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So far as a man thinks, he is free.—EMERSON.

Cowper and Moses.

DR. JOHNSON once said that the preferable book is one that can be held in the hand in a chair by the fire. Folios are venerable and imposing; one takes them from the shelf and opens them with a kind of reverence; here indeed, one says, is weighty literature; but one must sit up formally at a desk to read them, and it is hardly possible to regard them with a tender affection. It is different with a smaller and lighter book that can be read without discomfort in any position. One can become quite attached to it. Yes, Dr. Johnson was right. But what would he have said of the pocket editions which are now issued by so many different publishers? These are the bibliophile's luxury. You slip one of them into your pocket, and the hundreds of pages—by means of India paper and limp leather binding—shall not cause a perceptible bulge. It may be a volume of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Sir Thomas Browne, or Swift, or Coleridge, or Wordsworth, or Byron, or Shelley, or De Quincey—or some other of the noble and illustrious muster-roll of English literature, to say nothing of the literatures of the rest of the world. The sweet, neat volume, full of precious stuff, lies snugly in its receptacle. You may not need it, but it is there; and when the hour for reading strikes it is instantly available. The mood comes upon you, or you are kept waiting by the rain or some other inconvenience; be the cause what it may, your book is handy, and you can slip it back into your pocket again in a moment, becoming at once an ordinary unlearned citizen; whereas a book that must be carried in the hand, or under the arm, proclaims you as an exceptionally literate person, and surrounds you with an atmosphere of insularity.

Personally, I find these pocket editions an admirable excuse and opportunity for reading old favorites again. I have refreshed my mind with them a thousand times that I should otherwise have missed. I read big books less than I used to, and little books more. It is another case of "dear little one." And when a woman hears a man call her *that*, she knows she has the surest sign of his being in love with her.

One of the pocket editions I have been reading lately is Cowper's *Task*. I read Cowper through in the old days, when I had more leisure, when youth and perfect health made life a perpetual holiday, and when I read everything from Chaucer to Tennyson—from Hume and Gibbon to Grote and Froude—from Bacon and Hobbes to Mill and Spencer—and from Defoe to Dickens. Of late years, I have had less time for desultory reading, and I have rarely dipped into Cowper's poems, except to renew acquaintance with two or three short pieces that are unforgettable. But I have read *The Task* through again with real pleasure, and I will venture to say a few words about it to my readers.

Do my readers know Cowper? I hope some of them do. He is perhaps the most delightful of our letter-writers. His "divine chit-chat," as Coleridge

called it, is good sense and good feeling couched in the purest English. Everybody knows his "John Gilpin." His "Boadicea" is a fine poem, and the highest grace of tenderness is enshrined in the lines to his mother's picture. *The Task* is a long poem in blank verse. It is mainly the work of a social satirist. Sometimes the composition is more pedantic than poetical; sometimes it is fine and striking. A few lines have passed into every man's budget of quotations:—

"God made the country and man made the town."

"England with all thy faults I love thee still."

"The cups
That cheer but not inebriate."

"The toil
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up."

There is the episode of Crazy Kate, which is worthy of Crabbe. Here and there are lines of exquisite force and modulation. One exquisite phrase—"woo a soul"—seems to belong to a greater age than Cowper's; and one line—

"I saw far off the weedy fallows smile"—

has quite a haunting suggestion of George Meredith, and might well have been a line, though, of course, not of the greatest, in *Modern Love*. It should be said, also, that Cowper's ethical teaching is always manly and lofty. He hates cruelty, loathes strife, despises vanity, denounces oppression, champions the rights of man (his own phrase), hurls the leven of his wrath at slavery, and inculcates the humane treatment of all the lower animals. He meant what he said in exclaiming—

"I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

What a pity that a man of such delicate refinement of nature should be martyred by the Christian religion, be haunted and overwhelmed by the sense of sin, be driven to imagine that he (even he!) had committed unpardonable offences, was cast off by God, and a lost soul doomed to everlasting hell! It is enough to make one curse the creed that cursed this amiable poet.

Were it not for the tragedy of Cowper's life, one could smile at his stiff orthodoxy. "Revelation," he said, "satisfies all doubts." What he found in the Bible he believed. He rebuked the geological sceptics who were then beginning to alarm the clergy:—

"Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn
That He who made it and revealed its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age."

A passage like that is a fossilised thing to the present age, after the lapse of rather less than a century and a quarter. Moses has become a considerably mythical personage; the author of Genesis was mistaken as to the age of the earth—and could not help being so; and the six thousand years of the Bible chronology is only a paltry fraction of the world's antiquity. Cowper's beautiful humanity is a thing to rejoice in; his theology was but the common superstition of his time.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Disease that Kills Religion.

ONE of the largest facts in human history is religion. It is a phenomenon upon which religious advocates dwell at inordinate length, but without anything like an adequate appreciation of either its cause or its significance. They point out with great glee that humanity at all times, and under all conditions, have possessed a religion; but they ignore the fact that, except under the most primitive conditions, human advancement has meant a weakening of religious conviction. Under very primitive conditions gods are created with a lavish profusion, and flourish with the grotesque exuberance of an untouched tropical forest. Under very primitive conditions the gods are more sharply defined, their "spheres of influence" marked out, the extent of their powers indicated. Advancing civilisation sees them diminished in number and still further weakened in power, until their very weakness and impotency is apt to breed the kind of sentimental pity one feels for a millionaire become a pauper, or an autocratic monarch reduced to the level of a simple citizen. Like their human creator, the gods bring with their birth the promise of death. They are all born, flourish, and decay under fundamentally identical conditions. Sooner or later mankind turns its back on its gods, and the causes are patent to all who attentively study the subject.

The rejection of religious beliefs is no new phenomenon. It covers all civilised history. In one of his wonderfully modern Dialogues of the Gods, Lucian introduces the various Olympian deities discussing—like a modern Church Council—the existence of unbelief among mankind. They are concerned that mankind is rapidly reaching the stage of either not believing in their existence, or not troubling about them. There is a great deal of talk, and at length one of the minor deities asks:—

"What other conclusions could they arrive at, when they saw the confusion around them? Good men neglected, perishing in penury and slavery; and profligate wretches, wealthy, honored, and powerful. Sacred religious temple-robbers undiscovered and unpunished; devotees and saints beaten and crucified. With such phenomena before them, of course men have doubted our existence..... We affect surprise that men who are not fools decline to put their faith in us. We ought rather to be pleased that there is a man left to say his prayers. We are among ourselves, with no strangers present. Tell us, then, Zeus, have you really ever taken pains to distinguish between good men and bad? You cannot say you have. Theseus, not you, destroyed the robbers in Attica. As far as Providence were concerned, Sciron and Pity-O-Campus might have murdered and plundered to the end of time. If Eurystheus had not looked into matters, and sent Hercules upon his labors, little would you have troubled yourself with the Hydras and the Centaurs. Let us be candid. All that we have really cared for has been a steady altar service. Everything else has been left to chance. And now men are opening their eyes. They perceive that whether they pray or don't pray, go to church or don't go to church, makes no difference to them. And we are receiving our deserts."

The case could hardly be put more effectively. It is the appeal to experience with a vengeance, and it is experience that sows and develops the seeds of the one disease that is sooner or later fatal to all shams and to all superstitions. For the one disease that has killed god after god is that of being found out. The fear that protects them from examination dies out, and they are seen for what they are—phantasmal projections of human ignorance, fashioned and perpetuated by human fear and folly.

How long is it since man began to find out his gods in matters of physical science? For thousands of generations the gods dominated the world of physical phenomena. From the revolution of a planet to the fall of a rain-shower the gods ruled everything. Their immediate influence was seen in all; to merely question their power was the greatest of crimes. Bit by bit this vast field was reclaimed—a task at the side of which the conquest of the frozen

North or of the heat-stricken tropics was the merest child's-play. The process is now practically complete. Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Laplace, Lyell, with numerous other workers, have given man a finished physical universe in which there is simply no room for the supernatural—nothing for the gods to do. All that was once done by the direct agency of the gods is now produced as the necessary consequences of the motions of a cosmic mechanism with which any outside interference is simply inconceivable. Physics and chemistry know nothing of the supernatural—if it exists, it is outside their departments; and a chemist or physicist would no more dream nowadays of bringing in "God" as the cause of any of his phenomena than he would attempt to revive the cosmical theory that pictured the earth as resting on the back of a tortoise.

In some departments of life the process is not yet completed. But it is going on, and that is something to be thankful for.

For how many generations have the gods, for example, held sway in matters of morals? So long that still to a large number of people the conception of a healthy morality without religion sounds more or less of an absurdity. The gods have been looked upon as both the creators and the upholders of morality, and their disappearance would involve, it is thought, moral chaos. Better knowledge is correcting this error. The world is beginning to realise that, in their modern form at least, the gods are the expressions, not the creators, of the moral sense. Nearly all the modifications that have occurred in the character of God have had as their cause the play of man's partly-liberated moral sense upon his religious beliefs. The current teaching concerning the character of God is what it is because improved ideas of morals found the older teachings to be ethically unsavory. Man refines his gods, even in the process of destroying them. The refinement is, in fact, part of the process of destruction. It only serves to emphasise their human origin.

As in one direction there has been built up, piece by piece, a physical universe, self-contained and self-sufficient, so in another we see a moral world developing along the same lines. Deep down in the animal world we can see the beginning of our moral nature. We can trace, more or less completely, its development from the purely animal to the semi-human, and from the lowest human stage to the highest. The history of the moral sense may be difficult enough to trace in full detail, but it is plain enough in its general outline, and the knowledge of detail is certain to come one day. At any rate, there is no room for doubt that normal human associations are alone adequate to explain the origin and development of every one of the moral qualities, not that the gods have, here as elsewhere, been receiving credit that is not due to them. Very largely, indeed, they have prevented instead of aiding moral development. In the name of God vices have been stamped as virtues and virtues branded as vices. In the name of God the moral sense has been stunted and deformed, so that men have been led to praise in God conduct they would have denounced as barbarous in their fellow-men.

So, too, in social life. Once upon a time, the existence of a State without a religion would have been scouted as an impossibility. Much as Christians have quarrelled on other matters, they were, until very recently, in agreement upon this. The contest between Nonconformists and the State religion has been far more a question of what religion should be taught by the State than aught else. Today, the fact that there is a growing number who hold that the State has no legitimate right to interfere in matters of religion is proof that here, too, the gods have been found out. It is a recognition that the belief in the gods contributes nothing that is of vital importance to society at large. And this is an enormous step in advance. It marks the beginning of the end, and registers the recognition of the truth that the real contributions to social development have come apart from the gods, or in

defiance of their opposition. People are recognising, as Lucian did, that going to church, the offering of prayers, the belief in religious doctrines, have no real bearing on social welfare. They see, now as then, good men punished and bad ones rewarded, and "men who are not fools," and who look the world squarely and honestly in the face, decline to put their faith in deities who are either incapable of doing anything or too careless to exert their power.

In all directions the gods are being found out, their real nature understood; and no deity that the world has ever seen has been proof against such a discovery. Their pretended power is seen to owe its existence to human weakness, their wisdom to human folly, and their care for man to man's carelessness of his fellows. Yet, because old beliefs die hard and because people shrink from treading unaccustomed roads, the gods die but slowly. Fear is only quite killed by knowledge, and knowledge is of slow growth. There is an old German story of a ghost that had for long terrified a neighborhood. People did not wait to see it; it was enough the news came that it was abroad. At last some villagers met the ghost in a place from which escape was impossible. Terrified, they watched its approach, until, when it came close, the spectre obligingly removed its skull and showed them that it was perfectly empty and harmless. So we have for generations been terrified by this spectre of deity, not a whit more dangerous than the Germanic ghost. It is powerful only to such as lack the courage to come to close quarters with it. All others are under no delusions as to its real nature and value.

C. COHEN.

The Real Man.

IMMORTALITY is a subject which philosophers and theologians are ever fond of discussing, and concerning which they have never been able to see eye to eye. In the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, the erudite idealist, Professor Josiah Royce, of Harvard University, tries his metaphysical hand at the vexed problem. He gives us his views on man, time, eternity, and God; and these views are such that, in his opinion, immortality is an unavoidable inference from them. Man is immortal because he wants to be, and he wants to be because God is as yet dissatisfied with the expression of himself in him, and will not let him alone until he arrives at perfection. This is a very old argument, but it sounds new as stated by the Professor. He says:—

"In me, God is discontented with his own temporal expression. This very discontent I myself am. It constitutes me. This individual thirst for infinity, this personal warfare with my own temporal maladjustment to my own ideal—this is my personality. . . . In me the temporal being, in me now, God is in need, is hungry, is thirsty, is in prison. In me, then, God is dissatisfied. But he is God. He is absolute. Eternity is his. He must be satisfied. . . . As an ethical personality, I have an insatiable need for an opportunity to find, to define, and to accomplish my individual and unique duty. This need of mine is God's need in me and of me. Seen, then, from the eternal point of view, my personal life must be an endless series of deeds."

Such, in brief, is Professor Royce's argument for immortality. It is ingenious, it is subtle, and it is cleverly worked out; but to what does it really amount? What is the practical import of it? It is a purely metaphysical argument, and of no evidential value whatever. It may be logically flawless and philosophically sound; but it is built on a foundation of sand. Let us examine it.

Everything in Professor Royce's argument rests on his definition of time. To him, man has reality only as a being "of will and of meaning, of ideals and of personal character, whose value you acknowledge. This real man is—what he is worth." This definition of man naturally leads up to that of time. "Time, to my mind," he says, "is an essential practical aspect of reality, which derives its whole

meaning from the nature and from the life of the will." Of course, this idealistic definition of time involves the following conclusion:—

"Take away from your conception of the world the idea of a being who has a will, who has a practical relation to facts; take away the idea of a being who looks before and after, who strives, seeks, hopes, pursues, records, reports, promises, accomplishes; take away, I say, every idea of such a being from your world, and whatever then remains in your conceived world, gives you no right to a conception of time as any real aspect of things."

Professor Royce waxes exceedingly merry over what he terms "the time of the timepieces and of mechanical science, the time of geology and of physics," saying that it "is indeed but an abstraction." "It has no ultimate meaning," he adds, "except in relation to beings that have a will, that live a practical life, and that mean to do something." "Apart from their needs, time is nothing." Now, in addition to the individual will, there is what the Professor calls "a world-will." "If you look beneath the abstractions," he says, "you find that time is in essence the form of the finite will, and that when I acknowledge one universal world-time, I do so only by extending the conception of the will to the whole world. If I say, 'There is to come a future,' I mean merely, my will acknowledges deeds yet to be done, and defines as the future reality of the universe a will continuous with my will—a world-will, in whose expression, my present deed has its place."

We are now enveloped in a fine Scotch mist; but we shall soon be out of it, and we shall appreciate the clear, bracing atmosphere of common sense all the more for having passed through it. The question which naturally arises here is, what bearing has this definition of time upon the problem of immortality? The contention is, that "all our wills are together partial expressions of a single conscious volitional process—the process whereby the world-will gets expressed in finite forms and deeds." This finite world-process, in all its parts, is an imperfect expression of a being who is within it and beyond it—a being omnipotent, omnipresent, absolutely perfect, yet expressing or realising himself in and by means of imperfection. The most perfect expression of God yet discovered is man, and yet the fact of which man is most keenly conscious is his own imperfection. He is at war with himself, "dissatisfied with his present opportunity to express his will." Therefore, he demands a future, and must have it. He is a will burning to do something, to express itself ever more perfectly, to find final satisfaction, self-peace.

Such is the working out of Professor Royce's argument for personal immortality. It is a well-reasoned argument; but the reasoning is altogether in a circle. Unproved assertions are used to prove each other, and therefore nothing is proven. The existence of a world-will is only a hypothesis, the only will known to us being the individual will. All other wills are simply conceptual, visionary. God, whether immanent or transcendent, or both, is likewise merely an assumption, for the proving or disproving of which we have absolutely no data. Professor Royce's distinction between the phenomenal and the real man is equally gratuitous, and any argument based upon it is utterly worthless. Listen to this:—

"A man endures in time while his body lives; but this is only the man as viewed in relation to the clocks and to the calendars—the phenomenal man—the man of the street and the market-place, of the psychological laboratory and of the scientific record, of the insurance agents and of the newspapers."

That is the quintessence of flippancy. *Man in the body is the only man we know.* He who walks along the street, transacts business in the market-place, keeps the scientific records, works in the psychological laboratory, and writes, prints, and reads newspapers—he is the very man who thinks, and loves, and struggles, and performs deeds of will and purpose. No other sort of man has ever yet given himself realisable expression. Man out of the body

and out of time exists alone in the metaphysician's brain. To common sense, idealism is laughably absurd. Take this sentence: "Matter is a conceptual entity, a phenomenon, a creation of the scientific point of view." The meaning is, that matter is not real, does not exist except phenomenally. The human body is a mere appearance, a phantom, the only reality being mind, soul, spirit. Metaphysically, this may be sound doctrine; but practically it is unadulterated nonsense. If a rock were to roll down the mountain-side, and fall on Professor Royce, would the rock be then nothing but "a conceptual entity, a phenomenon, a creation of the scientific point of view"? And where would then be the real man now claimed to be resident in the phenomenal Professor Royce, the man of the street and the philosophical class-room? The phenomenal rock is yet real enough to destroy all traces of the mind which is supposed to constitute the real man.

No, we cannot distinguish between man and his body, because apart from the body there is not the shadow of evidence that man exists. Science recognises no such distinction. It is very easy to assert that the brain is only the instrument of mind, but it would be safe to challenge the wisest man living to demonstrate the existence of mind without a brain. Therefore we legitimately conclude that the man who stands before you in the form of an animated piece of matter is the only man whose existence is verifiable. There he is, with his harmonies and disharmonies, his joys and his sorrows, his strength and his weakness, his pleasures and his sufferings. Can you for a moment imagine that an omnipotent and all-good God made him and delights to see himself reflected in him? Professor Royce actually says that the absolutely perfect God produced such a shockingly imperfect creature in order that his gaining perfection through unspeakable suffering might enhance the Divine blessedness. Of course, in so far as man is God, or a manifestation of God, God himself is imperfect, and is now slowly being made perfect through animal and human suffering. But dismissing such an intolerable and impossible being, whether transcendent or immanent, we must be content to think of man as a member of a race full of imperfections, structural and functional, and existing in fulfilment of no intelligible purpose whatever. What the object of existence is, if it has any, no one can tell. Intelligence is a comparatively recent product of the process of evolution, and purpose is the offspring of intelligence; and the amount of purpose any being brings to bear upon life is in exact proportion to the degree of intelligence which he possesses.

Professor Royce says: "God in eternity wins the conscious satisfaction of my essential personal need. So much I can assert." Yes, so much, and much more; but no amount of asserting makes a thing true. God "in eternity" is an empty phrase. All we know is that we live as part and parcel of Nature, and that our happiness in life is dependent upon our degree of harmony with our surroundings. The real man is he who manages to get the most out of life for himself and his neighbors, the man who makes the street and the market-place, the psychological laboratory and the scientific record, insurance agents and newspapers, contributories to the efficiency of his life as a member of the race. He is the real man who attends to the education of his brain and of the brains of the rising generations. The real man is a lover of his kind and a practical worker, not a mere dabbler in metaphysical subtleties and fantastical speculations. The real man cares nothing about personal immortality after death, but is prepared to spend his life in the service of the race that its permanence may be crowned with joy and happiness.

J. T. LLOYD.

Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home.

—Shelley

What Would You Substitute for the Bible as a Moral Guide?

BY THE LATE COL. R. G. INGERSOLL.

You ask me what I would "substitute for the Bible as a moral guide."

I know that many people regard the Bible as the only moral guide and believe that in that book only can be found the true and perfect standard of morality.

There are many good precepts, many wise sayings and many good regulations and laws in the Bible, and these are mingled with bad precepts, with foolish sayings, with absurd rules and cruel laws.

But we must remember that the Bible is a collection of many books written centuries apart, and that it in part represents the growth and tells in part the history of a people. We must also remember that the writers treat of many subjects. Many of these writers have nothing to say about right or wrong, about vice or virtue.

The book of Genesis has nothing about morality. There is not a line in it calculated to shed light on the path of conduct. No one can call that book a moral guide. It is made up of myth and miracle, of tradition and legend.

In Exodus, we have an account of the manner in which Jehovah delivered the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

We now know that the Jews were never enslaved by the Egyptians; that the entire story is a fiction. We know this, because there is not found in Hebrew a word of Egyptian origin, and there is not found in the language of the Egyptians a word of Hebrew origin. This being so, we know that the Hebrews and Egyptians could not have lived together for hundreds of years.

Certainly Exodus was not written to teach morality. In that book you cannot find one word against human slavery. As a matter of fact, Jehovah was a believer in that institution.

The killing of cattle with disease and hail, the murder of the first-born, so that in every house was death, because the King refused to let the Hebrews go, certainly was not moral; it was fiendish. The writer of that book regarded all the people of Egypt, their children, their flocks and herds, as the property of Pharaoh, and these people and these cattle were killed, not because they had done anything wrong, but simply for the purpose of punishing the king. Is it possible to get any morality out of this history?

All the laws found in Exodus, including the Ten Commandments, so far as they are really good and sensible, were at that time in force among all the peoples of the world.

Murder is, and always was, a crime, and always will be, as long as a majority of people object to being murdered.

Industry always has been and always will be the enemy of larceny.

The nature of man is such that he admires the teller of truth and despises the liar. Among all tribes, among all people, truth telling has been considered a virtue and false swearing or false speaking a vice.

The love of parents for children is natural, and this love is found among all the animals that live. So the love of children for parents is natural, and was not and cannot be created by law. Love does not spring from a sense of duty, nor does it bow in obedience to commands.

So men and women are not virtuous because of anything in books or creeds.

All the Ten Commandments that are good were old, were the result of experience. The commandments that were original with Jehovah were foolish.

The worship of "any other God" could not have been worse than the worship of Jehovah, and nothing could have been more absurd than the sacredness of the Sabbath.

If commandments had been given against slavery and polygamy, against wars of invasion and extermination, against religious persecution in all its forms, so that the world could be free, so that the brain might be developed and the heart civilised, then we might, with propriety, call such commandments a moral guide.

Before we can truthfully say that the Ten Commandments constitute a moral guide, we must add and subtract. We must throw away some, and write others in their places.

The commandments that have a known application here, in this world, and treat of human obligations are good, the others have no basis in fact, or experience.

Many of the regulations found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are good. Many are absurd and cruel.

The entire ceremonial of worship is insane.

Most of the punishment for violations of laws are unphilosophic and brutal.....The fact is, that the Pentateuch upholds nearly all crimes, and to call it a moral guide is as absurd as to say that it is merciful or true.

Nothing of a moral nature can be found in Joshua or Judges. These books are filled with crimes, with massacres

and murders. They are about the same as the real history of the Apache Indians.

The story of Ruth is not particularly moral.

In first and second Samuel there is not one word calculated to develop the brain or conscience.

Jehovah murdered seventy thousand Jews because David took a census of the people. David, according to the account, was the guilty one, but only the innocent were killed.

In first and second Kings can be found nothing of ethical value. All the kings who refused to obey the priests were denounced, and all the crowned wretches who assisted the priests, were declared to be the favorites of Jehovah. In these books, there cannot be found one word in favor of liberty.

There are some good Psalms, and there some that are infamous. Most of these Psalms are selfish. Many of them are passionate appeals for revenge.

The story of Job shocks the heart of every good man. In this book there is some poetry, some pathos, and some philosophy, but the story of this drama called Job, is heartless to the last degree. The children of Job are murdered to settle a little wager between God and the Devil. Afterward, Job having remained firm, other children are given in the place of the murdered ones. Nothing, however, is done for the children who were murdered.

The book of Esther is utterly absurd, and the only redeeming feature in the book is that the name of Jehovah is not mentioned.

I like the Song of Solomon because it tells of human love, and that is something I can understand. That book, in my judgment, is worth all the ones that go before it, and is a far better moral guide.

There are some wise and merciful Proverbs. Some are selfish and some are flat and commonplace.

I like the book of Ecclesiastes because there you find some sense, some poetry, and some philosophy. Take away the interpolations and it is a good book.

Of course, there is nothing in Nehemiah or Ezra to make men better, nothing in Jeremiah or Lamentations calculated to lessen vice, and only a few passages in Isaiah that can be used in a good cause.

In Ezekiel and Daniel, we find only ravings of the insane.

In some of the minor prophets there is now and then a good verse, now and then an elevated thought.

You can, by selecting passages from different books, make a very good creed, and by selecting passages from different books, you can make a very bad creed.

The trouble is that the spirit of the Old Testament, its disposition, its temperament, is bad, selfish, and cruel. The most fiendish things are commanded, commended, and applauded.

The stories that are told of Joseph, of Elisha, of Daniel and Gideon, and of many others, are hideous; hellish.

On the whole, the Old Testament cannot be considered a moral guide.

Jehovah was not a moral God. He had all the vices, and he lacked all the virtues. He generally carried out his threats, but he never faithfully kept a promise.

At the same time, we must remember that the Old Testament is a natural production, that it was written by savages who were slowly crawling toward the light. We must give them credit for the noble things they said, and we must be charitable enough to excuse their faults and even their crimes.

I know that many Christians regard the Old Testament as the foundation and the New as the superstructure, and while many admit that there are faults and mistakes in the Old Testament, they insist that the New is the flower and perfect fruit.

I admit that there are many good things in the New Testament, and if we take from that book the dogmas of eternal pain, of infinite revenge, of the atonement, of human sacrifice, of the necessity of shedding blood; if we throw away the doctrine of non-resistance, of loving enemies, the idea that prosperity is the result of wickedness, that poverty is a preparation for Paradise, if we throw all these away and take the good, sensible passages, applicable to conduct, then we can make a fairly good moral guide,—narrow, but moral.

Of course, many important things would be left out. You would have nothing about human rights, nothing in favor of the family, nothing for education, nothing for investigation, for thought and reason, but still you would have a fairly good moral guide.

On the other hand, if you would take the foolish passages, the extreme ones, you could make a creed that would satisfy an insane asylum.

If you take the cruel passages, the verses that inculcate eternal hatred, verses that writhe and hiss like serpents, you can make a creed that would shock the heart of a hyena.

It may be that no book contains better passages than the New Testament, but certainly no book contains worse.

Below the blossom of love you find the thorn of hatred; on the lips that kiss, you find the poison of the cobra.

The Bible is not a moral guide.

Any man who follows faithfully all its teachings is an enemy of society and will probably end his days in a prison or an asylum.

What is morality?

In this world we need certain things. We have many wants. We are exposed to many dangers. We need food, fuel, raiment, and shelter, and besides these wants, there is, what may be called, the hunger of the mind.

We are conditioned beings, and our happiness depends upon conditions. There are certain things that diminish, certain things that increase, well-being. There are certain things that destroy, and there are others that preserve.

Happiness, including its highest forms, is, after all, the only good; and everything, the result of which is to produce or secure happiness, is good, that is to say, moral. Everything that destroys or diminishes well-being, is bad, that is to say, immoral. In other words, all that is good is moral, and all that is bad is immoral.

What then is, or can be called, a moral guide? The shortest possible answer is one word: Intelligence.

We want the experience of mankind, the true history of the race. We want the history of intellectual development, of the growth of the ethical, of the idea of justice, of conscience, of charity, of self-denial. We want to know the paths and roads that have been travelled by the human mind.

These facts in general, these histories in outline, the results reached, the conclusions formed, the principles evolved, taken together, would form the best conceivable moral guide.

We cannot depend on what are called "inspired books," or the religions of the world. These religions are based on the supernatural, and, according to them, we are under obligation to worship and obey some supernatural being, or beings. All these religions are inconsistent with intellectual liberty. They are the enemies of thought, of investigation, of mental honesty. They destroy the manliness of man. They promise eternal rewards for belief, for credulity, for what they call faith.

This is not only absurd, but it is immoral.

These religions teach the slave virtues. They make inanimate things holy, and falsehoods sacred. They create artificial crimes. To eat meat on Friday, to enjoy yourself on Sunday, to eat on fast-days, to be happy in Lent, to dispute a priest, to ask for evidence, to deny a creed, to express your sincere thought, all these are acts are sins, crimes against some god. To give your honest opinion about Jehovah, Mohammed, or Christ, is far worse than to maliciously slander your neighbor. To question or doubt miracles, is far worse than to deny known facts. Only the obedient, the credulous, the cringers, the kneelers, the meek, the unquestioning, the true believers, are regarded as moral, as virtuous. It is not enough to be honest, generous, and useful; not enough to be governed by evidence, by facts. In addition to this, you must believe. These things are the foes of morality. They subvert all natural conceptions of virtue.

All "inspired books," teaching that what the supernatural commands is right, and right because commanded, and that what the supernatural prohibits is wrong, and wrong because prohibited, are absurdly unphilosophic.

And all "inspired books," teaching that only those who obey the commands of the supernatural are, or can be, truly virtuous, and that unquestioning faith will be rewarded with eternal joy, are grossly immoral.

Again I say: Intelligence is the only moral guide.

The history of human-kind to trace, [unriddled,
Since Eve—the first of dupes—our doom
A certain portion of the human race
Has certainly a taste for being diddled.

—Tom Hood.

Evangelist.—A bearer of good tidings, particularly (in a religious sense) such as assure us of our own salvation, and the damnation of our neighbors.—*Ambrose Bierce.*

A wise man looks on another man's wife as his own mother; on the possessions of another as a clod of earth; on all creatures as himself.—*The Hitopadesa.*

Acid Drops.

Rev. R. J. Campbell wrote a letter warmly supporting the candidature of Mr. Pete Curran at Jarrow. This annoyed the *Christian World*, which called Mr. Campbell's "intervention" *unfortunate*, and sneered at it, at the same time, as "unlikely to be very helpful to the Labor party." The *C. W.* warmly supported Mr. Hughes, the Liberal candidate. There was no politics in that, of course. It was Mr. Campbell who was guilty of "politics." In other words, he failed to support the Nonconformist candidate—who, by the way, *lost*.

Father Tyrrell praises Mr. Campbell for speaking his mind, but does not agree with him in all things, especially with regard to Jesus Christ. Father Tyrrell wants an absolute Savior, to whom he can sing:—

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

What an abject attitude! How much braver and nobler was Henley's "I am the captain of my soul"!

General Booth had his big reception at the Albert Hall. It was as well organised as a first-rate circus. "I have travelled 25,000 miles," he said, "held 93 meetings, addressed 140,000 people, seen 2,084 persons at the mercy-seat, interviewed 265 press representatives, and written 50 articles." Yes, but what *good* had he done? There is no particular merit in mere activity. We have always understood that Satan was the busiest person on earth.

Rev. Dr. Rashdall, of New College, Oxford, made the Church Union members sit up. He took a strong objection to the ethics of some of the Psalms. He also condemned a great many Old Testament lessons. Out of thirty-two such lessons, he found only six that were edifying, and eighteen were distinctly *unedifying*. Why should they go on telling children stories like the downfall of Jericho? Were there six bishops who believed it—in their studies? Look at the story of Balaam's ass and that of the floating iron axe-head. Look at the horrible stories of Jael, the murder of Agag, and Jehu. Look at the Second Commandment, describing God as "jealous." Look at the Fourth Commandment—in which none of *them* believed. He knew clergymen who did not believe in the miraculous birth and bodily resurrection, and bishops winked at it. Why should not the truth be admitted?

Nobody proposed to slay Dr. Rashdall. Nobody proposed to expel him. Nobody proposed to interfere with him. And apparently nobody replied to him. What a change from fifty years ago, when Colenso was regarded as a fiendish heretic! Yes, the world does move, as Galileo said; and the clergy have to move with it. What they call the New Theology is really the Old Freethought. Christianity wins, like Kurapatkin, by a series of masterly retreats. But when it can't get any further the trouble begins. When the Christian faith does fight—like a rat in a corner—its last hour will have come. Meanwhile, it goes on retreating.

Rev. J. H. Jowett notes that Jesus was "never jocose," that he "never clothed a subject in the light vesture of a gaily colored humor." Quite so. No founder of a religion ever had a sense of humor. It is your solemn, weeping people who discover ways of being miserable, and call it religion.

Mr. Jowett notes that the common people heard Jesus gladly. He does not note that the common people also shouted, "Crucify him!" Preachers have such convenient memories.

Mr. Silas K. Hocking writes novels—of a kind, and one must be prepared for a more or less lively imagination. Still, there should be reasonable limits in addressing an audience, because a lecture is meant to contain something beside romance, although it does not always come up to one's expectations. As, for example, when we are informed that Christianity is the only thing that can abolish war and heal the jealousies of nations. If Mr. Hocking will turn from romance to history he will see that Christianity's only influence on war has been to increase the liability of its occurrence by intensifying national divisions and adding the hatred of rival religious opinions to other hatreds. And of all the evil forces humanity knows there is none greater than that hatred born of or nourished by religion. The longest and most brutal wars in history have been inspired by Christian belief. The armaments of Europe are maintained, almost wholly, for the protection of Christian against Chris-

tian. Christian nations claim the supreme skill in military matters, and others who wish to attain excellence in the art of warfare come to sit at their feet as pupils. Mr. Hocking had better try again.

Reading further, we see that he *has* tried again, but without any better result. The advance of knowledge and culture, the discoveries of science and the triumphs of engineering, are, we are informed, good enough in their way, but if there is to be a united human family it must be through Christianity, and without Christ all hope will vanish. The worst of the stock Christian is that he is so terribly and unreasonably pessimistic. He believes neither in the possibility of human goodness nor in its healthy development without some supernatural addition. People, he believes—or professes to believe—will not be honest or truthful or affectionate for long without the belief in some outside power to coerce or reward. And yet the curious thing is that there is not one person in a thousand who in the ordinary business of life is influenced by any such consideration. People are good, bad, or indifferent in relation to the way they are built and the circumstances amid which their lot is cast. Their religious opinions may be used as a cloak or as an excuse, to heighten or depress, but they do not create. And, after all, while scientific discoveries and the development of knowledge, considered by themselves—which is not, by-the-by, the right way to consider them—may not give us all that is necessary, they are, after all, the conditions that make a better life possible. The annihilation of distance by better means of transit, the inventions that bring people into closer contact and make them better acquainted with each other, the culture that shows the essential oneness of human interests and the best methods of promoting human welfare, are the real forces making for a more human life, for which Christianity—parasitic here as elsewhere—is trying to take the credit.

Mr. Henry Blyth has presented a handsome new church to the Free Methodists of Great Yarmouth. Those who know the gentleman will conclude that he is making preparations for kingdom-come. The *Eastern Daily Press* praises his generosity—though some will regard it as a pious investment; and adds that "A Christian man's wealth is better spent by himself than by his heirs." This is a proposition that the "heirs" may look at in a different light. Neither can it be either true or false in a general way. It all depends on circumstances. A Christian man might easily spend his money in ways that would not bear investigation, while his heirs might spend it more discreetly. What the *Eastern Press* means, we take it, is this—that it is better to build churches than to leave money to your own family. No doubt this sounds well to persons who don't belong to the family and do belong to the church.

Speaking at a meeting at St. Pancras, Lord Robert Cecil said there were every year 120,000 deaths of children under one year of age. Of this number, 60,000 might easily be prevented. Whether these deaths are due to carelessness or criminality—and there is little difference in this connection—the figures form an instructive comment on the humanising influence of Christianity. If that religion had paid less attention to the manufacturing of angels, and more to the development of decent and intelligent men and women, things might have been very different from what they are. Not that the present state of things is without its compensations. Our social sorrows and sorrows at least provide employment and occupation for those who would otherwise have nothing to do, and so enable them to justify their existence. And thus the inscrutable workings of "Providence" bring out of evil good—for some.

Weather or no weather, people will have holidays. "Jesus at the seaside," was a notice outside a chapel that caught our eye a few days ago. We wish him joy of the weather wherever he is.

"Three Hundred Sailors Sleep in a Chapel" is the way an article is headed by one of our contemporaries. We thought at first the phenomenon had some connection with sermons, but afterwards found the place was hired for that purpose. It is so easy to make a mistake in such matters.

Dr. Pope, Wesleyan Methodist, is much impressed with the need of a determined effort to meet the unbelief so current among the working classes. The Home Mission Committee of the Conference suggested the employment of the Rev. Frank Ballard for the task, but the recommendation was not adopted. We do not suppose that it would have mattered much even if the suggestion had been carried out. People who really become intelligent unbelievers never go back—at least, not while they remain healthy and honest.

Nor do we believe that scepticism is more rife among the working classes than among other sections of society. If the cure of unbelief is the thing aimed at, there is just as much need for an evangelist for the rich as there is for the poor. Only it is the poor that must be kept in order by the "Black Army," and that makes a world of difference to the situation.

Dr. Wardlaw Thompson, of the London Missionary Society, says that some of the best Japanese complain that when their young men return home from England and America, they come back with "the one ambition to get rich and be self-indulgent." The compliment will, doubtless, intensify the desire of the Japanese to embrace Christianity.

The United States are still unsaved. In spite of the strenuous activity of Dr. Torrey, the Holy Ghost, and others, the people are still on the road to hell. Indeed, so serious is the condition of things that Gipsy Smith has agreed to return before long on "a further evangelistic campaign." Wicked Chicago is likely to have this famous deputy soul-winner for three whole months. Meanwhile, perishing Australia, being smaller and poorer, must wait until America has had one more chance of salvation.

America needs to be saved, though not in Dr. Torrey's or Gipsy Smith's way. The other day six high-caste Hindus, who visited Washington at the expense of the British Government, and as the guests of the United States Government, found that they would not be allowed to travel in the ordinary railway carriages, but in the "Jim Crow" ones set apart for negroes. Now, America calls itself a Christian country, its President is always spoken of as a bright and shining disciple of the Carpenter, and a fundamental Christian doctrine is that in Christ all difference of color or nationality utterly vanish. A Christian country should have no racial problem to disturb its peace—nor any other unsolved problem.

The current number of *Etudes*, the official organ of the Society of Jesus, contains a remarkable confession by Father Alexandre Brou. The reverend gentleman declares, with deep sorrow, that the Catholic missions are a stupendous failure. India, with a population of 300 millions, has only a million and a half Catholics; China, with 330 millions, shows but a million Catholics; while Japan, with forty-eight millions, counts only 60,000 Catholics. Father Brou says, further, that the missionaries themselves have lost faith in the intrinsic power of the Gospel, and are depending on their own abilities and exertions, or, in other words, that they have developed into secular agents, antiquaries, teachers of French, seekers after literary renown, or anything rather than simple preachers of the Gospel of Christ. And this is only another way of saying that Christianity, even in the Catholic Church itself, is at last rapidly dying.

At the annual meeting of the Welsh Congregational Union, recently held at Neath, the Statistical Secretary had to announce that during the year there had occurred a decrease of 3,550 in the number of communicants. The gains that resulted from the Revival are so soon turning to losses. The religious tide is everywhere on the ebb, and each new ebb goes farther than its predecessor did.

Here is another clerical truth-teller. The Rev. Canon Jones, giving evidence before the Royal Commission on the Church in Wales, said that he was obliged by facts to hold "a pessimistic view of the religious state of Wales. Defection from the faith was more general than it was a century ago. He did not limit that statement to Wales. There was a greater margin of non-churchgoers—500,000 altogether. He did not think that activity in church-building was evidence that religion was gaining ground." Then the chairman, Lord Justice Vaughan Williams, added that "both in England and in Wales one of the most striking features of the present day was the absence of positive belief in a large percentage of the people. He read in a newspaper recently that among educated people five-sixths were not positive believers." What are *negative* believers like, or worth?

Dr. Robertson Nicoll admits that "faith has always been hard to keep." How true; and the great man assigns the true reason: "And you cannot hope to keep it unless you live in the world of actual and continuous miracle, in the world of conversion and answered prayer." That is to say, faith can flourish only in a dream-world: in the real world of every-day life it is a foreign element, and, the climate not being suitable, it soon dies. Well done, Dr. Nicoll; you do unconsciously stumble upon the truth—sometimes.

Dr. Clifford is to be immortalised in a public-house at Kensal Town. The house is to be built and equipped at the expense of his church, and is to be christened "Clifford's Inn." Fancy our modern Cromwell serving behind a bar, and going down to posterity as a publican! Well, a publican may be no worse than a sectarian bigot.

The Bishops have been discussing the problem of the poor. We read that they passed several resolutions upon the subject. But we do not read that they resolved to quit their splendid palaces, and give up their enormous salaries, in order to win the Master's blessing upon themselves. They grow rich on Jesus' name, and repudiate his teaching. It never enters into their heads to *obey* their Lord, which they cannot even *begin* to do until they sell all they have, and give to the poor, and take up their cross, and start imitating Jesus.

A very popular preacher declared lately, that he has been preaching the old gospel all over the country, and that, in consequence, "hundreds" of Atheists have been converted. What a bare-faced lie; but, being a "pious" lie, the faithful wink at it and give God thanks.

Churches and chapels have a conscientious objection to Sunday labor—except in those cases where it is for the benefit of the churches themselves. At Leyton, the deacons of the Congregational Church have been petitioning the Council to have the road adjoining the Church watered on Sunday. Now we have no objection to road-watering on Sunday; it is the request coming from where it does that is surprising. And the deacons might, in common decency, ask that *all* the roads should be watered when necessary. Dust is quite as annoying away from a church as near it. Besides, a request for a general watering would have enabled them to pose as public benefactors, while really aiming at benefiting their religious place of business. As it is, the selfishness of the request is quite naked and unashamed.

It is recognised, says the *Christian Commonwealth*, that "there is something more in the Salvation Army than brass bands and poke bonnets." Why certainly. And exactly how much more there is, and exactly what the ring at headquarters is up to, is what an increasing number of people would be pleased to learn.

Another of the City churches is disappearing. St. Peter-le-Poer has been sold—that is to say, the site has been sold—under the hammer for £96,000. This money will be used by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in extending Church work where it is more necessary. In this way the loss of the City churches will be a great gain to the Establishment. While they last, indeed, these churches will be a regular gold-mine.

Florence Nightingale is dead. Not the famous English lady, but an American racehorse owned by George W. Glover, who devoted all her winnings to the missionary cause. The mare was buried, a brief service was held at her graveside, and a tombstone is to be erected recording her services to Christianity. She will rank with Balaam's ass, who was also a female.

A religious contemporary advertises "Sermon Outlines—Original, Spiritual. *Four for Sixpence*." The italics are ours. Who would be without original and spiritual sermons while they can be bought at the rate of three-halfpence each? Why, it's cheaper than mackerel—although, perhaps, not quite so nourishing.

The *Christian World* says it is "welcome news" that a committee of Free Church members is engaged in drafting an Education Bill to guide the Government in its preparation of next year's. We presume the "welcome news" is meant to apply to Nonconformists. Other people—and perhaps even some Nonconformists—will have little confidence in a measure inspired by a class as intensely sectarian as any in the community, and whose chief desire seems to be to "get level" with their religious competitors.

Apropos of the above, the same journal is disgusted at the present Government conferring a knighthood upon Mr. R. L. Morant, secretary of the Board of Education. Mr. Morant was concerned with the 1902 Act, and this, in the eyes of the *C. W.* is enough to warrant the boiling oil and molten lead treatment. But a knighthood! That kind of thing should obviously be reserved for staunch Nonconformists and their supporters, who are alone free from sectarian bias, and are alone capable of disinterested public service.

A Catholic Encyclopaedia is in course of publication, and it is recommended—in the advertisement—on the grounds of the impossibility of getting a fair statement of the Catholic teaching or attitude from Protestants, or even a truthful presentment of history where Catholics are concerned. This may be quite true, or it may also be true, as alleged by Protestants, that one cannot trust the Catholic presentment of history where the interests of the Roman Church is concerned. Both parties may, in this case, be speaking the truth—we believe they are—but it is a lesson of the way in which a belief in Christianity develops a regard for truth and fair play.

As one of the "dignified clergy," Canon Walpole may be expected to know things, and, amongst others, what Providence was aiming at when it created the Anglo-Saxon race. The question may now be considered settled, since this gentleman tells us, in the course of his contribution to a volume on *Church and Empire*, that "It is to the Anglo-Saxon race that the command has gone forth, 'Go ye and make disciples of all nations.'" This settles it. Some might be inclined to read "customers" in place of "disciples"; but as the pious Britisher generally manages to get a cash value for services rendered, it does not matter which reading is adopted. Anyway, it is the Anglo-Saxon who is divinely appointed to be on top, and those who obstruct him in carrying out the divine will are clearly flying in the face of Providence—and must take the consequences.

What on earth, or in heaven, is meant by "Very God of Very God" as a characterisation of Jesus Christ? Once upon a time, a wise man exclaimed, "Behold, God is great, and we know him not." Even the Athanasian Creed pronounces God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost "incomprehensible." If "God" is too great to be known, what about "Very God"? And if "God" and "Very God" are incomprehensible terms, what intelligible meaning can a finite, human being discover in the phrase "Very God of Very God"? And yet hot anathemas by the score are being hurled at the poor head of the Vicar of Eccles because, at a "United Communion" held in his church, he allowed to partake, a Unitarian minister, who could not join in calling Jesus "Very God of Very God." Even the *Church Times* takes part in the silly persecution, and is in favor of calling upon the Bishop to prohibit the reverend gentleman from holding such services. What a storm in a teapot over a subject nobody knows anything at all about!

Edward Coles, of Junction-road, London, N.W., died in a tramcar while on his way to church. More "Providence"!

The Rev. F. Lewis Donaldson, Vicar of St. Mark's, Leicester, is a man of genius. Recently, Father Waggett said that he does not "hold that the authority of Christ can be quoted on the side of what we now know as Socialism," because "no one party can claim the authority of Christ." Mr. Donaldson answers by asking the eminently Christian question: "Would it not be truer to say that all parties can claim the authority of Christ?" Precisely; that is what all parties do, from the Pope of Rome down to Dr. Clifford. The authority of Christ is the most elastic thing in the world. The Archbishop of Canterbury claims it, the Presbyterian Moderator claims it, Mr. Henry Varley, the butcher, claims it, and so does Mr. Campbell. All claim it, and flourish under it, because it does not exist, and cannot call the wrong parties to account!

The Rev. Dr. Warschauer declares that God is infinite and incomprehensible, and that to pray to him as such would be unfathomable folly. But this divine proceeds to observe that God is also a being with moral attributes, and that it is as such we are called upon to address prayers to him. Very well; but how can you ascribe moral attributes to an infinite and incomprehensible being? How can you tell that he is a person at all? Dr. Warschauer says that the moral attributes of the Almighty were revealed to us by and in Christ. Will he tell us when and how? He asserts, but does not prove, after the manner of the Gospel Jesus himself. Religious teaching is nothing if not blindly dogmatic.

Dr. Warschauer wonders "how long will it be before we give up the really unworthy notion which identifies prayer with 'asking for something?'" But to pray *is* to ask for things. The old divines used to divide prayer into seven or eight different parts, but the soul of it is petition. No prayer has ever been heard in which God was not earnestly besought to grant or do certain things. In public prayers, the Divine Being is told a lot of things about himself and the universe; he is told what he is, what he has done, what he can do, and

what he ought to do; but they all wind up with pointed and passionate petitions. And everybody knows that not a single prayer addressed to the Infinite has ever been answered.

Dr. Warschauer's point is, however, that it is not at all proper to present petitions to Christ, because he is not the whole of God. You may petition the Father, though you needn't. Christ is not the All-Giver, and is not, therefore, to be approached in petition. This is the veriest twaddle, not worth a moment's consideration. The Christ of theology, old or new, is as infinite and incomprehensible as God, and as utterly silent and powerless. And so the theologians are everlastingly criticising and contradicting one another because all of them are equally in the dark.

Here is otherworldism in all its glory: "O Lord, so plant the hope of a glorious eternity spent with thee in our hearts, that our whole lives may be a straining after the high things which shall best qualify us for life and service with thee." That is from a prayer published in the *British Weekly*, and it shows how terribly disastrous must be the effect of true religion upon the earthly life of its professors. Christians have no legitimate interests in this world. They are in it as foreigners, sojourners, not as citizens, and their one duty is to watch and pray that at the very first opportunity they may slip out of it and enter upon the ideal citizenship of heaven. If they become interested in earthly affairs it is because they are disloyal to their risen and ascended Lord.

The Rev. Dr. Ambrose Shepherd, of Glasgow, has just published the address he delivered from the Chair of the Scottish Congregational Union, in which he says: "Our centre is God, and our message is that God from all eternity was, and is, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." We hold that the centre is a purely imaginary point, and the message wholly a lie. If Dr. Shepherd's God exists, he cannot be a failure, for he is both almighty and infinitely loving; but he *is* a failure, the world being still unreconciled to him. Hence the only rational inference is, that he does not exist. One can understand the blunders and failures that characterise Mr. Bernard Shaw's God, because, only a little while ago, he was devoid of self-consciousness; and even now, at his as yet evolved best, he is a miserably weak and dependent being, by himself able to do absolutely nothing. But Dr. Shepherd's God of infinite power and love is, in the face of the existing condition of the universe, an infinite and intolerable monstrosity.

Dr. Shepherd is a shrewd man. He is fully aware that the Christian Church is founded on *sin*, and therefore he says that "sin must be emphasised." Of course it must, or his occupation will be gone. Without the doctrine of sin the Church would die within a week. It is from this doctrine all ecclesiastical emoluments have always been derived.

Next to the doctrine of sin must stand that of salvation from sin by "a trumpety expiation." "Personal sin must be emphasised," maintains Dr. Shepherd, "and the Atonement made known, embodying the thought that Jesus did for man what he could not do for himself." This is superlatively logical. Add to these two a third doctrine—namely, that of the indispensableness of the Christian ministry ("How shall they hear without a preacher?"), and you have the trinity which is positively essential to the continued existence of the Church and its crafty priesthood. Dr. Shepherd does not employ this form of expression, but the whole truth may be read between the lines in the following sentence: "Apart from these cardinal doctrines, there can be no gospel to preach to a world so full of wrong, misery, and unrest." Now, mark, this very gospel has been regularly preached for nigh two thousand years, and yet, as Dr. Shepherd himself admits, the world is still "so full of wrong, misery, and unrest." What has this gospel done? It has kept the Church afloat, and provided a comfortable livelihood for the clergy; *that*, and—nothing more.

The Rev. Dr. James, of Enfield, says: "If, as I believe, the Christ is infinite, then must he have infinite ways of revealing himself to men." Whether he means ways infinite in magnitude or in number does not matter; but, in either case, the infinite mystery is that the Christ does not reveal himself direct to all men. If all men are eternally lost without the knowledge of him, and if he is infinite, it is he alone who will be responsible for their damnation, for until he makes himself savingly known to them, they can do nothing. Such teaching, and it is the teaching of all the orthodox, is its own condemnation. Facts give it the lie at every turn. History mocks it.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

To Correspondents.

- W. S. PULMAN.—Thanks for copies of your letters to Mr. Shaw and Mr. Thompson; also for your congratulatory letter to ourselves.
- S. L. SALZEDO writes: "I have just read your article on 'Life's Little Ironies' and find it admirable in point, restraint, and dignity. I had noticed with indignation Mr. Thompson's attitude in the remarks you quote, and that of the *Clarion* generally, and trust that your protest, admirable in word and feeling, will have due effect."
- J. DE B.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- A. FRAYN writes: "Please allow me to congratulate you on your dignified attitude *re* the *Clarion* in last week's *Freethinker*. Such restraint and such a sense of equity are as pleasant to note as rare to find." This correspondent, who is an ardent Socialist, wishes that Freethinkers and Socialists could find some greatest common measure of agreement "in face of the reactionary powers of all kinds now rapidly amalgamating."
- JAMES and ELLEN PAYTON.—Pleased to have your encouraging letter. Paper shall be sent as desired.
- W. P. MARTIN.—Sorry, but things will go astray sometimes. Hope it will arrive regularly in future.
- A. LAZARNICK.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.
- J. A. REID.—Pleased to receive your congratulations.
- A. ALDWICKLE.—How on earth could it have been our business to correct any mistake in Mr. Shaw's paragraph except the one relating to ourselves? The editor of the *Clarion* was quite capable of correcting any mistake relating to his paper; it was his business to do so, and it would have been impertinence on our part to take the task out of his hands. Besides, there are more papers than one, in addition to the *Freethinker*, that denounce punishment. Was it our duty to make a list of them? On the other point, your chronology is wrong. Mr. Thompson could not have been provoked by our "refusal to correct Shaw," because our paragraph and Mr. Thompson's article appeared concurrently—that is, in the same week's *Freethinker* and *Clarion*. You overlook the chronology. You may not "see anything funny in the names of Blatchford and Foote being bracketed with those of Shakespeare and Milton." But would you really like us to bracket them together? Don't you overlook the real point again? And you must pardon us for saying that you also overlook the fact that our article was a public reply to a public impertinence. To call it a "personal attack," in these circumstances, seems to us an absurdity.
- E. R. WOODWARD.—We cordially concur. We hate tyranny, but there must be some regulation in human affairs. It should not be more than is necessary, and it should conserve the equal liberty of all.
- J. SMITH.—Glad you found our article "excellent." We shall write on Determinism very shortly now, and shall do our best to make a clear statement and correct some misconceptions.
- ELIZABETH LECHMERE.—Pleased to see the long extract from Sir Oliver Lodge's letter and our reply in the *Hereford Times*.
- W. J. EDWARDS, 365 Cardiff-road, Aberman, Aberdeen, will be glad to hear from local "saints" willing to take part in forming a Secular Society.
- WELL-WISHER (Leicester).—Thanks. Why did you not send your name and address? Glad you value the *Freethinker* so highly, and thought "William the Conqueror" *extra*.
- COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—S. H. Munns, 5s.
- GEORGE SCOTT.—Very glad to have your "entire sympathy" with our article on the *Clarion* matter, and your recognition of "how distasteful the penning of it must have been."
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- SOCIAL DEMOCRAT.—We spoke of Mr. J. M. Robertson as a Socialist because he calls himself one. That fact was enough for the point of our criticism. Whether he really is a Socialist is another question, and one we are not called upon to discuss. Can't you see it? Thanks for your good wishes.
- R. THRELKAP.—It is pleasant to see that you have got so much of our reply to the Bishop of Durham *re* John Stuart Mill into the *Consett Chronicle*—and to note the editor's intellectual hospitality.
- HAROLD LOBLEY.—We cannot stoop to notice anything in the gutter Christian paper you send us, so we have put it in the waste-basket without looking at what you refer to. Don't worry yourself about liars and rogues.
- J. BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings, which are always welcome and useful. Your batch arrives rather late for this week's issue, but some will come in handy later on. We note your reference to the *Clarion* article. The "sarcastic" plea may be taken as a sign of grace, and also proof of the timeliness of our rebuke.
- 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.

Mr. Foote being absent from home and London during the past week, Messrs. Cohen and Lloyd have written an unusually large proportion of the "Acid Drops," and Mr. Cohen has seen to the pages on press day (Tuesday). Our thanks are due to both.

Owing to Mr. Foote's absence, Tuesday's letters stand over to be dealt with in our next issue. Monday's letters were forwarded to him and have been answered.

To-day Mr. W. Heaford lectures from the N. S. S. platform at Parliament Hill Fields. Mr. Heaford's appearances on the lecture platform have not been frequent of late, and we have no doubt he will have all we wish him in the shape of a large and attentive audience.

On Sunday last the Birmingham Branch had its Annual Outing, in which it was joined by the "saints" from Coventry. The place selected was Warwick, and we are pleased to hear that the day was in every way enjoyable—including the weather.

The Italian Chamber adjourned in honor of Garibaldi's hundredth birthday, after voting a sum of 3,000,000 francs to provide for necessitous Garibaldian veterans. Not a single Catholic deputy took part in the great procession to Garibaldi's statue on the Janiculum, and amongst all the countless flags, not one flew from a church tower. Anticlerical feeling ran high in the crowd, and there were cries of "Down with the Pope and the priests." Italy, as well as France, knows her real enemies.

The *Positivist Review* is an ably-conducted and interesting monthly. The July number maintains the excellent character of this publication. Amongst the contents are some brief "Notes from France" by Mr. Frederic Harrison, who says that the Disestablishment agitation "seems to have practically settled itself." "The churches were open as usual," he says, "but practically empty. I attended mass in two cathedrals, and in several churches, both in cities and in villages; but I seldom counted more than fifty worshippers and more often five.....A leading official in one of the great State establishments told me that the Disestablishment question no longer aroused any interest, and was not expected to give any further trouble." Mr. S. H. Swinny, the editor, refers to the case of Mr. John Morley as "forcibly bringing home to us Comte's precept that those who, being fitted by intellect and character for theoretical work, have undertaken to hold up before the public lofty ideals of conduct, and have thereby acquired great moral authority, should not also attempt to take part in political government. Of the many evils which follow a confusion of functions so distinct, perhaps the worst is that the philosopher turned statesman is often driven to descend to compromises, the spectacle of which, exhibited by such a man, tranquillises and deadens the popular conscience, and so does infinitely greater and more enduring harm than the sacrifice of principle to temporary expediency which, in the practical politician, excite no surprise." Sir Henry Cotton also points out that Mr. Morley, in imprisoning an Indian reformer without trial "for reasons of state," is doing the very thing he so vehemently denounced (in opposition) at the time of the detention of Mr. Cartwright in Cape Town. Mr. Cartwright's offence was "anti-British propaganda"—and this is precisely the offence alleged against Lala Lajpat Rai. What was considered "monstrous and indefensible" by Mr. Morley then is his own policy now. It may be inevitable, but a philosopher ought not to be in such a situation—not even for £5,000 a year.

The late Karl Blind ordered, in his last will, that his remains should be cremated and the ashes buried under the monument of his late wife. "I do not wish any clerical ceremony to be performed," he said, "as I have been a Freethinker throughout life."

Religious Nonsense.

A CONSIDERABLE time back there appeared on the front page of the *Freethinker* a pungent quotation from Robert Burns. "Of all nonsense, Religious nonsense is the most nonsensical." So said Scotland's greatest poet, and if it were true of religion in Burns' day it is no less true to-day. Indeed, it has always been true of religion, as a study of the history of religion will amply demonstrate. The nonsense that has been believed, and the tomfoolery that has been practised, in the name of religion in all ages is enough to make one stand aghast at the credulity of mankind. The Church which has preserved the largest proportion of nonsense in its system is undoubtedly the Roman Catholic. Modern Protestantism has lopped off many twigs and excrescences from the tree of faith, and this trimming process is by no means at an end. But in spite of it all, Protestantism differs from Catholicism in point of absurdity only in degree, and not in kind. The fundamentals of Protestantism and Catholicism are alike nonsensical. Catholicism, however, embraces a larger element of the absurd, because its system is more comprehensive, and because the Catholic Church has been forced to adapt herself to the customs and prejudices of so many varying races. The Protestant Churches are national Churches, but Catholicism—as the name implies—has ever aimed at universality.

It is not likely that Burns had Roman Catholicism in his mind's eye when he uttered his comment on religious nonsense. Not specially, that is to say. The Church of Rome was but of small account in Scotland towards the close of the eighteenth century. Calvinism and Presbyterianism offered abundant scope for the keen and merciless satire of Burns, as his works are witness of to this day. But the present writer is better acquainted with Roman Catholic religious nonsense, and may perhaps be allowed to expatiate a little thereon.

The main difficulty is to know where to begin. There are many doctrines and customs of Roman Catholicism which appear highly preposterous when detached from the mosaic of dogma or ceremonial into which they have been fitted. It is only when we view Roman Catholicism as a whole that we perceive how really logical a system it is; that is, if we take one or two things for granted at the outset. For instance, it would be easy to show that certain Roman Catholic dogmas which Protestantism rejects are really the logical outcome of other beliefs which the latter retains. This is a subject to which it may be possible to return at some future date. Meantime, I am dealing with religious nonsense, and that in lighter vein.

I have been dipping into a bound volume of a little magazine which finds much favor in Roman Catholic circles. It is devoted to the exploitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and while it is not absolutely devoid of sensible passages, it contains a very large proportion of those painfully guileless stories so dear to the religious mind. We have the story of the poor little orphan girl to whom the Virgin Mary appears. It is told with quite touching artlessness. It reminds us somewhat of the "converted Atheist" romances. No confirmatory details whatever are furnished. The name of the girl is not given. Nor are the name of the "two religious" mentioned who were witnesses of the vision vouchsafed to the girl on her death-bed, and who, we may suppose, are responsible for retailing the story of the alleged miraculous apparition. We are not even told where the affair happened, yet thousands of Roman Catholics reading such an account would believe it as firmly as if they had beheld it all with their own eyes. There is one curious point. It is stated the two religious "saw coming towards them a group of virgins, clad in dazzling white." Now, how did they know they were virgins? Truly the eye of faith has marvellous powers of discernment.

Closely following the above we have the story of a sea-captain—also anonymous—who had been astray

from the fold of the Church for thirty years. A lady friend (how the women are the allies of the priest!) persuaded him to wear a "miraculous medal." These medals are turned out by the thousand, and we never hear of the miracles that *don't* happen to the persons who wear them. However, just immediately after adding the medal to his wearing apparel, the captain had a narrow escape from falling overboard. This he subsequently foolishly ascribed to the fact of his wearing the medal and being under the Virgin's special protection. Which shows—if the story be true—that thirty years' absence from church had not destroyed the superstitious tendency of his mind. He seems to have forgotten that for thirty years he had managed fairly well without the Virgin's care. And as in this case he "severely bruised" his shoulder, it seems as though the medal had not proved of full efficacy. In fact, why should he not have been saved even from falling? What is the use of a miracle that is only half a miracle? But perhaps the captain should have worn *two* medals, and thereby doubled his insurance.

Later on, the captain's ship escapes destruction during a tremendous gale. No credit, of course, is due for this to the men who built the vessel staunch and taut, nor to the sturdy sailors who clung courageously to their posts. The miraculous medal on board was the immediate cause of their safety. And we are not in the fourteenth century. Now, what is the practical moral of a story of this sort? Does the writer seriously suggest that if everyone wore miraculous medals there would be no more sudden deaths and no more shipwrecks? That seems the logical conclusion. Otherwise, if some who carry about with them the Virgin's image are to be saved from danger, and others who do the same are to be destroyed, where would be the improvement on the present dispensation? Does the compiler of the above-noted precious anecdotes maintain that the wearing of a brass token and an escape from drowning can by any possibility stand in the relation of cause and effect? And if he does not, what meaning is there in the whole affair at all? For myself, I would choose a lifebelt round my waist in preference to a medal round my neck if I happened to be caught in a gale at sea, and so, I suspect, would the majority of Roman Catholics if it came to an emergency. And I have never yet heard of any assurance company that made any reduction in their premiums in favor of individuals who agreed to pad themselves with medals, agnus dei, scapulars, or other religious underwear.

Then we find recorded a "Triumph of the Sacred Heart." The worship of the Heart of Jesus is an exceedingly popular devotion in the Church of Rome. Roman Catholics chop up Christ in their imaginations as if he were a prize bullock. His hands, his feet, his face, and his side are separate objects of devotion. They adore his blood as well as drink it, and they eat his flesh. A cannibal would feel quite at home amongst this. The mere thought of it is enough to raise the gorge of any self-respecting vegetarian. They have never got so far as to worship his liver, though if there be any truth in modern medical science the livers of the world's teachers have had more to do with the character of their utterances than their hearts. In this case, however, the Sacred Heart had worked a miracle. It had effected the conversion—on his death-bed—of a gentleman who, thirty years previously (thirty seems a favorite number), had "fallen a victim to the pestilential influence of a well-known Protestant College, and of reading heretical books." Presumably the college is so well known that it is unnecessary to mention its name, and the same apparently fails to be said of the gentleman. At the same time it may be admitted that death-bed repentances *do* occur—though Christianity has small reason to be proud of them. What the Sacred Heart had to do with this particular recantation is far from clear. It appears to have been rather a case of the gentleman's silly head.

It is both amusing and instructive to perceive how

religious writers unwittingly make most damaging admissions. In the volume under notice a little summary is given of the career of St. Joseph Calasancius. It is only just to the memory of this particular St. Joseph to say that he was evidently an earnest man who did good social service in his day—he flourished in the second half of the sixteenth century. And his reward was to get into trouble with the Papal authorities and end his days in prison. For which I raise my hat to him across the centuries. They canonised him later. But the damaging admission referred to above as being made by the Roman Catholic narrator of the saint's life-story is as follows. When St. Joseph went to the Eternal City he found "crowds of children growing up in vice and ignorance." This after centuries of direct Papal government! And the dear Popes have always been such friends of education. Strange that to the present day the largest percentage of illiteracy should be found in the most religious countries! Of course, the Popes a few hundred years ago were too busy forcing their arrogant wills upon foreign princes and potentates to pay attention to the ordering of their own house. Ecclesiastical aggrandisement was their main object. One may safely surmise that his attempts to educate the children of the poor and raise their status under the very nose of the Pope was not unconnected with St. Joseph's lapse from favor at the Roman Catholic headquarters. But—they discovered he was a saint after they had assisted in cutting short his life.

In the brief account of the Saint which I have been reading one of the usual idiotic religious anecdotes is introduced as illustrating the good that resulted from his teaching. Once "a bishop, as he was passing a garden, heard a little child reciting an Act of Contrition. He turned, and saw the child's father hanging from a tree, in imminent danger. The bishop's attendant rescued the father, and the little boy told them that he knew help would come, because he had been taught in the 'Pious Schools' to make an Act of Contrition in every danger and then turn to God." The simple biographer fails to observe that in this instance the same result would have been achieved if the child had been taught to recite the alphabet or the multiplication table aloud in every danger. Nor does it strike him that an ordinary child who had not taken time to pray might have brought help much sooner.

On another page of this entertaining book we are presented with an infallible recipe for causing flowers to grow luxuriantly in our gardens. We have only to promise the Virgin Mary that if they do grow we will decorate her altars with them. The supplier of this valuable information mentions, however, that he previously obtains seeds from a firm of nurserymen and plants them. Surely this detracts somewhat from the miraculous nature of the flower-growing! It might be worth talking about if the flowers came without sowing any seed. But evidently the aid of poor Mother Nature must be called in to assist even the Blessed Mother of Christ in the growing of flowers. As befits the writer of a communication emanating from a Scotch town, piety is combined with thrift. We learn that "those who wish to have flowers and do not know how to proceed about getting them should procure a seed catalogue. Such books are generally issued *gratis* [italics are not ours], and contain every information as to time of sowing, etc." Clearly in growing flowers for Our Lady's altar it is not advisable to leave her ladyship very much to do.

There is much more of a similar tenor in the book before me, and that such nonsense should be issued for the benefit of the Roman Catholic rank and file speaks eloquently for the estimation in which their intelligence is held by the producers.

GEO. SCOTT.

Faith.—Belief without evidence in what is told by one who speaks without knowledge of things without parallel.—*Ambrose Bierce.*

"Christian Evidence."—II.

(Concluded from p. 421.)

THE Biblical evidences previously referred to were, of themselves, enough to show any reasonable person the worthlessness of the Christian religion. We shall, however, continue the study of "evidences," for they are food for Freethought and poison to Christianity.

What in the name of anything except religion could have induced Christians to perpetrate such atrocities upon themselves?

Consider one proof in 1 Tim. iii. 2, and in conjunction with it 1 Tim. iii. 12. In verse 2 of the Revised Version a definite article, "the," is inserted before the word "husband." The bishops thereby are prevented from having a license for whoredom. But in the twelfth verse no such alteration has been made; therefore permission for unlawful sexual intercourse is given to the deacons.

Upon this statement relative to bishops the Rev. A. Edgar, D.D., remarks:—

"Such a rendering [*i.e.*, with an "a" instead of "the"] would present unutterable horror to the episcopal mind; for, while forbidding the bishop to indulge in polygamy, it would give Scripture sanction for his wife's luxuriating in barbaric dignity of polyandry. Therefore, for the bishops' sake, the 'Revisers' did not revise the passage, but continue to make the rules of grammar succumb to the dictates of sober theology."

But why attempt to preserve the bishops and wholly neglect a poor deacon? This is clearly a case of bless the bishops and damn the deacons. And the evidence is quite lucid. The Bible states that the "one wife" is to be the common property of "deacons," who are to be her "husbands" and she their prostitute. And this is what the Right Rev. Samuel Thornton, D.D., Assistant Bishop, calls "light in all its purity and clearness"!

Many of these Christian evidences convey extraordinary ideas. One of them is an account of a biological impossibility, *viz.*, Eve gave birth to Abel *twice*: "And *again* she bare his brother Abel" (Gen. iv. 2). Similar foolishness regarding the word "again" is exhibited in Acts x. 15: "A voice came *again* unto him the second time." And in John iv. 54: "This is *again* the second sign that Jesus did." How can there be *two* second times?

Even poor old Job is made to swallow his riches and vomit them up *again* (Job xx. 15). In explanation, before anything can be *vomited up again*—but, verily, verily, it is too sickly; so we leave the full explanation to the "revisers." Moreover, this is a gratuitously foul simile, because a Freethinker—Mr. E. J. Dillon, Professor of Oriental Languages—is privileged to convey a cleaner and more sensible meaning in his *Poem of Job* than that repulsive translation of the "learned revisers," who know little Hebrew and less English.

Similar offensive expressions—*e.g.*, filthiness of a woman's latter end (Lam. i. 9)—are gratuitous insults to both sexes. "Light in all its purity," indeed!

Mr. G. W. Moon, author of *The Revisers' English*, also points out some very droll translations. In Luke viii. 23, as they sailed on the lake, "they were filling with water." The words "with water" are not in the "original," and, as the revisers thought that the sailors were "filling" with something stronger, "with water" was added by vote. Also, in Acts xxvi. 16, we read, "Arise, and stand upon thy feet." Why "upon thy feet"?—as if Christ's apparition frightened Paul to such an extent as to expect the apostle to stand *upon his head*.

What nonsense, too, is in Heb. x. 13 and Luke xx. 43—"footstool of his feet." How could there be a footstool of any other part of the body? Then Matt. ix. 2 declares that "a man was sick of the palsy." Doubtless the poor fellow was sick of it. This evidence is surely meant for a pun, or the "learned revisers" might have rendered it "sick with the palsy." And, according to Matt. xii. 22,

"The blind and dumb spake and saw." No wonder all the multitude were amazed, and well they might be, because the sequence of this piece of evidence implies that the blind man spoke with his eyes and saw with his mouth! At a picnic in the desert Luke says: "They *did* eat, and all were *filled*." The word "did" being inserted to emphasise their gluttony (ix. 17).

Another specimen of "particular carefulness" is offered in Mark vi. 16—"him that was possessed with devils, and concerning the *swine*. And *they* began to beseech him." What extraordinary swine! and the more so since they had been previously drowned (Mark v. 18).

Truly the "learned" divines have well said: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. x. 22).

W. A. V.

The Psalms.

THE poetry of the Old Testament is to be found in parts of Isaiah and Ezekiel, in the Song of Solomon, in the Book of Job—which is simply a dramatic poem—and in the Book of Psalms. The last is a collection of sacred chants used in the Temple worship. All of them abound in Chaldee words, which is a proof that they were at least redacted at a late period of Jewish history. The ascription of most of them to David is an arbitrary absurdity. Every scholar is aware that the superscription of the Psalms is misleading. Just as the national collection of Proverbs was ascribed to Solomon, because of his traditional wisdom, the national collection of Psalms was (chiefly) ascribed to David, because of his traditional love of music. But the *royal* authorship of these collections is now discarded by every scholar of the slightest standing.

When and where the various Psalms were written is not and never will be known. Bleek may think this, and Canon Cook may think that, with respect to particular portions, but opinion on this subject is little else than conjecture. It is only a speculation that the Psalter contains any Davidic element. It is idle to cite the "authority" of this or that orthodox or semi-orthodox critic, while the equal "authority" of heterodox critics may be cited in opposition.

Certainly, if the historical books of the Old Testament are to be relied upon, David *could* not have composed the finest Psalms. His people were on a level with the Zulus, and he himself was on a level with Cetewayo. The finest Psalms were beyond his mental and moral scope. If his hand is to be traced in the collection, the murderer of Uriah, the bloody and remorseless victor of the Ammonites, is most likely to be detected in the cursing Psalms, for which the late Mr. Gladstone penned a sophistical defence.

Whether the Psalms are relatively ancient or modern, cannot decide the question of their inspiration. Nor does it avail to say that they are "unparalleled," or that they are "the prime and paramount manual of devotion" to Christians as well as Jews. Christians have been *trained* in the use of the Psalms. Yet their inadequacy for the expression of Christian sentiment is proved by the vast collection of hymns in use among the various denominations. On the other hand, the excellence of the Jews in the composition of devotional pieces is by no means miraculous. Among the Greeks and Romans, as Mr. Gladstone observed, the "rise of intellect was the fall of piety." Such a calamity did not befall the Jews. There was never a "rise of intellect" amongst them. Piety was therefore the exclusive object of their cultivation. They were without science, art, philosophy, or secular literature; all of which made heavy drafts on the mental powers of the Greeks and Romans. Consequently, the whole of their genius ran in one narrow channel, and ploughed it deeply. If, therefore, the Psalms are "unparalleled," there is nothing supernatural in the

fact, unless it is miraculous for a nation to excel in the one direction, to which it bends its whole faculties.

But, after all, such terms as unparalleled and unapproachable, in these matters, are terms of taste, sentiment, or prejudice, rather than of scientific precision. Translation, too, counts for a great deal. The Psalms were translated by masters of simple, vigorous, poetical English. To compare with the best of them, a fine passage of the Vedas, or of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or Pindar, must be translated by a Max Müller or a Matthew Arnold. Mr. Gladstone selected the "marvellous" forty-fourth Psalm, and declared it to be "lifted as far above the level of any merely human effort known to us as the flight of the lark, 'hard by the sun,' is lifted above the swallow, when it foresees the storm and skims the surface of the ground." But see how tastes differ, and on what a narrow ledge of personal preference Mr. Gladstone built his towering structure of dogma! This very forty-fourth Psalm, which he regarded as immeasurably above all merely human efforts, seems to us distinctly inferior to many a passage of uninspired literature. Not to cite Shakespeare—the sovereign soul of this planet—let us go back to an old Greek and take the following *religious* extract:—

"Oh! that my lot may lead me into the path of holy innocence of word and deed, the path which august laws ordain, laws that in the highest empyrean had their birth, of which Heaven is the father alone, neither did the race of mortal men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old."*

Undoubtedly the forty-fourth Psalm is more stormy and popular; but the Greek poet puts intellect and measure into his piety, and is more edifying and inspiring. Mr. Gladstone, of course, was entitled to his preference; but a difference of taste is hardly the ground for a supernatural distinction.

"John Bright has told me," Mr. Gladstone said, "that he would be content to stake upon the Book of Psalms, as it stands, the great question whether there is or is not a Divine Revelation. It was not to him conceivable how a work so widely severed from all the known productions of antiquity, and standing upon a level so much higher, could be accounted for except by a special and extraordinary aid calculated to produce special and extraordinary results."

John Bright never expressed himself in *that* way. But supposing he communicated the substance of this paragraph to Mr. Gladstone, what in reality does it prove? John Bright was nurtured on the Bible and Milton. What was his acquaintance with "all the known productions of antiquity"? Did he ever read the Vedas, the Babylonian Hymns, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, or the Greek poets? He had little taste for Shakespeare, and he praised some very mediocre versifiers of his own generation. Perhaps he was "a very capable judge of the moral and religious elements in any case," but who in a state of sanity would accept his dictum as to the *inspiration* of a particular writing?

Submit the Psalms to a Hindu, and he will tell you they are human compositions. He is not to be imposed upon by such writings. He knows what is inspired. He has heard more convincing arguments in favor of the inspiration of the Vedas than any Mr. Gladstone offers on behalf of the Psalms.

"As soon as the Vedic religion became systematised, and had to be defended against the doubts of friends and foes, the Brahmans elaborated an apologetic philosophy which seems to me unsurpassed in subtlety and acuteness by any other defence of a divinely-inspired book. The whole of the Veda was represented as divine in its origin, and therefore beyond the reach of doubt. It was not to be looked on as the work of men, but only as seen by inspired poets."†

Mr. Gladstone's arguments will only prove the inspiration of the Psalms to those who are already convinced. His arguments are excuses rather than

* Arnold's translation, *Essays in Criticism*, First Series, p. 222.
† Max Müller, *Natural Religion*, pp. 233, 234.

justifications. Rhetoric is substituted for logic. Appeals to orthodox emotion serve instead of definition and evidence.

Mr. Gladstone's defence of the imprecatory Psalms is an elaboration of the latest plea of hard-pressed Bibliolators. "They are not the utterances of selfish spite," says the editor of *Lux Mundi*, "they are the claim which righteous Israel makes upon God that he should vindicate himself."* In the same way Mr. Gladstone furbished up the Hebrew Old Clothes. He took this verse, for instance:—"And of thy goodness slay mine enemies, and destroy all them that vex my soul, for I am thy servant."† And this is how he defended it:—

"The Psalmist pleads that he is engaged in the service of God; that in this service he is assailed and hindered; that, powerless in himself, he appeals to the source of power; and that he invokes upon the assailants and hinderers of the Divine work the Divine vengeance, even to their extinction."

Now this is the very essence of fanaticism. When a man calls on God to extinguish the life of a fellow man, he is only one step from murder; the wish is there, and only the opportunity is lacking.

It is refreshing to turn from Mr. Gladstone's observations to the "Holy Willie's Prayer" of honest Robert Burns. The hero of that poem talks like the Psalmist, and defends himself on the lines of Mr. Gladstone, but the poet depicts him as a fanatical hypocrite.

We are told that Jesus Christ forgave his enemies and bade us do the same. How is it possible, then, for a Christian to recognise the voice of God in the following curses which the writer of the hundred-and-ninth Psalm pours upon his enemy?

"Let his days be few, and let another take his office.
Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow.
Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.
Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children."

More infamous words never came from the mouth of man. If this indeed be the language of inspiration; if this is how a pious man may speak when under the influence of the Christian Deity; we had better return to the glad and gracious paganism of Greece, and worship the kindlier deities of its lovely Pantheon. Or let us adore the friendly Penates, whose worship, as Shelley said, is neither sanguinary nor absurd.‡

Mr. Gladstone seemed to have misgivings as to the soundness of his defence of these imprecatory Psalms. He fell back, therefore, upon a hackneyed stratagem. Just as he bade us take a "grand and comprehensive view" of the science of Genesis, so he told us that "the Psalms, like other productions, are to be judged by their general character." True, if they are human productions, but not if they are divine. Such a plea can only be advanced on behalf of a being who is a mixture of good and evil, wisdom and ignorance, strength and frailty. It is virtually asking us to make a debit and credit account, and strike a balance; and while this is just and natural in the case of a man, it is absurd and even blasphemous in the case of a God.

G. W. FOOTE.

With the Elect.

Our modern Cromwell is in fine fettle just now. He has recently had his monthly "Sunday off," which he spent travelling about, on the Lord's Day, to hear some of his brother-ministers. In the afternoon, he heard Canon Hensley Henson, and in the evening the Rev. Archibald Brown, of Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Speaking of it afterwards, he said: "The strange thing I have to report is that I found Puri-

tanism on top all day." But Dr. Clifford did not tell what he meant by Puritanism. He never does define his terms: he simply rants. We have a strong suspicion, however, that by Puritanism he really understands Cliffordism; Cliffordism is the very opposite of Romanism; and Romanism signifies whatever is beyond or not included in Cowper-Templeism, or Simple Bible Teachingism; but what the latter is is an insoluble mystery to all living flesh.

Blackburn Town Council has more dignity and independence than some other municipal bodies. It has unanimously declined to give General Booth a civic reception on his approaching visit to the town. The local leaders of the Salvation Army appear to have thought that all they had to do to secure such a reception was to ask for it. They are mistaken this time.

Rev. John Edmonds, of Tottenham, has left the pulpit and entered a drapery business. We congratulate him on adopting a more useful occupation.

Father Smith, of the West Derby Guardians, says it is ludicrous to think that an educated man could maintain his position and raise a family on £150 a year. This was *apropos* the appointment of a chaplain to some cottage homes at that salary. Father Smith forgets that a Christian is in duty bound to be poor, and that raising a family is not one of a Christian's duties. See Jesus Christ—and Count Tolstoy.

Blackpool people have been praying for the cessation of rain—with the usual result.

Correspondence.

THE THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Eder's letter on this subject is altogether misleading. The belief that Natural Selection is the source of evolution, so far from having become an "obsolete superstition," is more firmly established than ever in the scientific world. It is true that some biologists suppose that Natural Selection causes evolution by selecting large differences (mutations)—for example, an extra toe. Such a difference is technically termed a "specific" difference, and the individual possessing it, if he be not eliminated by Natural Selection, is said to found an "elementary species." These biologists differ from Darwin only in that they pin their faith to large variations, whereas Darwin laid more stress on smaller variations. In all England, I believe there is only one scientific man of note who repudiates Natural Selection—the Rev. G. Henslow.

Mr. Eder will admit that every species is closely adapted to its environment. If not by Natural Selection, by what has it been adapted? By miracle?

D. WAUDBY.

The friends of gentle missionary Sleek
Went out to find their pious brother.
He'd gone abroad, the precious Terewth to speak,
On some wild island or another.
They met at length a chief who news could give.
He spat a cheerful salutation;
He was, he said, Sleek's representative—
In fact, that saint's reincarnation.
The chieftan wept in honor of his friend,
And sighed: "Ah, how I loved him at the end!

He gave us tableaux from the Scriptures here,
Like Moses tapping rock for water,
And Solomon in his most glorious year,
And pleasing views of Pharaoh's daughter.
At last I thought I'd stage a Scriptural tale.
'Twas good, though Sleek thought little of it.
We represented Jonah and the whale—
I was the whale, and he the prophet. [see,
Three years have passed since then, and—well, you
I now despair of his recoveree."

—Lone Hand (Melbourne)

* P. 350.

† Psalm cxliiii. 12.

‡ Letter to T. L. Peacock, July 17, 1816.

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 and 6.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, W. J. Ramsey.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 10.30, H. B. Samuels, "Miracles."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, W. Heaford, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (G. Cruddas Beamish Club): 3.30, Business—important.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, meets for Discussion; The Mound, 7, meets to Vindicate Freedom of Speech.

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