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*The poor Greeks of the great ages expected no reward from heaven but honor, and no reward from earth but rest.*—JOHN RUSKIN.

## Mr. Asquith and God.

THE Englishman is before all else a moral animal. Drunk or sober, stupid or wise, aggressive or peaceful, he insists on being moral. When he enters into a political campaign it is with the feeling that God is on his side. If he embarks on a war, it is with the full conviction that morality and religion urge him to that course, although he insists on adequate naval and military preparations, and is not quite oblivious to the financial advantages that may follow a successful campaign. If he annexes territory, it is that the natives may acquire the inestimable benefits of English religion and English morality. Of the value of these two things he has not the slightest doubt. Their importance admits of so little question that all other nations are tested by them, and praised or condemned accordingly. If the Empire expands its borders, it is part of the "plan of Providence" that it should do so, and opposition on the part of other nations is manifest proof of *their* moral and religious shortcomings. In other countries an opinion or a theory may be discussed on the ground of their agreement with facts; in England the first question that arises is their effect on morals and religion. When the Englishman goes abroad his first and greatest attention is to the moral, or immoral, conduct of the people he visits. To complete his knowledge in this respect no labor is too great, no sight too distasteful. The Englishman in a Continental city—provided his womenfolk are not with him—will have a more detailed knowledge of its vice in a week than many a resident who has been there all his life. He will on such occasions forego his much-loved attendance at church or chapel in order that he may return and tell those at home the personal experience, of others, in Continental haunts of vice. Whatever be his other shortcomings, the moral enthusiasm of an Englishman is evident to every right-minded resident in the British Isles. And if our Continental neighbors show an absolute insensibility to our moral superiority, it must be because our morality is quite beyond their appreciation.

It was said of Mr. Gladstone that he would never do anything unless he was convinced that it was in the interests of true religion and morality, although it was also said that he had the faculty of persuading himself that all he did went in that direction. Our present Prime Minister seems also resolved to carry on this truly British practice. Speaking recently at the City Liberal Club, he said that the Liberal Party would never be content until it had given every man the opportunity to rise and do that service to the community, "which God and Nature intended them to do," so that as a nation we might "discharge the great function which Providence had assigned to us in the history of the world." I am not quite sure what is the "great function" which "Providence" has assigned us, but presumably it is to maintain British supremacy, and therefore to keep other nations down to a degree consonant with our being first; to retain all we have, and if possible get more; and in general to prove that Providence intended the

British people to be first by forcing everybody else to keep in the rear. Foreign nations are therefore warned that any interference with British supremacy is counter to the will of Providence, to run it is therefore anti-religious, it is therefore immoral, and is therefore anathema. Nothing could be clearer, nothing more satisfactory—to Britons.

Mr. Asquith is convinced that "God and Nature" intended man to develop all his physical and mental capacities in the service of the community. On that I refrain from expressing an opinion. I do not know, and can only wonder from whence Mr. Asquith derives his information. But it does seem that if both God and Nature join in desiring a certain thing, that that thing ought to be an accomplished fact. For what on earth, or in heaven, is there to prevent it? Man is clearly a part of nature, and therefore part and parcel of the intention. Of course, there is the Conservative Party, which doubtless Mr. Asquith had at the back of his mind; and there are the publicans, whom he had immediately in view; but these also are part of nature. Whence, then, the hindrance to realising the plan? A view of things which places Nature in opposition to God one can at least appreciate. God wishes something, and Nature thwarts his desires. That is understandable as far as it goes; but in the other case all opposition is ruled out by the terms of the proposition—unless there are three things: God, Nature, and the Conservative Party. But then, if the latter is strong enough to defeat the other two, it must be much more powerful than most people imagine. Or can it be that our new Premier is simply talking nonsense? The problem is a very difficult one.

May it not be—I make the suggestion with due humility—Nature does not *intend* any of the things Mr. Asquith recites, and that Providence does not care the value of a brass button whether the British nation is on top or underneath? I admit that a Providence that failed in due respect to the British constitution would merit every reprobation, and there is the additional difficulty of finding some cosmical significance in the existence of other people except to provide a market for British goods, or for them to serve as a background to set off our own excellence. Still, we must face facts, and these seem to point to the conclusion that either there is no intention on the part of nature to produce anything, or there is an intention to produce everything—conservative and liberal, sinner and saint, those who do appreciate the greatness of the English people and those who do not. Nature takes no more care of the Englishman than it does of the German or Frenchman or the "Heathen Chinee." The negro may be proof to a malaria that destroys the European. Forms of life hostile to human existence are as well developed, as perfect after their kind, and as carefully protected as the lord of creation himself. Really, it would seem as though nature would suffer no great convulsion did Mr. Asquith and the Licensing Bill drop out of existence, or even though both political parties disappeared altogether. There are a certain number of people who believe that the British belong to the lost tribes of Israel, and that King Edward VII. is a lineal descendant of King David. I do not suppose that Mr. Asquith accepts this theory, but it is a little difficult to see wherein his theory of the

Providential selection of the British people is intellectually more respectable.

The theory of an all-wise and all-powerful God intending things that never come to pass, introduces something very like humor into the situation. It is, indeed, one of the characteristics of the British pietist that he invites laughter by the very solemnity with which he states his views. If God really intended that there should be a limit to the number of public-houses, is it not suggestive of the ludicrous to find this all-powerful Deity checked by an organisation of brewers and their supporters? After all, it would seem reasonable to suppose, if God desires the Liberal government to go on and prosper, nothing that man could do would have any effect against his wish. It cannot be that preventing man doing harm would be wrong, because that is precisely what Mr. Asquith aims at doing; and, as he is working in furtherance of God's designs, it is unwise to suppose that what would be wrong on the part of the creator would be right on the part of the creature. Goethe said that if God is what people believe him to be, the world is as he would have it be. I would humbly commend this opinion to the notice of Mr. Asquith. True, Goethe was not a British politician, and was, therefore, not so intimately acquainted with what God's intentions are, and what are the plans of Providence. Still, his opinion is worth noting, despite this drawback.

I had some notion of giving to this article the title, "God in a Fix," but refrained from fear of offending religious susceptibilities. Yet this is really what Mr. Asquith's remarks imply. God set out, apparently, with certain intentions of the most laudable character. But things have gone awry. The brewers are in the way, the Conservative party is in the way, Mr. Balfour is in the way, and Omnipotence is brought to a standstill. He, or she, or it, can do no more unless the people of this country come to the rescue. The Liberal Party is on the side of God, God is on the side of the Liberal Party. It is a touching combination, and one well calculated to appeal to the Government's Nonconformist supporters. The union of such forces *should* carry all before it. Whether it will or no remains to be seen. It is at least politically possible that what with the Irish party, the Labor party, the brewers, and the official opposition, to say nothing of the House of Lords with its bench of bishops, Mr. Asquith and God may find themselves defeated once again.

There are several advantages in thus proclaiming an alliance between the intentions of God and the policy of the Government. It establishes a prior claim. Any other leader that raises a similar cry will clearly be guilty of blasphemy. God, wishing the Liberals to prosper, cannot help anyone else. Any belief they may have that God is on *their* side must be a delusion. Every other party thus enters the field with the stigma of immorality and impiety upon it. And this serves the further purpose of satisfying the Englishman's insatiable craving for righteousness and religion. It ministers also to that cant, fairly active in all departments of life, but nowhere more operative than in the field of religion. "We dine at seven," said the humorist; "dinner or no dinner, we dine at seven." We will be moral, says the Englishman; whether we are good or bad, we insist on being moral. In many directions the Englishman is good enough, as the world goes. But when he is seized with a moral paroxysm, and, in addition, begins to talk religion, he is as colossal a humbug as there is on the face of the earth.

C. COHEN.

### The Evidential Value of Christian Experience.

IN the present article we propose to examine, as carefully as possible, the most recent defence of the Christian religion, made by a distinguished scholar

who is at once a Higher Critic and an Old Theologian. Being a Higher Critic, naturally he cannot fall back upon the Bible, and being also a Protestant he is precluded from making his final appeal to the authority of the Church. The proof from prophecy and the proof from miracles he abandons as of no weight whatever, and lays a firm hold upon the proof from individual experiences, which he pronounces all-conclusive. But what is the argument from experience which is now being so confidently employed by progressive theologians? The best answer is to be found in an exceptionally lucid and forcible article, which appears in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, from the pen of the Rev. P. T. Forsyth, M.A., D.D., Principal of Hackney College, Hampstead. In this paper, which is entitled "The Distinctive Thing in Christian Experience," the Principal is to be seen both at his best and at his worst. In stating the case for unbelief he could not be fairer; but in stating the case for Christianity he shows himself to be a partisan of the narrowest and most bigoted kind. To him, Christianity is a Divine intervention, "Grace is essentially miraculous," and "Christ is more precious by what distinguishes him from us than by what identifies him with us." To him, "the Gospel turns entirely upon redemptive forgiveness; so that, if evolution explain all, there is no sin, and therefore no forgiveness." To him, "the Gospel turns on the finality of Christ; but on an evolutionary idea there is no finality except at the close; it is therefore inaccessible, for the end is not yet." Consequently, no religious experience is of any value unless it fully embodies that conception of Christianity. The experience of the New Theologians, for example, is necessarily out of court: it proves nothing, because there is nothing behind it worth proving.

But we will take the Principal on his own terms. The question is, Does his own type of experience prove the objective truth of the Christian religion according to his own interpretation of it? Here are his very words: "Am I really forbidden to make any use of my personal experience of Christ for the purpose even of scientific theology? Should it make no difference to the evidence for Christ's resurrection that I have had personal dealings with the risen Christ as my Savior, nearer and dearer than my own flesh and blood? Is his personal gift of forgiveness to me, in the central experience of my life, of no value in settling the objective value of his cross and person? My personal contact with Christ, our commerce together, may I found nothing on these?" Such is the Principal's question, and the following, he allows, is the objector's answer:—

"No, nothing of scientific objective value. These experiences may be of great personal value to you, but they give you no warrant for stepping outside your own feelings. They may be useful illusions in their place, but you must outgrow them. You can never be quite sure that the Savior you meet is a personal reality. You can never make it certain to any that he is a continuous personality with the historic Jesus. And it is even laid upon us to make it doubtful for yourself. In your so-called communion with Christ you have no more real right to build on the objective personal reality of your *vis à vis* than the Roman Catholic girl had to believe in the real presence and speech of the Virgin at Lourdes. If it is Christ who visits you, it were the Virgin that visited her. Of so little worth is the fact of the experience in vouching for the content of experience. If you commune with Christ, do not gird at those who traffic with the saints."

How does Dr. Forsyth meet the difficulty as thus stated? He tells us that he had to meet it for himself several years ago, and that the answer which then satisfied, and, apparently, still satisfies him, is two-fold: it is personal, and it is historical. He grants that "a vision might be a phantom, and a colloquy an hallucination," but contends that his contact with Christ is not merely visionary, but moral, personal, and mutual. It is too intense and too prolonged to be anything but a personal com-

munion between two real beings. Let us give his own words:—

"What I have in Christ is not an impression, but a life change; not an impression of personal influence, which might evaporate, but a faith of central personal change. I do not merely feel changes; I am changed. Another becomes my moral life. He has done more than deeply influence me. He has possessed me. I am not his loyal subject, but his absolute property. I have rights against King Edward, however loyal I am, but against Christ I have none. He has not merely passed into my life, but he has given me a new life, a new moral self, a new consciousness of moral reality .....He has made a moral change in me which, for years and years, has worked outwards from the very core of my moral self, and subdued everything else to its obedience. In my inmost experience, tested by years of life, he has brought me to God."

Does Dr. Forsyth describe his own experience in page after page of that species of rhetorical emotionalism? Can he really mean all he says? Take the following as the final quotation on this head:—

"Christ (like the Sacraments in the Catholic view) is objective, effective, creative, upon my moral, my real self, upon me as a conscience, on sinful me. He is the author, not of my piety merely, but of my regeneration. My experience of him is that of one who does a vital, revolutionary work in that moral region where the last certainty lies. *And in that region it is an experience of a change so total (the italics are our own) that I could not bring it to pass by any resource of my own. Nor could any man effect it in me.*"

Enough! It really nauseates one. Without intending any disrespect to the Principal, we are bound to characterise his eloquent and elaborate description of his experience of Christ as in the last degree hyperbolic. It is not true to life. We cannot boast of the pleasure of Dr. Forsyth's personal acquaintance; but we make bold to assert that neither his moral nature nor his moral life is, because of his contact with Christ, in any sense exceptional. He says that "Grace is *whatever, essentially miraculous*"; but we challenge him to prove that it ever works miracles in human lives. He assures us that Christ is a supernatural being; and yet it is a notorious fact that Christians are neither better nor worse than the generality of non-Christians. He calls himself Christ's "absolute property"; and yet he deliberately tramples Christ's most sacred words under foot.

But that is only by the way. Has it really never occurred to the Principal that all religious experiences originate in corresponding beliefs, and that his own experiences are possible only to those who share his theology? Had he not believed in the existence of a personal God of a specific character, he would never have looked upon himself as a "miserable sinner"; and had he never regarded himself as "a miserable sinner" in the sight of such a God, he would never have felt the need of Divine forgiveness; and had he never realised this need of forgiveness, he would never have invested the birth and life and death of Jesus with supernatural qualities. Thus every Christian experience can be traced back to some belief as its cause, and thus is justified the general statement that all Christian experiences are effects of which Christian beliefs are the direct and sole causes.

Dr. Forsyth's reasoning here is shockingly reckless. "If he [the Redeemer] is not real," he observes, "moral reality has no meaning." How infinitely absurd! Does the reverend gentleman mean to aver that, had Jesus never lived, man would not have been a social animal with social or moral obligations? Has he the audacity to maintain that morality is a Christian product, and that all the men who have not had his experience of the supernatural grace of Christ are morally his inferiors? If this is not his meaning, what on earth is it? "If you claim the right to challenge the validity of my experience," he says, "you must do it on the ground of some experience surer, deeper, getting nearer moral reality than mine." Well, we do it on that very ground, on the ground, that is to say, of an

experience of life in society which is much surer, deeper, and gets closer to moral reality than any religious experience whatsoever. Dr. Forsyth seems to imagine that when he asserts that the last criterion lies in the conscience, he is giving expression to some high theological truth, whereas, in reality, he is only uttering a natural truism. For what is the conscience but the registered synthesis of the results of social life? Conscience is the product of society, and varies according to the stage of society under contemplation. It is by association with one another that the natures of men can be moulded into conformity with the requirements of the social state; and it is the conduct that makes for social well-being alone that is entitled to be called right conduct.

We will not trouble ourselves about the self-consciousness of Jesus, concerning which the Principal pretends to know so much; but we are obliged to notice his attribution of infinite moral power to Jesus which "could only go out in moral achievement"—

"He was there to do something which only his power could do. If he had power more than all the world's, it was to overcome the world in another than the individualist and ascetic sense. It was to subdue it to himself.....He was there for action; and it was action commensurate both with his person, and with the world, and with the world's moral extremity."

That may be sound theology, and the only fault that can be found with it is that history has pronounced it absolutely false. Whatever power Christ may or may not have had, the one outstanding fact is that it has not subdued the world to himself. Whether or not there ever was a Father who once lost the world, it is incontrovertible that his reputed Son has never succeeded in regaining it for him. Neither in fact, nor even in name, can it be said of the world that it now is or ever has been Christ's "absolute property."

Thus we learn that neither Christian experience nor Christian belief is of the slightest evidential value. The distinctive thing in both is their equal worthlessness as proofs of the objective reality of their contents. The Christian experience depicted by Dr. Forsyth is already a rarity under the sun, as is the theology that is responsible for it. Even the churches are abandoning their ancient positions, one after another, and slowly coming round to the only rational conclusion that "we ourselves must, and can, work out our own salvation without expecting or desiring supernatural intervention."

J. T. LLOYD.

### Locke on Toleration.

MILTON'S *Arcopagitica* made no apparent impression on his age. It was written in too high a vein for the populace, and it was never the characteristic of members of Parliament to pay much heed to literary men unless they exercised a wide influence on the masses. The great poet's plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing seems to have been almost entirely forgotten in the next generation, so that his arguments, and even his very words, could be safely plagiarised by inferior pamphleteers. When the licensing system was finally abolished, it fell by the hand of commerce rather than by the hand of genius. The booksellers revolted against it, and their opposition was more powerful than that of the noblest writers in whose productions they trafficked.

Notwithstanding the "glorious revolution," scarcely a voice was raised on behalf of a free press in the earliest years of William's reign. But when the Licensing Act of 1685, which was passed for eight years, came to be renewed in 1693, it obtained a fresh lease of life with considerable difficulty. Edmund Bohun was then Licensor, and a trick played upon him by Charles Blount brought the whole system into public odium. Charles Blount is described by Macaulay as "a man of good family,

of some reading, and of some small literary talent." Dryden speaks of his abilities in higher terms. Macaulay was biased by his antipathy to Blount's "flippant profaneness," or he would have allowed him greater merit as a writer. Such a fervent believer as our great Whig historian could not forgive the editor of the *Oracles of Reason*, who "worried the priests" with his criticisms, and appended the most shockingly blasphemous notes to the Life of Apollonius of Tyana. Besides, Blount was not only "an infidel," but he was "the head of a small school of infidels who were troubled with a morbid desire to make converts." That is, they were not content with cherishing their own convictions, but actually had the audacity to disseminate them.

Although Blount was a wicked infidel, Macaulay allows that "it is in a great measure to him that we must attribute the emancipation of the English press." More than one of his heterodox treatises had been mutilated by the Licensers, and he was provoked into making war on the censorship. Under the name of Philopatris, he issued an unlicensed pamphlet entitled *A Just Vindication of Learning and of the Liberty of the Press*. For the most part it consisted of extracts from Milton's forgotten *Areopagitica*. This act of plagiarism rouses the ire of Macaulay, who likens Blount to the barbarians who employ the remains of classic architecture to build hovels and prop cow-houses, forgetting that in this case the arguments and eloquence of Milton were employed for the very purpose for which he intended them. Blount ended, as Milton had done, by recommending that books should be printed without a license, provided that the name of the author or publisher were registered.

This pamphlet being well received, Blount followed it up with another entitled *Reasons for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*. "To these Reasons," says Macaulay, "he appended a postscript entitled a Just and True Character of Edmund Bohun. This Character was written with extreme bitterness. Passages were quoted from the Licenser's writings to prove that he held the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance. He was accused of using his power systematically for the purpose of favoring the enemies and silencing the friends of the Sovereigns whose bread he ate."

Right on the heels of this second pamphlet Blount requested Bohun to authorise the publication of an anonymous work entitled *King William and Queen Mary Conquerors*. Bohun was in raptures with this work. It echoed his own sentiments more melodiously than he had ever expressed them. But a few hours after it was published poor Bohun learned that "the title-page had set all London in a flame." The odious word "Conquerors" had raised the patriotic pride of the multitude. A few days afterwards he was summoned to the bar of the House of Commons. The work he had licensed was ordered to be burnt in Palace Yard by the common hangman; he was himself taken to a place of confinement; and the King was requested to remove him from the office of Licenser. Poor Bohun was ruined, and Blount must be held responsible for whatever moral guilt attaches to his clever plot. Yet his efforts and intrigues produced great public good. Hitherto licensing acts had been passed without a division, but now people inquired whether they were, after all, of any value. Instead of passing the Commons unopposed, the Act of 1685 was only renewed for two years by a majority of ninety-nine to eighty. In the Lords the suggestion of Milton and after him of Blount, was moved as an amendment. It was rejected, but eleven peers signed a protest against subjecting all learning to "the arbitrary will and pleasure of a mercenary, and perhaps ignorant, licenser." Tillotson and Burnet were present, but, as good Churchmen, they voted against liberty.

After the death of Mary, in 1695, a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to ascertain what temporary statutes were about to expire, and to recommend which should be renewed. The

Licensing Act of 1693 was included in their list, but when the Speaker asked the House if it should be continued, he pronounced that the Noes had it. When the list went up to the Lords they reinserted the Act, but the Commons would not agree to the amendment, and they appointed a Committee to confer with the Lords on the subject. Their reasons were carefully drawn up in a lengthy document. Every one was of a practical or commercial character. According to the *Craftsman*, as cited by Macaulay, this able document was drawn up by JOHN LOCKE. Its arguments were suited to the taste and capacity of ordinary Englishmen, and they were so cogent that the Lords yielded without a contest. The peers probably thought that an improved bill would be sent up to them, but it never came, and the censorship of the English press was abolished forever.

Directly the Licensing Act expired, on May 3, 1695, the press began to show its activity. Prior to that time, the only real newspaper in England was the *London Gazette*, and that was edited by a clerk in the office of the Secretary of State. But after that epochal Third of May, which is infinitely more important than the date of many decisive battles, newspaper followed newspaper in rapid succession, until there was enough for all parties and all tastes.

Whether John Locke did or did not compose the paper against the Licensing Act, it is certain that he hated such pettyfogging tyranny. He was a friend of freedom in the broadest sense in which it was then understood. His famous *Letters on Toleration* shows that he was imbued with the spirit which shone from the pages of Milton and gleamed from the pages of Taylor. Yet, although more than a generation had elapsed since the great poet and the great divine had written their defence of liberty, it is curious that Locke made no practical advance beyond their positions. His contribution to the debate on this transcendent question was theoretical. It consisted in the pregnant idea, which was destined to produce an offspring he never anticipated, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do with any man's religion.

Locke composed his first Letter on Toleration, of which the subsequent letters are only a defence, while he was an exile at Utrecht. Under James II., in 1685, he had been illegally deprived of his studentship of Christ Church in the University of Oxford, the Bishop acting as political pimp to the king's ministry. The prelate's letters to Lord Sunderland, as printed in Lord King's *Life of Locke*, show to what a depth of baseness a priest could descend to serve the party in power. Locke was on the continent when he heard of his deprivation, which robbed him of his home and his bread, and he did not hasten to return. But the tyrant had an implacable hatred for the philosopher, and his name was included in a list of the proscribed whom the king's minister at the Hague demanded of the States General. The Government, however, would not hand over a man of such an innocuous life. Yet he thought it prudent to retire to Utrecht, where he spent several weeks in seclusion with his friend, M. Veen. It was there that he composed his first Letter on Toleration. The subject had long occupied his mind. From his *Commonplace Book*, dated 1667, Lord King quotes some notes of a projected essay, in which the main points of the Letter are clearly stated.

The Letter on Toleration was first printed in Latin at Tergou. It bore no author's name, but the initials J. L. A. signified Joanne Lockio Anglo. This did not, however, reveal his identity; and in a letter to Limborch, Locke reproaches him for having disclosed to a friend that he was the author of the *Epistola*. It was translated and printed in London after the Revolution, still without his name, and he defended it anonymously in a second Letter in 1690 against the attack of a Churchman.

Lord King says of Locke's first Letter that it is "in some sort the most useful, because the most practical of all his works." Mackintosh calls it

"the most original of Locke's works." Warburton said that those who subsequently wrote on behalf of "the divine principle of toleration" went back to it for their arguments.

Locke's object being, as he says, to "distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other," he naturally gives a definition of both:—

"The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, the preserving, and the advancing of their own civil interests.

Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like.

It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all people in general, and to every one of his subjects in particular, the just possession of these things belonging to this life."

The definition of a Church is equally concise. It is "a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshiping of God, in such a manner as they may judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls." The powers of such a Church are entirely moral, and only over its own members. It may exhort, admonish, and excommunicate; but in casting a member out of its pale it has no right to subject him to any temporal punishment, and if the magistrate assists it in such an outrage he is guilty of persecution. Not only must no injury be inflicted, but charity, bounty, and liberality must be shown. "If any man err from the right way," says Locke, "it is his own misfortune, no injury to thee: nor therefore art thou to punish him in the things of this life, because thou supposest he will be miserable in that which is to come."

There are three reasons why the magistrate should not meddle with religion. First, because "the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men." He can be of what religion he chooses, and so can his subjects, and he is as liable to be mistaken as they are. Secondly, his power consists in outward force, whereas religion is an inward persuasion of the mind. Confiscation, imprisonment, and torture cannot compel the judgment. "It is only light and evidence," Locke finely says, "that can work a change in men's opinions." Thirdly, because if penalties could change men's minds it would not therefore save their souls.

"For, there being but one truth, one way to heaven, what hope is there that more men would be led into it, if they had no other rule to follow but the religion of the court, and were put under a necessity to quit the light of their own reason, to oppose the dictates of their own consciences, and blindly to resign up themselves to the will of their governors, and to the religion, which either ignorance, ambition, or superstition had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born? In the variety and contradictions of opinions in religion, wherein the princes of the world are as much divided as in their secular interests, the narrow way would be much straitened; one country alone would be in the right, and all the rest of the world put under an obligation of following their princes in the ways that lead to destruction: and that which heightens the absurdity, and very ill suits the notion of a deity, men would owe their eternal happiness or their eternal misery to the places of their nativity."

A shrewd thought! But it applies to all forms of salvation by faith as well as to the right of private judgment. As a matter of fact, the faith of nearly the whole human race is decided by the geographical accident of their birth; and if they are to be saved by faith, as the majority of Christian teachers assert, is it not true (however absurd and ill-suited the notions of a deity) that they "owe their eternal happiness or their eternal misery to the places of their nativity"?

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

## Mr. McKenna's Bill.

THE Education Bill now before Parliament is a final illustration of the folly of attempting to settle the religious problem in National Education by deliberately avoiding the real issue. Mr. McKenna is asking the nation to adopt legislative proposals, the main principles of which have been tried and rejected by a century of explicit political experience. The greatest statesmen of the last century tried in vain to reconcile the interests of the contending sects: Whitbread in 1807; Brougham in 1820; Durham in 1840; Forster in 1870; Balfour in 1902; Birrell in 1906—all these eminent men exhausted every practical proposal for equitable adjustment between sect and sect; and what they failed to do in a century of political effort, Mr. McKenna is not likely to accomplish in 1908.

The chief purpose of Mr. McKenna's Bill is the establishment and endowment of Cowper-Templeism as the official religion of the English nation. It is to be paid for by public funds, and taught by public servants, and organised by public machinery. Now Cowper-Templeism is not accepted as their religion by millions of our fellow countrymen. The Roman Catholics will not have it; the Anglicans generally will not have it; it is not acceptable to the Jews, Unitarians, Theists, Positivists, Ethicists, or Freethinkers; and these groups, each of which has rights equal with those of any other section of the community, will not submit, without protest, either to pay for it, or to have it taught to their children.

As a set-off against putting Protestantism on the rates in the vast majority of public schools, Mr. McKenna proceeds to put Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism on the taxes in a small minority.

This, however, does nothing to remedy the injustice which Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Jews, and Agnostics suffer in the single-school districts where Cowper-Templeism is the only religion taught, while it exasperates the Nonconformist by conceding the principle of supporting schools out of public funds without public control. Compromise has been tried over and over again, and has been found futile.

The truth is, that no settlement can be found so long as any one form of religion is given in the public schools at the public expense. In this matter, one of two extremes is alone possible. Either the State must make itself a Universal Provider of Religion and teach the religion of every sect at the public expense, or it must not teach religion at all. By universal consent the latter is alone practicable.

Mr. McKenna's Bill may be summarised as "a new sectarianism on the rates," and therefore not a solution of the education difficulty. Its provisions are a negation of the principle of equal rights for all citizens; it perpetuates the injustice under which minorities suffer; it incites and prolongs religious strife, and it does nothing whatever for education itself.

The Secular Education League calls upon the nation to demand that this dangerous and futile wrangling shall cease. It appeals to it to see that religious persecution shall not be inflicted in its name, and to insist that Parliament shall confer the boon of Secular Education upon the country before further harm is done.

—Issued by the Secular Education League.

## Professor Goldwin Smith

ON

## Sir Oliver Lodge's Spiritualism.

SIR OLIVER LODGE, the great man of science, announces that he has received communications from the spirit-world. Great he is in his own line; but it has been seen in more cases than one that intellectual power does not preclude the existence of mythical weakness. Newton had theological fancies, and Johnson was evidently inclined to a belief in ghosts, and was angry with Wesley for not following up a ghost-story with sufficient spirit. People certainly above the average in intellect have been bitten by spiritualism. But no spirit as yet has presented anything like satisfactory credentials from the other world. Not one of them has had anything to reveal, and they generally talk the merest rubbish. We shall see what it is that Sir Oliver Lodge's spirits have told him, and whether it implies supernatural knowledge on their part. The decay of religious faith has not lessened, perhaps it has even in a way stimulated, the craving for the supernatural. So it has been before when religious belief failed. Not in these fancies is the solution of our difficulties to be found.—*The Sun* (Toronto).

Be thou but self-possessed, thou hast the art of living.

—Goethe.

## Acid Drops.

The poor Carpenter of Nazareth would have had a fit if he could have looked in at the banqueting hall of the Grand Hotel, Glasgow, the other afternoon. A presentation was being made to one of the poor Prophet's apostles—the Rev. Dr. Donald Macleod, minister of Park Parish, Glasgow, in honor of his attaining his jubilee as a minister of the Church of Scotland. The presentation took the form of a silver salver and a deposit receipt for £1,000—in addition to which there was a gift of a pair of silver candelabras and four silver candlesticks for Mrs. Macleod. No doubt the reverend gentleman will find the £1,000 very handy, but we understand that his annual stipend is more than that figure, so it must be reckoned as a fulfilment of the prophecy that "Unto him that hath shall be given." What a change since the days when the poor Prophet of Nazareth had to send Peter fishing for half-a-crown to pay the tax-collector! J. C. and all the twelve apostles—including the cashier, who went wrong for something like £3 15s.—would have thought themselves "rich beyond the dreams of avarice" with half the "cross" that the Rev. Donald Macleod has to carry through this vale of tears.

There's plenty of money in the Christian business now. Even at Belfast, where trade is not flourishing at present, Bishop Crozier, of the Church of Ireland, has raised £14,154 by a Self-Denial Week throughout his diocese, besides £846 0s. 9d. for the Cathedral. Apparently the £14,154 is all to be spent on "Additional Clergy"; in other words, on further apostles of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth. It would take the tongue of Jack Falstaff to do justice to these things.

Rev. George Frederick Holden, Marylebone, London, formerly curate of St. Savior's, Everton, Liverpool, left £30,247. "For their works do favor them"—but not their cash. Ay, there's the rub!

Rev. George Moseley Gay, of De Vere gardens, Kensington, London, left £133,074. The money won't melt easily, but the reverend gentleman must be melting. And he won't get a drop of Father Abraham's patent cooler. The old fellow turns a face of flint to all the ex-millionaires who are roasting in the pit.

The *Morning Leader* recently printed some "ghost" stuff published by the American Society for Psychical Research. Two American lady mediums carry on a little conversation with the "spirit" of the late Dr. Richard Hodgson. And such conversation! It is silly enough to make an ostrich sick. We decline to trouble ourselves or our readers with it in any detail. Communication between the living and the living is often imbecile enough, but communication between the living and the dead touches the bottom slush of nonsense. To believe it would add a new terror to death. When one reads the idiotic things that the "spirits" of the dead say to the "mediums," one is inclined to say with poor Ophelia, "We know what we are, we know not what we may be."

Chester Gillette, the American millionaire, who murdered a girl that he had been familiar with, and who tried every dodge to escape the electrocuting chair, has at last been extinguished. He was as bad a lot as could well be imagined, but he made an edifying end, as such scoundrels are apt to do. In a letter addressed to "Young Men" he implored them to lead Christian lives, and assured them that he could face God because his sins were forgiven. "My task is done," he said, and "the victory won." Not a word about the poor girl he had treated so shockingly. Such are the "consolations" of religion!

There is an American Christian who goes one better than Chester Gillette on this point. Rev. Henry McIlravy, to whom Gillette made a full confession, when he saw there was no escape, sent to the papers a sort of postscript to the convict's epistle. Here it is:—

"Gillette died a Christian, and is in heaven. Grace Brown, whose life was snuffed out by him before she had time to repent of her sin, is undergoing punishment now."

Lots of American people don't like this. But, after all, it is good Christianity. If you don't believe it, ask Torrey.

Vice-Admiral Viron, Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet—which must, we imagine, be worthy of Madame Tussaud's—has issued a remarkable order of the day to his comical squadron. He exhorts his crews to live Christian lives, to venerate their sublime Sovereign, to hold no inter-

course with traitors, and to keep a strict eye on the Jews. Some of them may need the last bit of advice. They are all right while they are afloat, but when they go ashore they may need to dodge their creditors.

The British and Foreign Bible Society boasts that its productions are allowed to go free on most railway and steamship lines in the world. The Bible has every advantage,—of course; but it is going to the dogs all the same. We mean as the Word of God. Millions of copies are circulated, but fewer and fewer people read it.

"The history of Christianity," the *Christian World* says, "is, on one side of it at least, a history of controversy. It is a history much more instructive than pleasing. One is apt to derive from it a poor opinion of human nature—even of religious human nature."

The Chinese Ambassador was the "guest of the evening" at the recent New Vagabonds' dinner at the Criterion. His Excellency made a very interesting speech in English. He observed that China always had great respect for authors, who were a force by which the thoughts of the people were moulded and the history of a nation was made glorious. Then, in a sly vein, he went on to remark how pleased he was to hear Lord Curzon, at last year's dinner, preach the doctrine of Imperial vagabondage—which drew all parts of the British Empire together and made it one great coherent whole; but why should not that vagabondage be extended still further, and try to draw all nations of the world together, and make them one family? This would mean universal peace, and literature and the arts would be fully developed. His Excellency spoke for the pacific genius of his country.

"The following Socialists," the *New Age* says, "are on the Provisional Committee of the Shakespeare Memorial Meeting at the Lyceum Theatre: Robert Blatchford, Jerome K. Jerome, Bernard Shaw, Herbert Trench, and the Revs. Cartmel-Robinson and Stewart D. Headlam." No doubt this is very interesting, but it admits of developments. The Liberty and Property Defence League may announce the names of its members on the said Committee. The Primrose League may do ditto. So may the Liberal Federation. Then the religious bodies may join in, and we may be treated to lists of Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Congregationalists on the said Committee. And why overlook the Jews? On the whole, it appears that the Shakespeare Memorial movement is mainly for the purpose of advertising persons who still live—with more or less credit and benefit to the world.

The one thing pretty certain about Shakespeare, besides his poetical genius and dramatic power, is that he was a Freethinker; as Mr. Foote will demonstrate at his Queen's Hall lecture on April 26. This is a point which the Shakespeare Memorial Committee is likely to ignore. It wouldn't do to say anything about that in pious, hypocritical England.

In an article on "Religion and Labor," "J. B.," of the *Christian World*, notes that "both at home and abroad Socialism, as represented by some of its most influential leaders, and by large numbers of its adherents, is actively hostile to Christianity and the religious concept generally. On the Continent it is almost entirely so." This is no more than the truth, although it is a truth hidden somewhat by the fact that a handful of Socialists insist on the friendliness of Socialism towards religion, while the much larger number keep their opinions on religion quiet for opportunist reasons. Still, those who really understand Socialism know that it has nothing to expect from religion, while religion certainly can get no help from straightforward Socialism. On the Continent, matters are brought to a clearer issue because on the Continent there is not, on the whole, nearly the amount of moral cowardice that exists in this country.

When, however, "J. B." goes on to argue that "primitive Christianity included a great social redemption" he is as much at sea as are those who parade Jesus Christ as a forerunner of the Independent Labor Party. Social redemption, in the sense of a reorganisation of society on a human basis, was the last thing the primitive Christian thought about. If early Christian literature is fairly studied it will be seen that social problems, as such, troubled the true believers not at all. It is true that they talked of a new heaven and a new earth, but it was to be brought about by the reappearance of Jesus Christ; and whether it was to be here or elsewhere was a question open to great doubt. Bearing in mind, too, that the unimportance of social duties

and obligations was insisted on by many of the early Christian writers on the ground that the world would soon come to an end anyway, the picture of the early Christians burning for social reform is decidedly grotesque. But, there, about the only occasion on which a Christian writer puts forth a sensible point of view is when he is "going for" some other Christian.

We are also told that the New Testament Church was a Labor Church because it was made up of laborers. Now this is funny; for the first thing the laborers did was to "chuck up" work. And even though they combined laboring and preaching, it would prove nothing. For, as "J. B." points out, the Jews were accustomed to see theology allied with handicraft. He supplies illustrations of this. "Rabbi Hillel was a day laborer, Rabbi Joshua a needle-maker, Rabbi Judah a baker, Rabbi Johanna a shoemaker." So that on the one hand it was but customary among the Jews for preachers to earn their living otherwise than by preaching, while on the other hand it is only part of the usual course of things for new religious preachings to be addressed to those who have least material interest in the prevailing order. One wonders what it is "J. B." thinks he has proven.

The question of Tariff Reform *v.* Free Trade is now settled. A writer in the *Methodist Times* says it is "a negation of Christian Teaching." Nothing more is to be said after this.

A leading article in one of the religious weeklies lets the cat out of the bag with regard to foreign missionary work. It admits that often the results are poor, and mentions one report which tells of "forty years' work and not a dozen members. It also admits that the stories told to the general public are carefully prepared for them, the missionaries "telling to the churches at home only such things as their faith might bear"; which is exactly what we have said over and over again. What professional missionaries can do in the shape of reports we know from the manner in which thousands of converts are reported at revival meetings at home. And if they indulge in these flights of imagination under our very noses, we may rest assured their stories will not suffer in the telling when the scene is laid some thousands of miles away. And there is nothing that better illustrates the credulity of the religious public than the manner in which these missionary yarns are swallowed year after year, in spite of continuous admissions and proofs that they are manufactured for the sole end of loosening the purse-strings of the home subscribers.

What some missionaries regard as proof of progress may be seen from the following. A Congregationalist missionary, the Rev. H. H. Theobald, reports that an educated Hindu, with whom he had a conversation, said that "thinking Hindus had abandoned idolatry, and had modified many of their old faiths and practices." But the same person pointed out that the Hindus "were not prepared to embrace Christianity." This we take to be about the position of affairs. So far as the missionary exerts any influence, he tends to break down the native beliefs, and the natives then tend to become Freethinkers. It is in India, as elsewhere—all the real gains are for Freethought. The law of progress is everywhere the same.

Rev. R. F. Horton is shocked. It seems that some of the New Theologians "speak about Peter and Paul as if they were living now, whom we could criticise and correct and reject according to our pleasure." Naturally, Dr. Horton is scandalised at anyone venturing to deal in this manner with people who have been dead for so long a period. Yet he may console himself with the reflection that neither Peter nor Paul will be troubled by any criticism the New Theologians may care to pass upon them.

In commenting on Dr. Horton's deliverance on this, the *Christian World* remarks that Peter and Paul were able as we to pass a judgment on religious subjects. But with this we beg to differ. Had Paul lived to-day, he would never have mistaken a sunstroke for a "divine visitation." He would have known it for what it was, and his preaching career would have been nipped in the bud. Had Peter or Paul, or any of the New Testament characters been alive now, they would have seen no proof of inspiration, or of demoniacal possession in the phenomena from which they drew these conclusions. The readiness of the people with whom Christianity began to see the supernatural in every event of their lives, with their obvious ignorance of science, is sufficient to place them upon a lower level than people living to-day. We have around us all the phenomena that confronted the early Christians, but no one outside of a

lunatic asylum would explain them in the same way. The New Theologians are, in fact, applying a perfectly sane principle—which is that we have to interpret past events in the light of present knowledge, and not allow ourselves to be guided by an interpretation of events that are now generally discarded. And when this is done thoroughly there will not be much left of Christianity.

The Salvation Army Self-Denial Fund realised this year £72,670—being £17 more than last year's total. Much more was expected, but the chief of the staff is good enough to say he is satisfied. The sum is large in itself, but when one bears in mind the extent of the advertising, the frantic efforts at collecting, involving practically a house-to-house collection throughout the country, the result is really not so great, after all. And one of two other things would seem to be certain. Either the amount contributed by the Salvationists themselves is small, or the money contributed by the outside public is far from large. Doubtless the agitation against "Army" methods has had its influence in preventing the total rising, and, if the agitation were maintained, next year might show a fall. Certainly, if the public knew that out of this £72,000 over £60,000 went to preach Salvation Army religion in Japan, Germany, and other foreign countries, few would be as ready to give as they are. This branch of expenditure is, however, kept in the background, while the amount spent on social work is kept well to the front—so much so, that the general public takes it as covering nearly all.

When the Rev. R. J. Campbell spoke, last November, at the Memorial Hall demonstration in favor of Secular Education, he amused the vast majority of the audience by suggesting that the Secularists did not understand what Secular Education meant. He apparently thought, in all good faith, that Secularists believed Secular Education to mean the State establishment of Secularism. Such a blunder only showed that Mr. Campbell had never taken the trouble to read what Secularists had written on the subject. He had not even looked at the National Secular Society's official manifesto. Fortunately, Mr. Foote was on the platform, and was able to assure the reverend gentleman that it was he who was mistaken, and not the Secularists. What they stood for was justice—on the basis of citizenship. It was no business of theirs—as citizens—whether Secular Education would help Secularism forward or hold it back. That was a partisan view of a sectarian interest. Justice and fair-play were the interest of all, and the Secularists only wanted their share in it.

Now we see that the *Christian Commonwealth*, which is devoted to Mr. Campbell and the New Theology, admits that the Nonconformists are only giving up the idea of forcing their own nostrum of Simple Bible Teaching upon the whole nation because they began to perceive the impossibility of succeeding. "We are glad," our contemporary says, "the stubborn resistance of Roman and Anglo-Catholics to the endowment of Protestantism in the schools of the nation has brought Nonconformists to a frame of mind which we fear a sense of justice alone would not have induced." This "frame of mind" is not, however, entirely satisfactory; for the settlement which Church and Chapel are contemplating, as the C. C. confesses, will be at the expense of all the rest of the community. *Arcades ambo.*

New Theology meetings, the C. C. says, have been held in the market-place at Leicester, and many questions were asked of the speakers. "Most of these," it is stated, "came from agnostics and secularists, whose kindly and respectful attitude was most marked." Probably "respectful" should read "courteous." The C. C. is vastly mistaken if it fancies that "agnostics and secularists" are going to become New Theologians. They have passed far beyond that stage of religious progress.

Charles Hill, secretary of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association, writes to the *Times* that certain statistics published in that paper "clearly prove that our national museums should be closed on the day of holy rest"—which, by the way, is the day on which the men of God of all denominations chiefly earn their livings. The "statistics" referred to are these: only 7,405 people, out of a population of 6,000,000, "could be found to visit our seven great museums and galleries on the Lord's Day." To keep these places open, therefore, on Sunday is, in Mr. Hill's opinion, a "national scandal." But is it? Let us look into the facts more closely.

In the first place, it is absurd to regard all the 6,000,000 of Greater London as potential visitors of the museums and

galleries. A vast proportion of them live at prohibitive distances from the institutions referred to. Walking to and from them is practically out of the question, and travelling involves a good deal of expense, to say nothing of the refreshment needed during many hours' absence from home. So much for one end of the figures. And now for the other. It must not be expected, of course, that the same people go on visiting the museums and galleries Sunday after Sunday; consequently, the number 7,405 would have to be multiplied by the number of Sundays in the year, which gives 385,060. Suppose we knock off the 85,060, as an allowance for duplicate visitors; we still have 300,000 left. Now, why should that large number of people be treated as a negligible quantity? And why should their rights not be fully respected? Is it not a piece of absurd bigotry to deny 300,000 people admittance on Sundays to national museums and galleries in London simply because Mr. Hill and his Society don't want to visit these institutions themselves? And how many members, after all, has Mr. Hill's Society? And, further, how many of them are *bona fide* working men? Are there half-a-dozen all told?

The annual self-denial effort in connection with the Liverpool division of the Salvation Army was concluded last evening, when a meeting was held in Pembroke-place hall to hear the results declared from the different branches. Prior to the gathering it was freely whispered that there was a decrease, and many reasons were adduced for the falling off in subscriptions. It has long been felt that the sending of the whole of the money to London headquarters was a proceeding which was open to serious question, inasmuch as the general public who subscribed did so under the impression that their gifts would be spent in local efforts. This year, what is described as "a meagre and paltry" concession has been made, by which a corps or branch collecting, say, £80 would be remunerated with the magnificent total of £2, or 2½ per cent. on the amount, and the maximum total of £78 being used for London work or foreign missions. Another reason has been given in the apathetic attitude of the Salvation Army in withholding their support to the Licensing Bill, and the Christian churches in many instances have refused to support the self-denial collection. The total result for the division was given as £2,533, or £267 below last year.—*Liverpool Evening Express*.

The piety of Mr. William Jennings Bryan, upon which the *Truthseeker* has felt constrained to comment once and again, is explained by facts which make it appear that he is the best paid preacher in the world, making more out of talking upon the Prince of Peace in the course of a year than he would receive as salary had he been elected President. In 1907, he filled 175 dates and his receipts for the season yielded more than \$300 each, or a total of \$52,500. His movements as a lecturer on religion are directed by a bureau, the secretary of which gives the following details: "Mr. Bryan's regular charge at Chautauquas is the first \$250 taken at the gate and half of all the receipts above \$500, not including season tickets. For evening lectures in a course his charge is \$200 cash as a guarantee and half of all the receipts at the door. For single evening lectures not in a regular course, he asks half of the gross receipts. He started out on January 6, 1907, and spoke almost every day until September 10, frequently twice a day. In addition to these, he has made a large number of political speeches." Mr. Bryan's press agent declares that he has no rival on the lecture platform, but we should estimate that he has a superior in Elbert Hubbard. If Hubbard would consent to hand out the religious slush that characterises Bryan's best efforts, the Nebraskan would become a star of the second magnitude.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Living on the Church is a common practice, but to do it safely you require to take holy orders. With a black coat and a white choker on, you may earn a splendid income by preaching "Blessed be ye poor." This was overlooked by John Spalding, who is committed for trial on a charge of breaking into Matlock Bath parish church, and carrying off a missionary-box and four bottles of Communion wine. It appears that he broke into the same church in 1902, and was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in consequence. His offence was sacrilege; he committed burglary in a holy place, and robbed God rather than man. Such, at least, is the Church view of the matter; which, of course, inspired the State law on the subject. Next time John Spalding feels the spirit move him to break in somewhere and appropriate something, he should choose some other building than a "house of prayer"—even though it should be a "den of thieves." Seven years' imprisonment is a terrible sentence for a transaction of rather slender profit. But it may be that the poor man is under an insane obsession. He may have contracted an irresistible taste for the Blood of Christ.

So much may not unreasonably be inferred from the four missing bottles of Communion port. Yet it is generally poor stuff as it leaves the wine-merchant's. We believe the common price is under two shillings a bottle.

Games and religion are to be supplied together, if possible, at Stamford-hill, London. The Borough of Hackney Young Men's Christian Association appeals for £6,000, in order to open a fine establishment there, with house and grounds, in which cricket, football, hockey, and other sports will be carried on in association with evangelistic meetings. Why not add occasional visits from Arthur Roberts and Little Tich?

The *New Age* regards the Secular Solution of the Education question as "an expedient of despair" and lends what influence it possesses to the policy of the Bishop of St. Asaph's Bill. It argues that there should be a right of entry to the schools for all denominations,—which seems to us a mad and impossible idea in England, whatever it may be in Utopia. Our contemporary winds up by saying that young people should have all sorts of "ideas" brought to their attention. But why should this be done in the public school-rooms? This is a question which our Socialist contemporary does not attempt to answer. It seems too much overcome with the dread of Secularism.

The writer of the "Handbook" in last week's *Referee* is under the impression that the Psalms were really written by David. It is one of the commonplaces of Biblical Criticism that the Psalms were written hundreds of years after the time of David, and were, in fact, the Hymn-Book of the Second Temple. After such ignorance on the part of a front-page *Referee* writer, it is not astonishing that this journal refuses to insert an advertisement of the *Freethinker*. Darkness always did hate the Light.

James Thomson ("B. V."), the Atheist poet of the *City of Dreadful Night*, used to tell us that smoking pews were bound to come in some day. They appear to be coming at last. "Smoking services" are to be held this summer at Atlantic City, the famous New Jersey watering-place. Worshipers will be allowed to sit in their shirt-sleeves, with their collars off, smoking pipes, cigars, and cigarettes. 'Tis better to have prayed and smoked than never to have prayed at all.

Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan has been visiting the Pope. His Holiness was asked to write a few words in the Yankee millionaire's pocket-book, and he complied as follows:—"We offer the best wishes for Mr. Morgan and his family, and we pray that God may grant him every happiness." It was very good of the Pope, but we doubt if it will make any difference in Mr. Morgan's insurance premium.

Mr. John Morley has never, to our knowledge, written a word on behalf of Freethought since he became a politician. It seems to have been tacitly understood that he should be forgiven for his old books on Voltaire and Diderot, which were before the world and could not be recalled, on condition that he committed no further offences against British religion. Now that he is going up to the House of Peers (or is it down?) we suppose he is more unlikely than ever to break through the traditions of respectability.

Mr. Morley has been a successful statesman; that is to say, he has got on, and also won the respect and admiration of "the world." Whether he has been a great statesman is not to be discussed in these columns. But whatever he has done or not done as a legislator and a cabinet minister, we are very decidedly of opinion that the whole of his political record is of far less real value than any of his books on the great French Freethinkers of the eighteenth century. So much more important is what a man says direct to his fellow-men than what he says as a member of a political enterprise.

The Government Licensing Bill goes a step further in the direction of Sunday Closing. The Welsh Sunday Closing Act (1881) is to be extended to Monmouthshire. Public-houses outside the London area are to be opened on Sundays for one hour only between noon and 3 p.m. and for two hours only between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. The *bona fide* traveller will have to ride or tramp six miles instead of three as at present. Altogether the Bill aims, in this particular, at making it difficult to obtain "drink" on the Lord's Day. Now we regard this as pure Sabbatarianism and truckling to the Churches. If drinking a glass of beer is a legal act from Monday morning to Saturday night, it cannot be prohibited or restricted on Sunday except on Sabbatarian grounds. Teetotalers ought to see this as well as other citizens.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, April, 19, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W. : at 7.15, "The True Meaning of Easter."

April 26, Queen's (Minor) Hall, London, W.

May 3. Liverpool; 10, Aberdare.

### To Correspondents.

EDINBURGH BRANCH.—Your envelope bore the Edinburgh post-mark of April 7, last week; and your lecture notice inside was, of course, too late for insertion in the *Freethinker*.

WATCHFUL.—Thanks for letter and cuttings.

T. W. HOUGHTON.—See paragraph. Thanks.

W. A. BOND.—The "Sermon on Sin" was a "skit"—and it must have been a good one (in one way) to deceive a careful reader. Of course the "reported by" was a part of the joke.

Mrs. TURNBULL, a staunch Glasgow "saint," subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I have been a reader of the *Freethinker* since 1882, and I enjoy it as much as ever. I really don't know what we should do without it in the house now. My invalid son looks forward to its coming every week, and it has given him many a bright hour's reading. I trust you will be able to carry on your grand work for many years to come."

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged.

—Donations, £165: Annual Subscriptions, £164 11s. Received Since.—F. M. Pottow, £1; Mrs. Turnbull, £1; R. Spiers, 2s. 6d.; R. Wood, 5s.

G. ROLEFFS.—Thanks for cuttings.

JOSEPH BRYCE.—Shall appear. Sorry you could not come and shake hands with Mr. Foote when he last visited Newcastle-on-Tyne. He would be pleased to greet you.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

F. J. VOISEY.—We don't deal with politics in the *Freethinker*. If it pleases John Morley to die a Lord, that is his affair. Still, we understand your feelings as an old Radical.

V. PAGE.—Mr. Foote is writing you.

B. E. TRAYNER.—Pleased to have your letter. With regard to the verses, which are not without merit, we should prefer something on a less hackneyed topic.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

### Sugar Plums.

There was a much improved audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Bible and the Drink Question." The lecture was followed by an animated discussion. There were several opposition speakers, and they were answered collectively; Mr. Foote's reply evoking great enthusiasm as well as a lot of laughter. Mr. Schaller acted as chairman.

Easter Sunday is not one of the best for London meetings, but there were reasons against breaking the continuity of the present course of Sunday evening lectures at Queen's Hall. Mr. Foote, therefore, occupies the platform again this evening (April 19), and his subject is the seasonable one of "The True Meaning of Easter." His object will be to show that the New Testament story of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is not at all historical, but entirely legendary and mythological. A lecture of this kind is extremely well calculated to set Christians thinking, and the

"saints" should try to induce some of their more orthodox friends or acquaintances to attend.

London "saints" will please note that Mr. Foote's lecture this evening (Easter Sunday) will commence at 7.15 instead of 7.30. This will enable him to return home by the last train. It is a matter of some importance to him to do so this once, instead of stopping in London, and it is hoped that the slight change (on this one occasion) will not make any serious difference to any members of his audience.

Mr. Cohen has just issued another penny pamphlet on *Christianity and Social Ethics*. It is very ably written, and it deals with a question of present-day interest. We hope it will have a wide circulation.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will be held on Whit-Sunday in the Secular Hall, Manchester. Branch secretaries, and members generally, will please note that all notices for the Conference Agenda must be in the hands of the General Secretary—Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.—by May 15 at the latest.

We hope there will be a strong representation at the Manchester Conference. The position is convenient for the North of England and the Midlands, and it should be possible for delegates from Scotland to attend—especially Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The April number of the *Humane Review* (quarterly) is an interesting one. It opens with a striking article by M. Little on "The Beast of Prey—Viewed from an Aesthetic Standpoint." Carl Heath writes on "The Law on its Trial." There is a long and able article by E. J. Hunt on "Humanitarianism and Food Reform." The gem of the number is an anonymous article on "Bernard Shaw as Humanitarian." It is written with great force and verve, and draws attention to aspects of Mr. Shaw's character which the general public is most likely to overlook. The other articles are "Cruel Sports," by the Rev. J. Stratton; "James Thomson" (the eighteenth century poet), by Howard Williams; and "The Sermon on the Mount (According to Scotland Yard)," by H. J. B. Montgomery. This last article is a pungent reply to Sir Robert Anderson. We may add that the *Humane Review*, which is beautifully printed, is published at only a shilling—by Ernest Bell.

The sphere of earth is known enough to me;  
The view beyond is barred immutably:  
A fool, who there his blinking eyes directeth,  
And o'er his clouds of peers a place expecteth!  
Firm let him stand, and look around him well!  
This World means something to the Capable.  
Why needs he through Eternity to wend?  
He here acquires what he can apprehend.  
Thus let him wander down his carthy day;  
When spirits haunt, go quietly his way;  
In marching onwards, bliss and torment find,  
Though, every moment, with unsated mind.

—Goethe.

### THE JUDGMENT OF JESUS.

Since thou hast quickened what thou canst not kill,  
Awakened famine thou canst never still,  
Spoken in madness, prophesied in vain,  
And prophesied what no thing of clay shall gain,  
Thou shalt abide while all things ebb and flow,  
Wake while the weary sleep, wait while they go,  
And, treading paths no human feet have trod,  
Search on still vainly for thy Father, God;  
Thy blessing shall pursue thee as a curse  
To haunt thee, homeless, through the universe.  
No hand shall slay thee, for no hand shall dare  
To strike the Godhead, Death itself must spare!  
With all the woes of earth upon thy head,  
Uplift thy cross, and go! Thy doom is said.

—Robert Buchanan.

### REVELATION.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication—after this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; for it was not a revelation made to me, and I have only his word for it that it was made to him.—Thomas Paine.

### The Sayings of Jesus.—III.

(Continued from p. 236.)

THE next matter to be investigated is the identity of the earliest known Christian sects—including that to which the apostolic party belonged—the Ebionites and Nazarenes. The first point to be noticed is that the members of both sects were Jews who still conformed (save upon one point) to the Mosaic ritual. And such being the case, we naturally look for some account of them from Josephus, who gives a long and detailed history of his nation up to the year A.D. 70. That historian, however, never once mentions them. He tells us that in his days there were three religious sects amongst the Jews—Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes—and describes the last-named at great length (Wars ii., viii.; Antiquities xviii., i., 5). From this description it soon becomes evident that the primitive Jewish Christians were no other than those whom he calls Essenes. Remarkable it is, too, that the latter name is not found anywhere in Talmudic literature, and that we never hear of the sect after the end of the first century. Did its members about that time take the name of Nazarenes? It is also remarkable that neither the writer of the Pauline Epistles nor the Jewish author of the Book of Revelation mentions the name by which the followers of Jesus were known in his time. They address their fellow Christians as brethren, disciples, believers, and saints; never as Christians. The latter appellation does not appear to have come into use until after the time of Paul, Josephus, and the author of the Revelation.

Of the numerous points of analogy which, collectively, prove the primitive Christians to have been identical with the Essenes, the following may be cited as in themselves conclusive. The comparison must, of course, be made with the most ancient and Jewish portions of the Christian writings, which, in the New Testament, comprise the Epistle of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Book of Revelation, the Sermon on the Mount, and a few scattered passages in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. The statements made by Josephus respecting the doctrines and practices of the Essenes I have given first—and in italics—so that those relating to the Christians, which follow, can easily be compared with them. The passages indicated in the New Testament should be turned to, and read.

1. *“And the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have.”*

Primitive Gospel: “Jesus saith unto them [the disciples], Never be joyful except when ye shall look on your brother in love.”

Aristides (A.D. 140): “The Christians live honestly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. . . . And they walk in all humility and kindness. . . . and they love one another.”

(See Heb. xiii. 1-3; James iv. 11; v. 9, 16; John xiii. 35; Eph. iv. 32.)

2. *“These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil; but esteem continence and the conquest over their passions to be virtue.”*

Aristides says of the Christians: “These men abstain from all unlawful wedlock and from all impurity, in the hope of the recompense that is to come in another world.”

Justin (A.D. 150) says of his fellow Christians: “We, who heretofore gave ourselves a loose to women, now strictly contain ourselves within the bounds of chastity.”

(See James i. 27; iv. 4; Matt. v. 28; 1 John ii. 15.)

3. *“They neglect wedlock. . . . they do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage. . . . but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women. . . . Moreover, there is another order of Essenes, who agree with the rest as to their way of living and customs and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage.”*

Primitive Gospel: “The Lord saith to Salome: Death shall prevail as long as women bring forth children. . . . I am come to destroy the works of the woman, that is, the works of female concupiscence, generation, and corruption. When you despise a covering for your nakedness, and when two shall be one, and the male with the female neither male nor female —” (The latter part of this saying is quoted in another early Christian writing.)

Second Epistle of Clement: “This therefore is what he saith: Keep your flesh pure and your seal unspotted, that ye may receive eternal life.”

Justin says of the Christians of his day: “There are now many of both sexes who have from their childhood been disciplined unto Christ, and lived in a constant course of spotless virginity to sixty or seventy years.”

(See Matt. xix. 12; Rev. xiv. 4-5; 1 Cor. vii. 27-40.)

4. *“These men are despisers of riches”—“For they alone of all men, having been originally poor and destitute. . . . are nevertheless accounted very rich, judging contentment and frugality to be great abundance.”* (Here the Ebionites are as good as named.)

Revelation ii. 9: “I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich),” etc.

James ii. 5: “Hearken, my beloved brethren: Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom,” etc.

(See James v. 1-3; Matt. vi. 19; xix. 21-24; Luke vi. 20, 21, 24, 25.)

5. *“Nor is any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order. . . . so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way.”*

Justin says of the Christians: “We, who loved nothing like our possessions, now produce all we have in common, and spread our whole stock before our indigent brethren.”

(See this regulation described in Acts iv. 32-35.)

6. *“They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and. . . . to get their corn and their food ready for them.”*

Acts vi. 2-5: The apostles “said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report. . . . whom we may appoint over the business,” etc.

7. *“They have no certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own. . . . For which reason they carry nothing with them when they travel. . . . Nor do they allow of the change of garments or of shoes till they be worn out. Nor do they either buy or sell anything to one another; but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it.”*

Justin says of the Christians: “But the wealthy and the willing contribute as they think fitting. . . . and out of this the bishop relieves the orphan and the widow, and such as are reduced to want by sickness or any other cause, and such as are in bonds, and strangers that come from far.”

(See Matt. x. 5-10; v. 42; Acts xi. 29-30.)

8. *“They think it a good thing to be clothed in white garments.”*

Rev. iv. 4: “And upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments.”

Rev. iii. 4, 5: “And they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments.”

Rev. vi. 11: “And there was given them to each one a white robe.”

9. *“They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passions. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace.”*

James i. 19: “But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath,” etc.

(See also James iii. 11-18; iv. 11; Eph. iv. 26, 31; Matt. v. 9, 22, 39, 44.)

10. "Whatever they say, also, is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them.....for they say that he who cannot be believed without an oath is already condemned."

James v. 12: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment."

(This statement, very much amplified, is placed in the mouth of Jesus in Matt. v. 34-37.)

11. "They condemn the miseries of life.....And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living.....and resign up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again."

Rev. ii. 10: "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.....Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

(See Matt. v. 10-12; Justin 2 Apol. 12; Clement of Alexandria Strom. iv. 8)

12. "Their doctrine is this: that the body is corruptible, and that the matter it is made of is not permanent; but that the soul is immortal, and continues forever."

(See Rev. vi. 9-11; xx. 4; James v. 20; Matt. x. 28; Luke xvi. 23; 1 Cor. xv.)

13. "And when they send what they have dedicated to God unto the temple, they do not offer sacrifices."

(See Heb. x. 1-4; ix. 11-15; Matt. v. 23-24; ix. 13, etc.)

14. "They preserve the books belonging to the sect, and the names of the angels" (i.e., ministers or teachers.)

Matt. x. 2-4: "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these," etc.

Rev. ii. 1, 8, 12, etc.: "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write.....And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write.....And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write," etc. The most important of the books "belonging to the sect" was the collection of ethical precepts and rules of conduct drawn up for the observance of the members of the order, which, at a later day, were all ascribed to Jesus, and became known as the Sermon on the Mount.

There are many other points of analogy which I have not noticed, though one of them—the constant study of the Hebrew scriptures—I shall have to refer to later on. There can be little doubt that the author of the Book of Revelation belonged to the stricter order of Essenes who regarded all sexual intercourse, wedded or unwedded, as "an abomination" (Rev. xix. 1, 4, 5; xxi. 27; xxii. 15); while the majority of the Nazarenes, including the apostolic party, were of the second order who, if it pleased them, took wives on approval, and if they liked them married them (1 Cor. ix. 5; Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20; iii. 4).

The comparison here made is, of course, only between the historical Essenes and the primitive Jewish Christians—the Ebionites and Nazarenes. The Gentile form of Christianity—which we find widely established from the time of Irenæus downwards—was a totally new religion whose founder, Paul, was regarded by the Nazarenes as an interloper and "an apostate from the law."

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

## Christianity and Blasphemy.—I.

A Lecture to the South-Place Ethical Society on Sunday morning, March 15, 1908.

BY HERBERT BURROWS.

IN view of the recent prosecution and conviction for blasphemy, so-called, it is quite natural that from this platform your thoughts should be directed to that prosecution, and to the exceedingly important consequences which are inseparably connected with it. South-place has always been the home, not of

lost causes—for the truth is never lost—but of unorthodox causes. If, for instance, Moncure Conway's long ministry here could be summed up in a phrase, it might be said that he stood for the truth of heresy, for the belief of unbelief—the heresy that is which strips away the man-made theological shrouds which stifle the truth within, the belief which finds behind the negations of unbelief that positive reason which, intelligently used, is the only basis for the wise and rational conduct of life.

For there are two heresies and two unbeliefs—the negative and the positive—and both are necessary. In any really rational life the one is the natural outcome of the other. Negation in itself affords no basis whatever for any satisfactory form of life, physical, mental, or moral. The self-styled Freethinker, for instance, who does nothing more than negate, deny, and disbelieve, is no real Freethinker at all. Negation, denial, and disbelief are, or should be, but the mere first steps in rational existence. Negation and denial supply no bond; taken alone, they are but intellectual anarchy; and on anarchy, as such, no real and lasting life was ever built up. The only real basis for such a life is co-ordination; and co-ordination implies always a construction. The opposite to that is the dilettante Agnosticism which, in some quarters, is so fashionable, probably because the minds which profess it are too feeble to bear stronger meat—the Agnosticism which takes a foolish pride in saying "I don't know," because behind it there is not enough strength of brain to make any reasoned search, and which is content to remain in ignorance because to attempt to arrive at knowledge would mean trouble and mental work. For such Agnosticism as that—and there is much of it about—all healthy-minded men have nothing but contempt. In face of the great problems of the universe, of life and thought, all of us who think must be largely Agnostic—Herbert Spencer's "unknowable" is always so. The mistake lies in making our own little circle of unknowableness, and always being afraid of looking, even with one mental eye, over our own circumference. That is the worst use we can make of our negative heresy, our negative unbelief. The positive use of heresy and unbelief begins just where the negative side of it ends—begins when we have cleared the ground of our mind from the old rotten mental bricks—begins with our first reasoned attempt to construct a rational life on new foundations. This is co-ordination. It is the deliberate reasoned attempt to discover what we really are, not so much from whence we came as the effort to foresee whither our life-work is likely to take us, to discover what are our real relations with our fellow-men, and how best we can work together with them for the common good. In all this, if rightly regarded, there is as much, if not more, heresy and unbelief as in negative Agnosticism and denial. But it is of an entirely different kind. It is simply the recognition of the law of progress in life, the realisation of the fact that progress is necessarily fluid and ever-changing—that the standpoint of to-day is never the exact standpoint of to-morrow; that the knowledge of to-day may probably become the heresy and unbelief of to-morrow; but only in this sense: because more knowledge has been attained. So that what I have called positive heresy and positive unbelief is simply the advance of knowledge, the progress mentally from strength to strength; and that means the mental capability and the mental fearlessness which will enable us to reconstruct daily, if need be, our reasoned life if real occasion should arise. In Free-thought there is just as much need to say boldly, "Light, more light," as there is in orthodoxy. On the whole, perhaps, the stagnant Freethinker is in worse case than the stagnant believer, because with him there is apt to be more rigidity. Where there is friction, mental or otherwise, there is always movement.

In our mental friction we must always blaspheme. The word "blasphemy" will have to be rescued from its base use. We have allowed orthodox people to make it their exclusive property and to give to it the

meaning of excessive wickedness. I had not the opportunity, a fortnight ago, of hearing Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner lecture here on the Heresy Laws. I believe she dealt with their history, and it is therefore possible that to-day I may be repeating, in some measure, something of what she said, because I shall also have to deal with them a little technically.

In law (and of course I speak only as an amateur lawyer, and therefore liable to mistakes) we must draw a distinction between heresy and blasphemy. In early days heresy was described among canonists, in vague and general terms, as consisting of any deviation from the true Catholic faith as understood by Holy Mother Church; and, as we well know, Holy Mother Church always interpreted this in the most brutal and bloodthirsty way. The constitution of the Emperor Frederic—of course, at the instigation of Holy Mother Church—adjudged all persons without distinction to be burned by fire who were convicted of heresy by the ecclesiastical judge. That is one reason why centuries after many of us plead for Secular Education in our State schools, because we know what happened in the past from allowing the priest to meddle in civil affairs. And in another constitution the Emperor ordained that if any temporal lord, when admonished by the Church, should neglect to clear his territories of heretics within a year, it should be lawful for good Catholics to seize and occupy the lands, and utterly to exterminate the heretical possessors. In the nature of all things, even of persecution, there seems to be a sense of eternal fitness, for under this very constitution the Pope afterwards expelled this very Emperor Frederic from his kingdom of Sicily and gave it to Charles of Anjou.

Out of this grew the claim of the Church to exercise supreme authority in civil matters—practically the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to-day. It should be ever burnt in on our minds that what this means is ever and always persecution—persecution of the heretic and of all who do not bow the knee to ecclesiasticism. As Stephen says in his Commentaries (from which I quote), Christianity was thus deformed by the demon of persecution.

During the Reformation, Henry VIII. declared that offences against the see of Rome were not heresy, but thereupon proceeded to set up the bloodthirsty law of the Six Articles, consisting of six points—transubstantiation, communion in one kind—celibacy of the clergy—monastic vows—the sacrifice of the mass, and auricular confession—to deny the first of which was to be a heretic and be burned with fire; and, as regards the last five, to be felons and suffer death. Elizabeth, in the first year of her reign, abolished all this, and heresy was then visited by spiritual punishments in the ecclesiastical courts, but her statute for the first time actually defined and set bounds to heresy, nothing for the future being so determined but such tenets which had been heretofore so declared by the words of the Canonical Scriptures, by the first four general church councils, or such others as have only used the words of holy Scripture, or which shall hereafter be so declared by Parliament with the assent of the clergy in convocation—a fairly wide latitude and broad margin. It rested with that most moral, pious, and God-fearing monarch, Charles II., at last, to subject heresy only to ecclesiastical correction—*pro salute animæ*—for the health of the soul, of which he was, of course, exceedingly careful. Then came the Act 9 and 10 W. III., c. 32, of which I shall have more to say in a minute or two, and which, although obsolete in the sense that its provisions have never been put in force, is practically the fountain-head of the law of blasphemy at the present moment. So that, bit by bit, heresy has slid into blasphemy, the ostensible idea being, or pretending to be, rather (to quote Stephen again) the preservation of good order and decency in civil society than the maintenance of orthodoxy. That is to-day the crux of the question, and it is around that view of it that the conflict turns.

Now I maintain that philologically there is, and practically there ought to be, another meaning to

blasphemy, which should be insisted on by Rationalists and Freethinkers—"to find fault with"; and in good dictionaries we shall find that meaning—overlaid, it is true, by numberless orthodox interpretations, mostly founded on texts from the Old and New Testaments. Thus we get what is termed the ordinary meaning: "To utter profane language against God, or against anything sacred, by word of mouth to arrogate his prerogatives, or grossly to disobey his commands"—a very wide net indeed. In the second place, this idea is transferred from God to the king. "To utter injurious, highly insulting, calumnious or slanderous language against a person in high authority, especially against a king, who may be looked on (and here comes the orthodox trail) as in certain respects the vice-regent of God." These, as I say, are dictionary definitions of blasphemy, but they are based and founded on Christian orthodoxy. Both of them I reject; the first, to find fault with, I accept. For, as I said, all thought and all progress depends on finding fault with our former mental attitude—the giving up the imperfect thought of yesterday because it is found inadequate for the development of our real life, and the reaching out to the thought of to-morrow because in that we hope to find surer ground for our mental evolution.

But this real meaning is not yet, and it will never be till religion, as such, is definitely declared by the nation at large to be entirely the private matter of individual citizens, with which the State, as such, the community collectively, has nothing whatever to do.

For it must be remembered that the real ground of all blasphemy prosecutions is that as laid down in the Court of Common Pleas as long ago as the reign of Henry VI. Christian religion is part of the law of England, and, that so, apart from heresy, another species of offences against God and religion (again to quote Stephen) is that of blasphemy against the Almighty by denying his being or providence, or by contumelious reproaches of the Lord and Savior Christ; whither also may be referred all profane scoffing at the Holy Scripture, or exposing it to contempt and ridicule. If the latter part of this were really meant to be carried out, most of the members of the present House of Commons ought now to be in jail. Last Friday week I was in the House listening to the debate on the Woman Suffrage Bill, and several times the Bible was quoted by various speakers in really quite a pertinent way. Whenever it was mentioned the whole House simply rocked with scoffing laughter. There were no bishops in the gallery; if there had been they certainly ought to have gone straight to the court and laid information for blasphemy against the Commons House of Parliament. But of course they would no more do that than the Archbishop of Canterbury, if he were dining with Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, would inform against him if Charles rapped out an oath, although, under the articles of war for the government of the Navy, any person in the Navy who shall be guilty of profane swearing shall be dismissed from the service with disgrace, or suffer other punishment prescribed by the Act. I have never heard of an admiral being dismissed in this way, although I believe the Navy is not generally considered to be the most godly service in the world.

The fact is, of course, that blasphemy and kindred laws are not made for members of Parliament and admirals. They are meant for the common people, who must be kept under and taught to submit to their spiritual pastors and masters. As of old, so now; the authorities in Church and State know full well that in the long run he who questions the divine right of priests is more than likely to question the divine right of kings, and *vice versa*.

This brings me directly to the recent blasphemy prosecution. Before I proceed to comment on it, and to attempt to draw some lessons from it, it is necessary that I should give you its actual facts, even at the risk of repeating what perhaps Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner may have done a fortnight ago.

A speaker named Harry Boulter—of whom I know nothing for I have never seen him—a tailor's cutter, a member of the British Secular League, of which I also know nothing, was in the habit of lecturing against Christianity at Highbury Corner (not far from my house) on Sundays. In the course of time attention was drawn to his lectures, and that highly-moral journal, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had some prominent articles calling for his suppression and for police interference. A police officer was sent on several Sundays to take shorthand notes, and on his report a warrant for blasphemy was obtained against Boulter. He was tried before Mr. Justice Phillimore, defended by Mr. Atherley-Jones (son of Ernest Jones, the great Chartist), convicted, bound over in £50, and released on giving an undertaking as follows:—

[Mr. Burrows here read the text of the undertaking given by Mr. Boulter.]

These are the bald actual facts of the case. Mr. Boulter was not a member of the N. S. S., but the case was taken up by that Society with Mr. Foote, its President, at the front, who fought with his usual ability right up to the last. When, however, the decisive moment came for Mr. Boulter, having risked the prosecution, to make up his mind as to whether he should give his undertaking not to repeat the legal offence or go to prison, Mr. Foote quite rightly, as I think, stood on one side and left that decision entirely to Mr. Boulter himself. It was a matter solely for him. Mr. Foote and the N. S. S., one of whose missions it is to wage deadly war against all blasphemy prosecutions, were bound to take the case up, but there came a last point at which no other person than the prosecuted man could act. On Mr. Boulter's action at that last point I personally make no comment.

I have here a copy of the policeman's shorthand report of the language used by Mr. Boulter, and it is necessary for my purpose that I should read to you some, at any rate, of it. I warn you, however, that perhaps even the most advanced ethical members who are here may be shocked by it.

[Mr. Burrows here read passages for which Mr. Boulter was indicted, and which have already appeared in this journal.]

That language, as far as I know, was not denied by the defence. There are two things to say of it. First, that it is torn from its context, which is always a most unfair thing to do with any speech, as all public speakers know. Next, that, from my point of view, it is vulgar, uneducated, uncultured, repelling, and useless, for instead of being likely to achieve, what I take was its object—the turning people away from Christianity, it was much more likely to produce a revulsion of feeling in the minds of any thoughtful Christians who might have been induced, on hearing real argument, to reconsider their orthodox position. I believe that such language does more harm to real and genuine Freethought than it does to Christianity.

But—and this is the real point—all that is, in this, as it has been in similar prosecutions, entirely beside the mark. Harry Boulter was not prosecuted for vulgarity, want of education or culture, nor for indecency, foul language, or obscenity. He was prosecuted for so-called blasphemy. The police applied for the warrant solely for blasphemy, and in the indictment there was not a single word about obscenity or indecency.

(To be concluded.)

### Max Nordau on the Bible.

Owing to the force of habit we go regularly to the church, bow reverently to the minister, and take up our Bible with solemnity; we assume mechanically an expression of awe and inward reflection when we are taking part in a church service, and we avoid any exact comparison of its outward observances with our convictions, taking especial pains to close our eyes and minds to the disgraceful treason which we are committing by these acts against all our knowledge

and convictions, and everything that we recognise and cling to as truth.

Historical investigations have revealed to us the origin and growth of the Bible; we know that by this name we designate a collection of writings as radically unlike in origin, character, and contents as if the *Nibelungen Lied*, Mirabeau's speeches, Heine's love poems, and a manual of zoology had been printed and mixed up promiscuously and then bound in one volume. We find collected in this book the superstitious beliefs of the ancient inhabitants of Palestine, with indistinct echoes of Indian and Persian fables, mistaken imitations of Egyptian theories and customs, historical chronicles as dry as they are unreliable, and miscellaneous poems, amatory, human, and Jewish-national, which are rarely distinguished by beauties of the highest order, but frequently by superfluity of expression, coarseness, bad taste, and genuine Oriental sensuality.

As a literary monument the Bible is of much later origin than the Vedas; as a work of literary value it is surpassed by everything written in the last two thousand years by authors of the second rank, and to compare it seriously with the productions of Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, or Goethe would require a fanaticised mind that had entirely lost its power of judgment. Its conception of the universe is childish, and its morality revolting, as revealed in the malicious vengeance attributed to God in the Old Testament and in the New, the parable of the laborers of the eleventh hour, and the episodes of Mary Magdalen and the woman taken in adultery.

And yet men, cultivated and capable of forming a just estimate, pretend to reverence this ancient work; they refuse to allow it to be discussed and criticised like any other production of the human intellect; they found societies and place enormous sums at their disposal to print millions of copies of it, which they distribute all over the world, and pretend to be edified and inspired when they read it.

—Conventional Lies of Our Civilisation.

### THE FAIRY TALES OF RELIGION.

To the school children of the near future, in spite of all the priests of Christendom, Hell will have vanished and Heaven will have become a mere name. The "true" cross will survive no more than the "real" ark. The Garden of Eden will have gone and the Garden of Gethsamene will have vanished with it. Jacob, with his ladder, will be no more credible than Jack with his beanstalk. Jonah will swagger arm-in-arm with Sinbad the sailor. Daniel will exchange yarns with Baron Munchausen; and little Moses in his bulrushes will gurgle a welcome to the Babes in the Wood. The menagerie of the Apocalypse will be classed with the genii of the *Arabian Nights*. Bald-headed Elisha, with his bears, will romp with little Red Riding Hood and her wolf; and the New Jerusalem, with its jewelled streets and its many mansions, will be associated with the House that Jack Built.

### HOW THE BISHOPS FOLLOW JESUS.

The spiritual lords almost invariably voted against useful measures of reform. They voted against the Bill to abolish the death penalty for stealing from shops property of the value of five shillings. They fiercely opposed the Reform Bills. The Roman Catholic Disabilities Bill and the Jewish Disabilities Repeal Bill, both met with their determined opposition. The right reverend fathers in God bitterly resisted the motion for the admission of Nonconformists to the Universities, and also the Bill to permit in churchyards funeral services other than that of the Church of England. In fighting the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, they displayed the noble firmness of the mule. The "Established" Church, be it remembered, is far less intolerant than the Catholic Church, and, intellectually, miles above any Nonconformist body. The above examples of Christian ethics in practice show that even a tolerant and educated priesthood is as hostile to all progressive impulses as the hindmost of the reactionaries.

### PRAYER.

When the giants of social force are advancing from the sombre shadow of the past, with the thunder and the hurricane in their hands, our poor prayers are of no more avail than the unbodied visions of a dream.—*Rt. Hon. John Morley.*

I do not say that a God does not exist, neither do I say that a God does exist; but I say that I do not know—that there can be no evidence to my mind of the existence of such a being, and that my mind is so that it is incapable of even thinking of an infinite personality.—*Ingersoll.*

**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.): 7.15, G. W. Foote, "The True Meaning of Easter."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, A. Allison, "Christ is Risen?" Selections by the Band before lecture.

**OUTDOOR.**

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Christ the Disciple of His Interpreters." Brockwell Park, 3.15, Guy A. Aldred, "Phases of Religious Doubt"; 6.15, "The Program of 'The Religious Life.'"

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

**COUNTRY.**

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): 3, A. Paul, "The Triumph of Monism."

**OUTDOOR.**

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3.30, meets for Discussion; The Mound, 7, a Lecture.

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