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Nothing is coarse which is proper, nothing is scurrilous which is just.—G. J. HOLYOAKE (1842).

Fooling the Children.

FOOLING the children is the commonest of games. Too many parents play it—especially fond mothers. Preachers of all denominations play it from January to December. All the Churches are playing it, or seeking to play it, in the great "education" struggle. The last thing they really think about is education. There is nothing whatever about that subject in Mr. McKenna's Bill in the House of Commons or the Bishop of St. Asaph's Bill in the House of Lords. Both are measures of ecclesiastical adjustment. The point at issue is simply who shall control the religious teaching imparted to the children. Not only in day-schools, but also in Sunday-schools, children are systematically and shamefully bamboozled. Teachers with long faces, and most virtuous expressions, lie to their classes by the hour; telling them things about the Bible, for instance, which they only half believe, or thoroughly disbelieve, themselves. Men, and sometimes women, who know and accept a good deal of what is called the Higher Criticism, tell boys and girls the exploded falsehoods of fifty years ago; and in so doing they commit a crime in comparison with which burglary is quite a respectable pursuit.

All sorts of publications join in this infamous work. Here is a new *Children's Encyclopædia* issued by the proprietors of the voracious *Daily Mail*. In the first part (there are to be forty at sevenpence each) Mr. Harold Begbie is turned on—at so much an hour or so much a line—to write "The Story of Our Bible." We suppose he was chosen for the job on account of his experience as a novelist. He opens in a most sentimental manner. He explains "B.C." and "A.D.," but does not give a hint as to when and how the latter came into use. Child readers are left to imagine that it began nineteen hundred years ago. "Jesus," they are told, "is the centre of history and time. From the cross men look forward; from the cross men look backward. Man, you see, has divided time into two great parts, two immense divisions. The first division is the time before Jesus lived among men; the second division is the time after Jesus appeared on earth. All over the world time is now divided in this wonderful way." Thus, without exactly telling falsehoods, Mr. Begbie manages to convey them. His young readers are cunningly deceived. It is not true, and Mr. Begbie must know it, that "Man" has divided time into two divisions, before and after Christ. Only one-third of mankind have done so. "All over the world" is simply a subterfuge. Geographically it is true; in any other sense it is false. Christians are to be found in all parts of the world, even where they are not wanted; but the people they live amongst, outside their own countries, do not divide time in this "wonderful way." "B.C." and "A.D.," in short, are only accepted by European nations, or by their descendants in other parts of the world, such as America, Australia, and South Africa.

Mr. Begbie goes on to tell Harmsworth's children that "the Jews were chosen by God to teach the other nations about life and the mystery of death." This is one of the silliest sentences we ever read. Christian scholars, even, admit that the Jews had no solution of the mystery of death. There is not one clear declaration of belief in a future life from Genesis to Malachi.

"God promised" the Jews, Mr. Begbie says, that "they should be a blessing to all the world." Well, if God did so, he has not kept his word. We do not wish to run down the Jews; they are probably as good as the Gentiles—some people think they could hardly be worse. But to call them, in any special and honest sense of the words, a "blessing to all the world," or any part of it, is rather a ghastly sort of joke. Rightly or wrongly, at any rate, it is precisely in Christian nations that the Jews are most hated and despised; so that the principal recipients of the long-promised "blessing" are perfectly satisfied that it has never reached them yet.

Mr. Begbie, the novelist, says that the ancient Jews were "a very kind-hearted people." Good God! Has he read their own account of themselves in their so-called historical books? He says that they "made the home the great thought of their lives"—whereas they were hardened polygamists. Their ideal king, David, had several wives, including other men's. Their wise king, Solomon, had seven hundred wives over the right and three hundred over the left.

Harmsworth's novelist-historian next writes about the Jewish expectation of a Messiah, who came at last, not as a mighty warrior, but as "a beautiful young peasant." How romantic! And how imaginary! Jesus, according to Christian and prophetic tradition, was not beautiful; he was not even comely or desirable. Nor was he a peasant. He was a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter.

Mr. Begbie does not tell the children who wrote the various books of the Bible, or how they were collected together as "The Book." Perhaps he does not know; perhaps he thought the story too dangerous. He jumps forward ever so many centuries, and writes about the English Bible, and how the good Protestants gave it to the people, and how the wicked Catholics burnt them for doing so. But nothing is said about the good Protestants burning the Catholics, and each other, when they had the chance.

"Bibles can now," Mr. Begbie says, "be bought and read everywhere." That is true. It is also true that hardly anybody believes it. When a man comes forward who believes it up to the point of acting upon it, he is sure to be sent to prison (or a lunatic asylum) by his pretended fellow believers. Witness the case of the Peculiar People. And the Christian Scientists, who also carry out New Testament teaching, are looked upon as cranks and humbugs.

Mr. Begbie sentimentalises through six pages and winds up with some doggerel which he doubtless considers poetry. Of all these twelve lines there is but one that is true,—*"We know not who inscribed each page."* The authorship of the Bible is indeed unknown. Various assertions have been made about it, but the greatest lie of all is that its author was God.

G. W. FOOTE.

Mr. Campbell on Immortality.

IT appears that some of the followers of the New Theology are concerned about the question of a future life. Not all of them; because the Rev. J. Warschauer says plainly enough "Don't trouble," he believes in the gospel of "One world at a time, and let us try to do the duty that lies nearest"—which is a good, wholesome piece of secular philosophy. Others, however, are not so sensible, and these, not unnaturally, appeal to their leader, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, for enlightenment. Numbers have asked him to state his views as to the "experiences which await the individual soul in the life beyond the grave," and this, in the time snatched from the task of social reorganisation, he proceeds to do during the course of one of his City Temple sermons. The sermon is welcome for the reason that it gives one the opportunity of studying Mr. Campbell on a question that at least gives a chance for careful reasoning and subtle argument. The chance is there, but that is all. From beginning to end of the sermon there is little else than expressions of unreasoning sentiment—interesting enough, no doubt, for a congregation to listen to, but quite worthless from any other point of view.

Mr. Campbell prefaces his sermon with the usual prayer, which, with its professions of human weakness, littleness, and frailty, leave one with a very disagreeable taste in the mouth. Mr. Campbell's prayers are not, in this respect, worse than those of other preachers, but neither are they any better. And they might all be well dispensed with. For these public professions of humility, weakness, and ignorance, have not the slightest beneficial influence. Christians have been repeating these phrases for centuries, without their having the least effect in making them desirous of becoming better, stronger, or wiser men. They are simply part and parcel of the traditional pulpit cant, and are probably harmful inasmuch as the open confession seems to make people quite contented with their shortcomings. Besides, God, if there is a God, does not need to be told that his professional followers are not all they might be. The fact is sufficiently obvious, and if sermons are read in heaven they can only be taken as additional evidence where further corroboration is quite unnecessary.

Now it would seem that the question of a future life must be settled either by direct evidence in the shape of facts, or by inference from facts that admit of no other explanation. As a New Theologian, one who speaks on behalf of "enlightened thought," and who moreover falls foul of other theologians because of their disinclination to reason things out, one would expect a person of this kind to rest his belief upon evidence that would at least bear examination. Far from this being the case, Mr. Campbell seems to rest his case upon a mere expression of sentiment; and sentiment does not admit of profitable discussion. Mr. Campbell's conviction that since the universe is "morally governed" there must be a future life, is of no more evidential value than my own conviction that there is not a particle of justification for either belief.

Mr. Campbell says that to him "the cessation of any form of self-conscious existence is unthinkable." Well, if all that is meant by this is that Mr. Campbell cannot think of himself as *minus* the power of thinking, he is simply stating a truism. But neither can he positively think of himself in a deep sleep. Yet the fact of sleep is questioned by none. But while one cannot think of one's own self-consciousness ceasing to be, the self-consciousness of other people is on a different footing. In our own case, self-consciousness covers the entire field; in that of others, the existence of self-consciousness is an inference. To ourselves, self-consciousness is a primary fact; but every other person is, to us, primarily an object, and evidence is necessary to prove that it has self-consciousness. Indeed, far from an inability to think of self-consciousness *per se* as non-

existent, I cannot, nor do I think can anyone else, think of self-consciousness as existing apart from a material body. What Mr. Campbell really means, then, is that he cannot think of himself as not thinking; and that hardly needs discussion. What he says is that he cannot conceive consciousness ceasing to exist in anybody; and that is simply wrong, and is proven so by the common fact of deep sleep. Really, when one finds men like Mr. Campbell and Dr. Warschauer, both doubtless very admirable gentlemen in their way, but both without any real capacity for serious thought above that of the average man—when one finds them hailed as profound thinkers, a feeling of irritation can hardly be suppressed.

Mr. Campbell says that the desire for a future life is not the desire "for the preservation of the *ego* so much as a longing for the perpetuation of the higher relationship of human experience." Now, in the first place, it may well be questioned whether people do really desire a future life in any case. Certainly people do not desire—save in abnormal moments—death; but this is only the equivalent of the desire to *live*, not the wish to depart from this state of existence and enter on another. And evolutionists are in nowise at a loss to explain this phenomenon. It is nothing more than a normal, an inevitable, and a healthy outcome of the laws of biological development. And it is because this desire for life is not satiated, save in very rare cases, that we find in nearly all a clinging to life, which has been wrongly interpreted as a desire for a life beyond the grave.

But however this may be, it is obvious that the desire to "perpetuate the higher relationships" of life is in no way responsible either for the origin or the continuance of the belief in a future life. What is there of this element present among savages, with whom the belief is universal? Not a trace. They believe in a continued existence of the "double," because to them it is a truth forced upon their minds by a series of mysterious experiences. And, once the belief is consolidated and organised, it takes its place as part of the mental furniture of the race to which the human race, having once accommodated itself, clings with unreasoning tenacity. The reason for a future life, advanced by Mr. Campbell, is really an apology for the belief elaborated in the face of hostile criticism. Lacking evidence of justification, excuses are invented for its continuance. Besides, if Nature, or God, does sever these higher relationships in the sphere in which we are certain of their existence, why should they not remain severed in any other state in which it is assumed we may exist? Is Nature, or God, so careful of human desires or feelings in other directions that we can safely argue they will be satisfied in this? Even granting the desire in question, it is evidence only of the desire, not a presumption that it will meet with gratification. And what is to be said of the millions of Buddhists whose desire is not that their human relationships will be perpetuated, but that they may reach that state of perfection which will prevent their recurrence. Probably Mr. Campbell may feel that the desires of Buddhists are not to be counted as of equal weight with the desires of Christians, but to anyone but a Christian preacher they will be taken as proofs of training or of education, not as evidence that the universe is built in accord with their dictates.

If I may call Mr. Campbell's attention to such vulgar things as facts, I may also remind him that the belief in a future life is strongest where the finer and higher natures are least prevalent. Savages, as I have already said, universally believe in it. And among civilised peoples the belief is least questioned amongst the least refined and the least thoughtful classes. I am not, of course, referring to classes in the social sense of the word; what I mean is, that with all sections of society it is precisely among those who have devoted most attention to the question, and who certainly betray no lack of recognition of the "higher relationships of life," that we find the greatest amount of disbelief in human immortality.

Mr. Campbell does not say exactly what he means by "higher relationships," but I may assume that he will include under that expression the relations of husband and wife, parent and child. Indeed, these cannot well be excluded, since around these all the other feelings aggregate. All the social feelings and affections, worthy as they are, and which in course of time have taken on the appearance of having an independent value, all of them are among nature's devices for the perpetuation of the race. In other words, our social sense develops from, and is dependent upon, the family. But the family, resting as it does on the great phenomenon of sex, is a physical fact. That clearly comes to an end at the grave; and one would like to know whether Mr. Campbell believes that the higher relationships can continue to exist in the absence of those feelings and conditions upon which they are, so far as we know, completely dependent?

Mr. Campbell assures his audience that if the universe does not provide immortality for us it will not come up to his expectations. Orlando's retort to Jacques when he expressed a dislike to Rosalind's name was, "There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened." One might reply in a similar vein to those Christians who solemnly assert their disapproval of the universe if it does not respond to their fancies. The world will at least outlive their frown. We are asked whether it is credible that, in a universe in which the "highest is sure to prevail," the victory "should be wasted as soon as it is won," that "this very universe will fling into nothingness the life by which it has prevailed."

Now I am not certain that the highest is sure to prevail. I do know that over and over again the lower prevails, and that the world would not be as it is were it otherwise. But even though it be granted that the highest will prevail, I do not see how this affects the question of immortality. For the victory of the highest, to be of service, must prevail *here*, not in some other world. The "way-makers" Mr. Campbell refers to as having benefited the race, did whatever good is to be placed to them *here*, not somewhere else. And whether these individuals be extinguished at death, or continue to live elsewhere, their work ceases at death, and the race reaps the benefit or the sorrow of their lives.

It is evident that Mr. Campbell is in a sad confusion. He quite fails to discriminate between the value of a man's work to the people amidst whom he lived, and the question of whether that same individual will go on living for ever elsewhere. Nothing can destroy the value of the former; the latter is a question of quite individual concern. Yet Mr. Campbell believes that unless the individual enters a perpetual existence elsewhere, his work here is a mockery and next to worthless. Which only proves that when a leader of "advanced religious thought" ceases belaboring theologians of a slightly more unscientific mind than himself, he makes it plain to the observer that he is, after all, a member of the same family, with all the ancestral blemishes thick upon him.

C. COHEN.

The Story of a Crisis.

JAMES DANIEL was never known outside the community in which he spent his quiet, unassuming, blameless life. His one hobby was reading, and farming his occupation. All his leisure hours were given to his books and solitary meditation. His neighbors knew him only at a distance. They were somewhat afraid of him because he knew so much, and he was by nature excessively shy. Everybody felt, and often admitted, that he was a good man who availed himself of every opportunity to be of service to his fellow-men. But he had one fault—a great, gaping, terrible fault—which could not be overlooked. He never darkened the door of church or chapel. Why he would not join his fellows in the

worship of God no one could tell. In personal character, and as a citizen, he was all that could be desired; but he was spiritually unregenerate, unsaved, ungodly, and on the broad road to everlasting destruction. In a word, he was a wicked Pagan in a Christian country; and the great wonder was that God did not cut him off and cast him into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But heaven was marvellously patient and long-suffering, and he lived on to a ripe old age. At last he was gathered to his fathers, and a Christian funeral service was read over his corpse, although the general impression was that his soul was already in hell. Among his effects was found a sealed document, which, on being opened, turned out to be a carefully-written account of an intellectual experience, a crisis during which he successfully resisted all endeavors to convert him from inborn Atheism to Christian Theism. The MS was never publicly read, but its contents somehow leaked out, and the community was shocked to discover that for fifty years it had harbored not only a non-chapel-goer, not merely an Infidel, but a soul-hardened and heaven-defying Atheist. A shudder passed through the whole neighborhood.

I am one of the few who actually saw, and read, James Daniel's story of that great crisis, which is now in the possession of his eldest son, who is himself a thorough-going Secularist. James Daniel's parents were Puritans of the Puritans. They gloried in the exceeding strictness of the rules laid down for their life. The chief ingredients in the only happiness that ever came their way were fear and trembling. It was with trembling that they clothed themselves and drank their water. They served the Lord with fear, and rejoiced with trembling. The God in whom they believed was an angry Sovereign, in whose sight they were most miserable sinners; and although they believed that they were saved through the blood of the Lamb, yet their very salvation was a thing to be worked out with fear and trembling. It was in this, their own austere faith, that they endeavored to bring up their eldest son James, whom, with fear and trembling, they truly loved. But James was of an inquiring mind, and the very first question he asked was this: "Father, how do you know that there is a God?" This was a blasphemous puzzler, and the father was struck dumb with horror. This was proof positive that human nature was in a woefully fallen estate. After a while came this lame reply: "My dear boy, as I have often told you, God has revealed himself in the Bible." "But, father, have you never seen him yourself, and has he never spoken to you?" "Poor boy, we cannot see God with eyes of flesh, nor hear his voice with material ears; it is by faith only we can see him, and it is alone to a believing heart that he addresses himself." By-and-bye James was able to read the Bible for himself; and the more he read it the more perplexed and bewildered he became. "If the God of the Bible exists," he reasoned with himself, "he is certainly to be feared; but who can love him?" It was an old argument, but is it not always new because ever pertinent?

James Daniel never believed in the existence of God. Like everybody else he was born an Atheist, and an Atheist he remained until his eyelids closed in death. Unlike poets, believers are made, not born. But neither his parents, nor his Sunday-school teachers, nor the minister succeeded in making James Daniel a Theist. He never openly challenged his instructors; he merely asked questions, and formed his own conclusions, silently musing on the blundering answers given. Though brought up in one of the most intensely religious parishes in Great Britain, he never took the disease that was so prevalent.

Finding no use for God in the furnishing of his mind, James never felt the need of Christ the Savior. The central idea, one would almost be justified in saying that the only distinctive idea, of Christianity is that of recovery, redemption, purchase; and from the earliest apostolic times this idea implied belief in the Devil as well as in God. Prior to the creation,

God and the Devil alone existed, and they had become bitter enemies. When man was made, the Devil saw a chance of having his revenge on God by seizing and holding captive his creative masterpiece. That is really what was meant by the fall of man in paradise. Satan, in the guise of a serpent, took him as prisoner of war, and held him in spite of high heaven's omnipotence. Between the Fall and the coming of Christ, the Devil exercised dominion over his captives; but he agreed to hand them back to his rival on receipt of a sufficient ransom; and the ransom fixed upon was the only begotten Son of Heaven's dread monarch. Well, the only begotten Son came down to earth, and by his death on Calvary paid the price for the release of the Devil's prisoners, or of a certain number of them. This is the explanation of the New Testament references to believers in Christ as people bought, purchased, or "redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter i. 18, 19); and it is well known that, according to the common belief of the primitive Church, salvation meant release from the dominion of the Prince of Darkness. But James Daniel, being an Atheist from birth, treated Christianity as a huge joke. To him it was unbelievable because meaningless, and meaningless because needless.

James Daniel was thus a profound philosopher. He justified his Atheism on logical principles; and his Atheism once firmly established, all else was easy. It is passing strange that so few people realise that Atheism is the only logical position. A belief in God, in the face of the existing universe, necessitates belief in a savior of some sort. Nothing is more palpable than that, as Creator, God must have been bitterly disappointed with himself. What he pronounced his masterpiece, a creature made, presumably, in his own image and likeness, was hopelessly marred, more than half destroyed, by a malignant being whom he, the Almighty Power, had previously—

"Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire."

The very idea is preposterous in the extreme. But even assuming that such a crushed foe, in spite of "adamantine chains and penal fire," succeeded in working such incredible havoc, we have to face the still more unthinkable fact that God, as Redeemer, has been a greater blunderer than as Creator, because mankind are to-day as far from recovery as they were six thousand years ago. Before he reached his twenty-fifth year, James Daniel had seen all this and clearly expressed it in his MS.

Now, although from birth an Atheist, this man lived a beautiful and truly noble life. He loved and served his fellow beings, not from the hope of heaven nor from the fear of hell, but because he was thoroughly healthy in mind and body and fully realised his obligations to society. He did not publish his Atheism from the house-tops; he simply lived it from day to day. He was merely without God, and God was equally without him. He never had speech with the Supreme Being, nor the Supreme Being with him. They left each other severely alone. And yet, his Atheism apart, his contemporaries were well pleased with him, which conclusively shows that religion and morality are not indissolubly united.

Before we part from this old friend, let it be distinctly understood that he never *preached* Atheism, either privately or publicly. Atheism is not a doctrine which one holds, but purely the negation of a doctrine. An Atheist does not say "There is no God," either in his heart or in his head. The greatest length of his utterance is, "I know of none." An Atheist is militant alone in his determined opposition to Theism. It is the existence of Theism that renders the defence of Atheism necessary. Nay, more, had it not been for Theism there would never have been Atheism. I repeat, Atheism is not a gospel which we are called upon to preach; it is the absence of the gospel of Theism, and an

attempt at refuting it. When Atheists take to preaching their gospel is Secularism. Their one object in fighting Theism is to facilitate the establishment of the Secularist philosophy of life, to deliver the minds of men from the thralldom of other-worldism that they may have leisure to exercise themselves upon the various pressing problems of this world. It is a pleasure to find that the Rev. Dr. Warschauer has adopted the Secularist watchword, "One world at a time"; but he goes on to explain that in so doing he did not mean to "suggest that no cognisance was to be taken of the *fact* of a future life, but that no purpose can be served by trying to discover its *details*." We, on the contrary, have adopted the motto, "One world at a time," because we hold that a future life is not a *fact*, but, at best, a *theory*. Dr. Warschauer is not a Secularist, because, as a Theist, he believes in another world; and if that belief is in any degree active, he cannot be loyal to the motto, "One world at a time." Therefore, we claim that Theism and Secularism cannot walk abreast. A Theist is bound to be a Sacredist, and ultimately Sacredism, if consistent, destroys Secularism, as we are often told from the pulpit. It is with Atheism alone that Secularism is in full harmony, and it is under Atheism alone that it is destined to flourish.

James Daniel's crisis consisted, not in casting belief out but in preventing it from entering, or in remaining an Atheist in spite of all efforts to make him a Theist. Whether he was wise or not in not avowing his Atheism during his life-time is a debatable point. Possibly, in the long run, he did more for Atheism by his silence than some do by their speech.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Sayings of Jesus.—I.

THE words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels are for everlastingly declared by Christian pastors and masters to be a divine revelation to mankind, and these unthinking and credulous persons tell us with the calm assurance born of ignorance that all the Gospel sayings fell from the lips of a divine Being whom they call "the Son of God." Passages such as the following we hear continually quoted as the undoubted and indisputable words of this Savior, addressed to the human race:—

John iii. 16.—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Matt. xi. 28-29.—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.....and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

John xi. 25.—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."

These and all the other Gospel statements put in the mouth of Jesus are believed by the majority of church and chapel-goers to be the words of God. Christian advocates consider it no part of their duty to teach Christian evidences or to adduce the slightest proof of the alleged divine origin of the sayings ascribed to the Gospel Jesus. The latter is assumed to be a fact beyond all question, which to doubt is to be guilty of the most heinous sin imaginable—infidelity. And this being the case, I propose in the present series of papers to do what Christian ministers have been careful not to do—to examine the most important of the Gospel sayings with the view to determine whether the words attributed to Jesus are of the character that Christian advocates and apologists claim for them.

In considering the many sayings ascribed to the Gospel Jesus, two questions, among many others, will have to be answered, viz.: (1) Were these sayings uttered by a divine Being possessed of power to forgive sins and grant eternal life? (2) Were the sayings spoken by a historical Jesus who was not a divine Being? The answer to both questions, it is scarcely necessary to say, cannot fail to be a decided

negative: no historical personage, divine or otherwise, ever gave utterance to the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels—a fact which I shall endeavor to demonstrate in this series of papers.

In commencing our investigation, the first point to be noticed is that Jesus, even according to the Gospels, wrote nothing himself; neither were his disciples shorthand writers. The sayings of Jesus, then,—supposing he ever uttered any worth recording—were not written down at the time. Moreover, two of the evangelists (Mark and Luke) are admitted to have *not* been hearers of Jesus at all. Yet in the two Gospels which bear their names we find precise and detailed accounts of sayings and doings of the Christian Savior, with the exact words he is said to have uttered, on various occasions—to the multitude, to the scribes and Pharisees, and to the disciples in private. We have also, in another Gospel, a long discourse with a woman of Samaria, which is stated to have been delivered when Jesus was alone with her, while "his disciples were gone away in the city to buy food" (John iv. 8, 27). We find recorded, again, words alleged to have been spoken by the child Jesus eighteen years before the apostles were chosen (Luke ii. 49). How did the writer obtain his information?

Most astonishing of all, two of these biographers (Matthew and Luke) have gone so far as to give us the exact words said to have been uttered by various persons before their Lord's birth. The compiler of the Third Gospel, who was not an apostle, and who implies in his Preface that he did not even live in apostolic times, tells us, for instance, the words uttered by the following personages:—

- (1) The angel Gabriel to the priest Zacharias (Luke i. 13-20).
- (2) The angel Gabriel to Mary the virgin (Luke i. 28-37).
- (3) Mary to the angel Gabriel (Luke i. 34, 38).
- (4) Elizabeth to Mary (Luke i. 42-45).
- (5) A long declamation by Mary (Luke i. 68-79).

The same compiler further tells us what was said by the following persons immediately after his Lord's birth:—

- (1) An angel to some shepherds (Luke ii. 10-12).
- (2) Praise sung by a heavenly host (Luke ii. 14).
- (3) Declamation by an old man named Simeon (Luke ii. 29-35).

Furthermore, the compiler of the First Gospel relates the words uttered by an angel to Joseph the Carpenter *in a dream* before and shortly after the birth of the child Jesus (Matt. i. 20-21; ii. 18, 20).

All these sayings ascribed to various persons about the time of the birth of the Christian Savior must be placed in the same category as those attributed to Jesus himself during his alleged public ministry. If the first class be considered apocryphal and untrustworthy, why should we give credit to the sayings which the *same* writers have ascribed to Jesus? It is, of course, perfectly clear that neither Matthew nor Luke—whose Gospels were not written within forty years of the Crucifixion—could have had any means of knowing the private events alleged to have occurred in connection with the birth of Jesus, an event which is said to have taken place a generation before any of the apostles were chosen. Yet one of them tells us what the angel Gabriel said to Mary before Jesus was born, and the other relates what the same angel said to Joseph the Carpenter *in a dream* about the same time.

But to go a step further, it is to Luke, who was not even contemporary with the apostles, that we are indebted for the text of a number of remarkable discourses alleged to have been delivered by Jesus. No one, save this very late compiler, appears to have known that the Savior illustrated his teaching by such notable parables as the following: The Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Unjust Steward, the Importunate Widow, the Lost Sheep, and several others, each discourse being recorded in the very words alleged to have been spoken by Jesus. Where did Luke obtain the report of this unique collection of

parables? Nobody knows. Possibly he may have found them in some of the "many" legendary Gospels he refers to in his Preface (Luke i. 1). In any case, we have no evidence that Jesus, or any historical person, ever gave utterance to any of the sayings or discourses recorded in Luke's Gospel.

The next point to be noticed is the very important fact that the first three Gospels (the Synoptics) are simply compilations from older writings, and are *not*—as the great majority of Christians have been led to believe—*independent* histories written by apostolic men in apostolic times. It is now admitted by unprejudiced Biblical critics that the compilers Matthew and Luke had copies of Mark's Gospel lying open before them when writing their own, and that they incorporated nearly the whole of that Gospel in their new compilations; also, that the portions of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels which were not taken from Mark's earlier Gospel were copied from other pre-existing Christian writings, now unknown. As to Mark, nothing is known either of his identity or the source of his narratives. We thus arrive at the very obvious conclusion that we have not the testimony of a single witness for the verity of anything recorded of Jesus in the three Synoptical Gospels.

Lastly, as regards the Fourth Gospel, it may be stated that the sayings and discourses in that veracious history—that is to say, those not found in one or more of the other three Gospels—were piously manufactured by the second-century writer of the "First Epistle of John," who took the liberty of placing his own words and ideas in the mouth of his Lord and Savior, with the view, no doubt, of adding to the glory of that imaginary personage. A consideration of these and other significant facts, drawn from a critical examination of the Gospels, leads to but one logical inference—that the Gospel sayings and discourses were not uttered, as represented, by any historical person, but were composed and drawn up by some of the the early Christians, and ascribed by a later generation of Christians to Jesus.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

What was Christ?

We turn to the gospels for the character of the traditional Christ and ask: Was he endowed with exceptional goodness or learning? We have a glimpse of his supposed perfection in the so-called loss in the temple. Being God, he must have deliberately stayed behind and known that his parents were seeking him in distress. If he wished to remain in the temple and teach the doctors he should have warned his parents. A boy causing his parents a sorrow which could have been easily avoided, is not only inexcusable, but guilty of sin; and it is impossible to hold him up as a pattern to other boys in this respect. Did he not evince imperfection in causing jealousy among his apostles by his favoritism? Did he not display anger in his fierce denunciation of the Pharisees? And how can we justify his conduct in choosing Judas as an apostle, knowing he should be betrayed by him? Or in going to Jerusalem when he knew he was to be put to death there? Can we distinguish such action from that of a man who lays himself across the line at the approach of a train?

Is his doctrine irreproachable? Many of his precepts are either impracticable or pernicious: "Resist not evil"; "Labor not for the meat which perisheth"; "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away"; "If a man wants to take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also"; "Be not solicitous what you shall eat or put on"; "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." What would become of human society if those rules were followed? Men would drift into universal thriftlessness, beggary, and flabby helplessness. Luckily Christians have, from the first, been better than their creed. They have ever resisted evil, been solicitous what they should eat, and laid up on earth all the treasures they could—without remorse.

Again, the words and acts of Jesus are often in conflict. He commands us to love our enemies, but he burns his own; or, "As for these mine enemies, who would not have me to reign over them, bring them hither and kill them before me."

He praises humility, but he says of himself: "Behold one greater than Solomon here; all who came before me were thieves and robbers." In fact, he has taught us nothing of practical utility, and all his commendable moral sayings were current in the East centuries before him.

But his worst record is his sins of omission. He throws no light on such burning questions as education, labor, capital, slavery, gambling, the position of women, on the form or history of the globe, the stars, America, negroes, steam-power, electricity, hygiene, medicine, anaesthetics, antiseptics. Why did he not start a printing-press, which could most effectively have propagated his doctrines and hastened civilisation by fifteen centuries? Could we exonerate a man from blame who was possessed of knowledge that would importantly advance the welfare of mankind and kept his secret to himself? Could a person who withheld a signal benefit from the world be regarded either as good or perfect?

Neither does he shine as a teacher. He used parables lest the people should understand and be saved. He even failed to make himself understood to his disciples. To the very last, and after three years' schooling, they knew not what "The Kingdom of Heaven" meant; for, on the very day of his alleged ascension, they asked him: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?"—a delusion which he did not dispel, for the good reason that he was himself the victim of it. He had been led by circumstances to assume a rôle which he had not at first thought of, but which he sustained to the last, witness his despairing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" To this day his doctrines are a tangle, which two thousand years of effort have failed to unravel, and which promise to remain a battlefield for disputants to the last. Nor have his alleged prophecies any value. Those touching his passion, his resurrection, the siege of Jerusalem, were written after the events; while those regarding his return in the clouds and the end of the world are visibly false. One institution, however, has vastly benefited by his coming—the clergy. To them Christianity is indeed "good tidings of great joy," an inexhaustible source of power, position, and wealth. The only rational conclusion we can derive from a conscientious survey of the Gospel legends is that his knowledge was not above that of his time, and his virtues were not superhuman.—*F. Bonte, "From Fiction to Fact."*

Acid Drops.

The Peckham election must have been more than a disappointment to persons like the Rev. J. E. Ewing. That gentleman wrote to the *Daily News* on March 23 (his letter appearing on March 24) stating that the Liberal candidate represented the cause of God, and that "prayer had been going up to God" for Mr. Gautrey's success. But how was the prayer answered? Mr. Gooch romped in with a tremendous majority. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

It will be easier henceforth to argue the question of the disestablishment of the State Church. Hitherto its friends have been fond of declaring (though, of course, it is great nonsense) that the right of the Church to its property is absolute, and that the nation has no more right to take away the smallest fraction of it than it has to take boots, meat, or bread out of tradesmen's shops. But henceforth we can all quote the Bishop of Liverpool to the contrary. Dr. Chevasse, in addressing a meeting in support of the Government's Licensing Bill in the Drill Hall, Wigan, on Saturday evening, March 28, said it was an axiom to him that if any vested interest was found to be against the well-being of the nation that vested interest must go. He was asked whether he would apply that axiom to the Bishops. "My answer," he declared with warmth, "my answer is—certainly! If it could be proved to me that the bench of Bishops, or the Church of England, was doing one-thousandth part of the harm the Trade is doing at the present time to the millions of English people, then I would say, 'Let every penny of endowment that the Church of England possesses be taken away from her.'" No doubt it would be very difficult to persuade a Bishop that the Church of England is doing any harm. But that is not the point at issue. The point is, has the State the right to deal with, and even take away, the Church's endowments? The Bishop of Liverpool says it has.

Father Vaughan says that there are more insane people outside asylums than inside them. Perhaps he is right. He has the Spiritualists in mind. We have the Christians too.

John Thomas, a young farmer, who shot Helen Roberts dead through the window of her parlor at a lonely farm in

Glamorganshire, has been found "insane" and ordered to be detained during his Majesty's pleasure. One of his hallucinations was that Miss Roberts "had to be sacrificed before the world could be saved." Millions of people believe that Jesus had to be sacrificed before the world could be saved. Where's the difference?—except in the shooting.

An Irishman named Flynn, residing at Boyne, incurred the resentment of his Catholic neighbors (so the newspapers say) by marrying at a registry office. They separated him from his bride on the night of the wedding, and he was informed that they would not be allowed to come together till after Easter. He is virtually a prisoner in his own house, and horns are blown outside the bride's house at night to show that she is being watched. Flynn is warned of serious trouble if he attempts to "go against the wishes of the clergy." What a picture of priest-ridden Ireland!

When the Nonconformist members on the London County Council succeeded in closing the Park Gymnasiums on Sunday, Mr. John Burns lent the move his support. Now he has gone a step further to oblige his Nonconformist friends. Hitherto Dissenting places of worship have been liable to the payment of paving rates. Nonconformists, who protest against the State endowment of religion, have long been anxious to dodge this, and so tax the rest of the community for their benefit. Now Mr. Burns has prepared a Bill that will legally exempt all places "appropriated to religious public worship" from the payment of rates of all description. The *Christian World* says the Bill will redress a "long-standing grievance." But on what principle is it a grievance? One can well understand Nonconformists protesting against Churchmen not paying rates, but on what grounds does a party that protests against the State endowment of religion ask for its own endowment to the exact amount of the rates remitted? And, above all, on what principle can a Freethinker justify such a measure? If it were to relieve all places devoted to public gatherings of a non-business character, some justification might be pleaded. But a Freethinker, who does not believe in any religion, bringing in a measure for the State endowment of a religious body that proclaims its disbelief in State support is funny enough for a comic opera.

Holyoake and Ingersoll were both fond of saying "one world at a time," and the former loved to quote Goethe's saying "do the duty nearest hand." Now the Rev. Dr. Warschauer winds up a long article with the sentence: "One world at a time, and let us try to do the duty that lies nearest." And he calls it Christianity!

In America there lives a phenomenally ingenious sky-pilot, Newell by name, who has actually discovered that there are fourteen ways to hell and only one to heaven. Jesus imagined that there was only one way to each destination, only that the one to hell was broad and crowded, while the one to glory was narrow and grass-grown. But the Rev. Newell knows better. Well, he pays a high compliment to the inventive genius of the Devil, and casts a sad reflection on God's character, whose one road to heaven is so indistinct that scarcely any two are agreed as to where or what it is.

The Rev. Dr. Horton has just let himself go again. Speaking last week at a meeting in connection with the Notts Congregational Union, he lashed away in fine style at the people who dare to differ from him about the Cross. The religious journals which print their insane utterances are worthy of no support, and ought to be suppressed. The man of God was in a towering rage. They who venture to challenge the correctness of his views are piously and politely described as "empty-headed, ignorant little persons who know Christianity only by reputation, and evidently have not a glimmer of a notion what the Congregational Church means." How eminently beautiful and sweet and sweetening a grace is Christian charity!

Rev. Dr. Horton's long letter to the *Daily News* on the Peckham election and the new Licensing Bill, ended by saying, "Let us trust in God, and decline to despair of our country." It is with such high-falutin' stuff as this that the soul-savers swagger about in front of "reform" movements. "Trust in God" is one of the worst recipes for progress. The history of the whole world is convincing on that point. It is easy to see what Dr. Horton really means. He wants people to believe that nothing but the Christian Churches, and their pretended religious agreements, stands between England and sheer ruin. There is the same amount of truth in this that there is in the rest of clerical teaching.

Popular men of God no doubt reckon on windfalls, supplementary to their often handsome salaries. We see that the late Mrs. Rylands, widow of the late John Rylands, whose estate is sworn at £3,428,547 net, has left £5,000 to the Rev. C. Silvester Horne, of Whitefield's Tabernacle, and another £5,000 to the reverend gentleman's wife. This will be worth another £250 per annum to them, in addition to the reverend gentleman's nice professional income, even if the whole £10,000 is placed in the finest gilt-edged security. And the £10,000 itself would lie untouched all the time. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Mrs. Rylands also left Mrs. Horne her "square emerald brooch set with diamonds," her "emerald and diamond chain bracelet," and her "emerald and diamond ring." Odd gifts from one pious Christian lady to another pious Christian lady! See the much-lauded and never-practised Sermon on the Mount.

Three other men of God profit personally by Mrs. Rylands' will. Rev. Walter Hackett, missionary at Samoa, gets £6,000; Rev. Dr. S. G. Green, £6,000; and Rev. J. W. Kiddle £5,000. Mrs. Fairbairn, wife of the Rev. Dr. Fairbairn, also gets £5,000. Christianity is not a losing game—yet.

Men of God often take things easy. The last issue of a well-known religious weekly contained the announcement that the Rev. Dr. Fairbairn had already left Oxford for his Easter vacation.

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, need exercise some care. In the issue of March 26, dealing with the question of faith, he remarks that—

"Dogs are excellent theologians.... A dog's feeling for his master is about as good an example of sheer faith as you can find. That he has never held a church council about it, or thrown it into a creed with damnatory clauses, is so much the better..... He is full of the sense of a personality that is higher than his own, having powers beyond his, a personality that commands but also protects, whom he is to obey, but whom he may also love."

Very religious people will no doubt be ruffled at the comparison, but it is sound enough, and there is really more in it than the writer is aware of. Darwin pointed out, many years ago, that in the dog's feeling towards his master there was a distinct approach to the religious feelings; and other writers since have developed the suggestion. And the essence of the feeling in both dog and man is probably identical. There is the same feeling of helplessness in face of a force ill-understood and beyond control, the same fear of punishment and hope of reward. In some respects the comparison is in favor of the dog, for he does develop a certain unselfish devotion towards his deity, while there is very little of this between man and his God until a comparatively late stage in human history. The dog, moreover, has a deity that is real and unmistakable. He sees it, and can be under no delusion as to its existence. Man's deity is not only not seen, but doubts as to its existence strengthen as human nature grows in courage and wisdom. It may be added that both occasionally growl at their deity, and both have equal justification.

Christians make wonderful pretences of moral and spiritual superiority, but they act just like other people in most things—and sometimes more so. The New Theology people have a special hatred for the Rev. Dr. Forsyth, of whom there were some sweet things in last week's *Christian Commonwealth*. He was said to suffer from "an almost disordered state of self-importance," to be guilty of "systematic insolence to other preachers," and to be "evidently wrought to transports of vituperative anger." It is not our business to complain of all this. We merely point to it as a proof of how little difference Christianity makes when people quarrel.

Dr. Forsyth, in his turn, declares that "the triviality of sections of the religious Press is one of the corrosives both upon the pulpit and upon high-minded religion generally."

"We shall willingly forget Zola's novels," the *Christian Commonwealth* said in another article. Very good; but what difference will that make to Zola?

"H. M.," whoever that is, in last week's *Academy*, which is now a rabidly religious journal, and apparently in the service of the Jesuits, had some nice things to say about Zola. According to this skulking libeller, Zola "often observed" that "a good dinner was the only real pleasure in life," and "the belly and its adjuncts were emphatically

the grand realities to him." This of the Zola who roused the whole civilised world by his magnificent act of heroic idealism,—throwing his fortune, his liberty, and almost his life into the scale, in order to secure justice for a man he had never seen, and in doing so to vindicate the conscience of France against the bigots, liars, and forgers who had the nation under their evil influence. Such a libel as "H. M.'s" is really too clumsy. It can only hurt the libeller.

When thieves fall out honest men come by their own. And when the Churches fall out beyond all reconciliation we shall have Secular Education. But this will be averted if possible. There are rumors that the new McKenna Bill is to be dropped like the old one, and that the Government will concentrate on the Bishop of St. Asaph's proposals. "The time," the *Christian World* says, "seems ripe for a round table conference." We hope not. It would be unfortunate if the religious robbers of the nation agreed together as to the division of the "swag." That would lead at once to flat (and successful) burglary. The greatest hope of Secular Educationists lies in the fact that the Churches, which have not agreed, and do not agree now, will never agree.

How amusing it is—yet it has also a serious aspect—to watch the antics of the Nonconformists in regard to Secular Education. There is the dear *Daily News*, for instance. It has been for Secular Education, and against it, ever so many times during the past ten years. Then there is the veteran Dr. Guinness Rogers. He also has been in favor of Secular Education; but we always doubted whether he was so on principle. It now appears that he was simply supporting Secular Education because he was afraid that any other policy would be disadvantageous to Nonconformity in its battle with Anglicanism. As soon as a round table conference is suggested he writes to the Nonconformist daily hoping that the idea will catch on. He sees in it "great hope of the permanent settlement we all desire." By which, of course, he means a satisfactory division of privilege amongst the various religious denominations at the expense of all the rest of the nation. Such is Nonconformist honor when there seems a chance of making a bit!

From an issue of the *Japan Weekly Chronicle* we have just received, we see that the methods of the Salvation Army in Japan have given birth to some caustic comments. At Kobe there exists a Seaman's Institute that has had for its special work the care of foreign seamen who from any cause whatever are left stranded at that port. The institute is maintained by foreign residents in Japan, who are rightly desirous that the seamen who are out of employment shall not become a burden on the Japanese. Some time ago, we gather from the *Chronicle's* leading article, and the report of a public meeting held at Kobe, the Salvation Army gained control of this institute. After collecting funds in its usual energetic manner, the Salvation Army, greatly to everybody's surprise, decided to close the institute, apparently from the expressed desire to devote its energies to "missionising" the Japanese people. Considering the emphasis laid by the Army in England on the need for looking after the spiritual welfare of people, the decision is peculiar. The *Japanese Advertiser* remarks that "the Japanese poor are less in destitute circumstances and more in the possession of guidance than the average poor of the world," and sneers at the Army believing that "evangelical work is of more vital importance in itself than to rescue the fallen and shelter the oppressed by giving them food and lodging."

Probably the real reason for the Army discontinuing is that, as it states, the Seaman's Home has not paid. The Salvation Army may be safely trusted to drop any work that does not yield a margin of profit. The *Advertiser* points out that many of the contributions to the Army in Japan have come to it because of its work in connection with the Seaman's Institute; so that the work may be said to have yielded an indirect, if not a direct, profit. The *Japan Chronicle* bluntly remarks that—

"It is to be feared that the Salvation Army is inclined to judge of the 'necessity' of its labors in any given direction by the financial returns for such efforts; the Army believes in philanthropy at five (or more) per cent., and the maintenance of a Seaman's Institute in Japan, or a Suicide Bureau in Timbuctoo, is from first to last a purely business proposition where the Army's interests are concerned."

A committee has been formed to carry on the institute, but the incident will not raise the Army in the opinion of English residents in Japan.

Although nearly all the Churches are vigorously supporting the Government Licensing Bill, the Salvation Army refrains from expressing any opinion on the matter. It has further

issued a special order from headquarters forbidding its officers lending any assistance to Temperance organisations in their present agitation. We do not record this as in any way either supporting or condemning the measure; these columns not being a suitable channel for any such expression of opinion. We merely note it as indicating the policy of the Army. We imagine the truth to be, that headquarters feels a decided expression of opinion might lead to a withdrawal of certain subscriptions, as well as to their collectors being warned off licensed premises. And the Army may safely be trusted not to do anything that may seriously affect its revenues.

Newspapers here and there are beginning to speak out more or less on the lines of our criticism of the Salvation Army. The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* says that Booth's emigration scheme wants "careful watching," and speaks of it as simply "competition with private traders, with the aid of funds contributed by the public for no such purpose."

"Some Aspects of the Chinese Puzzle" is the title of a vivid article by the veteran Felix Moscheles in *Concord*, the organ of the International Arbitration and Peace Association. Civilisation, he says, went gobbling up things in the East, and as it peered into the vast empire of China it said: "Our goods must be bought, the barbarians must be converted, and Confucius confounded." "In pursuance of these aims," the article continues, "civilisation marched forward supported by its staff-officers, the three B's, representing the Bible, the Brandy-bottle, and the Bullet,—those forces cordially co-operating." This is pretty plain speaking, and we rejoice to hear it.

The *Daily News* lately referred to the action of the European Powers at the Chinese capital only a few years ago as the most disgraceful episode in the recent history of Christendom. "No one has read," our contemporary says, "because no one dares to publish, the cold truth of what followed the relief of the Legations at Peking." It was hell let loose. The horrible deeds of the Christians have burnt into the memory of the whole Chinese nation,—and may bear black fruit some day.

Mr. Philip Snowden is in raptures with the Rev. R. J. Campbell's book on *Christianity and the Social Order*. Perhaps this is natural, for many Socialists have a way of finding wonderful genius in any public person who favors their cause. But there are some Socialists, at any rate, who will not share Mr. Snowden's gratitude because this book "will enable organised Christianity to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of thoughtful Christendom." Mr. Snowden ought to be aware that Christianity cannot be rehabilitated, for the simple reason that it is founded upon demonstrable falsehoods. *It isn't true*. And what is the use of evading the real issue?

Answers is running a "symposium" on "Should a Young Man Sow Wild Oats?" That is, we suppose, should he ruin his own body and character, and play fast and loose with the happiness of others? Put in that way, who would enter into the discussion? Sir Robert Anderson, K.C.B., thinks it worth his while to join in this debate. With reference to sowing wild oats, he says, "I am amazed that anyone but an atheist can be found to advocate it." We are *not* amazed that Sir Robert Anderson can be so bigoted and silly. He is a Christian.

Christians put religion higher than morality. Atheists put morality higher than religion. That is the grand difference, Sir Robert. Do you understand now?

Sir Joseph Compton-Rickett says that "Congregationalism has simply marked time for the last thirty years, and seems to have lost all its springs." The Rev. Dr. Goodrich states that "many village chapels are on the point of extinction, and can only be saved by grouping." We are moving on, after all. These facts are hopeful signs of the times.

Dr. Campbell Morgan, addressing a meeting at Hartford, Connecticut, is reported by the *Christian World* as saying that the New Theology was "an intellectual picnic" and "already a dead issue among the masses of the people." He also said that "he considers the mass of the people indifferent to religion, and hence materialistic." Men of God let the truth out occasionally.

"J. B." (Rev. J. Brierley) had an article in last week's *Christian World* entitled "The Widening of Faith." Why not call it "The Expansion of the Bubble"?

"J. B.'s" ideas of "faith" are sufficiently amusing. Why do we trust the laws of nature? he asks. All we know is that things have happened in a certain way before; we do not *know* that they will do so again, but we *believe* they will, we *trust* they will, and that trust is an act of *faith*. Yes, and "J. B." must have a lot of faith in human credulity to fancy that people will be gulled by such an argument. That a popular writer should ask (and expect) his readers to believe that there is any analogy between a scientific induction and a religious dogma, is merely a proof of the mental obfuscation which has been produced by so many centuries of Christianity.

Belief based on evidence is one thing; belief without evidence, or against evidence, is quite another thing. Belief that what happens *will* happen is also one thing; and belief that what never happens *will* happen is also quite another thing. We believe that the sun will rise in the east to-morrow because it was never known to rise in the west, and there is a natural explanation of sunrise and sunset. But if we believe in (say) the resurrection of the dead, we do so without any such case having been established in the whole course of human experience. Reasonable belief uses two eyes,—one looking to the past, and the other to the future; religious belief uses but one eye, which is fixed upon the future only. The first belief is *real* belief; the second belief is merely *conjecture*.

Joshua Gordon, a Portsea rabbi, brought a libel action against two other rabbis for saying that "he was about to be converted to Christianity." The jury found for the defendants, with costs. Commander Key, a gentleman connected with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Jews, testified that the plaintiff called upon him one day, stating that he wanted to be a Christian, also declaring that he was very poor, and accepting a gift of two "bob." Surely this was a too modest beginning. Actual converts from Judaism to Christianity are so scarce, and there is such a lot of money subscribed for converting the Chosen People, that the price naturally rules high. The "bobs" should have been "quids."

A curious advertisement appeared in a recent number of the *Daily Chronicle*. It was addressed to "DEACONS," and apprised them that "A 'CALL' to the Ministry of a chapel is sought by one who has been wonderfully saved from the sea of modern infidelity." The next words are, "The Bible only." From which we infer that he was converted by the "Bible only" or that he wants to preach the "Bible only." We daresay the gentleman will find a patron. We had nearly written a *victim*.

Dr. Hunter's church at Glasgow was crowded in every corner on Sunday evening, March 22, when Mr. R. F. Benson, the well-known actor, discoursed on "Shakespeare and the Resurrection of the Dead." We have not seen a full report of this amateur preacher's sermon, but the summary in a London religious paper suggests that it was sorry stuff. Actors, however, have seldom shone outside their own profession. Even the greatest of them have seldom more intellect than ministers to their mimetic faculty. Shakespeare himself was an actor, but not a great actor. He was too original for that. And he had the sense—manager-actor as he was—to play subordinate parts. He was "all there." Business to him was business. He had other interests, but each had its proper time and place. You would have had to get up very early in the morning to get the better of William Shakespeare.

FREDERICK THE GREAT ON BLASPHEMY.

A report was made to Frederick the Great that one of his subjects had committed three acts of Blasphemy; one on his majesty, one on the magistrate, and one on God. His sentence was: "For his libel on me I freely forgive him; for his libel on God, it is proof he does not know him; but for his libel on the magistrate, I must have him confined in the castle of Spandau for half-an-hour."

The martyr cannot be dishonored. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode; every burned book or house enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through the earth from side to side. The minds of men are at last aroused; reason looks out and justifies her own, and malice finds all her work vain. It is the whipper who is whipped, and the tyrant who is undone.—*Emerson*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April, 5, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W.: at 7.30, "Socialism and Religion." A Reply to H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, and other "Fabians."

April 12, 19, 26, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London, W.
May 3, Liverpool; 10, Aberdeen.

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. —Donations, £165: Annual Subscriptions, £154 3s. Received Since.—Annual Subscriptions: Arthur Powell, £1 1s.; N. D., £2; T. Robinson, 5s.; A. Lamont, 5s.; J. Robinson, 2s. 6d.; A Secularist (10 weeks' sub.), 5s.; Nottingham, 5s.; C. H. Howson, 1s.; J. Pruett, 5s.; S. A. C., 12s. 6d.; F. F. Deane, 10s.

QUIZ.—You ask whether it is wise to send the *Freethinker* to parsons. We can hardly say; we fancy it all depends on the parsons. Sorry we cannot help you to get a copy of the address you refer to by the late G. J. Holyoake. We think it was merely printed in a periodical he was then editing, and not as a separate publication. But we are not sure.

W. H. G.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

FELIX HERRMANN.—We took from another English journal the statement that the students of Freiburg University were forbidden to read Goethe and Schiller. We are pleased to see it contradicted by the friend in Germany to whom you wrote on the subject. We know, of course, that Goethe was a more robust Freethinker than Schiller. He was a greater *thinker* in every way. Thanks for your trouble in the matter.

R. H. ROSETTI.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

T. ROBINSON, writing with reference to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I am pleased to think that we of the Freethought party have at the head of our affairs one who hesitates not to pursue a direct course for the death of Christianity and all the bigoted intolerance the name implies."

N. D. writes: "I hope you will live long to fight the battle of freedom and truth. Men of your stamp are very rare."

ARTHUR POWELL, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, sends "best wishes for good health and a prolonged life for the good of the cause."

H. J. GIBBS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

J. B. HIBBERT.—You will find what you want in our columns before very long. Glad to have your congratulations on our action in the "blasphemy" case, and to know you are so pleased with the *Freethinker* in every way.

JOHN ROBINSON.—Thanks for your warmly-appreciative letter. Glad to hear that you, as an N. S. S. man for over thirty years, and all the Tyneside Freethinkers you have spoken to on the subject, are proud of the President's "brave and honorable conduct" in the "blasphemy" case. He is also proud of their pride in him.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever-welcome cuttings.

"NOTTINGHAM" writes: "It would be quite easy to raise the £300 a year if 99 Freethinkers in, say, a middling position, would join me in sending you a postal order for 5s. each month. This would enable you to 'bank' the subscriptions lately advertised in the *Freethinker* as a nest-egg for that 'rainy day' that invariably comes to all of us. I enclose my 5s., and you may rely on my repeating this at the end of each month; and I shall be surprised if the number of subscribers I have suggested be not greatly exceeded."

A. LEVY.—Thanks for cuttings; also see list.

R. SIMMONDS.—We never sought a quarrel, and we have kept out of many quarrels to which we were invited. You overlook the fact that we publicly replied to a public attack. That is all. We will work with anybody who is working for Freethought,—if possible; and, when it is not possible, we will do our own work, and leave others to do theirs,—if they will only let us alone. But, even then, there may arise questions of public interest and importance on which conflicting views have to be expressed.

C. H. HOWSON.—Glad you were so pleased with our articles. Yes, Mr. Cohen is a "smart man"—and something more.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

CERBER.—You are about right. We quite understand their amiable wishes. Thanks for the references to the rare old pamphlets you possess,—some of which we should like to see. But it is not true that the Attorney-General has to start or authorise "blasphemy" prosecutions.

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.

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.

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

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.

Mr. Foote is lecturing at the Queen's (Minor) Hall every Sunday evening in April. A complete list of his subjects will be found in our advertising columns. The whole course is under the auspices of the Secular Society (Ltd.). It is hoped that the London "saints" will assist in advertising these lectures, partly by word of mouth amongst their friends and acquaintances, and partly by circulating small printed announcements, which can be obtained of the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. The major part of the formal advertising will be done through the London press. It is impossible to bill lectures over the vast metropolitan area, and Mr. Foote's audiences are drawn from almost every part of it.

Mr. Foote lectures in the big Picton Hall, Liverpool, on the first Sunday in May, under the auspices of the local N. S. S. Branch. The date is exactly twelve months after Mr. Foote's previous lectures in the Picton Hall—which, by the way, is Corporation property. In view of the fact that there cannot be a charge for admission, and of the fact that the meetings involve a good deal of expense, which the local N. S. S. Branch is unable to meet, the Secular Society (Ltd.) has decided to undertake the financial responsibility. Liverpool "saints" will doubtless do their best to crowd the Picton Hall on both occasions. The lectures will be afternoon and evening, as before.

Mr. Foote, as President, made a formal statement *re* the late "blasphemy" prosecution at the last meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive. It will be remembered that the Society undertook the whole cost of the defence in this case, including the bill of the solicitor who attended on Mr. Boulter's behalf at Bow-street Police Court. The total amount expended by the N. S. S., inclusive of the cost of the verbatim report of the proceedings, is £222 7s. 3d. Against this amount the sum of £127 13s. 4d. was realised by the subscriptions acknowledged in the *Freethinker*. The N. S. S. therefore bears on its own shoulders the balance of £94 13s. 11d.

The President's Honorarium Fund, including the acknowledgments in last week's *Freethinker*, amounts to £319 3s. altogether. But of this amount £165 represents Special Donations, leaving £154 3s. to represent Annual Subscriptions. It is hoped that the Donations will not have to be drawn upon, at least during the present year, but remain as a reserve fund for any future contingencies. On that basis rather more than half the £300 asked for by the Trustees has been contributed already in the form of Annual Subscriptions. No doubt the balance will be made up before the year is ended. Those who can afford to subscribe now would be well advised to do so without delay; but some must subscribe as they can, and some are waiting for the arrival of June, at which time they have been accustomed to responding to Mr. de Caux's former appeals. After the National Secular Society's Conference has been held (on Whit-Sunday) the President will address a few words to the party himself on this subject. His own point of view is naturally of some importance, and to many will be of considerable interest. In a certain sense, the matter is one of delicacy; in another sense, it is really nothing of the kind. Mr. Foote has always turned away from outside literary work which might earn him a living; he has preferred to devote his whole time and energies to Freethought work; and to live by it is, in the circumstances, as open and honorable as it is inevitable.

Perhaps we may refer, in this connection, to a passage in the peroration of Mr. Foote's speech to the jury when he was tried for "blasphemy" before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge in 1883. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have more than a personal interest in the result of this trial. I am anxious for the rights and liberties of thousands of my countrymen. Young as I am, I have for many years fought for my principles, taken soldier's wages when there were

any, and gone cheerfully without when there were none, and fought on all the same, as I mean to do to the end." The end is not yet, but twenty-five years have rolled by since he spoke those words, and they are as true now as they were then. Some men use words lightly; he, at least, was never one of them. Friends and enemies both know that.

We like to be accurate. For that reason we correct a misquotation in our last week's article. Mr. McCabe's statement that his first article was suggested by him to his editor, was quoted as though the editor had suggested it to him. The three words "by me to" got transposed into "to me by." The blunder was of no importance whatever to any part of the argument; still, we regret it.

The number of distinguished men who have been Free-thinkers is far from being generally known. W. E. Henley, for instance, was a thorough unbeliever. This is admitted by Mr. G. K. Chesterton in an article on Henley in the *Bibliophile*. With regard to the *Song of the Sword*, he says: "It is all about the Lord and the Sword, two things that Henley knew nothing whatever about. Of the sword he had no grasp or experience, and in the Lord he did not believe."

Mr. Chesterton's statement about Henley's unbelief will not surprise his discerning readers. In the first verse of one of his most powerful and characteristic poems—perhaps the one by which he will be most certainly remembered—he uses an expression (borrowed, it may be, from Swinburne) which is extremely significant:—

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul."

"Whatever gods may be" is tantamount to a declaration of scepticism. And the proud last lines—

"I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul"

are as far as possible from the pious submissiveness of the Godites.

Clericalism and Crime in Barcelona.

WHILST the Spanish journals, for a long time past, have been publishing, day after day, innumerable columns of harrowing details concerning the terrorism which hangs like a pall upon the life of Barcelona, the English press has maintained a frigid silence respecting the causes of the abnormal situation thus created in this the commercial and intellectual metropolis of Spain. It speaks volumes for the boasted humanity of our twentieth century civilisation when Fleet-street can flood its readers with streams of turbid journalism concerning spicy sensations at home and abroad, while it averts its eyes with indifference or disdain from the sordid tragedy which is day by day being enacted in Barcelona by clericals and reactionaries of the worst type, leagued together against the life, security and liberty of an industrious and intelligent people.

Almost the only mention of the subject of the bombs and the reign of terror thereby created which the English press vouchsafed to make, was on the occasion of the visit of King Alfonso to the Catalonian city, so famous at once for its fervid rationalism and revolutionary spirit on the one hand, and its mysterious bomb explosions on the other. And then, in its softest and most insinuating manner, our press, so conscientiously ignorant or ignorantly conscientious, bracketed together the bombs, the unbelief, and the progressive ardor of Barcelona in one compendious condemnation.

For some years past, Barcelona has been the victim of an appalling succession of bomb outrages, under cover of which, the reactionary government, with Maura at its head, has been able to arbitrarily imprison numbers of innocent people, to suspend newspapers, abolish the ordinary guarantees given by the constitution in favor of civil liberty, and create a wholesale reign of terror in the city in virtue of intermittent bomb explosions, the authors of which, with certain rare exceptions, remain un-

known or undetected. The scandalous, anomalous impunity with which these heartless crimes are repeated, in a city bereft of the ordinary guarantees of liberty, where the police are as thick as locusts, where the soldiers and spies are ubiquitous, and where every man who calls his soul his own is dogged and tripped and clapped into prisons like that of Monjuich, is as discreditable to the Governor of Barcelona, Senor Ossorio y Gallardo—whose hands, loaded with weapons for repression of these horrors, are inept either to strike or defend—as it is disgraceful to the reputation of Maura, who seems destined to rival the achievements of Franco and to play the part of evil genius to the Spanish people.

All the symptoms of the situation at Barcelona would seem to indicate that the clerical and reactionary parties in Spain are, in this matter, acting politically upon the well-known theological principle that if there be no God it is necessary to invent one. And thus, inasmuch as the numerous republican and anti-clerical organisations in Barcelona—the co-operative societies on the one hand, and the Anarchist groups on the other, with all the varied educational, political, trades-union, and other progressive organisations which abound in that hive of intellectual proletarians, have repudiated the bomb as an instrument of propaganda, it became necessary to "plant" these explosives in the unwilling soil of Barcelona in order that the suspicion of complicity with these horrors might furnish the Government with a specious excuse for suspending the liberties under which progressive principles and the principle of civilisation itself can best flourish. A succession of crimes of this nature thus occurred, accompanied with the horrifying and inexplicable circumstance that the victims were invariably poor people: women and children, against whom no struggling minority of political desperadoes could possibly entertain a murderous grudge. The holocaust, however, of these humble victims served the very useful purpose of intensifying the general horror against the delinquents, whom the clericals and reactionaries of every hue and complexion identified—by innuendo—with the general body of progressives of every type. The Government were thus enabled to secure, under lock and key, every disagreeable propagandist they did not like, and soon stocked the prisons with victims for the classic torturers at Monjuich. Unfortunately, their agents sometimes went to work in a clumsy fashion. For instance, Lieutenant Morales, of the Civil Guard, was, some years ago, actually discovered in the act of "planting" one of these murderous machines, and an ungrateful judge, unmindful of his eminent services to law, order, and religion, rewarded him with a long term of imprisonment. Another worthy, Juan Rull, an *agent provocateur*, conducted the operations of a whole band of these scoundrels, who spread death, destruction, and terror throughout the city. This loathsome creature and several of his acolytes, were at length apprehended about a year ago and are now in prison. Others of the same gang are still at large, and it is openly declared that the recent crimes which during the seven months of his imprisonment have happened with such constant regularity have been committed by accomplices still at large, from fear that, unless they organise fresh outrages in order to keep their captured chief in countenance, he may denounce them to the authorities. With the exception of the capture of *agents provocateurs* caught in the act, like Morales, or detected through loose talk in a drunken orgy, like Rull and his associates, all the bombs have been traced and brought home to the reactionaries, and none have been shown to be the work of the revolutionaries. This is an important fact, the lesson conveyed by which must not be lost sight of.

In this connection, it must not be forgotten that the trend of tendency as regards the responsibility for these crimes leads entirely in one direction, whether we have regard to the circumstances attending the "planting" of the bombs or the political effects flowing from their installation. Armies of spies and clouds of police have entirely failed to

ferret out the perpetrators of these horrors. In spite of all this—or shall we say, because of this?—Barcelona has its bomb day by day, and sometimes twice or thrice a day. On the other hand, the Governmental perquisitions and inquiries directed against the radical element in the political and social life of Barcelona, have entirely failed to fasten responsibility in that quarter, and, indeed, have produced no result, except the purely negative, yet singularly demonstrative result, that the bombs are not the work of any of the advanced elements in the city.

The only scientific method of procedure in mysterious problems of this nature is to endeavor to discover the hidden cause by studying the acknowledged effects. Now, what have been the political or legal effects of all this terrorism? First of all, the suspension of trial by jury; suspension of all civil guarantees of liberty and right; and savage laws professedly directed towards the repression of anarchy but really designed in order to stamp out freedom of thought and expression. The law devised with this latter object in view, had to be ignominiously abandoned by the Government in deference to the universal protest of the nation against the brutal rigor of its proposals. Property, life, honor, all would have disappeared as a mere vain illusion in deference to a legal dictatorship more abominable than that which provoked the recent events in Lisbon. Reaction failed for the time being, but did not desist in its attempts upon the normal development of political liberty in Spain. It became necessary, by means of exceptional laws, to create an atmosphere of collective cowardice in the community, capable of accepting, without murmur, the foulest crimes against public order hatched and contrived in the inmost haunts and recesses of the titular protectors of the city's life and progress. This atmosphere was duly created by the unprecedented horrors that burst upon the city in the wake of the perennial succession of bombs which have rained down with suspicious partiality upon the poorest and most humble members of the community.

The Civil Governor has confessed his inability to discover the authors of these crimes, and by the law of political gravity has fallen into the lap of the clericals and reactionaries who and whose interests are, in fact, the only beneficiaries by virtue of the panic created by the repeated outbreak of the bombs. Now, it is not a little remarkable that during fruitless searches for the authors of these outrages, the only people who are not spied, watched, and badgered by the police and their perquisitions are the priests, and the only places where no suspecting eye looks for the bombs and the scoundrels connected with them, are the innumerable churches, convents, and monasteries with which Barcelona abounds. There is every reason to believe that here is a clue deliberately neglected by the authorities. It is no use saying that the bomb is a "plant" that could not flourish on such holy ground. The traditions of Spain are not inconsistent with the hypothesis, and the facts of this particular case all tend in that direction. We know the time-honored Jesuit maxim that the means justify the end; we know the long line of assassinations inspired and contrived by the Order and its creatures. We know that the Carlist civil wars were stirred up by them in their interests, and it is a matter of notoriety* that the great bomb thrower, Rull, now in prison awaiting trial, is a friend of the Jesuits; that he put his brother into a monastery, and was the confidant of the great Jesuit partisan, Güell; and we also know that the motto of the Mother Church is *semper eadem!*

The present Government in Spain is notorious for its clerical leanings and sympathies. The Alphonsists have enriched the Jesuits and increased their influence in a hundred ways. Maura's father confessor is a Jesuit and the Jesuit Father Colonna keeps spiritual guard at the royal palace. The governors of the various provinces have defended the Jesuits

with bullets and bayonets against the people, and permit the holy fathers to arm themselves within their monasteries with mausers. At the faintest breath of popular excitement detachments of troops are detailed by the Government in their defence, and are permitted to make these abodes of piety their barracks and arsenals. The whole history of the Restoration is, in fact, intimately united and identified with the Company of Jesus and its machinations.

When a crime is wrapped in mystery it is time to ask the question: *Cui prodest?* Let us look at the condition of affairs in Barcelona. For a long time past the emblems of authority have been conspicuous in every square inch of the city. Spies and delators have dogged the footsteps of every citizen. Towering above this occult shadowing there looms the Civil Governor, with police and soldiers, dominating a population kept in a state of siege, able to interrupt the daily succession of these outrages only on two solitary occasions, and always unable to discover the murderous ruffians who perpetrate these abominations.

In these circumstances the impeachment of the Government by the indignant conscience of Europe becomes a matter of public duty. *The Government stands accused* of simulating an attempt to discover the perpetrators of these horrors. All it has done and all it is doing is the malicious persecution of a particular social class, clapping the leaders of the popular parties in prison, mutilating them in military fortresses, and repressing the political and intellectual aspirations of the very class whose members are constantly falling victims of the murderous bomb. The Government stands charged with complicity in these horrors from the fact that it has not extended the radius of its perquisitions to those spots and centres of the city consistently immune from the ravages of these bombs.

The victims *accuse* the men and classes benefited by these outrages—the men who utilise the bombs as the pretext for obtaining the legal repression of advanced opinion.

They accuse the Government of complicity with these crimes in that it has not thought fit to require the police and the troops to watch the churches and convents in order to prevent the criminals from there seeking refuge from justice. They taunt the Government with the suspicious fact that the claustral sanctity of these places has never been alarmed by the intrusion of these discriminating bombs.

In a despairing cry of indignation a writer in *El Progreso** implores that the convents should be registered and the churches inspected, and that no sacred asylum be held immune from the piercing investigation which should be made, and has not been made, for the shameful authors of these crimes. Unless Barcelona is freed from the obsession of these bombs and the political paralysis which they produce, the life of the city and the intellectual vitality of Spain are doomed to suffer a long eclipse. Let justice, then, be done, though the Jesuits may fall!

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Holyoake on "Blasphemy."

WHEN I was imprisoned for "blasphemy" in 1883, George Jacob Holyoake's perversity excited the indignation of the whole Freethought party in England. He was then well advanced in the second unsatisfactory half of his public career, to which I adverted in a recent article in these columns. From the year 1870, when he debated with Bradlaugh at the Hall of Science on Secularism and Atheism, he began to cultivate the art of saying disagreeable things about his fellow Freethinkers, in the most insidious fashion, and at moments when he could do them the most damage. Gradually this unfortunate passion grew upon him, and had completely

* *El Progreso*, March 13, 1908.

* March 16, 1908.

mastered him by the time that Bradlaugh's great parliamentary struggle opened in 1880. At the most critical points of that tremendous contest Bradlaugh was sure to find himself confronted with some nasty sneers and cunning misrepresentations, dished up by Holyoake in a letter to the newspapers, which were glad to print anything injurious to such an uncompromising Atheist. My prosecution and imprisonment for "blasphemy" gave him several good opportunities of venting his bitterness. He went so far that his name was fiercely hissed at a great demonstration against the Blasphemy Laws held in St. James's Hall while I was incarcerated in Holloway Prison. I have hitherto kept silent on this subject. For twenty-five years I have preferred to let it rest in oblivion. But I see that this policy is no longer possible. Holyoake's friends and biographers compel me to speak out by their misrepresentations. Peace is an excellent thing in its way, but it must not be allowed to cover falsehood and dishonor. I quite see that I shall be obliged to go at length into the matter of Holyoake's attitude and actions in relation to the *Freethinker* case in 1883. For the present, however, I shall rest satisfied with saying that there was only one Freethinker in England who persistently insulted me when I was unable to defend myself; only one Freethinker in England who broadly hinted that I had only got what I deserved; only one Freethinker in England who, instead of denouncing my persecutors, denounced what he chose to call my "policy of outrage"—and his name was George Jacob Holyoake.

My younger readers will understand now why I admire the earlier instead of the later Holyoake. He was embittered by his failure to retain the leadership of the Secular movement. But he had once been "in grace," and the best way of answering his attacks on "blasphemers" in the second half of his public career is to confront them with his defence of "blasphemers" in the first half of his public career,—when he cared first of all for the Freethought cause, and was indifferent to the compliments and flatteries of its enemies.

Holyoake was bold and firm in defence of his own "blasphemy" in 1842. He was bold and firm in defending the "blasphemy" of his leader, Charles Southwell, who went to prison before him. He was bold and firm in the articles and pamphlets he wrote after his six months' imprisonment. Nothing could be better than the way in which he nailed down the "sober argument" theory in the first pamphlet he published after his release. Christians said then, as they say now, that you are free to assail their religion with "sober argument," but you must not assail it with "ridicule" in order to bring it into "contempt." But what is "sober argument"? Holyoake's answer was excellent. "By 'sober argument,'" he said, "Christians really mean convenient argument, such is at once suitable to their taste and the weakness of their cause." They are persecutors because they cannot tolerate anything that stings their bigotry and fills them with mental apprehensions. "Every Christian," Holyoake said, "has agreed with that pious ruffian Paul, that the mouths of unbelievers should be stopped." Orthodox objection to ridicule is simply a confession of weakness. "Ridicule," Holyoake said, "is the infallible and searching test of truth," and is "fatal only to falsehood, which is the true reason why it is so dreaded."

Holyoake became Secretary to the "Anti-Persecution Union" which did such good work in publishing full reports of the many "blasphemy" trials in the eighteen-forties. I have just been looking through once more a pamphlet which I had not seen for many years. It is the Anti-Persecution Union's report of "the Scotch Trials" of Thomas Paterson, Thomas Finlay, and Matilda Roalfe. There is a Preface and Introduction, both from the pen of Holyoake. They are manly and generous. It had not dawned upon him then that he was the unique person, or that his own was the unique "blasphemy" case, which the

Freethought party has since been invited to believe. He was filled with honest admiration of Paterson's heroism. Paterson had been imprisoned in London; his health was impaired, and he had retired from public action in order to recruit it; but his principles and his courage called him to Edinburgh, where the authorities were carrying on a crusade against "infidel" shops. He took a shop in West Register-street, and issued what Holyoake called a "spirited and satirical placard which merits special record." He stated that he meant to sell all works "calculated to enlighten, without corrupting—to bring into contempt the demoralising trash our priests palm upon the credulous as divine revelation." The list of publications on sale ended with the Trial of Thomas Finlay, who had been sentenced to sixty days' imprisonment. The placard wound up with the notice:—"The Bible and other obscene works *not* sold at this shop." Naturally, this brave man was soon in trouble. He was prosecuted for "blasphemy" and imprisoned for fifteen months. The Lord Justice Clerk actually told him that if he offended again (which he did) "there was no extent of punishment by fine or imprisonment, which it would not be the duty and in the power of the judge to award against him in such a case." Even this terrible threat could not intimidate the lion-hearted Paterson, whose magnificent courage stirred a noble chord in Holyoake's nature. "It is not flattery to say," he observed, "that two men like Thomas Paterson are not given to one cause in a century. In disinterestedness, bravery, and endurance, he has known no equal. No man has appeared capable of bearding religious tyrants after this fashion."

Holyoake's preface to this pamphlet (I have been quoting from the Introduction) consisted of "A Dissertation on Blasphemy Prosecutions." He states very early that "religion is the great foe of liberty," and that "the man who believes in a future life, and that its happiness depends on a particular faith, is necessarily and consistently a persecutor." The perception of this truth does credit to Holyoake's sagacity. Admirable, likewise, is the reply he makes to those (and they are still a living species!) who try to clear Christianity from the guilt of persecution:—

"Some will offer the idle objection that blasphemy prosecutions are not chargeable on Christians—that they originate with men ignorant of Christianity's principles. To this I make but one answer.—There *are* Christians who understand their own principles—they boast their numbers and their power; let them exercise their influence! Let them put an end to these proceedings! They know that they are conducted in their name and avowedly on their behalf. If they approve them not, they have the power to prevent them, and if they do not, the world will understand the reason why."

Juries have nearly always been ready to convict "blasphemers." My own case was the first considerable exception, if we exclude the peculiar case of Hone. I was three times tried for "blasphemy" within two months in 1883, and on two of the three occasions the jury disagreed. Then for the first time juries hesitated to convict. In 1844, they were easier tools of oppression. "A religious jury," Holyoake said, "can be found in every assize town, who will declare it blasphemy to love a flower if somebody with a wig on told them to." In a footnote he mentions a remarkable incident. A Mormon preacher was arrested at Cheltenham and committed to take his trial for "blasphemy." The charge against him was that he had said that "*the elements of Euclid were as true as the Bible.*" But common sense, with great difficulty, prevailed, and the man was liberated.

I now come to a very critical point of Holyoake's dissertation. There were evidently "superior persons" in those days, as there are at present, who play the game of the bigots in the pretended interest of Freethought. Holyoake told them what he thought of them. He said that "the persecuting Christian" was "the common enemy of liberty," and that "the man of expediency" was "his criminal patron." What a pity that Holyoake did not think of this forty years later! What a pity, also, that he

did not remember his old reply to the argument from "offensiveness"! This is what he said, and said well, in 1844:—

"Nor is this view weakened by the supposition that the persecuted blasphemer may be the advocate of error—that he expresses himself in an unnecessarily offensive manner. These are false and deceptive distinctions, intended to set a barrier between the sympathies of men laboring for a common object. Let no evasion mislead, nor jesuitry darken this question. The contest is not one of propriety of expression—there is no assumption of the truth of the opinions advocated, but of the right to publish them."

The policy so effectively criticised and forcibly denounced by the Holyoake of 1844 is the very policy of those who claim to speak in Holyoake's name in 1908. I cannot do better than leave them face to face with that notable quotation.

G. W. FOOTE.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 26.

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed, cash statement adopted.

The President gave a final report and financial statement of the Blasphemy Defence Fund.

The Secretary reported that no replies had been received to the Conference Circular up to the time of meeting, and it was resolved to leave the matter in the hands of the President.

The advisability of a Summer Excursion was discussed, and it was decided to arrange for a Social Meeting on a week-night, to which London members and friends will be invited.

Other matters in connection with Provincial Branches were discussed, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

N.B.—Branch secretaries are requested to note that the accounts for the year will be made up on April 12, by which date all subscriptions and collections should be forwarded to the Secretary.

PEOPLE'S "FEELINGS."

But we must treat the errors of the age gently "or we shall outrage people's feelings." Who does not know that the more we bend, the heavier are the burdens the priests will lay upon our backs? Who ever knew fanatics gentle? They pounce like the tiger on those who stand up before them, and trample in the dust those who lie down. They can always be awed by the bearing of the brave, but their rage ever becomes rampant by the submission of the coward.

—G. J. Holyoake (1842).

PEOPLE'S "PREJUDICES."

Another embargo is laid on our license to speak the truth. "We may tell it, but we must respect people's prejudices." Indeed! We will see. What is a prejudice? A bias, a prepossession, a belief upon any subject. Granted that Christians have theirs,—I have mine. They are on one side, and, thank God, if there be a God, I am on the other. I am to respect their prejudices! Pray, do they respect those which I have?.....Those who respect not my prejudices forfeit all claim to my respecting theirs. I do not. I will not. It would be respecting oppression, intolerance, and cruelty; it would be betraying, Judas-like, humanity with a kiss.—G. J. Holyoake (1842).

NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPINIONS.

The truth is, that no one can justly be held responsible for his thoughts. The brain thinks without asking our consent. We believe, or we disbelieve, without an effort of the will. Belief is a result. It is the effect of evidence upon the mind. The scales turn in spite of him who watches. There is no opportunity of being honest or dishonest in the formation of an opinion. The conclusion is entirely independent of desire. We must believe, or we must doubt, in spite of what we wish.—Ingersoll.

Christ Died on the Cross.

THESE MEN LIVE ON IT.

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY takes up his Cross and follows his Savior on the miserable wage of £15,000 a year. The Archbishop of York suffers gladly on a paltry £10,000 a year. The poor bishops eke out a precarious existence on the following starvation salaries:—London, £10,000; Durham, £7,000; Winchester, £6,500; Bangor, £4,200; Bath and Wells, £5,000; Carlisle, £4,500; Chester, £4,200; Chichester, £4,200; Ely, £5,500; Exeter, £4,200; Gloucester, £5,000; Hereford, £4,200; Lichfield, £4,200; Lincoln, £4,500; Liverpool, £4,200; Llandaff, £4,200; Manchester, £4,200; Newcastle, £3,500; Norwich, £4,500; Oxford, £5,000; Peterboro', £4,500; Ripon, £4,200; Rochester, £3,800; St. Albans, £3,200; St. Asaph, £4,200; St. Davids, £4,500; Salisbury, £5,000; Sodor and Man, £1,800; Southwell, £3,500; Wakefield, £3,000; Worcester, £5,000. These followers of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth, who had nowhere to lay his head, are addressed as noblemen, and the majority of them have seats in the House of Peers.

Scrap-Ironies from Ingersoll.

A man said to me the other day, "I am a Unitarian Universalist." "What do you mean by that," said I. "Well," said he, "the Unitarian thinks he is too good to be damned, and the Universalist thinks God is too good to damn him, and I believe them both."

When a thing gets too idiotic to be preached in the pulpit, it is handed down to the Sunday-school superintendent and taught to the children. When it is too absurd for the children we give it to the missionaries, or send it down south for the colored brethren.

Nothing is so prolific, nothing can lay or hatch so many eggs as a good, healthy religious lie.

I once happened to be in the company of some Baptist elders, and they wanted to know what I thought of baptism. I answered that I had not given the matter any attention. But they pressed me, and finally I told them that I thought, with soap, baptism was a good thing.

The Church has reduced Spain to a guitar, Italy to a hand organ, and Ireland to exile.

Many people think they have got religion when they are troubled with dyspepsia. If there could be found an absolute specific for that disease, it would be the hardest blow the Church has received.

Death: Christian and Pagan.

DEATH AN ENEMY.

For, since by man came death, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.—*St. Paul.*

DEATH A FRIEND.

What is it to die? If we view it in itself, and stripped of those imaginary terrors in which our fears have dressed it, we shall find it to be nothing more than the mere work of Nature; but it is a childish folly to be afraid of what is natural. Nay, it is not only the work of Nature, but is conducive to the good of the universe, which subsists by change. Do not despise death, but accept it willingly; look upon it as part of the conduct of Nature, and one of those things which Providence has been pleased to order. For such as are youth and age, growth and manhood, and all natural actions and incidents of life, so also is dying. He must look upon death as Nature's business, and wait her leisure, as he does for the progress and maturity of other things.—*Marcus Aurelius.*

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.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Socialism and Religion: a Reply to H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, and other Fabians."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, J. W. Marshall, "If I were God." Selections by the Band before lecture.

OUTDOOR.

HIGHBURY CORNER: 12, Debate, E. Cecil Beman and Harry Boulter, "The Barnsbury Fire and the God of Love." Collection on behalf of the victims of the fire.

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

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (Pughley's Restaurant): 6.30, J. L. Williams, "Bible Mythology."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club Rooms, 12 Hill-square): 3, Discussion Class.

GLASGOW (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon and 6.30, H. P. Ward.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): H. S. Wishart, "Ballard, Blatchford, and the Bottom Dog"; 6.30, "Immortality and Immorality." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7.30, Conference and Financial Business.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (The Meadows): 7, Meets for Discussion. (Weather permitting.)

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