

# THE Freethinker

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*Religion is the only metaphysic that the multitude are capable of understanding and adopting.*—Joubert.

## Begbieism.

MR. HAROLD BEGBIE is a professor of the new journalism. He undertakes to set the world right in almost any direction. He is particularly fond of interviewing distinguished people, and turning what they say into undistinguished (but saleable) copy. His style is rather stilted and affected. He disdains to write in a natural, straightforward manner. Perhaps he feels, if he does not intellectually recognise, that the poverty of his matter needs to be tricked out with a certain preciosity of expression in order to make it look valuable. He has a decided turn for the sentimental. Naturally, therefore, he is very prone to religion. When he interviews a great sceptic—say like the late Marcelin Berthelot—he cannot help lamenting that such genius, such character, etc., etc., is lost to Christianity. He is capable of becoming quite lachrymose on these occasions, and his fellow-sentimentalists must find him really touching and possibly impressive.

“For 'tis man's ancient whim  
That still his like seems good to him.”

We were not surprised to see an article in the *Daily Chronicle* by Mr. Begbie, entitled “Laughter in Tears,” with the sub-title of “A Tilt at Modern Flippancy and Irreverence.” In this article we have the quintessence of Begbieism; and although Begbieism is nothing in itself, it is symptomatic of a common tendency in what is comically called modern literature, and may consequently be given a few minutes' attention.

We shall say little about flippancy. We were never one of its friends, but we think we understand it, and we believe that Mr. Begbie confuses it with something very different—with lightness of touch and satirical humor. He would probably call Voltaire flippant. Which is a great mistake, for Voltaire knew when and how to be perfectly serious, and a serious purpose underlay all his sallies of wit on grave subjects. When he laughed at the oppressor, it was the other side of his profound sympathy with the oppressed. Flippancy has no principles and convictions, it fights for no impersonal object, it serves no high and worthy cause; it is simply a mixture of ignorance and impudence, and it jabbars and grimaces because it is so near to the aboriginal ape, and can do nothing better.

Irreverence is quite another matter. We abhor it. George Eliot said in her earliest and, as some think, her best book, that “The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence.” Wordsworth had expressed the same truth before in the fine line—

“We live by admiration, hope, and love.”

For he meant by “admiration” the same thing that George Eliot meant by “reverence.” And we cordially concur with both these great writers. “Reverence” is an essential element in a healthy human composition. But what is reverence? It is a feeling and an attitude. It has no necessary connection with any one object. It is the recognition

of a natural superiority, which makes us both humble and aspiring; humble, in acknowledging our inferiority—and aspiring, in the hope to imitate in some degree what we admire. We reverence the genius of Shakespeare; we reverence the heroism of Bruno; we reverence the mother's love that glorifies poor homes and transfigures commonplace clay into the semblance of divinity.

Nothing could be sillier than the idea that Free-thinkers lack reverence because they do not reverence your religion—which they regard as your superstition; and if you make yourself ridiculous in their eyes, they are not irreverent because they laugh at you. They are under the influence of the Comic Spirit; but, as George Meredith has explained in a splendid essay, the Comic Spirit is one of the brightest and most effective servants of true reverence. It awakens what Meredith well calls “thoughtful laughter.” And behind the laughter, if you are sensible, you will look for the idea.

Mr. Begbie makes the ancient mistake of the religionist. The man who laughs at him has no respect for great things. But are you—are your beliefs—great things? That is the question. It is nonsense on Mr. Begbie's part to say that he is “concerned with the future of humor.” We cannot see that he has any personal acquaintance with it. He seems to us one of the last persons that humor would entrust its interests to. All he is doing is to find excuses for his bigotry. He objects to the searchlight of the Comic Spirit being turned upon himself and the contents of his joss-house. He knows it will make him appear a ludicrous figure. Consequently he sets up a *taboo*, and proclaims you an impious person if you violate it. Listen to his pompous declarations:—

“There are authors whose whole art lies in chaffing the Eternal.....Any subject which fringes the loftiest hopes of the human race should be sacred from buffoonery. The saucy fellows of evolution must be warned off holy ground.....There are subjects which these droll-pated and ludicrous jack-puddings must be taught to respect.....If they have not imagination enough to perceive that the thought of the Creator and His universe has filled the minds of men with the noblest gratitude and aspiration, they must at least be brought to understand that the deepest feelings of humanity cannot be quipped into vulgarity.”

What a grandiose way of saying, “Don't laugh at me”! Mr. Begbie is first cousin, if not own brother, to the gentleman who exclaimed:—

“I am Sir Oracle,  
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark.”

He also reminds us of the gentleman in a Restoration comedy, who knew when people were talking about him—“they laughed so consumedly.”

Mr. Begbie's language shows how much respect he has for the free-spoken critics of his faith. All the respect must be on *their* side. This is the common attitude of religionists. They express the utmost contempt for other people's opinions, but demand that their own opinions shall be treated with solemn deference. Now we beg to tell these people that their demand is unreasonable and impudent. Their opinions, on any subject, are not sacred, but may be criticised and even ridiculed. And the gods they choose to worship are no more reverend to us than the gods of any other faith.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Throwing Up the Sponge.

CHRISTIAN defences are among the most curious things in the world. Taken singly, they are strange enough; taken as a whole, and with the various parts contrasted, they almost beggar description. For example: If one attacks Christianity on account of what it has done, or left undone, one is met with the reply that these faults were merely the corruption of Christianity, that genuine Christianity is a doctrine, an ideal, or to use the cant phraseology, a life. If, on the other hand, the attack is made on the nature of this ideal, or the teaching, then the reply is that we have to judge the teaching, not by its logical character, nor by its satisfying the demands of a rigorous scientific canon, but by its effect on the lives of the people; and we are referred back to the very historic record we have just been cautioned against. So that "genuine Christianity" is a historic phenomenon or not, just as it suits the argument of its defender. Of course, the truth of the matter is, that Christianity is both a set of doctrines and a historic phenomenon. Doctrines do not exist apart from flesh and blood men and women, and teachings that have borne fruit for centuries in the lives of people, become, of necessity, a matter of history.

*Apropos* of the above, here are two leading articles in a couple of Christian journals—the *Christian World* and the *Christian Commonwealth*—both issued during the same week, and both taking up the position that criticisms of the influence and operations of Christianity are futile, for the reason that history does not present us with real Christianity at all, but only with various phases of corruption in connection therewith. If the defence is a sound one, one form of the anti-Christian attack is, of course, defeated. There is no use in attacking something that does not exist, and if all that has passed muster hitherto as Christianity is a spurious article, the genuine Christian, whatever that is, and wherever he is, might join the Freethinker in the attack. But, if Christianity is acquitted of evil on this ground, it must also be relieved of the credit of good; and all the claims made on behalf of Christianity for abolishing slavery, improving the position of women, refining manners, and advancing civilisation, must also be given up. Christianity has never existed in anything like a concrete form, and it can neither be blamed for any evil or praised for any good that has existed. Both good and evil must find their origin in some other cause, and the Freethinker must reserve his criticism of Christianity until it appears.

Now, if writers took up this consistent attitude, one could appreciate it, even though one did not endorse it. But they do not. In the very act of stating the defence, its grotesque character obtrudes itself upon even the Christian understanding; with the result that one gets an illogical jumble, giving up one moment what is claimed the next. In one sentence, we find writers dwelling upon the vivifying and regenerating power of Christian belief, and in the next, declaiming against the corruption and caricature which the world has hitherto experienced under the name of the Christian religion.

The truth is, the Christian is in an impossible position. On the one hand, he realises that if Christianity is to justify its long record, it cannot do otherwise than appeal to history. Service to the race or to civilisation, if a fact at all, must be a historic fact. But he also realises that history is far from endorsing his claims. Defenders of the faith like the writers referred to are aware that, instead of civilisation advancing under Christianity, it receded. The old civilisation was crushed out, and the official Churches fought against the growth of a new one. They are aware that Christian opposition to science in all its branches; that those ages were lowest in the scale in which Christian belief was least questioned; that heresy has been the outstanding feature of nearly all who have helped to

make the world what it is, and that, even to-day, the European countries where Christianity is strongest are the least progressive, are facts perfectly well known to all who have anything like an adequate knowledge of affairs. The Protestant game of throwing all the blame upon the Roman Catholic Church has been tried, but it is no longer effective. For there is not a fault of which the Catholic Church has been guilty that Protestants have not also committed so far as opportunity permitted. They, too, have obstructed, tortured, imprisoned, and killed. And, in addition, they observe that the modern revolt is not against one Church on behalf of another; it is an attack on all, without exception—a more or less clear perception that organised Christianity in all its forms is obstructive, and is bound to be obstructive. And seeing this, in sheer desperation they are striving to save the ship by throwing all the cargo overboard. Christians are fond of the appeal to experience. Well, here is the appeal to experience with a vengeance—the universal experience of the race in all ages and countries where Christianity has had the power to work its will.

A more grotesque defence than this championship of Christianity could hardly be conceived. Here is a religion with a power for good, as is still contended, such as no other system or religion ever possessed. It has enjoyed a long record, and wielded a power such as no other religion ever possessed. It had the power to make and unmake kings, and claimed and exercised dominion over the thoughts of men from the cradle to the grave. Yet throughout its long history no one can point to a single generation during which the world was clearly the better for its guardianship. It became corrupted, and so lost its usefulness, argues the defenders. Well, but was there ever a time in Christian history when the best men and women were not more or less ashamed of the Christianity around them, and looking back to some mythical period of Christian purity and perfection?—a period that never had an existence outside the imagination of Christian believers. For the more certain our information concerning the primitive Christians becomes, the more repugnant does their teaching and conduct become to the modern mind. Here, then, we have the religion so powerful to save and yet unable to maintain its own purity for a single generation—of such tremendous importance that the only ones who understand it aright are those who live two thousand years after its inception, and whose minds are influenced by an environment in which the better influences are definitely anti-Christian. And, finally, we are informed, substantially, that the only way to defend Christianity from attack is to reject all the Churches, all the creeds, and to admit that historic Christianity is a ghastly blot upon civilised history. A more wonderful defence was surely never attempted. The one thing that stands out from such a defence is that Christian apologists find Christianity's record incapable of defence.

Playing a primitive and mythically pure Christianity against a later and corrupt form is now a tolerably old game, but it is a hopeless one. In one sense, primitive Christianity was "pure," but that is not in the sense intended by apologists. Its purity consisted in the presentment of a number of teachings, of beliefs, of which Christians would now be ashamed. The belief in miracles of a more or less spectacular character, of demoniacal possession, of the approaching end of the world, a flat earth and a solid sky, the constant presence and warfare of angels and devils, are all beliefs that belong to Christianity in its "pure" state; while, on the contrary, many or most of its "corruptions" come under the category of modifications in Christian teaching necessary to secure its survival. Had Christianity remained "pure," it would have died out long since. It survived only because its "corruptions" enabled it to do so.

From this point of view modern apologies, such as those criticised, are only additions to the long list of "corruptions." Like apologists of all ages, these writers

are trying to interpret Christianity in terms of current knowledge and needs, instead of interpreting it in the light of its origin and historic teaching. With the primitive Christians social regeneration was nothing, and individual salvation from future torments everything; Jesus the social reformer non-existent, and Jesus the miracle-worker supreme, because to the people who became Christian the supernatural and the miraculous dwarfed everything else. Right through the ages the supernatural element was uppermost, because the supernatural was still the dominant belief in the minds of people. But science gave the people a new conception of things, a more orderly social life gave them better feelings and new desires, the supernatural began to lose ground, and, late in the day, Christian apologists discovered that the true message of Christianity had never been discovered until non-believers had made it plain that humanity, and not God, was the proper object of devotion; earth, and not heaven, the proper goal of our labors.

To preach such a Christianity is really tantamount to a surrender. For the conception of a society of men and women on earth, well fed, well clothed, well educated, as an end in itself, and the only important end, did not originate with Christianity, and owes nothing to Christianity for its development. It is essentially a non-Christian—even an anti-Christian—conception. And its adoption by Christians, even on paper, shows that they realise the game is up. They cannot defend Christian teachings, they dare not defend Christian history. The unreason of the one is too clear, the villainy of the other too patent. They stand watching the triumph of a spirit, a temper, which for a thousand years the Church has held in check, and which for more than half that period it has done its best to obstruct. They see the almighty deity of early generations reduced to a plexus of mechanical forces, the wonder-working, god-begotten Jesus reduced to a simple Jewish peasant with amiable aspirations after social reform. In the face of the enemy they profess to be delighted at the change. In their heart of hearts they realise that the game is up.

C. COHEN.

### “Who is the Christian Deity?”

THERE has always been a plurality of gods, though, in the fierce struggle for existence, the weaker and less adapted have invariably gone under. As in Greece and Rome, so also in Israel, there were deities many, with now this and now that one occupying the supreme place. Jehovah mounted his giddy throne through rivers of blood, and managed to retain it only through endless struggle. Not a single god has ever had an easy time of it. The Rev. Dr. Rashdall objects to the Second Commandment because it represents Jehovah as “a jealous God”; but is the Oxford divine not aware that, not only this commandment, but the whole of the Old Testament, regards jealousy as one of the chief Divine attributes? To get rid of the teaching of the Second Commandment, it is necessary to throw fully two-thirds of the Bible overboard. There are three distinct stages in the history of Jehovah. At first, he is simply one among many, all of whom are apparently as real, or as false, as himself. He appears next as the chief of a great host, and is distinguished as “God of gods, and Lord of lords.” During these two stages, Jehovah is represented, not as more real than other divinities, but merely as more powerful and successful in war. In the third stage, however, he is described as the only true and living God, all others being false and dead. It was at this stage that the transition from Judaism to Christianity occurred. In the fourth stage, Jehovah still maintains his supremacy, although an element is brought in that threatens it. A younger divinity is introduced, whose gradual evolution becomes a source of danger to the elder.

The most interesting and significant fact, in this connection, is that every deity begins his career either as a corpse, a ghost, a shade, or as some natural object artificially endowed with personal life. Now, Jesus, at first, was merely a man of superior endowments—a man born of two human parents like all other mere men. Then, he was regarded as an extraordinary man—a man clothed with supernatural powers. Next it was felt that such a man must be more than man. From this conviction there naturally sprang the belief in his Virgin Birth and Resurrection, the Resurrection being doubtless the first of the two in the order of time. By degrees, Jesus becomes very God of very God, and gets to mean practically much more to his disciples than either Father or Spirit. Indeed, early in the Middle Ages, a Christian might correctly have said: “There now remaineth Father, Son, and Spirit, these three; but the greatest of these is the Son.”

Now, according to Mr. James Collier, of Sydney, Australia, in the current issue of the *Hibbert Journal*, Christianity means the ascendancy of Jesus as an object of worship. He says:—

“The God of Christendom is still held to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is evidence that this view is erroneous. Christianity is pre-eminently the worship of Christ. Far away in the background of existence there may be a power answering to Indian Brahma or Greek Kronos, and conceived as God the Father. But the working, ever-living, and ever-acting Deity is Christ. He is the creator and preserver of the world, the ruler, redeemer, and judge of men. He and no other is worshiped as God, hymned, prayed to, invoked. To him have been transferred the attributes of Jehovah. He and no other is the Christian God.”

The object of Mr. Collier's brilliant article is to develop and defend that proposition; and it must be admitted that, on the whole, he makes a fairly good case for it. But there are formidable difficulties in the way. One difficulty assumes the form of Augustinianism. Augustin was a great man of genius, whose impress is on the Church to this day. Well, this illustrious Father was a Calvinist, an immeasurably superior Calvinist to Calvin himself; and Calvinism is nothing but the Old Testament Judaism with the sacrifice of Christ substituted for that of bulls and goats. Because of this substitution, Calvinism is a far more savage and cruel religion than Judaism ever was. The sovereignty of the Calvinistic Deity is indescribably more brutal an attribute than was that of primitive Jehovah at the very worst. But is it not true that this sovereignty of God was the dominant doctrine throughout the Dark Ages? This sovereign God, this horrid Divine monster, was believed to be at enmity with mankind, or to be an infinite flame of wrath ever burning fiercely against them; and Christ was welcomed and adored as the one sacrifice that annulled the enmity and quenched the wrath, and brought the two parties into harmonious union. Mr. Collier admits that this loathsome conception of God was always in the background; but its presence even in the background makes Christ more of a refuge or way of escape than an object of worship. Take Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian of the thirteenth century, and it will be seen that to him Christ's sacrifice was “an equivalent for the dishonor God has suffered” through man's rebellion, “a complete compensation,” without which reconciliation to God was impossible. There is no getting away from the fact that the orthodox Church has worshiped Christ only as the Savior, the pacifier, the wrath-extinguisher, the one propitiation for sin. Perhaps it would be correct to say that Christ was scarcely ever worshiped as God, but only as the one through whom access to God was practicable, as the one in whom God forgave sins and accepted the forgiven's worship. It is very probable that, on this very account, Christ may often have been loved much more passionately than the Father; but the motive of this more passionate love was always to be found in the profound gratitude for the unspeakable gift of acceptance with the Father. Mr. Collier fails to give this consideration its due weight; and his quotations are taken

from the devotional literature, and not from the creeds and confessions, of the Church.

There is a sense, as has been said, in which Christ as God means much more to a disciple than either Father or Spirit; but we cannot ignore the truth that this pre-eminence is due to the belief that he acts as Mediator and peace-maker between an angry Sovereign and his fallen subjects. That is the meaning of the expression that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Thus Christianity, as a religion, instead of being an improvement upon Judaism, is, in reality, many degrees inferior to it.

Having thus given prominence to a factor in the Christian religion, barely mentioned by Mr. Collier, let us hasten to express heartiest agreement with him in his rapid sketch of the gradual evolution of the proper Deity of Christ. It is well-known that Jesus was fashioned into a God in order to account for his successful pacification of the Father; but, the pacification being effected, the character of the stern Sovereign began to merge in that of the pacifier. Affronted justice being satisfied, and the broken law honored by a piacular offering of infinite value, accepted believers discovered that, after all, the Father was a rather amiable sort of person, and learned to love him as thus seen in the face of the Beloved. The fact is, then, that the orderly deification of Jesus slowly resulted in the humanisation of the Father. To make a long story short, the history of religions in general, and of Christianity in particular, may be summed up in this brief sentence: Evolved out of the human fancy, Gods are believed to exist as eternal, infinite, and independent beings; and, as such, to exercise supreme rule over the hearts and consciences of their own creators; but, in course of time, they are found to be nothing but personified projections of human thought and ideals; and this discovery, once made, inevitably dooms them to eventual annihilation. Or to use Mr. Collier's language:—

"All the new attributes acquired by man in the course of centuries, have been assigned to the being who impersonates for us the Divine Nature, or essence of things, as discoveries in that nature. The new depths of thought and emotion discovered in Christ by biographers like Lange and Keim, resemble the profundities discovered by the Neoplatonists in Homer, and by the commentators in Shakespeare, Goethe, and Browning; they record expansions of human nature. It is, therefore, in a daring sense, the spirit of man himself that is worshiped."

We have doubtless arrived at something like the truth at last. All Gods, Jehovah and Christ included, are imaginary beings to whom human attributes are assigned, and who, as such, are made to impersonate the Divine Nature, or essence of things. Thus is proved the essential unreality of all the deities ever worshiped in this world. Then the answer to the question, "Who is the Christian Deity?" is quite obvious. He is simply an imaginary being who served to modify the character of the Jewish Jehovah, and who, in exposing the imperfections of the latter, only accelerated his own unavoidable extinction.

At bottom, Mr. Collier is probably a Pantheist of some kind, for he employs the "Divine Nature" and the "essence of things," as identical terms. But since the "essence of things" is absolutely unknown and possibly unknowable, what on earth can the adjective *divine* connote? If you take away from things their essence, does anything remain? Things and their essence are of necessity indistinguishable, even in thought. To the Pantheist, therefore, Nature and God are synonymous words, and, consequently, so are natural and divine. What is gained, then, by applying to Nature the adjective *divine*? It only lands us in the nonsensical tautology involved in saying that Nature is natural. It is true that when theologians call Nature divine, they mean that at the core of it there is what they describe as a purpose of infinite love; but if Nature is to be judged by all its phenomena, there is at the core of it a purpose of infinite hate as well. If at the heart

of things there is any emotion at all, it must be admitted that malevolence is quite as much in evidence as benevolence.

This is the conclusion to which we are forced by Mr. Collier's essay. Indeed, it is Mr. Collier's own conclusion. The God of the Christians is a deified man. This is also Mr. Campbell's conclusion. But it is a conclusion which strips Christianity of every claim to be a revealed religion, and which justifies the Secularist interpretation of Nature. And it is a conclusion from which there is no possible escape for those who conscientiously study the comparative history of the world's deities.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Inadequate Bible.

ONE hardly knows how to deal with the claim that the Bible affords adequate guidance amid the difficulties and problems of life. In a very large measure, the claim is merely a literary tradition. That is to say, it does not arise spontaneously from the people's experience, but it is repeated from the pulpits and books of one generation to the pulpits and books of another. Generations, as well as children, learn things parrot-wise. Who is it that maintains this tradition? Mainly the middle-classes and a certain proportion of the proletariat who are affected by middle-class ideals, such as clerks, shopkeepers, domestic servants, etc. These people, on the whole, find life moderately comfortable. The comfort is due to economic conditions. Capital is concentrated in the hands of the upper and middle-classes, and their dependents share its cash-benefits. And as a theory of life is a necessity to all persons who think with more or less energy, the comfortable classes have adopted, as the handiest and easiest explanation, the theory that their gentility and emoluments are due to the Bible. They spend a good deal of money, therefore, in the support of the institutions which keep up this superficial belief, and, if they are inclined to letters, they write and read an enormous amount of literature devoted to the same end. Their competent incomes relieve them from the burden of any searching inquiry into the nature, history, and evils of human society. I cannot help observing, for instance, that the people who, from time to time, write me long letters on the evidences for Christianity and the need for making one's peace with God, are people who have done pretty well in the world from the commercialist point of view. They are undoubtedly sincere, but the sincerity is shallow.

On the other hand, the theory of the Biblical causation of social order and progress works a marked amount of harm by choking up those places in the public mind which ought to be occupied with practical and scientific study of industrial, political, and moral experience and problems. As soon as we apply ourselves to the leading questions of the age, we become aware of the singular inadequacy of the Bible.

The profound conflict between labor and capital has to proceed by discussion, strikes, lock-outs, struggles in legislatures and law-courts, etc. No national or international form of Socialism bases itself on Bible principles. Indeed, the middle-class subscribers to Bible missions and the like are usually resolute opponents of Collectivist doctrine and practice. I cannot recall the name of a single "Labor leader" in the whole world (I mean men of the type of Bobel, Adler, Jaurès, Hyndman, Tom Mann) who professes Christian orthodoxy. As a frequent reader of Labor papers, and being myself an active member of a provincial Labor group, I can aver without hesitation that Christian authority is never appealed to as supreme.

Imperialism as against Home Rule is an immense political issue, and promises to become yet more insistent. Parnell did not rest his case on the Bible. The Indian National Congress does not appeal to it. Polish patriots prefer Socialism to the two Testaments.

Three policies with respect to war are now engaging the attention of the civilised world—the Peace movement, represented by the Hague Conference; Conscription, represented by the practice of most Europeans; and the Military Training (as distinct from military service subject to military law), suggested by the Social Democrats. What guidance does the Bible, as a whole, afford on these points? Go to the Old Testament historical books, and the clash of the Lord's battles stimulates you to full-blown militarism, conscription, and imperialism. Con the Sermon on the Mount, and you will lay down your arms, and turn your Tolstoyan cheek to the smiter. Read the last book of the Bible, and, roused by the thunders of the Apocalypse, you will wish to imitate the fiery charge of the Rider on the White Horse.

Women apply to the Bible in vain for any clear and philosophic principle to direct their social development. They find it more effective to besiege the House of Commons, or to interrupt unhappy gentlemen at political meetings. Rising from the perusal of the history of Deborah the prophetess, the suffragette is ready to claim the Bible as the woman's charter. But she reconsiders the situation when she reads the Tenth Commandment, and finds herself catalogued with asses. Miserable indeed is the contribution of the Bible towards the problem of woman's true place in social evolution. Even the Talmud can pay better compliments than Genesis, as witness this anecdote:—

"One of the emperors said to Rabon Gamliel: 'Your God is a thief, as it is written, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept. And he took a rib from Adam."'

The Rabbi's daughter said, 'Let me answer this aspersion. Last night robbers broke into my room, and stole therefrom a silver vessel; but they left a golden one in its stead.'

Had this little story occurred in the Bible, it would almost have been worth an Act of Parliament to the suffragettes!

Education is one of the crucial questions of modern civilisation. Nothing is more interesting to the man who sincerely desires human welfare. And because the subject is so vital, it is necessarily beset with difficulties. The State is taking charge of immense armies of infants. Is that right? Ought not the mothers to be nurturing and teaching these little ones? The State gives intellectual food, but has, up to the present, provided no material meals. Is that right? Knowledge has to be paid for in all the higher stages, from secondary schools upwards. Is that right? Ought not every stage on the road of science to be free and open to all who love to learn? It may or may not be right. But I recollect as a significant circumstance that when, at Leicester, I raised the two questions together—should the local grammar school be free, and should it teach the Christian faith, the majority of the public bodies concerned supported the Bible and denied the freedom of learning. To my mind, at any rate, the whole range of knowledge ought, as a matter of State policy, to be made available gratis to every citizen. On such an issue the Bible is absolutely dumb. Nor does it give any light upon the inquiry as to the proper place of art in education. On no topic is the Bible so helpless an adviser as art. There is more æsthetic wisdom in one chapter of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* than in the whole of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures put together. It is futile to urge the retort that the Bible was not intended to teach art. As a matter of fact, it was not "intended" to convey anything at all; for it was written by a scattered mob of authors in various ages, some of whom would know naught of their predecessors; and none of the earlier members of the literary group could have anticipated the nature of the work of their successors. But if we assume, for argument's sake, that the Bible was "intended" to teach moral and religious truth, anybody that knows anything of this subject is aware that it is most important to fix the relation of art (the sense and expression of beauty) to conscience and conduct. I would as lief go to the

drovers congregated in the nearest cattle-market as go to the Bible for illumination on the connection between the Beautiful and the Good.

The advocates of kindness to animals are hard put to it to discover a basis for their gospel in the Biblical pages. The Old Testament reeks with the smoke of sacrificed oxen and other dumb creatures; and if a prophet here and there deprecates sacrifice, it is not done out of mercy for the animal. The New Testament has practically no counsel with regard to the right treatment of the inferior living things. If you consult a Concordance, you will notice that "beasts" (the term "animal" does not occur in the English authorised version at all) are seldom referred to in the New Testament except in the book of Revelation, where the "beasts" furnish a useful apparatus of damnation and general uproar. The original Christian gospel made no provision for any such systematic culture of generous feeling towards animals as now forms a noble element in the moral life.

Nothing can exceed the stupidity of the Christian plea that the Bible did not set out to supply programs on these themes of politics and social reform, and therefore must not be held accountable for gaps and silences. Why elevate the book at all to such an absurd position? How is it possible a miscellaneous compilation of ancient literature could reveal to twentieth-century Europe the solution of its economic and intellectual problems? In face of such a ridiculous claim we are bound to attack the inadequacy of the Bible. Otherwise, I for one would gladly abstain from such criticism, and should no more care to impeach Moses for ignorance of geology than I should wish to censure Aristotle for including slavery in his social system.

F. J. GOULD.

## Acid Drops.

When Mrs. Besant was an Atheist the press took no more notice of her lectures than if she lived in the moon; but they give her plenty of attention now that she is the high-priestess of Theosophy, and dresses in Oriental costume, and tickles the bump of wonder. Mrs. Besant is a clever woman, with a good heart, and cannot help saying something worth listening to in an hour's oration; and she said a few interesting things in her inaugural high-priestess lecture the other day; but what commends her to the attention of the press is the fact that she has gone over from the camp of reason to the camp of faith. Those are the only two camps—mentally speaking—that ever were or ever will be.

Rev. R. J. Campbell calls on Great Britain (including Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands) to put a forcible stop to King Leopold's sweet doings in Congoland "in the name of justice, humanity, and Almighty God." This is A 1. Fancy the Lord God Almighty commissioning Mr. Campbell to entreat the British nation to give Him a chance of dealing with King Leopold! It is worthy of the pantomime season.

Mr. Campbell regards International Socialism as "the only movement that is consciously striving to bring about the kingdom of heaven." And this nearly two thousand years after the establishment of the Church of Christ!

Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The *Christian Commonwealth*, in reviewing Mr. Bernard Shaw's last book, charges him, "where it serves his purpose," with deliberately caricaturing persons and causes he is not in sympathy with, and flinging out false challenges. This may or may not be true; but, in any case, the *Christian Commonwealth* is notoriously guilty of the alleged fault. Mr. Shaw accuses Christianity of inculcating a false attitude to poverty, its first beatitude being pronounced upon those who endure it. The *Christian Commonwealth* admits that organised Christianity has too often illegitimately exploited poverty for the benefit of the rich, but boldly declares that Jesus did not teach that poverty was a blessing, "because the common people heard him gladly." This is caricaturing, with a vengeance. It is special pleading of the most unscrupulous kind. And this abominable sort of thing is invariably resorted to by Christian preachers and journals, "when it suits their purpose."

Mr. C. T. Studd, once a famous cricketer and now a worker in the mission field, says it was at the express wish of an Atheist that he went out to do mission work in China. This "Atheist," like the rest of his tribe in Christian stories, appears to be without a name and address.

The lately deceased gentleman, known in the novel-reading world as "Ian Maclaren" and in the religious world as the Rev. Dr. John Watson, retired from his Liverpool church on the ground of advancing age and infirmity; but he went off to America on a long and doubtless profitable lecture tour, and met his fate in the midst of it. Probably his friends and admirers thought he wanted the money, but the proving of his will shows that he had estate valued at £57,709. Evidently the reverend gentleman was a good hand at "making the best of both worlds"—in the late Rev. Mr. Binney's meaning of the words. But if the gospel he preached (for a fine salary) so many years be true, he is now wishing he had died as poor as Lazarus.

Another man of God gone the wrong way. Rev. John Leach, of Middle Chine, Westcliffe-road, Bournemouth, left estate valued at £39,217. He now resides in a place without a winter.

The foreman of a special jury at the recent Manchester Assizes kissed his thumb instead of the Bible, and explained that it was not wholesome to kiss a book which had been kissed by probably 2,000 people. The judge ordered him to remain in the gallery during the sitting of the Court. This, we venture to say, his lordship had no legal right to do. As for the juryman, it is a pity he did not know that he could demand to make an affirmation, instead of swearing.

Christian service was going on in a church in Georgia, when news was brought in that a negro had assaulted a white woman. Had it been a white man who had assaulted a negress, the case could have waited; but piety and race prejudice together produced a hurry. The congregation rose up unanimously and went in pursuit of the criminal, who was captured, and presumably treated in the usual way. Such is the mild and sweet influence of Christianity upon human character.

The Rev. J. M. Stoops, B.A., of New Zealand, is a man of inexhaustible resource. In an address delivered at the recent meeting of the Congregational Union of that island, he complained that their Churches were failing in their mission. "How the Devil must laugh," he said, "at the incongruity of our invocations and benedictions in face of the facts that are plain to the eyes of the least observant." Christianity is a dismal failure in New Zealand, as in Great Britain. There is not a single minister there who can honestly claim that his work has been even "a moderate success." The only gospel that seems to prosper is "a gingerbread gospel." From "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" the people turn away in disgust.

What a confession! And yet Mr. Stoops is full of confidence. "Numbers are nothing. The largest church is the most corrupt. Two-thirds of the human race vote against Christianity." Still there is no reason to despair of its "ultimate success," and Mr. Stoops is absolutely certain that, as represented by Congregationalism in New Zealand, it will eventually achieve a magnificent triumph. Well, there is nothing like hope, and the longer deferred the more brightly it burns! In the case of Christianity, it is now two thousand years old, and still it is nothing but a hope.

Once more Dr. Clifford and his supporters have entered a protest because Westbourne Park Chapel (Dr. Clifford's) has not received as much State aid as these professed opponents of State aided religion would like. The chapel is assessed by the local rating authority, as all churches and chapels should be. But Dr. Clifford, instead of being delighted that in his case, at least, the whole of the rate-payers of Paddington are not taxed to pay for his place of worship, howls continuously about the injustice of such a procedure. The local Free Church Council (Dr. Clifford in his corporate capacity) presented a resolution asking the Borough Council to remit the rate. The Council declined to do anything of the kind; and so Dr. Clifford has one more jewel in the crown of his cheap and easy martyrdom.

At the same Council meeting, a letter was read from the Metropolitan Grocer's, Provision Dealer's, and Oilmen's Association, stating that "the tendency on the part of certain places of worship to utilise their buildings for the conduct of goose clubs and other institutions of a commercial

character, is so steadily growing, that the Association's have had to call the attention of several local authorities to the injustice of such proceedings." We are really shocked at this blasphemous want of reverence for the Nonconformist conscience on the part of the Metropolitan Association.

Bishop Welldon has, naturally, a strong belief in the importance of religious education. He does not wish to see teachers prevented from teaching religion, and is afraid—or says he is—that its exclusion from the schools would shut out some of the best of teachers. He believes this because "the privilege of teaching religion is often the strongest motive with the best persons to become teachers." As a schoolmaster himself, Bishop Welldon ought to know better. We know, and probably he does also, that it is the very best teachers in our elementary schools who object most strongly to religious teaching. And what is the value to the community of a teacher whose strongest motive in taking up with the profession is to enjoy the opportunity of forcing religion on children? We have no doubt that these would represent the "best" class from the Bishop's point of view, but, from any other, such a person's proper place is the street corner.

Dr. Macnamara, M.P., is greatly delighted with the Board of Education's new regulations with respect to the training of teachers and the examination of students in Training Colleges. He says he knows cases of young people who had changed their religion in order to use their scholarships. Moreover, the Church colleges are (he says) practically supported by the nation. In 1904-5 their total income was £118,243 13s.—and of this the Church subscribed £9,335 14s. 6d., or 4.9 per cent. The Cheltenham Church of England Training College had an income of £7,938, of which the Church subscribed only £51. Truro College, with total receipts of £2,599, had an income from Church sources of £120. We agree with Dr. Macnamara that the system is ridiculous; and we should be glad to see it abolished, and a new system taking its place—a system maintained by the State on the basis of Secular Education. But this is not what our Minister of Education, on behalf of our Nonconformist Government, has done. The new regulations contain a lot of verbiage which might lead superficial and unsuspecting persons to imagine that equality of citizenship all round was being aimed at. But a closer and more critical view reveals the fact that there is nothing more aimed at than an equality of privilege between Church and Nonconformity—at the expense of all other sections of the community. The two thieves are going to share the plunder, and their common victim is to be crucified between them.

The Rev. J. W. Hodgson, summoned as a passive resister for non-payment of rates, gave the magistrate an instance of the injustice Nonconformists were subject to. A little boy came home crying bitterly because the teacher in a church-school had told him that he could not go to heaven unless he was baptised. Mr. Hodgson seemed to think that the infamy was in telling the child that it could not get to heaven save by a certain method. Whereas the real infamy was in bothering the child's mind at all about getting to heaven by any road. What business has a child to be concerned with either heaven or the other place? And what right has anyone—parent or teacher—to impose upon the child's ignorance by giving it what professes to be exact information about either? In such cases "parental right" is only another name for parental tyranny over helplessness and ignorance.

According to Mr. Augustine Birrell, there is more godlessness and godless education among the rich than there is among the poor. We see no particular reason for challenging this statement, only Mr. Birrell overlooks the fact that religion is really not maintained for the use of the rich, and so their "godlessness" is of no importance. Religion is for the poor—to keep people in order, as some of our spiritual guides obligingly inform us. The "upper classes" profess to believe, in order to set a good example to the "lower" orders. Of course, the profession is so long maintained that it often becomes a habit, but the underlying reason remains. In civilised societies religion is for the use of the poor and for the benefit of the rich. When our social reformers master this lesson, they will have taken the first great step towards effecting a permanent improvement in the general condition of things.

An American church, advertising its need of money, says that it requires "a mile of cents." We are of opinion that a yard of sense would be much more to the purpose.

A Washington telegram reports that a negro preacher, whose brother was to be electrocuted, wrote to President

Roosevelt asking to be executed in his brother's stead. This sounds very generous, although it is rather difficult to believe that anyone in America could imagine that such a thing could be permitted. When the preacher brother gives as his reason that he is a good man while his brother is a bad one, and that his sacrifice might convert him, the whole affair is exposed as a piece of religious advertising. Still, as religious papers have taken the matter up, the would-be sacrifice has his advertisement after all. Perhaps the world might have benefited by the exchange.

After boy-preachers come girl-preachers. The latest is a girl-preacher in Yorkshire of only twelve years of age. The religious papers report that the child preaches every Sunday to large congregations, and, of course, has a number of "converts" already. Very little attracts a religious congregation, and there are always numerous conversion inebriates prepared to "surrender themselves to the Lord" at the slightest opportunity. Still, the exploitation of little children in the interest of Christianity is a pitiful affair. But when is the professional Christian ashamed of anything that means religious "business"?

The Bishop of Auckland says that scores of settlers have begged him to send out more clergymen to them. Well, we daresay there are plenty at home who would spare their ministers for this purpose.

A writer in the *Baptist Times* is concerned at the poor quality of many of the men in the pulpit. He advises the authorities to keep a watchful eye on candidates, and select only men of promise and ability. The advice is good, but impossible. Men of genius are not drawn to the pulpit nowadays, and it is becoming less attractive to men of even honest character. We do not know the name of a single man of outstanding intellectual ability who is in official connection with any of the Christian Churches. Men of ability may patronise the Churches, but they do not enter the ranks of official service. Art, science, and literature can point to the services of men of real eminence; the Churches must be content with what they can get, and what they receive becomes poorer with the passing of each generation. In the intellectual life of the nation the clergy have no dominant voice. They may influence it, but this is effected surreptitiously, and not in virtue of either their character or requirements. Parasitic so far as the nation as a whole is concerned, they fawn before any great name in literature or science that will give them a patronising pat on the shoulder. Without either the ability to lead or the courage to command; afraid to be thoroughly honest, yet without sufficient strength of character to be deliberately dishonest, and depending upon social or political sensationalism for public notice, the Christian clergy to-day present as pitiful an exhibition as it is possible for them to offer.

A week or two ago, the Rev. R. C. Fillingham fell foul of the Bishop of London and asserted that he lacked the intelligence of a domesticated rabbit. For this, he was gravely rebuked by the *Christian World*, and now in its columns he puts in a plea of justification. He is prepared, he says, "to justify anywhere, at length, my description of him," and he advises readers to peruse the Bishop's book on *The Faith of Church and Nation*. He declares that anyone will rise up "disgusted at such an exhibition of incompetence and ignorance." He also asks, what are we to think of a man whose argument for the Resurrection is, "someone else believed it, therefore it occurred"; or of a man whose argument for the feeding of the five thousand is, "What a world of miracle we live in?" Well, we, of course, think very little of the bishop, but Mr. Fillingham should not be too hard on his lordship. Even though the bishop were a man of the widest learning and the deepest culture, he could not make an absurd belief reasonable. And, after all, in these days, Christians should be thankful that there is at least one man on the episcopal bench whose limitations may permit him to believe absurdities with all sincerity, and, therefore, preach them with all gravity. It has never been the fools that have threatened the safety of Christianity.

Canon Simpson, of St. Mary's (Roman Catholic) Church, Bradford, has been fined a small sum, with the alternative of three days' imprisonment, for selling tickets in a lottery in aid of his school funds. He pleaded that it was not a lottery, but a subscription; by which he could only have meant that the end justified the means.

We have before us the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Stockport Police Court Mission. It contains the Missionary's (Mr. G. J. Prickett's) report to the members and subscribers. He attended 225 sittings of the Borough and County Police

Courts, and undertook 500 cases, the persons dealt with having committed all sorts of crimes and belonging to all sorts of occupations—including "5 prostitutes." We are even told what religious denominations they belonged to. Mr. Prickett says:—

"Of these, 260 professed to belong to the Church of England; 174 to the Roman Catholics; 46 to the Wesleyans; 13 to the Congregationalists; 2 to the Stockport Sunday School; 2 to the Presbyterians; 1 Salvation Army; 1 Parsee; and 1 professed no Religion."

It would have been interesting to know whether that one was really a Freethinker or just a person who professed no religion in particular—and also what offence he was imprisoned for. (We say "he," but it might have been a "she.") In any case, there was only one of the whole lot who belonged to no Church at all. All the others had received religious training and reckoned themselves religious men and women. No doubt it would have horrified them to be called "infidels." They were drunkards, thieves, prostitutes, violent and indecent assaulters, etc., etc., but not "infidels." With all their crimes, they were not as bad as *that*. From which one sees the immense value of religious education, and how true it is that Secular Education would be the death of morality.

Germany is on the eve of being converted to boisterous Evangelicalism. At least, we are informed to that effect by the Rev. Principal Griffith-Jones, who is himself an evangelical divine. It is notorious how these defenders of the Faith always see whatever they wish to see. This zealous man of God goes to Jena, hobnobs with Professors Eucken, Wendt, and Weindel, and then declares, in the *Christian World*, that there is "a strong reaction against the barren critical movement of the last half-century, and especially against the materialistic school associated in its latest form with the name of Haeckel (who still lectures here on matters zoological, but who has no authority among educated people)." Now, are such theologians as Eucken, Wendt, and Weindel, who are in profound sympathy with Evangelicalism, the only educated people in Germany? We confidently challenge the Principal to prove that even one-third of educated Germans desire the triumph of evangelical Christianity. We further challenge him to prove that one in five of accredited German scientists are opponents of Haeckel's scientific teaching.

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." A lady was staying with a friend whose brother was an Infidel. One day she went for a bicycle ride, and on nearing the house on her return, the Lord threw her off her machine, and pitched her into the neighbor's flower-garden, with the result that her knee was so badly injured as probably to cause her lifelong trouble. For a day and a night and part of another day, the pain was excruciating. But all of a sudden, it dawned upon her that the author of the accident was God, and at once she gave him fervent thanks. The same moment she felt God touching her knee, and in the twinkling of an eye she was healed. She jumped out of bed, and skipped from room to room, shouting, "I have had a distinct touch from the Lord, and I am quite healed." Now, that was God's way of getting at the wicked Infidel, who, of course, was converted on the spot, and became a burning light in the true Church! Marvellous are His ways—past finding out.

A distinguished preacher was pronouncing a beautiful eulogy on the grace of humility. Among other things, he said: "Usually the man of wisdom is for front places; but the wisdom of God makes a man meek and humble. Human wisdom says, 'I'm as good as you'; heavenly wisdom says, 'You are as good as I.'" Immediately after the service, this wise man of God, meek and humble, went into his host's house, accompanied by other guests, and without a moment's hesitation dropped into the best seat in the room, with an air of self-satisfying superiority. Then someone timidly asked, "Dr. —, will you please tell us what you think of Mr. —'s recent teaching?" "Sir," Dr. — replied, his thin body visibly swelling with his sense of responsibility—"sir, it is only another name for the Old Devil." Here we see meekness and humility kissing each other in this great servant of the Lord.

The relations between Dives and Lazarus are always profoundly delicate, but sometimes they become delightfully humorous. From the *Rodnoje Djelo*, of St. Petersburg, we learn that a peasant gave a receipt for £5 in these terms: "In full payment for my future place in Heaven, which, in consideration of my present helpless poverty, I heroby cede and bequeath to the wealthy landowner, Makar Selensky." The document was duly signed, and certified as correct by the village priest. What a splendid bargain for Dives! Let millionaires take note that their case is not quite hopeless

They may escape hell-fire and win the glory-land for the paltry sum of £5. Then they may do what they like down here, and get to heaven all right, if they only take good care of the receipt.

The Bishop of Carcassonne was summoned for performing the religious marriage service before the civil ceremony required by the law had been carried out. According to the evidence in court, it appeared that the parties to the marriage had made repeated application to the local mayor, but that personage was on strike—with the rest of the Midi officials—and declined to marry them; and the Bishop pleaded that, in view of the state of anarchy existing, his action was justifiable. In the circumstances, he was fined only fifty francs, and given the benefit of the First Offenders Act.

This incident raises a new question under the Separation Act. If the Church has no relation to the State, the State should have no relation to the Church; and as the only marriage recognised by the State is civil marriage, to which religious marriage is only a pious personal addendum, it appears to us that the State should just attend to its own business, as far as that goes, and no farther—and should let priests and pietists act as they please, at their own responsibility. It is not a crime at law for a man and woman to live together without marriage; and if people choose to do that, with the comfort and consolation of a priest's blessing, the State ought to have no more right to punish the priest than it has to punish the recipients of his benediction. Religious marriage, in short, is a religious act; it is therefore personal, and the State should have absolutely nothing to do with it, in any way whatsoever.

A paper called the *Monthly Evangel*, but bearing no date, has been forwarded to us, and we see that it opens with an extremely foolish article by the Rev. Professor James Orr, entitled "From Unbelief to Faith." This gentleman argues that Christianity must be true because, some fifty years ago, Joseph Barker and Thomas Cooper went over to it from "infidelity." A little reflection might satisfy him that this is far more than outweighed by the fact that Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and other great Freethought leaders were all converted from Christianity. But what we want to say most of all is this, that the Rev. Dr. Orr is very ignorant where he ought to be well-informed. He states that "when Jonathan Edwards was at Yale University, in America, there were two Thomas Paine Societies, and there were only three or four Christian believers in the whole place." Jonathan Edwards was at Yale in 1724-6 as tutor—and he died in 1758. Thomas Paine was born in 1737—eleven years after Jonathan Edwards left Yale; and went to America in 1774—sixteen years after Jonathan Edwards was dead. Dr. Orr's history is on a level with his argument.

There is ominous disquietude in the Church of England just now. The report of the recent Royal Commission is being vehemently resented by the Catholic party as represented by such stalwarts as Lord Halifax and Mr. Athelstan Riley. The columns of the *Church Times* are crowded every week with angry letters from both sides. The controversy is bitter, and not likely soon to end. And what is all the fuss about? Nothing. The Bishops of Oxford and Gloucester on the one side, and Lord Halifax and Mr. Riley on the other, wrangle hotly over subjects which lie outside the bounds of human knowledge. Still, the quarrel is not without profit. It is at least opening the eyes of many thoughtful people to the utter absurdity of both Catholic and Protestant views on such a profoundly superstitious subject as the Holy Eucharist. The Church never has agreed and never will agree concerning it, but the people, in ever-increasing numbers, are agreeing to disbelieve in the whole thing.

In Kansas there lives a wounded old veteran who has been for many years in receipt of a pension. Recently, the Christian Scientists got hold of him, assured him that he was never really injured, and drilled it into his mind that he was receiving his money under false pretences. The credulous old fellow believed their nonsense, and conscientiously gave up his pension. How long will the world tolerate such teaching?

The Irish Presbyterians are in high glee. They were officially instructed to pray for fine growing, ripening, and harvesting weather, and lo and behold, it has actually come. But strangely enough, the fructifying sunshine has descended, not only upon the Presbyterian portion of the Emerald Isle, but upon prayerless Great Britain, and upon the Continent as well. What a pity the Irish Presbyterians did not present their petitions sooner, before the hay-harvest was spoiled!

The above reminds us of a prayer-meeting for rain we once attended. Similar meetings had been held for a week, and this was the last of the series. Four men engaged in earnest prayer, and the fourth was on his knees deafening the heavens with the passionate cry, "Send us rain, O Lord, for thy beloved Son's sake give us rain, Lord," when there was heard on the chapel's roof the pattering of a heavy shower. Instantly the praying old shepherd exclaimed excitedly, "I thank thee, dear Lord; thou hast heard my prayer; I am a happy man." For weeks the simple-minded, ignorant man chuckled with self-satisfaction—his prayer had proved quite irresistible.

The Bishop of London—like Voltaire's Habbakuk—is capable of anything. He has just been boasting that 217 new churches have been built in London during the past forty years. Yes, and fewer people go to church than ever. One would think that Christianity lived on bricks and mortar; whereas, in the long run, every religion lives on men and women—and especially on children who grow up to be men and women.

We have been looking for him for years, and we have found him at last—a man who really believes the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible—a true-blue Protestant. Alfred E. Lean, F.R.G.S., writes to the *Daily News* expressing painful surprise at its giving publicity to the letters of people who don't believe the Bible history. "It is utterly ridiculous," he says, "for any human being to pretend that the Bible is inaccurate in its historical facts. The walls of Jericho were real walls, and they fell in the way the Bible declares it. Who dare argue with God?" There you are! That's the man for us! He is one among millions. We don't wish to hasten his death in any way—for he gives the world food for laughter; but when he does die he ought to be stuffed and exhibited in the British Museum (not Madame Tussaud's) as the last of an extinct species. We should be happy to subscribe a trifle towards the cost of securing this archaeological specimen.

The poor, weak creature who has the misfortune to be the Czar of all the Russias, is reported to be manipulated by spiritist mediums under the direction of a powerful Court clique. Unhappy man! He is in a false position at a terrible elevation. How anyone can look at him, in that position, and still believe in "Providence," passes our comprehension.

Guy Thorne's trashy novel, *When It Was Dark*—so highly praised by that unspeakably foolish person, the Bishop of London—has been dramatised and produced at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. According to the local *Daily Dispatch* "it was melodrama intended to be tremendously impressive," but "sad to relate, it evoked more titters than heart throbs."

It appears that the Holy Ghost committed a disastrous blunder when he appointed the present Pope. According to a "Roman Catholic Correspondent" in the *Church Times*, the policy pursued by Pius X. is calculated to injure the Church in all countries by playing into the hands of anti-Christians. In Italy, the feeling of antipathy to the Faith is spreading rapidly, and gaining in intensity. "The Papal policy is leading to a combination of all parties against the Papacy." The same thing is happening in Germany also, and in a lesser degree in Spain and Portugal. The state of affairs in France is known to all. This correspondent is of opinion that "if the present pontificate lasts long" it is almost certain that "anti-clericalism will be dominant in Italy" itself. Now, the curious fact is that, according to Catholic belief, the Pope's policy is God's policy, in which case God is now engaged in undermining and destroying his own Church! There is absolutely no avoiding that damaging conclusion.

Rev. A. J. Waldron has performed another wonderful work. He has converted a distinguished Atheist. The name of this convert is James Carl. Our readers will understand how distinguished he is when we say that we never heard of him before. As an Atheist lecturer he must have had a positive genius for obscurity. We understand that he is now working in the Bristol branch of the Lord's vineyard, and is posing there as an old and intimate associate of ours. This shows that, if he has a poor memory, he has a servicable imagination.

*Clergyman.*—A man who undertakes the management of our spiritual affairs as a method of bettering his temporal ones.—*Ambrose Bierce.*



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

**To Correspondents.**

- R. WALLIS.—Thanks.
- VERITAS.—The cutting will be useful. You will doubtless see, on reflection, the utter impossibility of our undertaking to write letters to local newspapers. We have more than one man's work to do already.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—W. Waymark, Is.
- JOHN WRIGHT.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- H. B. ABBERLEY.—Order passed over to our shop manager. Thanks for good wishes. Mr. Foote is keeping tolerably well.
- J. H. (Liverpool).—Not too late. Thanks.
- G. DAVEY.—Thanks. You will see it has been useful. Glad to have your expression of "gratitude for the pleasure" the *Freethinker* gives you.
- C. W. STYRING.—Those who reply to you are not overburdened with brains, but your letter is sure to do good.
- W. SWANBORO', Leacroft Villa, West-road, Southend-on-Sea, will be glad to hear from Freethinkers who would co-operate in starting a local Branch of the National Secular Society.
- HAROLD ELLIOTT.—You would understand the point better if you had read Mr. Shaw's book yourself. The fact is, he was not discussing Determinism at all. The context shows what he was discussing—and it was something entirely different. Mr. Shaw must have smiled at the way his point was missed.
- ALERT.—The Salvationist who told you that there was no such person as Mr. Manson has doubtless been put up to that little dodge by his superiors. Let the S. A. headquarters say it publicly—if they dare.
- J. BROUGH.—Thanks.
- J. ROBERTS.—Very likely you are right.
- A. MARQUIS.—We have passed your letter on to Mr. Cohen.
- A. W. GOLING.—Shall be sent as desired. Glad to hear you regard this journal as "the brightest and most straightforward you have ever read."
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your ever-welcome cuttings.
- J. H. G.—May prove useful. Thanks for good wishes.
- W. ROBINSON.—Pamphlet sent. Thanks.
- ALETHOS.—We know nothing of the alleged "Atheist of the name of Jeremy Taylor, who lived at Peterborough a hundred years ago, and employed a band of music to dispel his terror when dying." Probably a pious invention.
- N. LEVEY.—Sorry to be assured that it was the Socialists who broke up the N. S. S. meeting at Edinburgh. We are quite sure that the Socialist leaders would strongly condemn such tactics. The police are evidently treating you both unfairly and illegally. They have nothing to do with your opinions.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.
- SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

**Sugar Plums.**

Readers of the *Freethinker* who go away from home during the holiday season, and wish to make sure of seeing it all the time, should send the price of the paper (with a halfpenny extra for postage) to our publishing-office manager, who will forward it regularly for whatever number of weeks may be necessary.

Mr. F. J. Gould, who is a member of the Leicester Education Committee, moved on Monday evening (July 22) his resolution in favor of confining instruction in the schools to secular subjects. His motion was supported by 8 votes and opposed by 13—and was therefore lost. But this is an improvement on last year, when there were 5 for and 14 against. If this rate of progress is kept up Mr. Gould's motion will be carried in two years.

One of our most esteemed exchanges, the New York *Truthseeker*, reproduces Sir Oliver Lodge's letter to us and our Reply. In an editorial note our contemporary observes that the great scientist's letter "did not prove to be a crusher"—for "in point of ability Mr. Foote's comments are up to the level of his critic's."

The Annual Excursion of the Newcastle Branch takes place on Sunday week (Aug. 4). The party will leave the Central Station by the 2.32 train for Plessey Woods. Special cheap tickets for the railway journey at 1s. 3d. per head have been arranged for, but it will be necessary for anyone desiring tickets at this rate to apply previously to Mr. T. H. Elstob, 2 Coleridge-avenue, Low Fell.

The Flemish translation of Mr. F. Bonte's pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, continues to cause a great rumpus at Roulers, where Mr. Bonte is well known, and where he had been spending several months prior to its publication. Sermons against "infidel writings" are being preached in the Catholic churches; the Catholic press is in a perfectly rabid condition; there has been something like popular tumult in the streets; and, as Mr. Bonte has just returned to his old quarters in England, the vilest falsehoods are being circulated about his moral character. The Liberals are doing their best to defend him, but they seem to be in a sad minority.

Fifteen thousand copies of the English edition of Mr. Bonte's pamphlet have been put into circulation, and a new edition is in the press. It will be advertised in due course.

*La Pensée*, the organ of Belgian Freethought, continues to translate matter from our columns. The last number to hand reproduces (in French) our recent paragraphs on the absurd legend that England owes her civil and religious liberties to the Puritan Parliament of the seventeenth century. The *Journal de Charleroi* also introduces some of our paragraphs to its readers.

**JESUS AND SEX.**

Jesus appears to have despised the union of the sexes, therefore marriage, and therefore the home. He taught that in heaven, where all is perfect, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage; the saints being like angels, probably of the neuter gender. In Matthew xix. 12 he appears to recommend amputation, praising those who make themselves "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." This doctrine is too high for flesh and blood, but Origen and other early Christians practised it literally. We may be sure that those who trample on manhood have no real respect for womanhood. Hence the Romish Church has always praised up virginity, which is simply an abnegation of sex. Cruden shrinks from the literal sense of Christ's words, and says that the "eunuchs" he refers to are those who upon some religious motive do abstain from marriage and the use of all carnal pleasures; that they may be less encumbered with the cares of the world, and may devote themselves more closely to the service of God." Moonshine! Origen was a better judge than Cruden. If Jesus did not mean what he said, why did he take the trouble to speak? His doctrine is that of the anchorite. It led naturally to the filthy wretches, called monks, who dreaded the sight of a woman, and hoped to please God by stultifying nature. It also led to the Church law forbidding women to touch the sacrament with their naked hands, lest they should pollute it. Only women who relish that infamous law can feel any respect for the teaching of Jesus.

—G. W. Foote, "*Flowers of Freethought*."

Life is as dear to others as it is to oneself. Good men bear this in mind, and are merciful to all living creatures.—*The Hitopadesa*.

## The Era of Reason.

*The Religion of this World is Increasing its Influence Over the Conduct of Men.*

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS.

WHERE in the world are change and transition not taking place? In what field or phase of human thought or effort is not the transforming process at work? Look toward any of the departments of human life, one thing confronts us in each—the vast difference between the condition now and that within the memory of men. In the business world, within the third of a century, the entire plan has been changed. In the industrial world, and in the applied arts, we are living in a world greatly different from that of our childhood. If we look to the political phase, we find everywhere in the civilised world a strange, vital unrest. Never, until with the recent years, has the world witnessed a party with one plan, one ambition, and having among its adherents representatives of every nation upon the globe. The teachers and writers of Socialism assert the fact that there is no flag beneath which their comrades do not march, no government in which they are not citizens; and the inspiration and purpose of that body of men is simply political freedom and human justice. Or, if we look to the religious phase of human life, it is the most familiar fact that everywhere there is seething, yeasting unrest. Everywhere thought is billowing high and breaking in wild, impetuous surges upon the rocks and cliffs of dogma and conservatism. Within a week, the House of Commons of the English Parliament, by a vote of more than two to one, has passed a resolution calling for the disestablishment of the Church. What has taken place in France is beginning to have advocates in Spain, is already an accomplished fact in Germany, are things well known.

Every man is a willing or an unwilling factor in the progress of the world.

According to the old interpretation of life and the world, the functions and pretensions of the Church were consistent and logical; but this life that we are living now had no meaning, no sanctities, no obligations, and no rewards, except with reference to the life that is beyond. Man was in this world simply to prepare to go to some other. He lived here to get ready to meet his God. He was here only in a probationary state, and was to be pitied for coming and congratulated when he left. The fundamental teaching was "Prepare to meet your God," and the Church served as an instrument to help man in that preparation, to mediate between him and this terrific, threatening, dangerous being that he was destined soon or late to meet.

No attention was paid directly and primarily to this life. It was beneath the dignity of an immortal soul, born to die, to let his mind and heart be filled with the interests and attentions of the life that now is. Poverty was considered a blessing. Misery was construed as a certificate of good religious standing. The more a man suffered and was afflicted, the more certain he might be that he was looked after by God. If a child died, it was an act of God for the parents' good; and I myself have seen one man who, when told that God took his child in order to draw him, the father, closer to him, the God—I have seen one man, and honored him for it, who said from the depths of agony and scorn, "If I believed God willfully took my child, I would hate God."

That was the construction put upon life under the old teachings in the time of our childhood. If a man were prosperous, it was an occasion for suspicion. If he was poor and miserable, and feeble and frail, he was looked upon as a fitting candidate for sainthood. The saints were always sickly and anæmic. Saintliness meant feebleness, depression, loss of appetite, and melancholia. Heaven was a hospital. The only people that could be sure of the kindly providence and affections of God were the failures in this world, those who had lost out, the earthly bankrupts.

Heaven was a kind of celestial poor-house for their reception. Hell was peopled with the red-cheeked, the robust, the happy, and the prosperous; with the men that had found the world fairly pleasant to dwell in, and had succeeded in getting the most of what was coming to them.

There is no language that can exaggerate or overstate the gloom that these old teachings hung like a cloud over human life. We were here to be solemn, to be miserable. Laughter was the siren's voice, and happiness was disloyalty to God. Every day was solemn, and Sunday was made the most solemn of all. In those days, we used to go to church and Sunday-school, and then come home and study the New England catechism, read the Bible, sing hymns, repeat the commandments, and kneel in family prayer. The child was not allowed to pluck a flower, or pick and eat an apple, or whistle, or use his pocket-knife to whittle a stick. We were taught, and believed, that "I must not work, I must not play, upon God's holy Sabbath day." We sang about how "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood stand dressed in living green," but we were taught that there was no beauty, no pleasure, no attractiveness in the flower-gemmed fields this side the river of death. We were taught to sing, "I would not live always; I ask not to stay, where storm after storm gathers dark o'er my way," and every one of us sang it, the little liars that we were. We were taught that the earth was a vale of tears, a desert drear, a place to be shunned. Religion did everything possible to make that thing true. We were cheered and reassured by the song that heaven was a place "where congregations ne'er break up and Sabbaths never end," and we were justified in thinking that if, in the other world, Sabbaths were any longer than they were in this, it would not take many of them to make a real eternity.

Once, when a child, I drove the cows to pasture of a Sunday morning, and on the way back the dog ran down and killed a squirrel. As any boy of nine or ten years would do, I carried the squirrel home in a rapturous triumph. It was Sunday. The dog had killed it on Sunday. And I was forthwith ordered to take the thing out and bury it. The Sabbath had been desecrated; its sanctity had been violated by the dog!

An older brother of mine went hunting on a Saturday, some number of miles from home. He hunted all day, and returned early Sunday morning, bringing, with other things, a wild goose. The scoundrel did not say a thing at first about when he got it. The day after but one, it was dressed and stuffed and put in a long iron drip pan, and roasted in the oven with onions. We children sat around filling our lungs with the aroma that came from that oven. Dinner was at last ready, and on the table. We children were all sitting there eager, impatient, our appetites telegraphing rush orders, when that older brother, that two-fold scoundrel, confessed that he had shot the goose on the way home Sunday morning. There was no argument. There was not a moment's delay. No one dared to make a protest. The stern head of the household ordered the guilty brother to take the platter with all of its contents—roast goose, onions, stuffing, and brown gravy—and throw it to the pigs. That happened more years ago than I would willingly own. Many times since then I have eaten roast goose and onions, but never yet have I found one that tasted as good as that one smelled.

The argument that the Church is out of date may be stated in two forms. In the first place, the Church was always based upon absolutism. It has no part, no mission with philosophy, with science, or with reason. Look at it this way. Suppose the revelation, as the Church claims, is of God. How does the Church stultify and degrade itself and cast an aspersion upon its God by an attempt to prove the revelation divine! Suppose it is based upon the credibility of miracles. How does it degrade those miracles by deducing proof for them! Does any man think that if I believed that I had in my hand or in

my heart a commission from the Almighty One to speak, I would attempt to justify or vindicate that commission before any tribunal of men? I would stand there, satisfied with that conviction, proud with that distinction and resistless with that dignity. Absolutism is the only foundation for the Church. The Church abdicated when it undertook to prove its pretensions. The one consistent Churchman in this world is our friend the Pope. He makes no apologies to science, nor to governments, nor to politicians, nor to religionists. He says, "I, we are infallible; I, we hold the keys of heaven and hell; tremble, ye recalcitrants; fear, ye sinful men; outside of our benedictions and beneath our curse there is everlasting death; here and here only is the way of salvation." That is consistent. That gentleman has my respect. The foundation of absolutism, I repeat, is the only possible foundation for the religion that pretends to be supernatural in its origin and divine in its authority.

Little by little, the separation will take place. More and more the division will come until at last all this civilised world will be either Roman Catholic or Freethinker.

The second argument is that the Church did business on promises. The Church has always existed for the other world, not for this. There was a time when this world was such a poor proposition, when men were so ignorant, when a living was so hard to get, when returns from labor were so poor and meagre, that men spent a great deal of their time in dreaming about a better world; but as man advanced in knowledge and his experience widened, as science threw light upon his way and aided his efforts, the world became such a fairly respectable place that men forgot, for the time being, the other world, and commenced to live in this. Other-worldism is losing more and more its hold, and this-worldism is increasing its influence over men.

From the standpoint of a social force, the Church has been a failure. It has demonstrated in inefficiency. What contribution has it ever made to the knowledge of the world, to the intellectual wealth of mankind, to science, to invention, to discovery? What do civilisation and progress owe to the Church? In every land where it has been supreme the nation has remained in superstition and ignorance. It has declined and retrograded and been left far behind in mankind's march of progress. The Church and religion have been the bane of Ireland, the handicap of Scotland. France, in order that she might preserve the life of the republic, has been compelled to subordinate the Church. Germany was never so mighty as since she subordinated the Church to the State. Italy has entered upon a new national existence since she rescued herself from Churchly dominion. In all of Europe, once the abject servant of the Church, there remains Austria alone that acknowledges her ancient subjection. The Church has been tried in every circumstance, under all conditions, with all possible variety of materials. With what result? Look at Mexico, at any of the South American republics, at any of the Latin nations where, from time immemorial, the Church has held sway.

Why do we say these things? Why not be silent? Why not let well alone? Simply because well enough does not exist. Well enough is never good enough as long as better is possible. This nation is called a Christian nation. I suppose by that is meant it is a nation under the control and supreme influence of the Church. If it is, then this nation constitutes an indictment against the Church. Do you know that crime increases in the same ratio that the population does? Where is the influence of the Church? Do you know that poverty is not being lessened in this land of ours, a land of unexampled abundance and incomparable plenty? What is the reason? I will tell you one reason and then I will tell you a possible cure. One reason is, that the Church has always held that poverty was a blessing—for somebody else. And the other reason is, that it has always held that it was a divinely good thing for men to take

care of the poor, that to build almshouses and asylums for the care of the needy and the indigent and the suffering was one of the most beautiful tributes man could pay to man, and I want to say to you that it is just that kind of delusion that has kept poverty increasing in the world. When we come to look upon the poorhouse as a disgrace to a community, when we come to regard any eleemosynary institution as an indictment against the humanity, the goodness and the justice of the community that requires it, then we shall begin to abolish poverty. The great Preacher of the Mount said, "Poor ye have always with you," and he uttered a truth altogether too true; but if religion had been a thousandth part divine, as it claimed to be, if it had been striving to disseminate intelligence, justice and love between man and man, then we should have had better politics, better government; then poverty would have been abolished long ago.

It is a disgrace and a crime to be poor, not the disgrace of the man that is poor, but the disgrace and crime of the community or the State or the system of government that makes and keeps that man poor. I suppose that—not to be misunderstood—the statement must be modified, and let it be modified to this extent: It is a good thing to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and visit the unfortunate in prison and wait upon the suffering, the needy and the sick; it is a good thing, and as long as those conditions exist we trust there will be kindly and generous hearts to perform the service; but as long as we exalt that service as the best that man can render his fellow man, so long will we continue the conditions that make poverty and crime compulsory. Either God Almighty made a mistake in making this world, or else he made a mistake in making man, or else man has made a mistake in his ministration of the world.

It is a patent fact that there is enough in this world so that no one needs to go hungry, so that no one needs to go ragged, so that no one needs to sleep out-doors. There is plenty in this world if we could only get at it justly and decently. What has the Church done? What does it have to offer as a solution of these pressing questions? Why, there is no sarcasm that surpasses this: The Church, followers of the meek and lowly, the poor, unfriended, outcast, despised Nazarene; the Church, teaching the blessings of poverty and the beauty of humility and subjection and obedience to the Church, and the Church, at the same time, supported by men who have had arms that reached around the world, and greed and rapacity that reached farther still, and have gathered in the wealth of the world by hundreds and thousands of millions, while their poor fellow men starved, and every one of the notoriously and enormously rich men a shining light and gilded pillar in the Church of the poor and lowly Nazarene. No sarcasm can surpass it. And whenever the Church takes the money of a man like that, the Church puts a padlock on its lips. It cannot speak out. It dare not. So the Church has always been a slave, because it has always been a mendicant. The beggar, the dependent man, can never be free.

We have lived through the era of religion. For 1900 years the Church has had sway. We have come upon conditions the Church cannot meet. Humanity must find a new solution for the problem. And, first of all, the end of effort, of ambition, of thought, must be the welfare of the human world; not my salvation, nor yours, nor the salvation primarily of any individual, but the uplift of the whole human world. Not our nation at the expense of another nation, not our community at the expense of some other, but a universal aim, the emancipation and uplift of universal man. Do you know that some of the great words have been extremely narrow in their significance? What is patriotism? The love of country. But the love of mankind, and belief in justice for all the world, is infinitely better than any meaning patriotism can possibly bear. By the uplift of humanity I do not mean merely its temporal

welfare. The progress of humanity, in the real sense, does not imply merely the production of iron and coal or wheat and corn, it does not mean simply the size or magnitude of armies and navies, it does not mean simply clearing-house reports and trade balances; it means the happiness of men and women, their comfort and enjoyment here; it means the abolition of poverty, it means the decrease of compulsory crime, it means the destruction of special privileges, it means the equality of opportunity, it means the open road for all.

Under the old ordering, we were taught that the power of the world's emancipation was a divine power. It rested in God. The Church was to call mightily upon the Lord and he would make bare his arm for the salvation of mankind. Well, he may or he may not do it. He has not done it yet. After waiting 1,900 years, isn't it surely time to call on some other arm? What other arm is that? Man must be the savior of man. Humanity must work out its own salvation. And I say to you that with man, as he exists to-day, there are energies sufficient, powers that are adequate, and all elements that are required for the emancipation and the glorification of mankind. There are no evils in this world but those that come, as Diderot said, from bad education and bad institutions. The average man and the average woman each is better than they have a chance to show. We speak about business being piracy, the hard and fast lines of competition, the tremendous rush for wealth, in which the weak must go down, and I say there is not a business man in ten thousand but would rather do business in a fair and just way than to transact it in the way he does now. There is not one in ten thousand who would not rather pay every girl and every woman in his employ a fair living wage than to keep them in his employ at half wages, as at present. There is not one of them but would rather not have children employed in his factory or in his establishment than to have them there. But what can he do? He can only do what the whole business world does. As long as one man employs women and girls at less than a living wage, for less money than will buy their clothes and pay their board, then others must do the same. As long as one man employs child labor, thus reducing the cost of handling the goods, his competitors must do it. As long as one merchant buys of the factories that sell cheaper because they are degrading womanhood and asphyxiating childhood in their factories, another must. It does not do any good to convert a man. Not a particle of change is affected in the business world when the evangelist announces that one merchant or one manufacturer has been brought into the fold of God. Humanity is the thing that must be converted. The system is the thing that must be cleansed and purified.

The real reformer, the real teacher of men, is the man that makes himself unnecessary. The Church, for instance, if it had taught well enough, would be unnecessary now. Because it has not taught well enough it is unnecessary as it is. Otherwise, it would have been unnecessary through its excellence; now it is unnecessary through its inefficiency. The real teacher is the man that has no personal aim, nor ambition, nor inspiration, nor desire except just the uplifting of his fellow man.

And yet, my friends, there is no final good that can come, or ever did come, to this world except through the instrumentality of the fanatic, or the man in his time called a fool, or the martyr—in other words, of the man without any spirit of calculation or thought of consequences, who spoke his honest thought and took the chances.

I had in mind to violate the proprieties so far as to say a personal thing or two. One is this: The only claim I make for what I say is that it is my honest thought. I have no communication with the skies; I have no revelations from Almighty God, direct or indirect. I only have my mind and my conscience as a guide, and strive to follow them. I do not ask you or anyone to believe a thing I say

because I say it. I have no desire for followers, no ambition for this or any institution. I think that the race, that mankind, that men and women in the great vast sum, are more necessary and more divine than any individual or any institution under the sun, and I think the only way to benefit and help them is for any teacher, whoever he may be, to speak his honest thought. And in the second place, I have no personal feeling or animosity toward any living human being. There are certain old ideas that I have no respect whatever for, but I beg of you to understand that in attacking an idea no attack of a personal kind was or is ever intended. I have been informed within a few days that my usefulness in this field was to be summarily ended. "The future is with God alone and man has but to-day." Of that usefulness, I shall say this: No enemies of mine shall decide the question, but the liberal people of Kansas City, and whenever they say my usefulness here is ended, I go at once. Until they say that, I propose to stay indefinitely. I have also been informed within a few days, that if I did not stop these teachings I was in danger of being killed. The only reply to that which I wish to make is this, that in the near future I shall ask you to arrange for next season for two lectures a month instead of one.

A man may know nothing about the amors of the Holy Ghost and still be able to practice kindness. It is not necessary that a man must understand the doctrine of vicarious atonement in order to understand and practice justice. It is not necessary to believe in miracles, violations of law and indictments against the wisdom of the Highest, in order to love one's neighbor as oneself and be kind and just and true. We can then eliminate formal religion.

In the era of reason man will care less and less for religion, less and less for the Church, less and less for the pretensions of priesthood and dogmatism, less and less for foolish rites and selfish prayers, and more and more for kindness, justice, brotherhood, and love.

—Truthseeker (New York).

The old Douglas motto, "Tender and true," may wisely be taken up again by all of us, for our own, in art no less than in other things. Depend upon it, the first universal characteristic of all great art is Tenderness, and the second is Truth. I find this more and more every day: an infinitude of tenderness is the chief gift and inheritance of all the truly great men. It is sure to involve a relative intensity of disdain towards base things, and an appearance of sternness and arrogance in the eyes of all hard, stupid, and vulgar people—quite terrific to such, if they are capable of terror, and hateful to them, if they are capable of nothing higher than hatred. I say the *first* inheritance is Tenderness—the *second* Truth, because the Tenderness is in the make of the creature, the Truth is his acquired habits and knowledge: besides, the love comes first in dignity as well as in time, and that is always pure and complete: the truth, at best, imperfect.—John Ruskin.

Union, organisation spiritual and material, a far nobler than any Popedom or Feudalism in their truest days, I never doubt, is coming for the world; sure to come. But on fact alone, not on Semblance or Simulacrum, will it be able either to come, or to stand when come. With union grounded on falsehood, and ordering us to speak and act lies, we will not have anything to do. Peace? A brutal lethargy is peaceable, the noisome grave is peaceable. We hope for a living peace, not a dead one.—Thomas Carlyle.

But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop  
To quadruped instructors, many a good  
And useful quality, and virtue too,  
Rarely exemplified among ourselves;  
Attachment never to be weaned, or changed  
By any change of fortune, proof alike  
Against unkindness, absence, and neglect;  
Fidelity, that neither bribe nor threat  
Can move or warp; and gratitude for small  
And trivial favors, lasting as the life,  
And glistening even in the dying eye.

—Cowper.

Correspondence.

THE THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I declared that all species are *closely* adapted to their environments. Mr. Eder denies that they are *perfectly* adapted. He evades the point at issue. "Closely" and "perfectly" are not synonymous terms. Man, for example, is closely (not perfectly, for in that case none would die except of old age) adapted to *his* environment—by lungs, by limbs, by alimentary system, by brain, by mind, etc., etc. Therefore, he survives in it, which a fish could not do. The fish is closely adapted to another environment, in which man could not survive. The Lamarckian doctrine of the transmission of acquirements has been abandoned by nearly all biologists. There remain, so far as I am aware, only two explanations of evolution conceivable—at any rate, only two have hitherto been conceived—Natural Selection and miracle. Will Mr. Eder mention the third, to which apparently he pins his faith? Or will he declare he has not space or time?

A few—a very few—biologists still survive who, anxious to preserve a place for God in nature, reject Natural Selection and attribute evolution to miracle—to a divinely-directed "adaptive growth force." Of those biologists who reject miracle there are at present only two schools—the "Selectionists," who, as indicated in my letter, attribute evolution to the natural selection of small variations, and the "Mutationists," who ascribe it to the selection of large variations. Apparently, Mr. Eder has been misled by the technical term "Selectionist." Obviously, both schools believe in Natural Selection, but in biological literature the word "Selectionist" is reserved for the first-mentioned.

The opinions of Hans Driesch—or any other man—are of no importance. We are able to form our own opinions. Only facts, and inferences from facts, are of importance. I daresay for every biologist of note whom Mr. Eder can name as rejecting Natural Selection (and accepting miracle) I can name, if need be, a hundred as well, or better known who accept it. The Mendelians on whom he relies are almost to a man followers of Darwin, inasmuch as they attribute evolution to Natural Selection. Mendelism is not a theory of evolution at all. It is a theory of heredity. Mr. Eder appeals to Bateson, of Cambridge. Here are Bateson's words: "Mendel's discovery, it will be understood, applies only to the manner of transmission of a character already existing. It makes no suggestion as to the manner in which such a character came into existence" (First Report to the Evolution Committee of the Royal Society, p. 151).

D. WAUDBY.

For, as the ignoble person, in his dealings with all that occurs in the world about him, first sees nothing clearly—looks nothing fairly in the face, and then allows himself to be swept away by the trampling torrent, and unescapable force, of the things that he would not foresee, and could not understand: so the noble person, looking the facts of the world full in the face, and fathoming them with deep faculty, then deals with them in unalarmed intelligence and unharried strength, and becomes, with his human intellect and will, no unconscious nor insignificant agent in consummating their good, and restraining their evil.—*John Ruskin.*

The world *has* to obey him who thinks and sees in the world. The world can alter the manner of that; can either have it as blessed continuous summer-sunshine, or as unblessed black thunder and tornado,—with unspeakable difference of profit for the world! The manner of it is very alterable; the matter and fact of it is not alterable by any power under the sky. Light; or, failing that, lightning: the world can take its choice.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

SHAW ANTICIPATES.

This play of mine, *Major Barbara*, is, I hope, both true and inspired; but whoever says that it all happened, and that faith in it and understanding of it consist in believing that it is a record of an actual occurrence, is, to speak according to Scripture, a fool and a liar, and is hereby solemnly denounced and cursed as such by me, the author, to all posterity.—*G. Bernard Shaw, Preface to "Major Barbara."*

When would-be Suicides in purpose fail—  
Who could not find a morsel though they needed—  
If Peter sends them for attempts to jail,  
What would he do to them if they succeeded.

—*Tom Hood.*

LIBERTY.

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower  
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,  
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,  
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,  
Is evil: hurts the faculties, impedes  
Their progress in the road of science; blinds  
The eyesight of discovery, and begets,  
In those that suffer it, a sordid mind  
Bestial, a meagre intellect, unfit  
To be the tenant of man's noble form.

—*Cowper, "The Task."*

There is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence. There are glances of hatred that stab and raise no cry of murder; robberies that leave man or woman for ever beggared of peace and joy, yet kept secret by the sufferer—committed to no sound except that of low moans in the night, seen in no writing except that made on the face by slow months of suppressed anguish and early morning tears. Many an inherited sorrow that has marred a life has been breathed into no human ear.—*George Eliot.*

Yea, it becomes a man  
To cherish memory, where he had delight;  
For kindness is the natural birth of kindness;  
Whose soul records not the great debt of joy,  
Is stamped for ever an ignoble man.

—*Sophocles.*

With the consent of Congress, the State Department will remit \$40,000,000 of its claims for its indemnity arising out of the Boxer troubles in China, and Mr. Roosevelt has caused Sir Chentung Liang Cheng, the Chinese minister at Washington, to be so informed. The President asks only that the actual cost to the United States incident to the Peking campaign be forthcoming, and he looks out for the interest of the churches by reserving also the \$2,000,000 claimed by the missionaries. The men of God originally wanted \$10,000,000, but examination showed that at least \$8,000,000 was fraud, and the claim was reduced to the \$2,000,000 that Roosevelt now holds out for. The extortion will correct any notion by which the Chinese may have been deluded that salvation is free.—*Truthseeker (New York).*

EVOLUTION.

Out of the dusk a shadow,  
Then, a spark;  
Out of the cloud a silence,  
Then, a lark;  
Out of the heart a rapture,  
Then, a pain;  
Out of the dead cold ashes,  
Life again.

—*John B. Tabb.*

A PETITION.

These are the gifts I ask of thee,  
Spirit serene:  
Strength for the daily task,  
Courage to face the road,  
Good cheer to help me bear the traveller's load,  
And for the hours of rest that come between,  
An inward joy in all things heard and seen.  
These are the sins I fain  
Would have thee take away:  
Malice and cold disdain,  
Hot anger, sullen hate,  
Scorn of the lowly, envy of the great,  
And discontent that casts a shadow gray  
On all brightness of the common day.

—*Henry Van Dyke.*

WHEN THE GHOST WALKED.

First Disconsolate Widow: "Are you going to the medium's to-night to see if you can get a message from your husband?"

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"What became of Nineveh?" asked the Sunday-school teacher.

"It was destroyed," said Johnny, promptly.

"And what became of Tyre?"

"Punctured."

**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, F. A. Davies.

**CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.:** Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred. "Buddha and Buddhism." Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. R. Theakstone. "From Christian Chorister to Freethought Advocate"; 6.15, Guy A. Aldred, "The Crusades."

**KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.:** Ridley-road, 10.30, F. Schaller, a Lecture.

**NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.:** Parliament Hill, 3.30, H. Wishart, "How I Became an Atheist."

**WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.:** Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, H. S. Wishart, "Christ, the Enemy of Socialism." With special invitation to Christian Socialists.

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

**WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.:** Beresford-square, 11.30, H. Wishart, "Christ, the Enemy of Socialism."

**COUNTRY.****OUTDOOR.**

**CLECKHEATON:** Four Lane Ends, Scholes, 7, C. J. Atkinson and G. Whitehead.

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

**Huddersfield Branch N. S. S.:** Market Cross, on Saturday, at 8, George Whitehead, a Lecture.

**SOUTH SHIELDS** (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Excursion, etc.

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