faith." "It is the gaping fissure in the visible system of things," he says, "which makes us sure that what we read here is an incomplete volume—to be continued." But the volume is not only incomplete, but bristling to such an extent with mistakes, contradictions, anachronisms, false teachings, and imbecilities, that one dreads the very idea of its being continued. What guarantee have we that the continuation, or the sequel, would be any improvement on what we already possess? Our imperfect, and consequently sorrowful, world does not postulate a perfect maker. "J. B.'s" appetite for faith must be abnormally keen.

The Dean of Carlisle has been saying that children ought to be taught who made the world long before they are fourteen. We agree with him. The longer the better. It would be difficult to teach them theological moonshine when they had left fourteen behind them. The Dean of Carlisle understands his own business.

William Jacobs, of Edgefield, Norfolk, used to be of a lively disposition, but he "got religion" and talked incessantly about it for a week, and then he murdered and mutilated his own father, besides killing another man. Revivalists will probably not include this case in their budget.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

To Correspondents.

- JAMES MILNE.—Pleased to have your good wishes.
- H. O. STRONG.—Glad to hear that the *Freethinker* is on your table every Saturday, and is well read by your family.
- J. T. JONES.—Pleasant to hear you call it a "small recognition of a heavy debt."
- W. H. SWEETLAND.—So you have taken the *Freethinker* for three years, and "look forward to each succeeding issue with increasing pleasure." Well, this is the kind of tribute we like. We agree with you that there is a good field for Free-thought work in Bristol. Something will be done, we believe, when the summer is over, by the N. S. S. Executive.
- CISSY JONES writes: "I thank you for specimen copy of the *Freethinker*, which was brought to my notice by your enthusiastic follower, W. J. Caton. It is really splendid. I will do all I can to push your admirable paper." Letters like this should encourage our friends to continue sending us the names and addresses of persons to whom we might advantageously forward a free copy for six consecutive weeks.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Mr. Killip (per G. Weir), 2s. 6d.
- R. LLOYD.—Duly passed over by shop manager.
- M. D. EDER.—We are much obliged to you for your trouble in the matter, and we note the French professor's dictum. But we have lived long enough to learn that the new is not necessarily true, any more than the old; and it may be that Darwin, Wallace, and Weismann will not be disposed of so easily. Time will tell.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- S. P. says that about two years ago, in an "Acid Drop" or an article, the late W. E. Gladstone was quoted as saying that the ministers, or some of them, of the Church of England would as soon, or sooner, give up the Thirty-nine Articles of their faith as give up their livings. Can any reader of the *Freethinker* tell him where to find this quotation, and what writing of Gladstone's it was taken from? We do not happen to recollect it ourselves.
- WILD BOER.—Not so wild as you sign yourself. Thanks. May we add that we keep all names in strict confidence, unless advised otherwise?
- R. D. S. (Edinburgh).—Quite so; it is always best to order through newsagents when possible. Thanks for your good wishes.
- EDWARD JONES SAYS: "I have been a great admirer of Mr. Foote, and a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, ever since his visit to Porth, Pontypridd, and South Wales. I wish I could send ten pounds instead of ten shillings to his fund. I may add that I would not miss my *Freethinker* on any account. Sir Oliver Lodge's letter on Religious Education, and Mr. Foote's reply to the same, is worth more than the year's purchase of the paper."
- JIM BROUGH.—Much obliged. The cutting pasted on your letter is very useful. The others will not be useless.
- W. BRADBURN.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- P. W. M.—We had seen it; but thanks all the same. It seems pretty much as you say.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.
- E. HIRST.—The subject is one that we cannot continue dealing with at present, but we may return to it, or find room for others to do so.
- J. HAYDON.—Pleased and sorry that you find Sunday very dull without the *Freethinker*. Order placed in the right hands.
- ALERT.—"Whom the gods love die young" is an old Pagan proverb. It means, at bottom, about what you take it to mean.
- P. REED (India) says our writings ought to be more largely advertised amongst the native Christians. He has just succeeded in converting a Roman Catholic by means of our *Bible Romances*, "I never knew," the convert said, "that there was another side to the question." He now reads the *Freethinker*.
- F. HUNTER, subscribing for the *Freethinker*, says he was "unaware of this bright and intelligent journal's existence" until it was put in his hands some weeks ago by a relative; and he expresses "gratitude for being placed on the road to intellectual freedom."
- J. DAVIES.—Next week.
- F. WARREN.—Pleased to hear you came across the *Freethinker* accidentally some four months ago, and that it has "altogether changed" your "mode of thinking." We fancy you would get the information you want in the "Daily Mail Year Book." Lawyers and capitalists are the two most numerous classes in the House of Commons.
- E. PACK.—Glad to hear you disposed of 100 *Freethinkers* at your meetings on Sunday, besides a good many other of our publications.
- A. GAUBERT.—We note that our *John Bull* article "delighted" you.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

During the two months of July and August our "Acid Drops" columns will be contributed to by both Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd, as well as by the Editor. This will afford Mr. Foote a certain relief from his rather too exacting task, and enable him to let his brain have a partial rest, at any rate, for several weeks.

The Crown, the Court and County Families Newspaper has a whole page headed "Abnormal and Anomalous"—"culled from periodicals written for the peculiar by the peculiar." The number dated June 29 contains five paragraphs "From the 'Freethinker.'" We are pleased to see them there. And if our paragraphs are reproduced in this way we shall gradually cease to be peculiar. People will get used to our way of thinking, and many of them will end by agreeing with us.

It is a hundred years since Garibaldi was born. He was one of Plutarch's men, belonging to an older time, and perhaps a greater age. No loftier, simpler soul ever breathed the breath of life. His career was a romance, and he himself the embodiment of the dreams of chivalry. He began as a Christian. That was his training. He ended as an Atheist. That was his personal conviction.

Amidst all the rejoicings over Mark Twain in London, not one of the daily or weekly papers mentions the fact that he is a Freethinker. Nearly, not quite, all the really great thinkers of to-day are Freethinkers.

When the English newspapers recorded the death of Marcelin Berthelot, the great French scientist, whose character was as lofty as his genius, they omitted to mention that he was the founder and President of the National Association of the Freethinkers of France. It was judicious to keep back a fact like that from the "dear public"—as Thackeray called it—in pious old England. Nevertheless the fact itself stands. The new President is Charles Beauquier, deputy for Doubs in the French Chamber; and one of the two Honorary Presidents is M. Anatole France, who is probably the greatest living French writer.

La Pensée, the organ of the Belgian Freethinkers, reproduces some of our "Acid Drops" from time to time. It reproduced the one in which we ridiculed the offering up of prayers at Aldershot for the safety of the two officers who were lost in the balloon *Thresher*. By that time, we observed, the officers were either safe on board some ship that had rescued them, or more probably drowned. *La Pensée* wittily heads our paragraph, "Moutarde après Souper"—Mustard after Supper.

Secular Thought, of Toronto, reaches us very irregularly. The May number reached us towards the end of June. We see it contains a reprint, with proper acknowledgment, of our article on "Christian Accuracy." The rest of the contents show that Editor Ellis strives to keep up a good level of value and interest, and succeeds in the effort. We hope Editor Ellis will make another effort—to let us have his magazine earlier.

Peary, the Arctic explorer, loves the Eskimos. He says they have no religion, but they are generous and hospitable, and the lucky man shares with his neighbors. "It is this feeling of good fellowship," he says, "which preserves the race." There are plenty of religious people who would be the better for some of the "savages'" good qualities.

The Public Demonstration convened by the New Reform Club Political Committee, on behalf of Secular Education, at Caxton Hall, on Thursday evening, June 27, was not a success in point of numbers. Evidently, the conveners did not understand their business, for the hall could easily have been filled if the right steps had been taken. Several Freethinkers were present, including Mr. Cohen and Miss Vance, and the N. S. S. President came up from his home in order to watch the proceedings. Fortunately, there was not the slightest need for any interference on his part. The cause of Secular Education was admirably supported by the New Reform Club speakers on the platform, and the resolution in its favor was carried unanimously. Mr. Henry J. Wilson, M.P., presided; the resolution was moved in an excellent speech by Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., seconded brightly by Mrs. C. A. V. Conybeare, and supported by Col. Ivor Herbert, M.P. (a Roman Catholic), and by Mr. J. A. Hobson, whose well-trained mind added a fresh and welcome note to the oratory. The last speaker was Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., a Nonconformist stalwart, who carried the resolution in favor of Secular Education at the last annual meeting of the Liberation Society. It was quite refreshing to see the warmth with which Mr. Halley Stewart denounced Nonconformists—who, he said, ought to know better—for wanting the religion of "simple Bible teaching" endowed in the State schools. The meeting cheered him on, and he went (as some people would think) from bad to worse; winding up, at last, not only by declaring that sound morality could be taught on a purely civic basis, but also by affirming that, at the bottom of all religions, there was only one true religion, and that was the religion of humanity. It was a fine fighting speech, and we should like to see Mr. Halley Stewart—who, we repeat, is a Nonconformist stalwart—going round the country with it. There would soon be a powerful revolt against the hypocritical policy of Dr. Clifford.

Secular Education is winning all along the line. Lord Carrington is the latest politician who has declared in its favor. Addressing some 600 people at a garden party, held under the auspices of the Liberal Social Council, at Parkwood, near Wargrave-on-Thames, on Saturday, June 29, his lordship said that: "Speaking entirely for himself, he must say that after the rejection by the House of Lords of the education compromise last year he could see no other solution for the question than that the State should cease to provide for religious education, leaving it to the different denominations themselves to do the religious work." This declaration was greeted with loud applause—which is another sign of the times.

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

—Wordsworth.

What is chiefly needed in England at the present day is to show the quantity of pleasure that may be obtained by a consistent, well-administered competence, modest, confessed, and laborious. We need examples of people who, leaving Heaven to decide whether they are to rise in the world, decide for themselves that they will be happy in it, and have resolved to seek—not greater wealth, but simpler pleasure; not higher fortune, but deeper felicity; making the first of possessions, self-possession; and honoring themselves in the harmless pride and calm pursuits of peace.—John Ruskin.

Josephus and the Gospels.—II.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER,

Sub-Editor of the "Freethinker" and author of the
"Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers," etc.

(Concluded from p. 406.)

THE identity of the Essenes mentioned by Josephus with the early Christians has been noted by many authors from Eusebius to De Quincey, but few have ever suspected that the Essenes were to be identified with the sect founded by Judas. Mr. Proctor, in his article on "The Gospel Life of Jesus," in the *Freethinkers' Magazine* for August, 1887, is the first English writer I have noticed to run them together; and this, I suspect, may have happened through a slip of the pen. A learned Jewish rabbi, however (R. Abraham, in *Libro Tschassin*, folio 139, 1), cited by Schottgen (*Hor. Heb. in Act v. 37*), and in part by Adam Clarke, says:—

"At this time there were three sects; for, besides the Pharisees and Sadducees, Judas the Galilean began a third sect, which is called that of Essenes.....the opinion of the Nazarenes, who were called Essenes, and the author of whom was Judas the Galilean. They, indeed, occasioned the Jews to rebel against the Romans, saying that no one ought to command other men, nor to be called Lord, except God alone."

On which Schottgen remarks that this must be false, because the Essenes existed long before Judas; yet he, with Adam Clarke, thinks it very likely Judas was an Essene, though not the author of the sect. But, as Hennell remarks in his *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, may not the confusion of R. Abraham be unravelled thus: Many of the Essenes adopted part of the doctrines of Judas, and settled afterwards into that sect, of which one appellation was Nazarenes.

If the reader will turn to the speech put into the mouth of Gamaliel (in Acts v. 33-39) he will see that the author of the Acts takes pains to discriminate the followers of Jesus from those of Judas of Galilee. Readers of Zeller, Baur, or *Supernatural Religion* will have no need of any assurance that the Acts of the Apostles is utterly unhistoric. Indeed, one has only to compare the speeches put into the mouth of Paul with those ascribed to Stephen and Peter to see that the author, in each case, has not hesitated to make his characters utter his own sentiments. John Jones, the Unitarian, in his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, a work in which he strives to show that both Josephus and Philo were Christians, says:—

"The enemies of the faith, I have observed, were studious to identify its professors with the disciples of Judas. The Christians, on their part, must have been anxious to defeat this artifice, representing themselves on every proper occasion a very distinct people; and to this natural anxiety we are indebted for a very important incident, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Luke delicately notices the charge, and with great propriety avails himself of the language and advice of Gamaliel to show that it had no foundation in truth" (p. 209).

In other words, the charge that the Galileans were followers of Judas was made in the earliest ages, and the author of the Acts delicately makes a Jewish Rabbi distinguish between them and say that Judas perished, and as many as obeyed him were dispersed. But even this was as applicable to the Nazarenes as to the Galileans.

If we consider the utter improbability that Luke or any other Christian writer in the second century should possess such accurate knowledge of the proceedings within the sanhedrin as to be able to give, word for word, Gamaliel's speech as it was spoken, we shall probably conclude that it, like so much else in the narrative, is a concoction. That the account in the Acts of the Apostles is utterly untrustworthy, and, moreover, founded on the events narrated by Josephus, is evident from the reference to Theudas, which involves a double mistake.

Gamaliel is made to say, that before the time of Judas of Galilee, there rose up Theudas, "boasting

himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought." Now Josephus mentions this Theudas (*Antiq.*, bk. xx., ch. 5, § 6). He, like so many others at that time, was an impostor, calling himself a prophet. He persuaded a number to follow him to the river Jordan, telling them that he would, by his own command, divide the river and afford them an easy passage over it. The Roman procurator, Fadus, sent a troop of horsemen against them, who killed many and took the rest prisoners. (Four hundred are mentioned afterwards as slain in another rising). The head of Theudas was cut off and sent to Jerusalem. But this Theudas lived more than a generation after Judas, for Fadus was procurator of Judæa in the days of Claudius Cæsar. The discrepancy between the Acts and Josephus is admitted by orthodox Christians, but they say, with the Bishop of Bath and Wells, "Luke is as likely to be right as Josephus." We venture to hope that no immortal soul will be imperilled by the thought that Josephus is as likely to be right as the anonymous author of the Acts of the Apostles, a book competent critics assign to the latter half of the second century, and which was rejected by the Marcionites and other early Christians. Josephus places the event in its due chronological order, and from his official position, could not make a mistake of thirty years in regard to an outbreak which took place within his own lifetime. It should be observed, also, that whereas the author of the Acts makes the sect of Judas of Galilee come to nought, Josephus assigns them a most important position.

That the Gospel compilers did make glaring chronological errors in regard to historic facts, we have evidence. The anachronism in Matthew xxiii. 35, is of itself sufficient to show this. Jesus is made to declare that the Jews of his generation shall suffer for "all the righteous bloodshed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Now Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, bk. iv., ch. 4, § 4) tells us Zacharias, son of Baruch, one of the best and most eminent citizens, was slain in the Temple at the time of the siege of Jerusalem, more than thirty years after the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. Lardner and other Christian evidence writers, seeing in what discredit the Gospels would be landed by the admission of this anachronism, allege that Zecharias, the son of Jehoiada, killed in the court of the Temple (2 Chron. xxiv.) is meant. But apart from the identifying designation "son of Barachias," is it feasible that Jesus, beginning with Abel, the first known innocent blood, would stop with Zacharias, who was killed B.C. 840, when there was a flood of righteous blood shed among the Jews after that date? Zachariah the prophet cannot be intended, for in his time the Temple was in ruins, and nothing is known concerning his death. That the Zecharias referred to is the one spoken of by Josephus is evident; for the writer of Matthew goes on to make Jesus lament over Jerusalem, and in the next chapter, detail many other events in connection with the destruction of the city.

These passages simply prove that the writer lived after A.D. 70. The apologists have to confess that the son of Jehoiada is confused with the son of Barachias, which, of itself, is instructive of the process by which events belonging to different ages got mixed up in the course of a few generations.

Another instance of the untrustworthy nature of the Gospel statements concerns the date assigned to the census, or enrolment for taxation, under Cyrenius (Luke ii. 2). According to the gospeller, this census was synchronous with the birth of Jesus. According to the Jewish historian, it took place ten years later—viz., after the deposition of Archelaus, Herod's son and successor, who had already ruled some time as king, and then for ten years as tetrarch (*Antiq.* xvii. 13, § 2, 5). No reason can be assigned for Josephus misdating this event, which, as an annalist, he must

have been able to determine. Indeed, it is evident that while Herod was living and acknowledged sovereign, such a census would not have been instituted.

We may also briefly refer to the death of Agrippa, whom the writer of the Acts (xii. 21, 22) evidently confounds with his grandfather, Herod the king. Luke introduces the angel of the Lord; whereas Josephus speaks of an owl as being present. Eusebius, pretending to cite from Josephus, has the audacity to substitute angel for owl to make the accounts the more resemble each other.

But to return to the Galileans and the process by which the founder of that sect got to be considered Jesus instead of Judas. Josephus tells us in the very same chapter of the Jewish Wars (bk. vi., ch. 5), in which he relates that miraculous signs appeared in the heavens in the year of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed at the Passover, brought forth a lamb—tells of one Jesus, the son of a plebeian, who, four years before the war began, came to the feast of the tabernacle, crying, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people." This was his cry by day and night. Some people in authority took up the man and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did he not either say anything for himself or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon the rulers, supposing there was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator, where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare, yet did he not make any supplication for himself, but at each stroke of the whip cried, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem." The procurator dismissed him as a madman, and he continued his cry for seven years and five months, when he saw his predictions fulfilled in earnest at the siege. Standing on the wall, he cried aloud, "Woe, woe to the city again, and to the holy house." And just as he added at the last, "Woe to myself also," there came a stone from a catapult which killed him immediately. There can be no doubt that the career and fate of this strange prophet must have left a deep impression on his age. The nature of his prediction, his insanity, and the mild, submissive persistence, remind us of traits of the Gospel Jesus. But there is yet another Jesus of a very different character, mentioned by Josephus in his account of his own life, as well as in the *Wars*. This Jesus was the leader of what Josephus calls "a seditious tumult of mariners and poor people" in Galilee. He was ruler in Tiberius and "an innovator beyond everybody else." Mr. George Solomon, in his curious book *The Jesus of History and the Jesus of Tradition Identified* (1880), argues that the Gospel Jesus is a mixture of these various historic elements. But manifestly none of these accounts represent the miraculous elements of the Gospels. Those, however, who hold that the Gospels are really nothing better than romances of the second century, will, at any rate, be disposed to think it possible that the romances have distorted events which can be seen more clearly in Josephus. Mr. Richard A. Proctor, the eminent populariser of astronomy, in his articles on "The Beginning of Christianity" in *Knowledge* (January, 1887), and in one on "The Gospel Life of Jesus" in the *Freethinkers' Magazine*, already referred to, endorses this view, and considers that the supernatural parts of the Gospel story are founded on solar myths. After alluding to these, he says:—

"The records of ordinary events, natural in their proper place, which appear with a non-natural aspect in the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, are apparently taken from the works of Josephus. They may, of course, have been simply derived from stories of the self-same events, as they really happened, handed on over a generation or two, by ordinary oral tradition. But most of them have undergone less change than is commonly found in stories thus carried on."

But, it will be properly asked, how came the evangelists to refer back the story of their Jesus to the days of Herod and Pilate? We have already seen that while, according to Matthew, Jesus was born during the reign of Herod, according to Luke, it was not until ten years after, and Jesus must have been but a stripling when brought before Pilate. How little was really known may be seen from the passage in John viii. 57, which implies that Jesus was over forty, while Irenæus, in the second century, argues on the authority of all the elders in Asia that Jesus reached to fifty years of age.

Now Josephus does tell us of a false prophet of the Samaritans who was put to death by Pilate. That he does so assures us the more that he knew nothing of Jesus. Luke, moreover, tells us (xiii. 1) that Pilate mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices; and this, though uncorroborated by any historian, may indicate that there was a tradition of persecution.

As to the crucifixion, Rabbi Wise, of Cincinnati, makes a suggestion which is surely worth consideration. There existed, at the commencement of the Christian era, a widespread and deep sympathy for a crucified King of the Jews. This was Antigonus, the last of the famous Maccabees. Herod, with the assistance of the Romans, defeated Antigonus, and took Jerusalem after an obstinate siege. Antigonus was handed over to Mark Antony, who had him executed as a common malefactor. Strabo, Plutarch, Dion Cassius, and Josephus all relate this as a remarkable event, for never previously had the Romans put a king to death so ignominiously. Strabo says that because the Jews obstinately refused to recognise Herod, Mark Antony was persuaded to try this severe method of removing their respect for their lawful king. Josephus tells us he was beheaded, but the seeming contradiction which probably arose from Josephus's well-known suppression of offensive truths is explained by Dion Cassius, who tells us that he was first whipped and crucified, and then had his throat cut. Rabbi Wise, in his *History of the Hebrew's Second Commonwealth*, writes:—

"Dion Cassius says: 'Antony now gave the kingdom to a certain Herod, and having stretched Antigonus on the cross and scourged him—which had never before been done to a king by the Romans—he put him to death.' The sympathies of the masses for the crucified King of Judæa—the heroic son of so many heroic ancestors—and the legends growing, in time, out of this historical nucleus, became, perhaps, the source from which Paul and the Evangelists preached Jesus as the crucified King of Judæa."

There was another event, unnoticed by either Mr. Solomon or Mr. Proctor, which may have contributed to place the advent of a Messiah in the days of Herod. It was a Messianic conspiracy which took place in his days, and which he quenched in blood. The passages in Josephus relating to this intrigue were first pointed out to me by my friend Mr. W. J. Birch—a gentleman deeply versed in all the literature of the first ages of Christianity, and who has written at some length on this point. They may be found in the *Wars of the Jews*, bk. i., ch. xxix., and in the *Antiquities*, bk. xvii., end of ch. ii. The wife of Pheroras the Tetrarch, brother of Herod, seems to have been prophesied to bear the coming King. Pheroras, being a just man, was asked to put her away, but was not so minded. Josephus, strangely enough, puts the blame of this conspiracy on the Pharisees, the principal of whom were slain, together with those of Herod's own family, who had consented to what was foretold; and one Bagoas, an eunuch, who is declared by Josephus to have "been puffed up by them, as though he should be named the father and benefactor of him who, by the prediction, was foretold to be their appointed King; for that this King would have all things in his power, and would enable Bagoas to marry, and to have children of his own body begotten." Perhaps this was in allusion to Isaiah lvi. 4, 5.

Lardner says of this curious business: "Josephus's account is a perfect comment upon Saint Matthew's." But may not the account of the author of the Gospel

according to St. Matthew be a comment on the transactions related by Josephus? That Herod should be concerned and should stifle in blood a conspiracy in which were engaged the heads of the court and some six thousand Pharisees, bears all the air of probability; but that he should be alarmed at the prophecy by Magi of the birth of a poor child, and, when he did not find the child, should slay all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years and under, without one word of notice from any historian, demands greater faith than is possessed by the present writer.

Where Is Hell?

THIS is a question of great importance, or, at least, of very great interest. According to the Christian scheme of salvation, the vast majority of us will have to spend eternity in "sulphurous and tormenting flames," and we are naturally curious as to the situation of a place in which we shall experience such delightful sensations.

But there is hardly any subject on which we can obtain so little information. The clergy are becoming more and more reticent about it. What little they ever knew is being secreted in the depths of their inner consciousness. When they are pressed for particulars they look injured. Sometimes they piteously exclaim "Don't." At other times, they wax wroth, and exclaim to the questioners about the situation of hell, "Wait till you get there."

Just as heaven used to be spoken of as "up above," hell was referred to as "down below." At one time, indeed, it was believed to be underground. Many dark caves were thought to lead to it, and some of them were called "Hell Mouth." Volcanoes were regarded as entrances to the fiery regions, and when there was an eruption it was thought that hell was boiling over. Classic mythology, before the time of Christ, had its entrances to hell at Acherusia, in Bithynia; at Avernus, in Campania, where Ulysses began his journey to the grisly abodes; the Sibyl's cave at Cumæ, in Argolis; at Tænarus, in the southern Peloponnesus, where Hercules descended, and dragged Cerberus up to the daylight; and the cave of Trophonius, in Lebæada—not to mention a dozen less noted places.

The Bible always speaks of hell as "down," and the Apostles' Creed tells us that Christ "descended" into hell. Exercising his imagination on this basis, the learned Faber discovered that, after the Second Advent, the saints would dwell on the crust of the earth, a thousand miles thick, and the damned in a sea of liquid fire inside. Thus the saints would tread over the heads of sinners, and flowers would bloom over the lake of damnation.

Sir John Maundeville, a most engaging old liar, says he found a descent into hell "in a perilous vale" in Abyssinia. According to the Celtic legend of "St. Brandon's Voyage," hell was not "down below," but in the moon, where the saint found Judas Iscariot suffering incredible tortures, but let off every Sunday to enjoy himself and prepare for a fresh week's agony. That master of bathos, Martin Tupper, finds this idea very suitable. He apostrophises the moon as "the wakeful eye of hell." Bailey, the author of *Festus*, is somewhat vaguer. Hell, he says, is in a world which rolls thief-like round the universe, imperceptible to human eyes:—

"A blind world, yet unlit by God,
Rolling around the extremest edge of light,
Where all things are disaster and decay."

Imaginations, of course, will differ. While Martin Tupper and other gentlemen look for hell in the direction of the moon, the Platonists, according to Macrobus, reckoned as the infernal regions the whole space between the moon and the earth. Whiston thought the comet, which appeared in his day, was hell. An English clergyman, referred to by Alger, maintained that hell was in the sun, whose spots were gatherings of the damned.

The reader may take his choice, and it is a liberal one. He may regard hell as under the earth, or in the moon, or in the sun, or in a comet, or in some concealed body careering through infinite space. And if the choice does not satisfy him, he is perfectly free to set up a theory of his own.

Father Pinamonti is the author of a little book called *Hell Open to Christians*, which is stamped with the authority of the Catholic Church, and issued for the special edification of children. This book declares that hell is four thousand miles distant, but it does not indicate the direction. Anyhow, the distance is so small that the priests might easily set up communication with the place. But perhaps it only exists in the geography or astronomy of faith.

Father Pinamonti seems particularly well informed on this subject. He says the walls of hell are "more than four thousand miles thick." That is a great thickness. But is it quite as thick as the heads of those who believe it?

Our belief is that hell is far nearer than the clergy teach. Omar Khayyam, the grand old Persian poet, the "large infidel," as Tennyson calls him, wrote as follows—in the splendid rendering of Edward Fitzgerald:—

"I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell,
And by and bye my soul returned to me,
And answered, I myself am heaven and hell."

Hell, like heaven, is within us, and about us in the hearts of our fellow-men. Yes, hell is on earth. Man's ignorance, superstition, stupidity, and selfishness, make a hell for him in this life. Let us cease, then, to dread the fabled hell of the priests, and set ourselves to the task of abolishing the real hell of hunger, vice, and misery.

The very Churches are getting ashamed of their theological hell. They are becoming more and more secularised. They call on the disciples of Christ to remedy the evils of this life, and respond to the cry of the poor for a better share of the happiness of this world. Their methods are generally childish, for they overlook the causes of social evil, but it is gratifying to see them drifting from the old moorings, and, little by little, abandoning the old dogmas. Some of the clergy, like the late Archdeacon Farrar, go to the length of saying that "hell is not a place." Precisely so, and that is the teaching of Secularism.

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

PUSHING THE PAPER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Sir,—May I be allowed, through the medium of your columns, to endorse your remarks with respect to the sale of the *Freethinker* at open-air meetings? The paper only needs to be properly pushed to ensure extensive sales. In Finsbury Park, on Sunday last, I cleared 141 copies at two meetings, and could have easily sold another fifty in the evening. I have placed a standing order with your shop manager for 200 copies for future Sabbaths.

I nailed a more or less elegant poster (home-made) to the front of the platform and instructed my commissionaire to parade around a little, before planting the standard. The bill was a fine study in black and brimstone, backed by cartridge paper—most appropriate for brimstone—and it "caught on." I have never tried this before, but the new Bill has now become Law, and will come into operation for "regulars," and if I do not soon reach a sale of 250 copies per day, *i.e.*, per Sabbath day, then I am no "blatant blasphemer" (*vide Islington Gazette* leaderette). Let me say, however, a bill is not all that is needed. Continual mention of the paper and its contents should be made by the speaker, and someone should be walking round about the audience all the time, and, if then, sales are not effected, the "Devil" is in it. But that "If you want 'em, come and ask for 'em" attitude, is no good at all. It is enough to make the very paper flutter round the crowd on its own account, seeking for purchasers; and it is a shame that a journal, so brilliantly conducted, should not be more widely circulated, which it might easily be under more pushful methods.

June 28.

ERNEST PACK.

An onlightened man will give up even riches and life for the sake of others: what can be better than renunciation of all things for the sake of the good, since death is certain.—*The Hitopadesa.*

Obituary.

I REGRET to announce the decease of Mrs. E. Gates, age 41, wife of one of the members of the Bethnal Green Branch. The lady was in life an ardent Freethinker, and had expressed a wish that I should conduct the service at her graveside. The funeral service at Manor Park Cemetery was largely attended by representative Freethinkers, including Dr. Nichols, L. Anderson, and the Secretary of the West Ham Branch.—J. W. MARSHALL.

LIBERTY.

Freedom, as every schoolboy knows,
Once shrieked as Kosciusko fell;
On every wind, indeed, that blows
I hear her yell.

She screams wherever monarchs meet,
And parliaments as well,
To bind the chains about her feet
And toll her knell.

And when the sovereign people cast
The votes they cannot spell,
Upon the lung-impeted blast
Her clamors swell.

For all to whom the power's given
To sway or to compel,
Among themselves apportion heaven
And give her hell.

—Ambrose Bierce ("Dod Grile.")

If Pigs were Methodists and Bunyans,
They'd make a sin of sage and onions;
The curse of endless flames endorse
On every boat of apple-sauce;
Give brine to Satan, and assess
Black puddings with blood-guiltiness;
Yea, call down heavenly fire and smoke—
To burn all Epping into coke.

—Tom Hood.

IN THE NAME OF GOOD ORDER.

"What are they moving the church for?"

"Well, stranger, I'm mayor of these diggin's, an' I'm fer law enforcement. We've got an ordinance what says no saloon shall be nearer than three hundred feet from a church. I gave 'em three days to move the church."

MICHAEL AND TERRENCE.

When the late Dr. Bartlett, of Woburn, was pension examiner under the Cleveland administration, he was one day examining witnesses. He asked one of them:—

"Terrence McCarty, do you swear that you know the applicant, Michael Murphy, who has made application for increase of pension?"

"You may well say that I do, sir," replied Terrence. "Wasn't him and me shot in the same leg at Antietam?"

A NECESSARY PRECAUTION.

Neighbor: "No one ever hears you and your husband exchanging words. Do you get along so excellently together?"

Wife: "Not at all; but we discovered that the maid listened at the door. Now we quarrel only on Sunday afternoons between three and six, when she is out of the house."

WHY THE APOSTLES FISHED.

One of Private John Allen's favorite stories is about a Georgia bishop.

One of the members of the bishop's church met the reverend gentleman one Sunday afternoon and was horrified to find the bishop carrying a shotgun.

"My dear bishop," he protested, "I am shocked to find you out shooting on Sunday. The apostles did not go shooting on Sunday."

"No," replied the bishop, "they did not. The shooting was very bad in Palestine, and they went fishing instead."

EXTEMPORANEOUS.

A negro minister from Georgia, who was visiting friends in New York city, went one Sunday to the Cathedral on Fifth-avenue.

He was very much impressed by the service, especially by the choir-boys in the processional and recessional. When he returned to the South he resolved to introduce the same thing into his church; so he collected fifteen or twenty little darkies and drilled them until he had them well trained.

One Sunday, the congregation were greatly surprised to see the choir-boys marching in, singing the processional. The minister noticed that something was wrong; the boy in front was not carrying anything. He leaned over the pulpit, and in order to avoid attracting attention, he chanted in tune to the song they were singing:—

"What—have you done—with the incense-pot?"

The little darky, with great presence of mind, chanted back:—

"I—left it in—the aisle—it was too—damn hot."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15, James Marshall, "The Will of the Father"; 6.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Christ's Fairy Tales."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "What Constitutes Freethought?" Brockwell Park, Guy A. Aldred, 3.15, "Christian Criminals and Atheist Moralists"; 6.15, "Robert Taylor, C.E.S., Infidel."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 10.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The New Theology."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, F. A. Davies, "Religion and Reform."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, H. S. Wishart, a Lecture.

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

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.**OUTDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Picnic at Warwick. Train from Snow Hill Station at 10. Dinner 12.30, tea 5, at Bateman's, Smith-street, Warwick.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, meets for Discussion; The Mound, 7, a Lecture.

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S.: Market Cross, on Saturday, at 8, George Whitehead, a Lecture.

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