

# THE Freethinker

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No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought. The old opinions in religion, morals, and politics, are so much discredited in the more intellectual minds as to have lost the greater part of their efficacy for good, while they have still life enough in them to be a powerful obstacle to the growing up of any better opinions on those subjects.

—J. S. MILL.

## The John Davidson Scandal.

THE religious outrage perpetrated at the burials of Swinburne and Meredith has been repeated at the burial of John Davidson. Not even great Free-thinkers are safe against their nearest relations. There seems to be no sense of honor left in such matters. The clergy, on their side, join in the dishonorable game, and act just like the undertakers, who bury Christians, Jews, and Atheists at the same price.

John Davidson, the poet, disappeared from his Cornish home some six months ago. Circumstances pointed to his having committed suicide. Whatever he did he did it very deliberately. He covered up his traces so effectually that the most painful search was absolutely in vain. Months passed by, and it was concluded that nothing more would ever be heard of him, when his dead body was found floating off the coast. It was brought ashore, and after the inquest the family decided to bury it at sea, as Davidson had expressed a preference for such a burial. Naturally the superstitious natives were opposed to such a proceeding. They made all the fuss they could, and even appealed to the Home Secretary, but the Davidson family had their way at last, and the coffin was taken out ten miles, where it was sunk with weights inside to keep it at the bottom. Whether the body will stop there, however, remains to be seen. We have an idea that it will be in evidence again.

According to the newspaper reports the Davidson family had intended to bury the body without any religious ceremony, but they seem to have been frightened by the display of religious bigotry around them, and they were persuaded to take a parson on the steamer with them. The reverend gentleman appears to have done his work *con amore*. He read the Church burial service most "impressively," and added "an eloquent tribute" of his own to "the deceased poet's life-work." Which looks benevolent, but really makes the matter worse.

The Rev. J. S. Fagan, vicar of Newlyn, if he knew enough of John Davidson's work to pay it a personal tribute, must have been aware that he denied God and a Future Life. Yet he buried the sceptical poet's dead body in the name of God, and in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.

Now if this is not an outrage we should like to know what is. Davidson's scepticism was not a fact of private information. He had published his unbelief from the housetops. It was in black on white against him (or for him—whichever way you look at it) in five or six volumes of verse and several prose prefaces. There was *The Testament of John Davidson*,

for instance, published in 1908, in which the following passage occurs:—

"God and Gods  
Are man's mistake: no brain exists  
Behind the galaxies, above them or beneath;  
No thought inhabiteth eternity,  
No reason, no intelligence at all  
Till conscious life begins. The ouphs and elves,  
The satyrs, centaurs, goblins, gnomes and trolls,  
The ancient lands of faery and romance,  
Infernal and supernal domiciles,  
The dreadful dwellers there, and wonderful  
Cosmogony of Other World (perverse  
Reflexions of his unenlightened mind  
Upon the mirror of eternity,  
And on the mirrors of the sun and moon,  
The stars, the flowers, the sea, the woods, the wilds)  
With immaterial nothings deceived mankind,  
Even as his shadow on the darksome way  
Looms like a ghost and daunts the pilgrim still."

Some people read poetry as if it were hieroglyphics. We will therefore turn to the long Dedication to the *Testament*. Addressing the Irish in it, he offers them certain advice, and winds up with this:—

"And hark, sirs! a last word: Get rid of your priests;  
be done with Other World."

Davidson challenged and attacked the doctrine of the Other World. He did not say it was Not Proven, he said it was False. Here is another extract from the same Dedication:—

"There is no Other World; there never was anything that man has meant by Other World; neither spirit, nor mystical behind-the-veil; nothing not-ourselves that makes for righteousness, no metaphysical abstraction. Time is a juggler's trick of the sun and moon. There is only matter, which is the infinite, which is space, which is eternity, which we are."

Surely that is plain enough even for a Church clergyman.

In the prose Dedication to *The Theatrocrat*, which we reviewed at considerable length in August, 1907, Davidson wrote:—

"There is nothing anywhere higher than man; there can be nothing higher than the Universe become self-conscious. In his uninstructed time man called the Ether which permeates him, which is his ecstasy, God and gods: 'Out of God he came,' he thought; 'and back to God he should return'; or he called it Nirvana and an infinite peace. Imagination is the radiation of the omnipotent Ether. Only the whole Universe become conscious could have imagined God the Creator. Now man knows that there is no God; that nothing was made; that all is a becoming; that he is the Ether, condensed, evolved; and that he will devolve again into that invisible, imponderable form of Matter."

And again:—

"Man is Matter; mind and soul are material forces; there is no spiritual world as distinct from the material world; all psychological phenomena are material phenomena, the result of the operation of material forces."

Davidson objected to the term "Atheist," not because he had any doubt in his mind, but for two positive reasons; first, he said, you "cannot disbelieve in what is not," and, second, "Atheist" was, like "infidel" and "infidelity," a term of malignant reproach. On this point we ventured to criticise him, and he replied in a friendly letter, which we published (and answered) on September 23. In that letter he described the belief in God as "the most baleful delusion on record." It had to be left behind,

and everything connected with it. On this point Davidson said:—

"I think the time has come for Freethinkers to rise above theism and atheism, to come out of it altogether. There is the word, Man, a virgin word, a zero. Let us call ourselves Men, and begin all things over again as if the world had never dreamt of a drunken deity."

Was it not an outrage—a blasphemous outrage—to mouth over John Davidson's dead body the shibboleths of a creed he despised? The proverb says there is honor among thieves. Ought there not to be honor among clergymen?

We desire to thank the writer of the notice of John Davidson in last week's *Athenæum*. He did not conceal, or apologise for, the poet's Freethought:—

"His beliefs stated with an outrageous emphasis which drew on him the accusation of blasphemy, yet won by their sincerity and force the recognition of those who differed from him *toto crbo* in the literal sense of the phrase. The writer who 'turns Christian for an hour,' or conceals under a skilful and timorous irony the half-beliefs of the present age, plays a more popular and much more successful part than John Davidson, but he has lost the savor of that independence which used to be a common feature of English life in many departments. 'We poor, proud men,' he wrote to a friend, 'are now the only aristocrats'; and there are still some who think the pride of such men worth more than the pliancy of the successful—men often incapable alike of æsthetic creation and scientific deduction."

The *Athenæum* writer, who must have known Davidson personally, spoke well of him as a man:—

"Living largely the simple life (which fashionable writers are apt to extol with an imagination untainted by experience), he could not be said to be a soured man. He enjoyed his occasional luxury of a cab or a cigar; he was gay in congenial company; he found much to see in walks which, like Hazlitt, he preferred to take alone; he even enjoyed London fogs, which, oddly enough, relieved his asthma. His removal from London to Cornwall was a banishment from intellectual pleasures enforced by health."

Since the disappearance of John Davidson on the evening of March 23 his publisher has issued another volume of his verse, entitled *Fleet Street: and Other Poems*. The Introduction, signed J. D., is like a voice from the grave. It consists of extracts from notes found in his desk. The first is this:—

"The time has come to make an end. There are several motives. I find my pension is not enough; I have therefore still to turn aside and attempt things for which people will pay. My health also counts. Asthma and other annoyances I have tolerated for years; but I cannot put up with cancer."

There is little room for doubt that John Davidson committed suicide. We accept the fact—as he did.

The second note is more to our present purpose. Davidson intended the volume to include five poems under the general title of "When God Meant God," but he only wrote one of them. The volume was also to contain another *Testament*:—

"I should have concluded the volume with a second Testament in my own person, insisting that men should no longer degrade themselves under such appellations as Christian, Mohammedan, Agnostic, Monist, etc. Men are the Universe become conscious; the simplest man should consider himself too great to be called after any name."

John Davidson was thus sceptical to the very end.

It seems to us probable that Davidson upset himself by attempting a task that was too great for his powers. He was a true poet, but he lacked the high constructive power which we see in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, for instance,—not to mention earlier masterpieces of epic and lyric art. Neither by dramas nor by "Testaments" could he succeed in setting forth in a satisfying form the ideas of man and the universe which were struggling within him for expression. There was a tragedy in this, to which the tragedy of his suicide is slight and trivial. He must have felt a sense of unfulfilment. Nevertheless, he stood up bravely against an adverse fate, and he lived and wrought long enough to win a worthy place in English literature.

G. W. FOOTE.

## The Nature of Religion.—V.

(Continued from p. 619.)

THE gods are deified ghosts; the ghosts are born of misinterpreted subjective and objective experiences. These are amongst the surest and best established results of modern anthropology. It matters not even though an independent origin be claimed for animism. We have simply to restate substantially the same truth in terms of human error. And in face of this result all the ingenuities of modern apologetics, all the labored justifications of a belief in God, the appeal to universality, to causation, to design, to the needs of our moral nature, all are so many beatings of the air. For every scientific study of religion leads us to the result described in the preceding articles. We may trace the various stages of a universal delusion, but nothing can remove the truth that all religion rests on a demonstrable basis of error, and consists fundamentally of conclusions drawn from admittedly false premises. No one now really believes that the visions seen during sleep are evidences of the existence of a soul or double. No one now believes that elaborate precautions need to be taken to supply the ghost of the dead with food, with weapons, with wives, with attendants. We do not believe that the wind, the stars, the sun, the river, are living things capable of being influenced by our offerings or our petitions. All the phenomena upon which religious beliefs and practices are based are now all believed to be capable of a radically different explanation. And this being so, what genuine foundation have we on which to build religious belief? The answer is, None at all. Yet while we discard the premises upon which the whole edifice of religion has been erected, we continue to prate of religion as though it was one of the most certain of truths.

Human vagary in this direction leads to some curious results. Mr. Edward Clodd, for example, who belongs to a class of writers that is curiously anxious to find some justification for religious belief, says in his little book, *Animism*, after tracing the whole structure of religion to primitive delusion—

"Herein [*i.e.*, in dreams and visions] are to be found the sufficing materials for a belief in an entity *in the body*, but not of it, which can depart and return at will, and which man everywhere has more or less vaguely envisaged as his 'double' or 'other self'..... The distinction between soul and body, which explained to man his own actions, was the key to the actions of animate and inanimate things. A personal life and will controlled them. This was obviously brought home to him more forcibly in the actions of living things, since these so closely resembled his own that he saw no difference between themselves and him. *Not in this matter alone have the intuitions of the savage found their confirmation in the discoveries of modern science..... Ignorant of the law of reflection of sound, how else could he account for the echoes flung back from the hillside? Ignorant of the law of the interruption of light, how else could he explain the advancing and retreating shadows? In some sense they must be alive; an inference supported by modern physics.*"

The italics in the above quotation are mine, and they emphasise the manner in which certain writers succeed in being impartial on the wrong side. It almost causes one to cease wondering at the persistence of religion to find writers accepting the results of anthropological research on the one hand, and on the other claiming that savage beliefs are confirmed by modern science. If the last statement be true, all that Mr. Clodd has said about the origin of religion in delusion is waste of time. Fault may still be found with the form taken by primitive religious beliefs, but this is surely a trifling matter if their "intuitions" have been confirmed by modern science, and if the world is alive, as the savage pictured it. Neither statement, however, is true; both are palpably false. Modern science has not confirmed the savage speculations on any religious subject, nor on very few concerning the visible and

tangible universe. Neither on the existence of a soul, on the nature and being of the after life, the nature of disease, nor on the causes of physical and psychical states has science confirmed the "intuitions" (whatever may be meant by that conveniently cloudy word) of the primitive savage. The acquisition of correct views would indeed be a simple thing if it could be gained by the "intuition" of an untaught savage.

The statement that in some sense natural forces must be alive, and that this is "an inference supported by modern physics," is an example of that playing with words which is the bane of exact and useful thinking. Modern physics does not say that forces are alive; indeed, its calculations are all based upon the exactly opposite assumption. The only sense in which the word "alive" is used in this connection is that of active, and both "active" and "alive" owe their vogue to the necessity of controverting the older view that natural forces are "inert" or "dead." As used in physics, "alive" is no more than a figure of speech; the evil is when men take this figure and use it as an exact expression of scientific fact. From avowedly religious people one expects this; their plane of thinking makes it a necessity; but from one who sets out to instruct the religious world, something better than this is surely to be expected. Let a reader of Mr. Clodd ask himself whether, when he speaks of forces being alive ("some sense" only adds to the absurdity, seeing that there is only *one* sense in which the word can properly be used) he refers to animal life, and if he does not mean this what life does he mean, and the absurdity of such a statement will be at once recognised.

Putting on one side such attempts to accommodate savage beliefs with scientific thinking, we may safely say that given the origin of religion in the manner indicated, one may trace—in outline at least—the whole developments of religion from the primitive ghost worship up to the rituals and beliefs of current creeds. By this I do not mean that *all* religious customs spring directly from ghost worship. Far from it; once religion is established, and the myth making capacity let loose, additions are made from numerous quarters. The Roman and Greeks, for instance, invented a number of deities out of pure abstractions—gods of peace, of war, of victory, of fortune, and so forth. But this was because mankind had then reached a stage when gods abounded, and the habit of attributing events to their influence had become deeply ingrained. Why particular deities were invented, and how they became attached to particular phenomena, are often questions impossible to answer; but if we ask, why should men have associated spiritual personalities with astronomical or terrestrial events, the answer that best fits the facts is the one given above. But the principal lines of religious belief may, I think, be traced back to the worship of the ghost. Certainly the belief in a soul and in a future life may. About the practice of prayer there is no doubt whatever. So, too, may we see the beginning of the supreme doctrine of Christianity, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A few words may make this relation clear.

I have already noted Mr. Grant Allen's ingenious suggestion that the greater fertility of the grave, owing to grain, and fruit, and various foods being placed thereon, would produce in the savage mind the conviction that this increased fertility was due to the beneficent influence of the spirits of the dead. Reasoning upon this basis it is concluded that deficient or plentiful vegetation—particularly of such as is used for food—is everywhere the result of malevolent or beneficent spirits. Certainly the worship of trees and vegetation is very wide spread, and we have in the above consideration the most probable cause of its origin. Next, it must be remembered that it is the fact of dying that raises the human being to the level of a guardian spirit or god; and from this to the actual production of a god by ceremonial killing would be a natural and an easy step. In this last respect, at least, we are upon the firm

ground of fact, not of mere theory. If any reader cares to read Mr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (vol. i., pp. 104 to 110) he will find there described a host of examples of the practice of killing a human being and burying him under the foundations of a building, and sometimes actually using his blood as cement for the walls. Accounts of the building of bridges, and castles, and churches during the Dark Ages are full of stories of this character, and the modern custom of burying coins under a foundation stone forms an interesting and harmless survival of this practice. In some parts of Africa a boy and girl are buried on the site where a village is to be established. In Polynesia the central pillar of the temple was placed on the body of a human victim. In Borneo a slave was placed under the largest house. In Germany we read accounts of people being buried under castles and bridges. In Scotland there is the legend that St. Columba buried St. Oran under the foundations of his monastery to make it secure. Almost every country supplies us with similar stories, which whether true or not are at least testimony to the belief in the necessity of the practice. And finally we have the amusing story of the manner in which Sir Richard Burton ran a narrow escape of deification. Exploring in Afghanistan in the disguise of a Mohammedan Fakir, he received a friendly hint from some of the people of the village he was staying at that he would do well to go away at once. He expressed his surprise, as the people seemed very fond of him. That, they explained, was the cause of the trouble. They thought so much of him, that they desired to kill him and retain so excellent and so holy a man as their guardian deity for ever.

When Mr. Tylor wrote *Primitive Culture* he was under the impression, as were others, that this sacrificing of human beings was for the purpose of appeasing the spirits of the place. Later investigation has made it clear that it was with quite a different purpose, the object being to create a guardian spirit or local deity so that it might watch over and protect the building or place. God-making was thus shown to be a fairly universal practice.

Our next step has to be taken in company with Mr. Frazer. On all fours with the practice of creating a guardian deity for a building is that of creating a similar guardian for crops or vegetation. No one who reads through the pages of the *Golden Bough* can doubt the reality of this practice. The details of this practice are interesting, but they need not detain us now. It is enough that the practice existed; and, as Mr. Frazer shows, it was an annual practice. Year by year the god was killed in order that the seed might ripen and the harvest be gathered. In some cases the body was cut up, and pieces buried in the fields; in other cases it was burned, and the ashes scattered over the surface. Gradually the practice becomes more elaborate, but the central idea remains intact—that of a human being converted into a god by being killed—sacrificed for the benefit of the living. That Mr. Frazer has in his mind the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ there can be no reasonable doubt. At any rate, he leaves little room for doubt in the minds of his readers that the New Testament story is only another version of this widespread practice. The time of the sacrifice, the practices associated therewith, the symbolism, all point to this. The crucified Savior, in honor of whom the cathedrals and churches of the world are erected, is but another expression of the god-making practice of the savage world.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

### Earth and Man.

GEORGE MEREDITH, as a poet, personified the earth. It was not an *it* to him, but a *she*, full of beauty and charm. The mother of us all she is, to his poetic fancy, and through affection's eye he studies all her

modes and tenses. It is well known that Meredith was an enthusiastic optimist; but his optimism was not after the order of Master Pangloss, nor yet after that of many of the dramatic characters of Robert Browning. He did not believe that we are living in the best of all possible worlds, but in a world in which, in the long run, or on the average, good is stronger than evil, and happiness more prevalent than misery. It is by no means a perfect world, but it is a world in which the noble-minded, the courageous, and the strong find succor, motherly care, and more or less enjoyment. In "The Woods of Westernmain," Meredith supplies us with an eloquent summary of his reading of the earth; and the gist of this summary again is to be found in the following lines:—

" Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.  
Nothing harms beneath the leaves  
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.  
Toss your heart up with the lark,  
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,  
Fair you fare.  
Only at a dread of dark  
Quaver, and they quit their form;  
Thousand eyeballs under hoods  
Have you by the hair.  
Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare."

To Meredith the earth signified the aggregate of purely natural forces among which our lot is cast. In themselves these forces are neither for nor against us; they are simply indifferent, treating men and snakes alike. What the earth unrelentingly insists upon is unquestioning obedience to her laws. Lacking this obedience we shall be utterly crushed. For the coward and the slothful, for the selfish and the lustful, earth knows no pity and shows no favor.

" Straightway venom winecups shout  
Toasts to One whose eyes are out:  
Flowers along the reeling floor  
Drip henbane and hellebore:  
Beauty, of her tresses shorn,  
Shrieks as nature's maniac."

That reading of the earth is at once poetic, scientific, and true to the facts of experience. To Meredith Nature was the sum of things. Outside or beyond her he recognised nothing. To him, as to Swinburne and Shelley, Nature represented all that is. How radically different is the Christian reading of the earth. The Rev. Thomas Phillips, B.A., of Bloomsbury Chapel, in a sermon which appears in the *Baptist Times and Freeman* for September 24, presents this interpretation in its absurdest and most objectionable form. He asks: "How is the Christian man to approach the wonders of shining stars and moving waters and green things? How is he to listen to the anthem of the mountains and the drama of the sea?" Then he answers: "First of all we may approach them from the standpoint of scientific study." According to this preacher science should be studied "humbly and reverently," and when thus studied, it "ought to make us spiritual," that is religious, or worshipers of God. Being humble and reverent, Mr. Phillips "cannot read the address of Sir J. J. Thomson at the recent British Association meetings without being staggered and subdued by the theophany of radium and its activities." Then follows this rhapsody:—

" Without going so far as Emerson and speaking of spirit as matter thinned, we cannot but recognise with gratitude and awe that science is leading us to the steps of a great temple. The flight of stairs begins with solids, and proceeds by liquids and gases, by light and heat, by electricity and magnetism and radio-activity right into the presence of the Will and Love that drive and fill everything."

We thank the reverend gentleman for telling us that it is a Christian man who thus approaches the phenomena of Nature. Is he not aware that, according to the newest theory of matter, solids are composed of ether and electricity? He would probably characterise a rock as gross, dead matter; but the rock consists of countless trillions of electrons forming atoms and molecules, and the electrons are said to be strain-centres, charges of electricity, on the vast

ocean of ether. The ether is supposed to be the ultimate reality, or the *materia prima*; but it is quite as much matter as the rock itself. At any rate we can safely say that there is nothing spiritual about it, in the theological sense. It would have been a strange sort of spirit that tied itself up into knots, or ran into twists, or whirled in vortices, and then gradually evolved into minerals, plants, animals, and men and women. In all this process of evolution there is not the faintest trace of the infinite Will and Love so confidently spoken of by the preacher.

We will not follow Mr. Phillips into the second division of his discourse, in which he discusses the Psalmist's—that is, the religious—way of approach to the phenomena of Nature. The one clear point is that, to the preacher, all ways of approach are religious. To say that "science is becoming more and more the Gate Beautiful of the Temple of God" is to betray invincible religious prejudice and hopeless intellectual perversity. As Henry Drummond used to say, science does not teach religion, nor is it in the least degree religious. The science referred to by Mr. Phillips is exclusively physical, dealing alone with physical relations and developments; but he forces it, against its nature and purpose, into the service of religion, with the result that he forges, without intending it, a fresh argument against religion. Skipping, then, the second part of this sermon, we come to the cosmic consciousness and the seamless robe of Christ. The former is a beautiful dream of the poet. Mr. Phillips is of opinion that it is most difficult of realisation; but that opinion may simply indicate that Mr. Phillips is not a poet. Literally speaking, there is no such thing as cosmic consciousness, and to unimaginable people it can never be a reality. It is only such pre-eminent geniuses as Wordsworth and Shelley and Whitman and Swinburne and Meredith who succeed in realising and thoroughly enjoying their oneness with all Nature in conscious fellowship. Mr. Phillips fails to do so, though he has often made the attempt. Everything is dull and cold and commonplace to him in the absence of his anthropomorphic Deity. He has endeavored to "grasp the strange, strong, elusive God that makes his tabernacle in the round ocean and the setting suns," but that God is so terribly cold that he takes a chill every time he touches him. He has tried to "identify himself with the ocean and with the shore; but there is no human touch, no close heart-to-heart intimacy in that." All this is to be accounted for by the probable fact that Mr. Phillips is not a poet, and has not sufficiently trained himself in the art of which Meredith was such a consummate master; and his logic is also at fault. He lacks the poet's vision, and he is devoid of the logician's skill. "I might be one with the ocean," he says, "but it gives me no assurance that its waves won't swamp and engulf and drown me." Does anything in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, give him that assurance? What an awful fall is here! He wants to feel quite sure that the sea won't drown him! Well, he finds all he wants in Jesus Christ, in whom the great Something which challenges and eludes us breaks through the silence of the sky and shows himself, clothed with a human face, expressed in a human dialect, and vocal in our mother tongue. That sounds great and grand, and we are told that, as the inevitable result, "the great mysterious Universe has become warm and cosy, habitable and homelike." Listen to this:—

" Everything is different because of Jesus. The aspect of the sea is altered. Every leaf of the wood-land is the hem of his garment, and every flower the embroidery of his robe. Nature is not only the living garment of Deity, but the seamless robe of Christ."

What a curious, ludicrous reading of the earth, and what a complete perversion of the Christian Gospel. The object of Christ's coming, if we are to believe the New Testament, was not to place man in right relations with Nature, but to rescue him from her clutches, and establish a system of peaceful communication with the supernatural sphere. It

was the proud claim of Jesus that neither he nor the kingdom he sought to set up was of this world. It was the powers of the world to come that he came to display, and his true disciples were those who were "accounted worthy to attain to that world." Jesus never mentioned Nature, nor showed by word or act that he appreciated her. The same is true of the apostles. They all believed that the end of the world was close at hand. Like the Patriarchs of old, Christ's people were but strangers and sojourners on the earth. They were simply using this world as a bridge across the river of time, and the sooner they reached the eternal shores the better. But this was a mischievous doctrine, a totally misleading and demoralising gospel, and its influence upon mankind has been detrimental to their highest interests. It is impossible to detach man from Nature, and to induce him to "rave to the Invisible to rend him from her" is to do him an irreparable injury. He belongs to the earth and she to him, and his only true happiness lies in making her and her laws his all in all. Let him love her and obey her laws, and he shall be, to some extent, her lord. Furthermore, to quote Meredith,—

"I say but that this love of Earth reveals  
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,  
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift."

J. T. LLOYD.

### Spiritual Advice.

WHEN Christian people have gone through the experience mentioned in the sacred song—

"For the fountains of the Earth have failed  
And I am thirsty still,"

they seek for spiritual solace from experts. Why, they ask, should not we have our spiritual advisers just as we have our medical and legal advisers? If they examined themselves with sufficient care they might find that their desire for spiritual solace arose from selfishness and indolence. There is no analogy between having medical and legal advisers and having spiritual advisers. The doctor and the lawyer act for us in those things which now are, "the things which are seen and temporal"; the clergy devote themselves to speculative matters, regarding which they have the confident impudence to dogmatise.

The questions put by perplexed "believers" to their spiritual guides are very varied in character. One, for example, in a recent number of the *British Weekly*, puts this inquiry: "A minister said here lately that he welcomed all sorts to his church, and never asked what they believed so long as the life was right. Is that Christianity?" Another asks: "Is love for the neighbor equivalent to love for God? We are often told, and we read in even evangelical reviews, that an atheist may be as well a religious man as any real pious Christian; that believing in good and doing good, in fact he believes in God without knowing it." Another: "Do you think that if people live good lives, and yet are not converted, they will be cast into a lake of fire to be burned for ever and ever?"

Now these are straight questions which admit of categorical answers. But does the gentleman who is consulted give categorical answers? Catch him! He professes to answer the questions above quoted in a bunch, and he takes a column of the paper to do it. And it is a column of beautiful quibbling. It is a favorite wheeze of the orthodox to declare that all those who have ever served humanity were influenced by Christianity. We Agnostics are all stated to be believers "without knowing it"! We do not know what Mr. Smith would think if an Agnostic were to tell him that he is an Agnostic "without knowing it." He would probably put it down as a gross impertinence. But Christians are not particularly careful in controversial matters to mete out to others the treatment they expect for themselves.

Says Mr. Smith, "Christ was the Light of the World ere ever he appeared." The world has always been yearning for him who is the "Desire of all nations." Putting aside for a moment a consideration of the facts which flatly contradict these propositions and the remarkable absence of any evidence to support them, we would respectfully ask what Christ influenced men to do when once they got him? And if the great and good teachers of men before and after the time of Christ were influenced by his Spirit in the world, why should not that system of spiritual influence have continued? What was gained by Christ's coming in the flesh? It raised a lot of difficulties and caused a lot of fighting,

wars, murders, and general cruelty, and to-day the leading "Christian" countries do not practise the essential part of Christ's teaching. They are nationally and commercially antagonistic, and ready to fly at one another's throats. Christ was called the Prince of Peace, and he is reported to have left his peace with his disciples. But during his tours he once said, "Think not that I am come to bring peace upon the earth. I came not to bring peace but a sword." These different statements are fundamentally inconsistent. They contradict each other. They may be left to spiritual advisers who profess to be able to explain the policy of Bible chroniclers; but spiritual advisers usually just make confusion worse confounded.

The modern Christian is very strong on "Love." Love, we are informed, is the whole of religion. Really, Agnostics have good cause to rub their eyes after seeing such things in print. The most unseemly wrangles are those which take place in connection with ecclesiastical disputes. Only those who have had experience of them can tell how bitter they are. Men who had been friends before the Disruption in Scotland were sundered by that event, and refused even to look at one another afterwards. The virulence of feeling in Scotland as the result of a much more recent religious fight between the Wee Frees and the United Frees is very marked. Such a degree of hatred among men connected with any Secular organisation would be scandalous. But as it is only displayed among clerics it is taken rather as a subject for laughter. Then, again, are we to suppose that "love" was the cause of the recent war in South Africa? The pulpits of this country roared vociferously for war, and, like their Christian brethren, the Boers, commended the cause of their country to the loving "God of Battles."

It may be interesting or amusing to watch theological acrobats going through their contortionist tricks, but such performances furnish a woeful confession. Indeed, they amount to a surrender to rationalistic thought. One may infer or deduce, from what one hears from leading religious teachers, that each man must make his religion for himself. The bonds of dogma are giving way. Divinity is losing its attributes one by one. The Divine is gradually becoming human. Christianity is relinquishing its outposts. The net of Christianity is to be stretched so far that it can embrace every creed, every race, every type. No questions are asked. According to Mr. Smith, "Pythagoras and Socrates, no less than Abraham and Moses, will sit down with St. John and St. Paul in the Kingdom of Heaven," which may be whatever your imagination chooses to picture it. But why St. John and St. Paul and not St. Abraham and St. Moses, and by an easy transition St. Pythagoras and St. Socrates?

Mr. Smith goes on to remark:—

"There are earnest men in our day who are hostile, as they suppose, to Christianity. In truth, however, it is not Christianity that they reject, but a caricature of it. It has been presented to them, perhaps in their childhood, in a perverted and unlovely form, and their hearts have revolted from it."

This passage furnishes a good example of the pitying aloofness and calm assurance and certitude of the fanatic. Observe the judicial air and pose adopted towards "earnest men who are hostile, as they suppose, to Christianity." But it is quite futile as an explanation of the hostility of educated and earnest people to Christianity. The suggestion that such people are in their ignorance attacking, not Christianity, but a caricature of it, is grossly insulting. If it is not, it is an admission that the Christian Churches generally do not represent Christianity, that they more or less show to the poor world a caricature of it. But where is the faithful remnant? Where are we to find the true and incorruptible handful who are the real representatives of real Christianity? The fact of the matter is, the spiritual adviser, instead of pulling an inquirer out of a bog of perplexity, shoves him deeper into it. Religions have labelled sections of mankind with different names and badges, but they furnish no help in elucidating truth or advancing progress. The pioneers of truth and progress have been buffeted and burned by "Christians" in all ages. But "Christians" cannot have their cake and eat it, though the elusive theologian refuses to be pinned down to a definite and comprehensible position. To-day the Agnostic leaders of human thought and progress are condemned by "Christians" as dangerous men and disseminators of falsehood. Some years hence these very "dangerous" and "false" Agnostics will be claimed by the Christian Churches. This chicanery is really contemptible.

SIMPLE SANDY.

Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force; that thoughts rule the world.—Emerson.

## A New Religion.

WHEN Bishop McFaul reads the latest deliverance of former President Charles W. Eliot, of Harvard, he will be more certain than ever that the Catholic who attends one of our large colleges is lost. Dr. Eliot has been guilty of the blasphemy of outlining a new religion. We say blasphemy, because to affirm a new religion is to deny, impugn, and contumeliously reproach the old one. Addressing the Harvard Summer School of Theology, July 22, Dr. Eliot thus introduced and outlined his revised system, in part:—

"The new religion," he said, "will not be based upon authority, either spiritual or temporal; the present generation is ready to be led, but not driven. In the new religion there will be no personification of natural objects; there will be no deification of remarkable human beings, and the faith will not be racial or tribal. A new thought of God will be its characteristic. The twentieth century religion accepts literally St. Paul's statement: 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' This new religion will be thoroughly monotheistic. God will be so immanent that no intermediary will be needed. For every man God will be a multiplication of infinities. A humane and worthy idea of God then will be the central thought of the new religion. This religion rejects the idea that man is alien or a fallen being, who is hopelessly wicked. It finds such beliefs inconsistent with a worthy idea of God. Man has always attributed to man a spirit associated but independent of the body. This spirit is shown in a man's habits, in his appearance and actions—in short, it is his personality; it is the most effective part of every human being. In the crisis of a battle it is a superior soul that rallies the troops, and it appeals to souls—not to bodies. The new religion will admit no sacraments, except natural, hallowed customs, and it will deal with natural interpretations of such rites. Its priests will strive to improve social and industrial conditions. It will not attempt to reconcile people to present ills by the promise of future compensation. I believe the advent of just freedom for mankind has been delayed for centuries by such promises. Prevention will be the watchword of the new religion, and a skilful surgeon will be one of its ministers. It cannot supply consolation as offered by old religions, but it will reduce the need of consolation. The new religion will laud God's love, and will not teach condemnation for the mass of mankind. The true end of all religions and philosophy is to teach man to serve his fellow-man, and this religion will do this increasingly. It will not be bound by dogma or creed; its workings will be simple, but its field of action limitless. Its discipline will be the training in the development of co-operative goodwill. Again and again different bodies of people, such as Spiritualists and Christian Scientists, have set up new cults. But the mass of people stay by the Church. Since there will be undoubtedly more freedom in this century, it may be argued that it will be difficult to unite various religions under this new head; but such unity, I believe, can be accomplished on this basis—the love of God and service to one's fellow-man. There are already many signs of extensive co-operation—democracy, individualism, idealism, a tendency to welcome the new, and preventive medicine. Finally, I believe, the new religion will make Christ's revolution seem more wonderful than ever to us."

Well-meant but impracticable is the verdict on this revived theophilanthropy of Dr. Eliot. Thomas Paine tried it once, and was advised by Talleyrand that if he wished to succeed in establishing a new religion he must get himself crucified and rise on the third day. The crowd, standing open-mouthed and receptive, want to be filled with wonders and miracles. A religion that does not make a personal God out of nature, and allege divinity of its "remarkable human beings," will not take with the mob that gives a body to supernatural faiths. There must be the "intermediary," the medicine-man, the sacerdotal priesthood. The "fall" is a necessity to any redemption. A religion through which men can be their own redeemers eliminates graft and is foredoomed to failure. The "sacraments" through which the natural takes on the supernatural, and obscenities become sanctities, are as essential to religion as his apparatus is to the illusionist. No "dogma or creed" is not a condition of religion, but of Freethought. "Love of God and service to one's fellow-man"—this is a bait that has been thrown out before. The love of God is expected to attract the religious, and service to man the irreligious. But there is no definition of the word "love" under which it can be used to express the sentiment of a human being for something he knows nothing about. One may fear the unknown, but he cannot love it. The phrase "love of God," therefore, carries no meaning. Service to one's fellow-man means something not religious. We wish that Dr. Eliot had borrowed a name from Guyau and christened this child of his thought "the non-religion of the future." The merit of his five-foot religion consists in its rejection of the fundamental superstitions of current Christianity.

—George Macdonald in New York "Truthseeker."

## Acid Drops.

"Shall Ferrer Die?" was the heading of an article in last week's *New Age*. We cannot give the writer's name, for he does not give it himself. But it was an able article, although it was very hysterical. Under the heading was a parody of two famous lines:—

"There's twenty million Englishmen  
Will know the reason why?"

We are sorry to say it, but we do not believe there are twenty million Englishmen, or one million Englishmen, who care "a solitary damn" whether the noble Spaniard dies or not. And when the writer talks of sending the British fleet to Barcelona, and moving "that the Government be granted a war credit of ten million pounds for the purpose of undertaking operations against Spain," he is simply "up in a balloon." We take it that the explanation of these hysterics is the writer's religion. He has a God. And what a God! He refers to the Queen of Spain (quite rightly, we admit) as "a recanting English Princess, who sold her faith for a crown,"—"God rewarding her," he adds, "with a bomb as a wedding gift." Again we say, what a God! That bomb did not touch the royal couple; it killed several innocent people. But as the *New Age* writer appears to be a Protestant, and therefore a believer in vicarious sacrifice, this may be quite in keeping with his view of the fitness of things.

The gentleman appeals to "the conscience of Protestant England." Well, it has no conscience at all in these matters. Anglicans and Nonconformists do not care any more than Catholics what becomes of Francisco Ferrer or any of his tribe. Protestants and Catholics hate each other, and they both hate everybody else.

There is more truth in the statement that "Lord Morley, Mr. John Burns, Mr. A. J. Balfour, Mr. John M. Robertson, and many others owe a duty as Freethinkers to Senor Ferrer and his immediate friends." We smile at Mr. Balfour's name in the list, but we raise no objection to the rest. They do owe a duty as Freethinkers to Senor Ferrer and his immediate friends. But they are politicians first, and anything else afterwards; and with that fact before him every wise man takes Dante's advice to "look and pass on."

When we come to the "tortures" practised at Montjuich we come to something more tangible. We heard a few years ago from Spanish refugees, including one of the highest attainments and character, that all sorts of infamous tortures were inflicted on the political prisoners in that fortress. The prisoner we specially allude to was liberated just in time to escape a form of torture which is usually referred to as "unspeakable." But a word of that sort gives no clear idea, and clear ideas are necessary in such matters. The real truth is that the torture of compression was to be applied to the genital organs. That is the fact, and we make no apology for stating it. There is something higher than mere politeness, which is too often another name for sheer cowardice. Shall the enemies of humanity do devilish deeds, and shall the friends of humanity be too squeamish to bring such deeds to the daylight? The very idea is a treachery. Let us be honest—let us be as brave as justice.

We are quite prepared to believe almost anything of those infamous torturers. Still, we prefer evidence to hearsay. We do not wish to slander even the proved enemies of mankind. We ask the *New Age* writer, therefore, what his authority is for the statement that women prisoners at Montjuich are raped, that the boys are handed over to Jesuit and other monasteries for unnatural practices, and that even "little girls are deprived of their virtue by villains who have an assortment of venereal diseases." These statements may be true, but we ought to have better evidence of them than the bare word of an anonymous writer. If they are true, if they can be established, the British Government would be as much entitled to make representations to the Spanish Government as both of them were to make representations to the Sultan of Morocco. Here is a clear ground for a British protest. But who is going to raise the question in the House of Commons? How many men of real courage are there in that august assembly?

Professor Kirkpatrick, lecturing at Edinburgh recently on the Reformation, said: "It was a remarkable fact that all the great Reformers were quite as strongly in favor of civil as of religious liberty." Criticising that statement in the *Staffordshire Herald* for September 18, "M. C. L." characterises it as true, and adds: "The Reformers were just as

much in favor of one sort of liberty as of the other, and that is not at all; they were the advocates of persecution and violence." "M. C. L." supports that criticism with apt quotations from Hallam and Lecky, and by citing several cogent proofs from the history of Protestantism. Luther was the quintessence of intolerance. Melancthon wrote a book in defence of religious persecution. Calvin was morally responsible for the execution of Jacques Gruet, the burning of Servetus, and the banishment of several others, simply because they did not see eye to eye with him on theological questions. But while thus agreeing with all that "M. C. L." says on the subject, we at the same time beg to remind him that those who live in glass houses cannot afford to throw stones, as he is so fond of doing.

At first the New Theologians courageously repudiated Paul. If they agreed with him, they were glad; but if they differed from him, all the worse for him. But the tide has turned. It now looks as if the apostle were to have a fresh lease of life. Mr. C. E. Wood has just published a 5s. book to prove that Paul himself was a New Theologian. Poor old Paul! he is being endlessly driven from pillar to post. All the conflicting schools claim him. He is at once a Rabbiniist, Gnostic, Theosophist, Evolutionist, Hegelian, Nietzschean, and, now at last, New Theologian. To-morrow he may turn up as an orthodox Secularist.

The notion that a State Church is essential to the maintenance of religion is pretty nearly played out. One of John Stuart Mill's friends—we think it was Charles Buller—said he was opposed to disestablishing the Church of England because it was "the only thing that stood between us and Christianity." There are no State Churches in the United States or Canada, yet religion flourishes in both with remarkable vigor. There is actually a St. Anne Railway in Canada, which carries "pilgrims" from Quebec to the shrine of St. Anne de Beaupré. St. Anne is the alleged mother of Mary, the alleged mother of Jesus. At the village of Beaupré a fine church exists in her honor. It has a holy relic in the form of a fragment of the bone of St. Anne's arm, which is probably as authentic as the similar bits of bone scattered over Europe. "Miracles" have taken place at the Beaupré shrine. Of course! Catholic bishops have officially certified the fact, and who can doubt them? Not the pilgrims. They go there in shoals. A special railway was constructed for them in 1889, and was solemnly blessed, at the opening ceremony, by the late Cardinal Taschereau in the presence of a big muster of priests and a huge concourse of the faithful. We are not surprised to see by the Guide Book that the Beaufort Lunatic Asylum is situated near Beaupré. It accommodates over a thousand patients—and must be a very necessary institution.

"I wish," an Ontario correspondent writes us, "I wish those Rationalists who think orthodox Christianity dead were obliged to live in this province for a time. It makes one's soul sick to live with the people one finds in this Christian land." This correspondent, who heard us lecture twice in London, says he "must make time to read the *Freethinker* or else stagnate," so he sends over a subscription to the paper.

In a recently published prayer, the Lord is fervently thanked for a book he never wrote, for an altar he never raised, and for a house he never built. Then the altar and the house are thus characterised: "The place of common and public prayer, and the ground on which the rich and the poor alike can meet to call thee Father and lift up their eyes with a common expectation to the all-blessing and all-giving heavens." How fortunate it is that the Lord is stone-deaf, and cannot be annoyed by such ineffable rubbish. But if he *did* exist and *could* hear, his very first act would be to put an instantaneous and eternal stop to this intolerable praying-nuisance.

Professor Sir William Ramsay says that the Pagan "gods were powerless, and were recognised to be powerless." We agree, and wish only to add that the Christian gods are equally powerless, with the only difference that they are not yet *universally* recognised to be so. But as surely as the former went, because of their weakness, these are going, and for the same reason.

The Rev. J. H. Jowett has resolved to become a miracle-worker. It is his intention, on his return from America, to "stagger" his Birmingham congregation—to stagger it with "the presence of God." He will "stagger" it, if he fulfils his promise. As soon as he is able to introduce God to his people, saying, "Here he is, at last," we, too, will from that moment be numbered with the believers. But we are quite

safe; the reverend gentleman, as usual, only indulged in idle, empty talk.

Rev. R. J. Campbell's last printed sermon is on the Atonement,—a doctrine in which he doesn't believe in any straightforward meaning of the word. He denies that intelligent people believe it either. He quotes the Salvation Army statement of the doctrine, and says it is "plain and honest" but "nothing is much less likely of acceptance by the ordinary thoughtful, serious mind of to-day." "Preachers," he adds, "may shuffle and juggle as they please with the subject, but very few of them would have the courage to state as explicitly as General Booth that this is what they believe about the atonement of Christ for the sins of the world." Mr. Campbell protests, however, that there must be "a valuable truth" in the idea of atonement. But his "valuable truth" is only an afterthought. It has no more connection with the original idea of the Atonement than chalk has with cheese.

The New Theology weekly (it doesn't like us to mention its name) published portraits last week of "Leaders of the Brotherhood Movement." We recognised one of them as a gentleman who implored Mr. W. T. Stead not to expose Torrey's slanders on Paine and Ingersoll. Anything was better than injuring the cause of Christ! A nice "Brotherhood" representative this! It reminds us of the "brotherhood of Cain and Abel."

Some of the New Theology gentlemen are talking about "the pre-existence of Christ." This is only a form of that oriental moonshine called Theosophy. What can it really matter whether Christ (or anyone else) pre-existed or not? Besides, there is a primary question. Did he ever exist at all?

A London newspaper's "own correspondent" telegraphed the following news from Montreal on Thursday, September 23:—

"Interviewed here to-day as to his impressions in Canada, Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., said he had been searching here, as he had searched wherever he had been, for signs of the brotherhood of man as the principle of social conditions, but he was bound to admit that he saw no more evidence of it in Canada than he did at home in Great Britain."

England is a Christian country; Canada is rather more so; and Christianity is nearly two thousand years old. Yet the brotherhood of man is as far off as it was before England and Canada (as nations) or Christianity existed. This ought to astonish even Mr. Will Crooks.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., treated the International Press Conference to a denunciation of anonymous journalism. "Reality and sincerity," he said, "would never be truly attained till journalism ceased to cover itself with the mark of anonymity, and got rid of the ridiculous and stupid pretence that its articles were the emanations of some Lama and not of the individual, clever or stupid, honest or insincere, wise or foolish, who wrote the article." We quite agree with Mr. O'Connor. This has always been our view. We also agree with Mr. O'Connor's concluding sentence, that "Mystery is next door to mendacity." We should put it even a little stronger. We believe that they live together. And we wish Mr. O'Connor would extend the principle to religion as well as journalism. Perhaps he does—in private.

According to the speech from the throne, at the opening of the session of the States General, Holland, the policy of the Government will be, as before, the "application in legislation of Christian principles." That is what all the Governments in Europe, with the exception of "infidel" France say they are doing—and they are all acting differently. The fact is, there is no such thing as Christian principles in legislation. The phrase is perfectly meaningless. The only thing definite about Christianity is its dogmas—and some of these are rejected by "advanced" Protestants.

The Lord is no lover of black people. In Africa countless numbers of them are miserable slaves. The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society has already held two special prayer-meetings for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear upon him to emancipate them. Very influential people have passionately implored him to put an end to the degrading institution of slavery. As yet he has made no response, and a third meeting has been arranged for Friday, October 1, at which he is to be still more emphatically reminded of his duty in the matter. We are sorry to be prophets of evil, but we are afraid the third prayer-meeting will share the fate of the former two.

The Bishop of Manchester warns the clergy against preaching as if people knew something of what is in the Bible. "There are many, many people," he says, "who are quite unfamiliar with that book. The names which are mentioned are strange to them, and they wonder what on earth we are preaching about." Poor Old Book!

Rev. Dr. Fitchett, the well-known Jingo man of God, says that "the Bible is almost an unknown book" in Queensland. In all parts of the State the clergy report that "the Bible, as a rule, is almost an unused book." Of course the clergy cry out that such a state of things, if allowed, will "bring disaster not only on the Church, but on the State." Dr. Fitchett declares that Secular Education is the enemy. If the Churches cannot control education Christianity is lost. Agreed!

Religious papers at present are printing a good deal of what is probably "inspired" puffing of the Rev. C. L. Drawbridge, President of a Christian Evidence Society which has been formed to counteract the wicked work of the "infidels" at Parliament Hill Fields. According to the *Sunday School Chronicle* the "infidels" not only blasphemed shockingly from their platform, but distributed leaflets full of abominations. One of them actually contained the statement that "Churches and chapels are wicked dens of vice." Is it meant that *this* leaflet was distributed from the N. S. S. platform? If so, we ask for its production. The article we are dealing with says that "the successful anti-infidel debater must be a specialist." We are sorry to say that he is too frequently a specialist in falsehood and slander.

The Catholic Truth Conference was held this year at Manchester, and the very first subject dealt with was the Church and Socialism. Mr. Hillaire Belloc, M.P., one of the speakers, said that the Catholic Church was the one barrier to Socialism. Yet there are Catholics who declare that the only true Socialism is only to be realised through the Catholic Church. Mr. Belloc was followed by speakers who "made violent attacks on Socialism as anti-Christian and Atheistic." We really fail to see how an economic theory can be either Atheistic or Christian—except on the general ground that all theories of human improvement by purely social agencies are in a sense Atheistic, in so far as they involve man's saving himself instead of leaving it to God.

"Another remarkable cure" is said to have taken place quite recently at St. Winifride's Well. A girl of eleven, from Salford, who had been an out-patient at the Children's Hospital for a year, and had been provided with crutches and irons, was immersed in the holy water and cured of a serious affection of the hip. She walked away freely, and showed her leg to prove it was restored. So runs the pious story circulated in the newspapers. The important details of the child's name and address are not given. No doubt a thorough examination would show that the smoke (as the saying is) was caused by a very little fire. The whole story, indeed, may be a pure invention; for such are more than half the Catholic stories of wonderful cures at holy wells and sacred shrines.

The New York *Truthseeker* is generally accurate. But who is "Mr. Joseph Warwick, Bradlaugh's contemporary and fellow campaigner"? We don't think we ever heard of him before.

They seem to have a terrible lot of Old Testament men of God in America. The New York *Truthseeker* often fills a column or more with bare statements of their misdoings, which are generally sexual. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair." It is an ancient text with a modern meaning.

The Salvation Army has been declared to be "a nuisance" by the Aberystwyth Town Council. The way the Boothites poster visitors with their collection boxes is described as "intolerable." Since the "General" went to Buckingham Palace the "Army" has had cheek enough for anything. We are glad to see signs of reaction against its insolence.

Mr. Martin Harvey, the well-known actor, opened the winter course of lectures in connection with the Scottish National Song Society in the Charing Cross Hall, Glasgow, the subject of his address being "National Song." Mr. Harvey began by explaining the absence of the Rev. Dr. Ambrose Shepherd who was to have taken the chair. It appears that the godly had raised such a frightful rumpus over the idea of the reverend gentleman's presiding at a meeting to be addressed by a profane play-actor, a thespian rogue-and-vagabond, that Dr. Shepherd felt obliged to bow before

the storm. Mr. Harvey improved the occasion by telling a story. A native of Aberdeen once put his clerical prejudices in his pocket, and asked the actor to open a church bazaar; and before stepping on the platform he remarked, "Sir, it's just wonderful to think what depths a man will sink to in order to raise money."

Three hundred members of a sect known as the "Believers in the Latter Reign of the Apostolic Church" assembled at Duxbury, Massachusetts, on Thursday, September 23. They expected the millennium to begin the next morning at 10 o'clock. They themselves were to be caught up in a cloud to meet Jesus. They are still on earth, and the millennium has not arrived.

Pastor George Wise has been telling an Orange meeting at Liverpool that Catholics were taught, and believed, that heretics should be put to death. Does he imagine that Protestants ever renounced the principle of persecution? Does he fancy that they did not put heretics to death when they could? They persecute Freethinkers even now in Liverpool. Pastor George Wise himself dare not call upon the authorities to treat Freethinkers like other citizens.

Pastor Wise says that the Catholic Church only left off burning heretics alive when there were too many who objected to being burnt. He borrowed that from Ingersoll.

The entire coast line of the Gulf of Mexico has been swept by terrific storms. There has been immense destruction of property and a great loss of human life. The latter cannot yet be fully computed. Good old "Providence."

The *Catholic Times* replies to our remarks on the religious riots at Liverpool, but is afraid to mention the name of our paper, unless it is afflicted with the usual bad manners of Christian periodicals where Freethinkers are concerned. Our contemporary denies that "the Christian religion breeds an intolerant temper amongst its rival bodies of adherents," and says we are "endeavoring to make capital out of the Liverpool disturbances." The latter statement may be true, but the former is obviously false; for the hatred between Catholic and Protestant is not a thing of yesterday, but of centuries,—and the same may be said of their common hatred of Freethinkers. It is very easy, too, for our contemporary to charge us with discourtesy in saying that the Catholics are not honest in pleading for toleration. How do we know (it asks) whether other people's motives are honest or not? We reply that we judge them by their deeds. If they say one thing and do another it does not require a subtle genius to understand them.

Our Catholic contemporary's leaderette on the Ferrer case seems to us very disingenuous. It declares that he is arrested for political reasons. But, in that case, why are his Secular Schools closed all over Spain by the authorities? It also declares that the proofs the authorities say they have of his guilt may be valid. But they said that before when they arrested him for alleged complicity in the Madrid outrage. They kept saying it for twelve months. Yet when the public opinion of Europe forced them into bringing Ferrer before a legal tribunal the "proofs" were all found to be rubbish, and he was acquitted. Our Catholic contemporary forgets things. Still, it might recollect that we have a better memory.

The Lax case has come before the Petty Sessions and the reverend gentlemen's assaulters have been fined £5 each. It appears from the evidence in court that the assaulters thought him very Lax. They considered his "goings on" with a lady not his wife "intolerable." This lady was with the reverend gentleman, late at night, when some of his parishioners committed the assault. It is stated that his congregation now consists of few persons besides the fascinating schoolmistress.

Rev. Canon Dr. Alfred James Carver, of Lynhurst, Streatham Common, left £38,112. He will want no blankets this winter, if the Gospel be true. But perhaps it isn't.

"Providence" doesn't even watch over its own houses. St. John's Church, March, was struck by lightning recently while the early Communion service was going on. The stone cross was splintered, and the roof was set on fire and much damaged. "Ho dooth all things well."

During divine service in a Granada church on Sunday night a well-known merchant drew a revolver and blew out his brains. Immediately the congregation, mostly women, started a stampede, and the interior of the church was nearly wrecked in the struggle. Such is the soothing effect of religious influences.



### Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 3, Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street, Glasgow : at 12 (noon), "The Moral Failure of Christianity"; at 6.30, p.m., "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life—in *Hamlet*, etc."

October 10, Leicester ; 17, 24, and 31, St. James's Hall, London.  
November 7, Manchester ; 14, Liverpool ; 28, Birmingham.

### To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 3, St. James's Hall, London ; 17, Glasgow ; 24, Victoria Park ; 31, Birmingham. December 5, Liverpool.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 10, St. James's Hall ; 17, Liverpool ; 24, Glasgow. December 19, Leicester.

A. H. HALLEWELL.—The Ingersoll lectures you mention are all out of print. Thanks for papers, good wishes, etc.

D. McLEAN.—Thanks for cuttings. Order passed on.

W. A. HOLROYD.—Sent as requested. Much obliged. It is astonishing at first sight what a lot of people fancy the *Freethinker* is dead and that Freethought died with Bradlaugh. One reason, of course, is the boycott of this journal; and sometimes, we fear, the wish is father to the thought.

D. EVANS.—Glad to hear you are doing missionary work amongst your fellow workmen. Freethinkers should all be doing something of the same kind.

R. STEVENSON.—Too long for us to attempt the gentleman's immortalisation.

W. H. HARRIS.—Thanks for the reference. We note your wish that we would publish what you are pleased to call our "truly admirable orations on the immortal bard."

"ABRACADABRA."—Thanks for memorandum of your reply. It would be very interesting to have a collection of the Old Testament crudities slurred over with euphemisms in both the Authorised and Revised Versions. Some of them, of course, could hardly be printed in English, but the rest would make a pretty dish to set before the king—King Demos.

J. HANS.—We prefer to have our paragraphs based upon printed reports. It is necessary to have something of that kind to refer to if Christians ask "where is your authority?"

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. E. WILLIAMS.—Shall be sent as requested. Glad to hear you became a regular reader of the *Freethinker* through its being introduced to you by a Freethought friend, and that you are now doing all you can to promote its circulation. Shall be glad to see you and your friends at our Birmingham meetings.

F. WOOD.—Thanks for cuttings, though Tuesday morning is too late for the next issue.

T. FOWLER.—Shall have attention.

J. K. MAAGAARD.—We don't see that your letter proves the truth of Mr. Campbell's statement.

THE TREASURER of the Boulter Fund informs us that it will be closed with next week's *Freethinker*. Mr. Boulter hoped to get £50 to help him start in business for himself, but he will start with what is in hand, and trust to the "saints" for tailoring orders.

J. P. FRANCIS.—Tuesday morning is too late—and do keep up to date.

H. B. DOBBS.—We intend to deal with the case, but we see no reason for ill temper or heat.

J. M. MOSLEY.—Glad to have your letter, and shall be pleased to see you at Leicester. Our lecture there is to be on "The Religion of Shakespeare," so you won't (apparently) regret coming over from Chesterfield. We note your finding our *Flowers of Freethought* "delightful."

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 Manager of the Pioneer Press, 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.

### Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote opens the Glasgow Branch's winter lecturing season to-day (Oct. 3) with two lectures (at 12 noon and 6.30 p.m.) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, opposite the municipal law buildings. His subjects are both new to Glasgow audiences, and should gratify in particular those who come in to hear Mr. Foote from the surrounding district.

Mr. Foote's fourth and last Shakespearean lecture at St. James's Hall on Sunday evening drew considerably the largest audience of the whole course. It was followed with the same close attention that was given to the previous lectures and was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. F. A. Davies, who acted as chairman, said that those who had attended the other lectures, as he had, would all be sorry that Mr. Foote was leaving the subject, at least for the present; a sentiment which was endorsed by a good many people in the meeting. Several questions were asked and answered after the lecture, and a critic spoke for ten minutes. He was heard with a courtesy which he gratefully acknowledged.

Mr. C. Cohen occupies the St. James's Hall platform this evening (Oct. 3). As he is not quite as well-known to the outside public as Mr. Foote is, there is all the more reason why the London Freethinkers should make a point of attending his lecture. They should do this, first, for Mr. Cohen's sake; that is, they should secure a good audience for one who has long and very ably represented their cause with pen and tongue; and, next, because the expenses of these meetings are naturally great, and whatever loss there is will make a draft on the Secular movement's working fund—which is not supported by Carnegies and Rockefellers. We are not, of course, asking Freethinkers to rally round Mr. Cohen as an act of charity; far from it; he is sure to give them ample value for their expenditure. And the same may be said of Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who follows him on Oct. 10.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd opens the Manchester Branch's new lecture season to-day at the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road. The two meetings are afternoon (3) and evening (6.30). We hope to hear of the large audiences and warm welcome which Mr. Lloyd deserves.

Mr. Foote's recent article on "Hunting Skunks" has been reproduced as a leaflet by the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, who has found it very effective at Parliament Hill Fields. There is a fine supply of the baser sort of Christians there on Sundays, and the tract makes them squirm, besides opening the eyes of some of their auditors. Copies for distribution can be had of Miss Vance at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

Mrs. Sue M. Farrell, Mrs. Ingersoll's sister, writes to us from New York: "My Dear Mr. Foote,—A thousand thanks, from the entire Ingersoll family, for your splendid article on Vivisection. We heartily endorse every word of it, and are confident that it will do a world of good. We speak of you often, and are always grateful for your kind and eloquent words regarding the dear Colonel. With kindest greetings from all, I am very sincerely—Sue M. Farrell." We are delighted to receive this letter from what to us will always be the first family in America.

Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago, when in London this summer interviewed several notables, and amongst them Mr. G. Bernard Shaw. "I have heard," Mr. Mangasarian said to him, "that you have returned to the Church and have become a convert to the beliefs you once criticised so effectively. "No," Mr. Shaw replied quickly, "there has been no return to any worn-out dogmas. I am an Atheist so far as the orthodox idea of God is concerned, but I am not a Materialist." "Do you believe," Mr. Mangasarian asked, "there is in man a soul or spirit separate from the body?" Mr. Shaw replied, "I do not." We take this from Mr. Mangasarian's report in the New York *Truthseeker*.

"It seems a pity," a Nottingham correspondent writes, "that your publication is not brought more before the public, like other weeklies. It is only a few weeks since I became a subscriber, through a Freethinker, I suppose, sending me a copy through the post. After reading it I ordered it at once of my newsagent. I have always disliked the 'isms' though brought up in the church. Your paper should be read by all sensible people. I have some time to spare, and I shall devote a portion of it to introducing your paper to my friends." This letter should encourage our friends to push

the *Freethinker* about. They cannot tell the good they are doing at the moment, but there is plenty of evidence that the work bears fruit in time. We have gained many fresh readers in this way. Our circulation might be increased by fifty per cent., if not doubled, in twelve months if every one of its present readers would make an effort to get more. We beg them to try. They can help us in this way at a very small cost in time and money. Introducing the paper to their friends and acquaintances, or to persons they meet in the intercourses of business and pleasure, is a form of advertising which they can easily do—and it is the very best form of advertising. They might also send us the names and addresses of persons who might become subscribers if they only had an opportunity of reading the *Freethinker* for a few weeks. We will gladly send six consecutive weekly issues to such persons, gratuitously and post-free.

A Southport correspondent writes us:—

"One can get your paper from Smith's bookstalls by ordering it. As no doubt you are aware, this is because it is not returnable if unsold. If the paper was exhibited on the stalls I am sure your sales would go up. I myself became a reader through picking up a chance copy. I subsequently had difficulty in obtaining it except by ordering it. Catch trade would make a big difference to your sales and bring more regular subscribers. Cannot you make unsold copies returnable, as most journals do?"

As a matter of fact, we have always supplied the *Freethinker* on sale or return. We supply Messrs. Smith & Son, like every other trade house, on those terms now. If any reader of this journal hears that hoary legend from the mouth of any news vendor again, we beg him (or her) to tell the said news vendor, whoever he is, that it is absolutely untrue. It never was true, it isn't true now, and it never will be true. With regard to Messrs. Smith & Son, in particular, we have to say that they are more liberal than they used to be. They used to boycott the *Freethinker* altogether, but during the last two or three years they have been selling it (under certain restrictions, however), and their order has gone up steadily all the time. We are not without hope that they will treat us quite fairly before long. We agree with our Southport correspondent thoroughly. If this journal were treated like any other periodical, in a purely business way, its circulation would soon double or treble. We want no favor; we only want fair play.

"It is now close on two years," a Blantyre correspondent writes, "that my conversion, or, as Christians would probably term it, perversion, came about. It was while working at my trade. We discussed various subjects in the meal hours, and sometimes in the working hours. The man I discussed with was a Freethinker and I was a Christian; consequently the general topic was religion. When I first learnt he was a Freethinker I made up my mind to evade him as much as possible, as I was always taught that unbelievers would blaspheme, lie, steal, kill, and do everything contrary to the divine command. Fortunately, however, I decided to test the truth of my teaching, and I found with delight that it was not true of this Freethinker. I found him a bright, intellectual, and genial fellow, who would hurt nobody. In a week I was what I am to-day and shall remain to the end. I purchase the *Freethinker* on Saturday, and read it on Sunday instead of going to church. It is an admirable substitute, and the best twopennyworth purchasable." The writer says he is bringing in some of his friends to hear Mr. Foote at Glasgow, and has promised them "something they never heard before." They are likely to hear that, anyhow.

Mr. F. Bonto's spirited verses, entitled *Thaumaturgics*, which appeared in our columns lately, have been revised and added to, and are being published in the form of an eight-page tract for free distribution. The full title is *Thaumaturgics: or Wonders Ancient and Modern*. Copies will be sent free to N. S. S. Branches that will see to their judicious distribution. Individual members or friends can also have a supply, for the same purpose, by applying to our shop manager, Mr. W. A. Vaughan, at 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

Mr. Dent, the publisher, states that he has sold 5,000,000 separate volumes of his "Everyman's Library." He declares that "the people are reading, and reading as they have never read before." In spite of the fact that so many editions of Shakespeare are issued by various publishers, 50,000 copies of the poet have been sold in the "Everyman's Library." We are glad to hear it.

There will be a Conference next Sunday morning (Oct. 10) at 11 o'clock at Pugsley's Restaurant, Cardiff-street, Aber-

dare, to consider the general question of Freethought propaganda in South Wales. Visitors from outside places are invited to send their names to Mr. J. L. Williams, 376 Cardiff-road, Aberaman. In the afternoon and evening lectures will be delivered by Mr. Percy Ward, of Liverpool. It will be his first visit to the district.

Lord Coleridge, who took the *Indian Sociologist* case at the Old Bailey, sentenced young Guy Aldred to twelve months' imprisonment. We do not propose to discuss the case or the sentence. It is off our beat. What we desire to note is the fact that Lord Coleridge ordered Aldred to be imprisoned as a first-class misdemeanant. This is a step in the right direction, and we congratulate Lord Coleridge on taking it. Press offences, in nearly every civilised country, are treated as differing in character from ordinary crimes. Deprivation of liberty may be deemed necessary, but it is brutal to inflict indignities as well. This will be recognised eventually in the case of all propagandist offences, whether written or spoken.

A *Daily Chronicle* article on Sir Herbert Tree's edition of M. Brioux's play, Englished as *False Gods*, from the pen of Mr. Grahame Ballantyne, must have made some of the readers of that paper squirm. Sir Herbert Tree himself plays the part of the High Priest, who is described as—

"the very incarnation of ecclesiastical Erastianism; the official upholder of a natural religion which he regards in the light of a moral police force—impossible of credence by the enlightened, of all necessity for the keeping in subjection of a down-trodden populace. A Gallio, this High Priest, who at heart does not even pretend to care for any of these things. A type of the eternal priesthood the world over."

Which is not very flattering to the priesthood. Moreover, it is a plain admission that the people have always been humbugged in the matter of religion.

M. Brioux, the French author of the original play, who was present at the final rehearsal which Mr. Ballantyne reports, is described in an interesting manner:—

"An interesting figure this M. Brioux, rather tall, broad-shouldered, and thick-set, with curly brown hair, a thick moustache curving over a firm, well-cut mouth; a man with wonderful vitality, dashing here and there, eager, sympathetic, spontaneous, and with the eyes of the seer. At the conclusion of the almost painfully thrilling 'Lourdes' scene—for old Egypt had its Lourdes, as every land and every religion has had and will continue to have, and it understood, as we all understand to-day, the wonderful power of suggestion and of hypnotism in the human frame enfeebled by disease—he turned to one standing by and said, with a twinkle of kindly humor in his eye: 'I saw a great many crutches at Lourdes, but I would rather have seen one wooden leg; it would have been so much more convincing.'

M. Brioux, whose play is an outcome of his devotion to Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, is not, like many of his brethren on the Continent, a Socialist in the ordinary and perhaps somewhat anarchistic sense of the word; he is rather a social reformer who regards the French doctrine of Communism or Collectivism as a return to savagery pure and simple. Politically and religiously he works for humanity, and his play is meant to convey the great truth that all sacrifice should be directed to the alleviation of human suffering, and not to the propitiation of Divine wrath; Satni's message is 'la souffrance humaine,' not 'l'insensibilité des dieux.' Immortality is for the race, not the individual."

M. Brioux is evidently a Humanist, with something of George Meredith and something of Bernard Shaw.

May we ask Mr. Ballantyne what he means by stating that *False Gods* at His Majesty's "gorgeously pictures forth Egypt as it was about the period of the exodus of the children of Israel"? What period was that? History really knows nothing of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. They never were in Egypt, if we are to judge by the stone records. All the early "history" of the Jews, including the career of Moses, is purely legendary.

We are clearing out a considerable remnant of old stock from our publishing office, as we want the room for new publications. We make the following offer of them to our readers for distribution on their part as an act of propaganda. We will send them parcels of pamphlets by Foote, Ingersoll, and other writers, to the face value of one shilling for one penny. That is to say, an assorted parcel of six shillings' worth will be sent for sixpence, or twelve shillings' worth for a shilling. The carriage to be paid in addition, if sent by post or rail, will be at the rate of threepence for each sixpence remitted in payment. A sixpenny parcel, that is, will cost threepence, and a shilling parcel sixpence. We will take that figure at a venture.

## The Narratives in Genesis.—XIII.

### THE DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES.

(Continued from p. 619.)

IN my last paper dealing with the veracious "history" recorded in Genesis, I omitted to notice adequately the story of the "confusion of tongues." As we have already seen, according to the Bible narrative all the different languages spoken upon the earth came into existence upon one and the same day—that on which the god Yahveh "confounded" the tongues of the builders of the city of Babylon. This account of the origin of languages, it need scarcely be said, is not in agreement with facts derived from History and comparative Philology. From the latter more reliable sources we learn that from the earliest times known to us down to the present, new languages have invariably been of gradual and almost imperceptible development, and that such an event as the sudden creation of a number of new and hitherto unknown dialects could be nothing less than miraculous.

In considering this subject, the first point that may be noted is that different tribes who have inhabited different parts of the earth for a considerable period, and have had during that time no dealings with each other, save perhaps to wage war, would naturally be expected to express themselves by different combinations of sounds joined together in different ways; and as a matter of fact we find such to be the case. In the island of Borneo, for instance, as well as in the case of the Indian tribes of America, nearly every separate tribe was found to have a different language.

The next point to be noticed is that when some powerful tribe or people subjugated several others and brought them under one sway, in which the interests of the conquered tribes became centred in the one centralising power, the new generations of the tributary peoples learnt to speak the language of the dominant state, and discarded their own. We know, for instance, that the ancient peoples of France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Wallachia, and other countries, after being subjugated by the Roman power, gave up the Gaulish, Cantabrian, Etruscan, Oscan, Umbrian, and other tongues which they had previously spoken, and in time (A.D. 400) the great mass of the influential classes in those countries came to use the Latin language as their mother tongue.

A third point to be noted is the converse of the last, namely, that when on the decay or withdrawal of the centralising power, the various tribes or peoples were left in anarchical independence, new languages have sprung up, or were formed, from the common tongue previously spoken. An example of this is again furnished by the Roman power. After the Barbaric irruption and the fall of that great empire, no less than six distinct languages and literatures were derived from the disintegrated Latin.

None of the changes of dialects here referred to was effected in a day, nor in a year, nor even in a generation: the change has in every case been slow and gradual, but none the less sure. To make this fact perfectly clear the plan usually adopted is to travel back through the ages as far as it is possible to go, and note the result.

If, following this method, we were to start from the present, and trace back the stream of time for 800 years (*i.e.*, to A.D. 1100), we should find all over Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland, one uniform tongue spoken by all classes. To-day, there are in those countries three languages: in Iceland, the original language without much change; in Denmark and Norway, another; in Sweden, another. A person speaking only one of these languages now needs an interpreter for the other two.

If we go back another 200 years (*i.e.*, to A.D. 900), we should find that in England, in Holland and Lower Germany, and in Upper Germany, the languages had so much resemblance that they amounted at least to

a mutual intelligibility. The great mass of words in the languages spoken in those districts was then essentially the same, and the structure of the grammar was nearly so. In those times, a person knowing only the language of his own country might make himself understood in each of the others. To-day, there are three totally distinct languages in those countries—English, Dutch, and German—the first having changed most, and the last least. A person speaking only one of these languages must now learn the other two with grammar and dictionary.

If we go back another 500 years (*i.e.*, to A.D. 400) we find throughout Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, etc., as already remarked, the people speaking the Latin language. There was, moreover, so little difference between the language of one district and another, that it is now found impossible to determine in which of the countries named a Latin book of that period was written. To-day, we have the Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, and other tongues, which though all derived from the Latin, are totally different languages, and quite distinct from each other.

The comparatively recent science of Philology has compared nearly all the European and Asiatic languages, which have been classified substantially as follows:—

I. The *Semitic* family of languages, comprising the ancient Hebrew, the Phœnician, the Assyrian and Babylonian, the Aramaic, the Arabic, and some of the Abyssinian dialects. A peculiarity of this family is its "trilateral roots"—that is to say, "three unchanging consonants"—the derived forms of which are expressed by vowel-change.

II. The *Indo Germanic* or *Aryan* family of languages, comprising the Sanskrit, the Hindustanee, the Armenian, the Greek, the Albanian, the Italic (including Latin, and the Umbrian and Oscan dialects), the Celtic, the Teutonic or Germanic, and the Slavonic. From the Italic are descended, as we have seen, the modern Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Wallachian, and some others. The Celtic includes the ancient dialect of Gaul, the Welsh, the Erse of Ireland, the Gaelic of the Highlands of Scotland, and the Manx. The Teutonic comprises the Gothic, the Scandinavian (in Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden), the Anglo-Saxon, the Dutch, and the dialects of North, South, and Middle Germany. To the Slavonic belong the Bohemian, the Polish, the Old Bulgarian, the Russian, and several other dialects. All these Aryan languages can be shown to be related, and to have been derived from a common ancestral tongue—which has been called the Aryan. That there was such a parent language is certain, but how far back in the mists of the past we should have to go to find it, it is impossible to say. There was also, no doubt, a common ancestral language whence the Semitic families were derived; but this, like the Aryan, must have been in pre-historic times. The most ancient Semitic race known to us are the Babylonians; but these had dispossessed a much older and more civilised race—the Akkadians, whose language was neither Semitic nor Aryan.

III. Languages which show no signs of inflection, as the Chinese, the Tibetan, and others (the Akkadian, for instance) to which the name *Turanian* has been given. The Chinese tongue—which is spoken by a people numbering more than the whole population of Europe—is monosyllabic and without an alphabet, the words or sounds being represented by thousands of distinct symbols.

All the native languages of North, South, and Central America appear to be generally ignored, possibly because they have not been so much studied; but, like the Aryan and Semitic families, they have been found to be closely related to each other, and were, no doubt, derived from a more primitive common language. One thing, however, is certain: they have no relationship to any of the Aryan or Semitic languages, and could not therefore have been derived from either of those sources.

All progress in the study of languages has for a long time been retarded by the belief that the common ancestral tongue of mankind was the Hebrew, from which it was said all other languages were derived. This erroneous idea was taken from the Old Testament, in which it is clearly implied or indirectly stated that Hebrew was the first language spoken on the earth. This can easily be shown. Let us suppose, for the moment, that in the earliest times in the world's history only one language was spoken upon the globe, and that we found the following names borne respectively by twelve different men of that period: "Vanity"—"Man"—"Height"—"Artificer"—"Completion"—"Black"—"Wild Ass"—"Extension"—"Descent"—"Division"—"Placed"—"Fishing." Let us also suppose that the following names were borne by four women of that time: "Ornament"—"Life"—"Pleasant"—"Shadow." We should scarcely need a divine revelation to tell us that the language spoken by the parents of these men and women—and, by inference, by the men and women themselves—was English.

Now, we find the names of the hypothetical persons that bear the appellations just named written, not in English, but in Hebrew. They are (in the order named): Abel, Adam, Aram, Cain, Gomer, Ham, Irad, Japhet, Jared, Peleg, Seth, and Zidon: also Adah, Eve, Naamah, and Zillah. These names have all been selected from the narratives in Genesis which precede the story of the "Confusion of tongues"; whence it follows that the original language, according to the Bible, was Hebrew, and also that all other languages were derived from this Semitic tongue, and came into existence upon the same day.

These Bible statements, it is scarcely necessary to say, are not in harmony with facts. It is simply impossible to seriously imagine that the Aryan family of languages—not to mention all the Turanian dialects—could have sprung from the Hebrew or from any Semitic tongue. Many things may be deemed possible, but not this: the dissimilarity from every point of view is too great. And, after all, we have but the bare word of an ancient Hebrew writer who knew nothing of the origin of languages to support the Bible account. The writer's statement that all new dialects sprang into existence simultaneously is but another proof that he had no knowledge of the long and imperceptible process by which diversity of tongues came into use.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

#### THE ARGUMENT FOR MARTYRDOM.

Another argument for the "supremacy" of the Bible is based upon the history of Christian martyrdoms. Dr. Farrar gives several instances of Christians, old and young, rich and poor, high-placed and humble, who have died for their faith, and entered "the dark river and its still waters with a smile upon their faces." He attributes their fortitude to trust in the promises of the Bible. But he does not tell us how it proves the truth of the Bible either as history or as revelation. Millions of Jews have died at the hands of Christian bigots, and their heroism amidst torture and massacre has never been exceeded in human annals. Does this prove that the New Testament is not a revelation, and that Jesus Christ was not God. Men of other faiths have faced death with sublime courage. Mohammedans are notoriously ready to die for their religion. The Mohammedan dervishes in the Soudan never quailed before the most murderous storm of shell and bullets; they fell in thousands at Omdurman, and the Kalifa's standard-bearer, when all around him were slain, stood upright under the holy flag, with a smile of defiance on his face, which never left it until he sank shot-riddled upon the heap of his dead comrades. Does this prove that the Koran is the Word of God?

The orthodox argument seems to be this. If a Christian dies for the Bible, that proves it to be a divine book; if a devotee of any other faith dies for his Sacred Scriptures, that proves nothing—unless it be the obstinacy of wrong opinions.—G. W. Foote, "The Book of God."

#### Correspondence.

##### THE GOOD OF RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind."

SIR,—Here in this little out-of-the-way place the *Freethinker* has followed me up. Unfortunately I missed the interesting article by Mr. Cohen, mentioned by "Simple Sandy" in No. 38, and have no books to quote scripture from; but the mere fact that the *Freethinker* follows me about should satisfy even the most scrupulous that my signature is above suspicion.

To begin with, I scarcely think that "Simple Sandy" realises that he has laced to his eager feet the sandals of early Christian revolt, that his words are those of St. Paul, and his religion—I cannot call it otherwise (for he is in love with his own particular line of thought)—is not only that of St. Paul, but of Torquemada himself; a religion that will accept no quarter or give any,—and even in this ferocity there is grandeur.

Religion is false, so he writes; to be religious is degrading, insulting, foolish, injurious, immoral. Ah, my friends, the cat is out of the bag, and our friend is a Puritan—a God-Praise-Barbones, a Nathaniel Do-Good—who, looking through one pair of spectacles, pronounces all around him to be pink or green according to the color of the glass. He cannot see that what is immoral here is not immoral there; that English morality is not Japanese morality; that for what you might get a life-sentence in England you would have to do in Afghanistan if you wished to be considered a gentleman. Even murder is not a crime everywhere—and neither is religion.

Atheist though I am, I feel that to be in love with, to burn, flame, and glow with a genius for anything, is to be religious. The artist hack, the musician hack, the poet hack, is no better than the Christian, Mohammedan, and Buddhist hacks; neither are the Rationalistic, Agnostic, and Atheistic hacks. Hacks are the same all the world over—Rozinantes every one of them. But the artist who paints because he is exalted by the glory of color and beauty is not far removed from the Christian inflamed with the Christ-idea, ready to live or die for his ideal, or from the Hindu in the ecstasy of Shiva. Such are the Boracs, the "divine" steeds, that soar above the mists of mediocrity and reveal to us the little "heaven" we are ever likely to see on earth; and it is not for me to find fault with them, Atheist though I am.

Enthusiasm is a great and glorious master, and so long as Enthusiasm lives in a Cause great and noble characters will be born, for there is an heroic age in every cause; and curious to relate, as history at every turn shows us, it does not matter much what the fulcrum is upon which the lever of Enthusiasm works, so long as we are in love with it; and that it is only when Enthusiasm, love, Eros—the Seeking for the Unobtainable Ideal, the "Unknown God," dies—that a cause becomes ignoble like Christianity are become. But because many in this particular religion are now falling, it does not necessarily follow that all in every religion invariably fell, or will fall; it is ignoble to mutilate the dead, and it does not follow because now our part of the battle-field is covered with rotting corpses that never a hero stood before us, and that religious corruption was always the order of the day.

Every young religion has done some good, every old religion has done some harm, is worth thinking on.

To my humble mind religion is the direct consciousness of God on the part of an Atheist. That is to say that the truly religious man sees such an Infinite Vastness in his ideal, that to him it is beyond his finite attainments; it is, in fact, Unobtainable, beyond all word or description; to name it is a blasphemy; but that, nameless though it be, he is directly conscious of it with his mind.

This position of mine may be a mystical one; but the Mysticism that knows there is No-Thing is not far removed if removed at all, from the Atheism that knows there is No-God.

Life is but a little circle of ups and downs, of petty failures and, seemingly, great successes. What is behind it? To me there is No-Thing, yet I feel a grandeur in being allowed, may I say, to wander a few years about this wonderful and glorious world; and the more I wander and wonder the more I feel there is no fixed religion, no fixed morality, but love, joy, and the will to live. A little more thought, a little more insight, and a few more changes of colored spectacles (why not look with your own eyes in place of relying on the aid of the opticians?), and "Simple Sandy" might be a great man, ranking with St. Francis, Paine, Renan, or Bradlaugh.

Hermia's "O hell! to choose love by another's eye" is a fitting ending to this over-long letter which opened with

the words of her temporary rival—so let it be with all of us; for if we would only abandon other people's moral eyesight I believe we should all see straight, and not squint at each other as we are, apparently, so liable to do.

ATHEIST.

Grabow, Mecklenburg, Germany.

### A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A reader of yours has sent me a copy of the paper in which, under the heading of "Acid Drops," is a paragraph devoted to a notice of an unfortunate gentleman who had been found wandering while of unsound mind, and was stated to be a Christian Scientist on apparently the delightfully sufficient grounds that some Christian Science literature was found in his house. The paragraph is carefully marked with blue pencil, from which I gather that the sender either hopes that I shall be crushed by the weight of evidence that Christian Science produces insanity, or is thirsting to learn my opinion on the subject. He is quite welcome to the latter, though whether he ever gets it or not will depend entirely on you.

I should say, then, that the possession of literature was not exactly irrefutable evidence that you have accepted the doctrines contained in it. I gather from your continued references to the subject that a considerable amount of Christian Science literature must, at one time or another, have come into your hands, but I do not imagine that this would constitute much proof that you were a Christian Scientist. Here am I, at the present moment, in possession of incriminating evidence in the shape of a copy of the *Freethinker*. As a matter of fact, the gentleman in question was not a Christian Scientist, and had no connection with the Christian Science movement.

FREDERICK DIXON.

[Mr. Dixon knows his business well as advertiser-in-chief of the movement he officially represents. His ingenious cobwebs, however, are blown to the winds by the simple statement that it was not *we* who "stated" that the man was a Christian Scientist, but the witnesses at the inquest. Fortunately our paragraph stands to prove this.—EDITOR.]

### THE POWER OF THE CROSS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Re your "Acid Drop" of last week on the power of the cross in connection with *The Proud Prince*. I have seen the play, and I saw the cross most effectively used as a weapon of offence. A man is knocked down and killed, in the play, with one blow, by means of a cross taken straight from the altar. The paralysing effect of the blow from such a weapon was apparent to all, for the actor neither spoke nor moved again. However, it may be observed that there is nothing particularly novel in the use of the cross as an aggressive weapon of offence; but its crushing effect seemed to be fully appreciated by the audience, for the stroke was as roundly applauded as any incident in the play.

By the way, have you seen the *Life of Father Ignatius*, by the Baroness de Bertouch, published by Methuen? It contains some very questionable matter re the "Bradlaugh" debate at the Hall of Science—pages 461-574—that may be not altogether unworthy of your attention.

A. HOPKINS.

### FREETHOUGHT IN HUNGARY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In this week's (Sept. 26) issue of your delightful paper I see in your "Acid Drops" on the authority of the *Christian Commonwealth* the assertion that there are 130,000 Socialists in Hungary, and that these are at the same time Atheists. I do not know where the *Christian Commonwealth* has got the figure from, but I venture to say that this figure is highly exaggerated. Professing Socialists are fewer in Hungary than in any other European country in comparison. But while Socialism is looked upon by Hungarian thinkers as a sort of German dry-as-dust idea and finds but few followers, Freethought is making rapid strides indeed.

You will be interested to know that in Hungary not only Socialists boast of being Freethinkers, even men like Francis Kossuth, the present Minister of Commerce and leader of the majority in the Hungarian Parliament, does not find it derogatory to himself or hurtful to his political position to announce from the housetops that he is a Freethinker. Freethought lectures and Freethought lecturers are not looked down upon by anybody in Hungary; on the contrary, they are considered as something only fit for people who

have discarded their crutches. If in Hungary a so-called scientist were to try to minimise scientific results in order to fit them into the theory of miracles the whole Hungarian press would laugh him to death; even the religious papers would titter over it.

I may also mention as an illustration of Hungarian progress towards Freethought that in Hungary papers in the position of the *Times*, *Morning Post*, or any other leading journal would gladly publish articles printed in your fine paper, such as those beautifully written articles which are a source of delight to your readers. On the other hand, no Hungarian leading paper would print (much less spend on getting it cabled over from New York) whether Mrs. Eddy has or has not added something to Christian Science. May I add that the Salvation Army could not possibly take root in Hungary? The first public appearance would be sufficient to create genuine mirth over the "Blood and Fire" idea.

M. STEINBERGER.

### JAMES MILL ON RELIGION.

My father's rejection of all that is called religious belief was not, as many might suppose, primarily a matter of logic intellectual. He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness. His intellect spurned the subtleties by which men attempt to blind themselves to this open contradiction. The Sabæan, or Manichæan theory of a Good and an Evil Principle, struggling against each other for the government of the universe, he would not have equally condemned; and I have heard him express surprise that no one revived it in our time. He would have regarded it as a mere hypothesis; but he would have ascribed to it no depraving influence. As it was, his aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term, was of the same kind with that of Lucretius; he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality: first, by setting up fictitious excellences—belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies, not connected with the good of human-kind—and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues; but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful. I have a hundred times heard him say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.—*John Stuart Mill*, "Autobiography," pp. 39-41.

An act is really not vicious because it is prohibited, or virtuous because it conforms to the dictates of authority. When man attains to intellectual maturity he smiles at the ethical trick which was played upon his youthful ignorance. It is not sufficient to tell him that he must do this, and must not do that. He requires a reason. His intelligence must go hand in hand with his emotions. It is this union, indeed, which constitutes what we call conscience.—*G. W. Foote*, "The Book of God."

### UNINTELLIGIBLE PRAYERS.

Two Irishmen were discussing the earthquake at Messina. "Fwat a turrible thing it 'ud be, Pat, if we had an airthquake in poor disthressed owld Oireland."

"Sure, we should niver have an airthquake in Oireland. The Oirish are such a prayin' people."

"But the Oitalians are a prayin' people too. Haven't they got his Howliness the Powpe livin' among them? The Oitalians are always prayin'."

"Yis, begorra, but who would undherstand thim, Pat? When they shtarted gibberin' in Oitalian, how would the blissid saints undherstand fwat they wanted. Ye couldn't till whither they were prayin' agin an airthquake, or askin' for wan."

### The Boulter Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £25 4s. 6d. W. Bell, 5s.; M. Morris, 4s.—N. J. EVANS (Hon. Treasurer), 122 City-road, E.C.

The Fund will close on October 5 in order that next week's *Freethinker* may contain the final subscriptions and total amount.

**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.**

**INDOOR.**

ST. JAMES'S HALL (Great Portland-street, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Origin and Decay of God."

**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Is it Safe to Believe?"

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Jesus at the Trade Union Congress."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, E. C. Saphin, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Seven Sisters' Corner): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Is it Safe to Believe?"

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Coffee House, Bull Ring). Thursday, Oct. 7, at 8, F. C. Berkeley, "The Budget Proposals of Thomas Paine."

GLASGOW (Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote, 12 (noon), "The Moral Failure of Christianity"; 6.30, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life—in Hamlet, etc."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "How Will the World End?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Freethought Five Centuries B.C. and Now"; 6.30, "New Light on Materialism." Tea at 5.

**OUTDOOR.**

NOTTINGHAM (Great Market-place): 7.30, R. Hanson, "The Origin and Growth of the Christian Religion."

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