

# THE Freethinker

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*Prisoners, whose chain had but been lengthened, we boasted ourselves emancipated and free because we found ourselves able to move around the column to which we were bound.*—MAZZINI.

## The New Atheism.

THE Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple, is not lacking in self-appreciation, and there is no reason why he should be. Self-appraisal is, however, an extremely delicate performance, as innumerable instances might be cited in proof. Not long ago, Mr. Campbell stated that physical science implies the doctrine of the Trinity. "Perhaps this would be news to Professor Ray Lankester, and such as he," he said, "but I think I could convince them that I am right, if I had them face to face." In a sermon that appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth* for April 20, he addresses himself specially to those who "have ceased to believe in, or cannot realise that there is such a thing as, the love of God," who "do not even know if there is any God to love anybody," or who would say that "the world does not present many tokens of his existence." Mr. Campbell's confident message to such doubters is: "Well, I can demonstrate to you that you do know God, and that to speak of his love is no sentimentality, but a faithful reading of the book of life." His claim virtually is that he knows Atheists far better than they know themselves. So far is that claim from being true that we are obliged to characterise it as a piece of impertinence of the most offensive kind. It is a habit with Mr. Campbell to act as a self-appointed and infallible judge of the real contents of other people's minds; and naturally the habit grows upon him and makes him its slave. It is now as irresistible with him as breathing to say to Atheists, most of whom he has never seen: "You imagine that you sincerely disbelieve in the existence of the Divine Being; but I am here for the purpose of telling you that you are laboring under a woeful delusion. I can demonstrate to you, not only that you are not Atheists, but that you actually know God and his wondrous love as revealed in the Eternal Christ."

Before examining Mr. Campbell's alleged demonstration let us consider some of his characteristic admissions. He admits, for example, that on the face of it, the saying is perfectly true that the present age "has lost touch with God." It is an age of scientific investigation and religious doubt, an age in which society is being rapidly secularised. This is seen in the steady falling-off in church and chapel attendance. The people generally are losing interest in religious rites and ceremonies. During the last four years the Wesleyan Church has suffered a decline of 10,000 in the numbers of its communicating members; and most of the other denominations have gone back in a similar way. Mr. Campbell refers to "the marked difference between the language employed by Oliver Cromwell and his contemporaries in Parliament and that of Mr. Balfour or Mr. Asquith at the present day." He says:—

"The former was full of references to the Almighty; the latter—well, is not. Nor is the difference merely one of form. Puritan England lived habitually in the presence of God, was sure of him, invoked him in all its affairs; twentieth century England thinks and feels otherwise. When Cromwell was turning out the Long

Parliament by force he declared to the members: 'I have sought the Lord night and day that he would not put upon me the doing of this thing.' Imagine Mr. Asquith making a similar confession concerning his campaign against the House of Lords! And if you get back behind Protestantism to mediæval Catholicism you find much the same thing. People in general lived in an atmosphere of piety, which is rare nowadays."

The meaning of this admission is, not merely that the present age has lost touch with God, but that God has lost touch with the present age. In the exact proportion in which man is forsaking God, God also is abandoning man. If the Bible God existed such a state of things would be impossible.

The second admission made by the City Temple minister is that, on the whole, Christianity has done very little, if any, good in the world. He declares that the "seemingly far-off world in which the New Testament was produced was in certain ways really nearer to us, had closer affinities with our habit of mind, than the world that succeeded it, the world which knew but one faith, the unquestioned faith inculcated and enforced by the authority of the Christian Church," and that "even the Reformation made no great difference in this respect." Such a confession, made by a Christian minister, takes our breath away. Is Mr. Campbell aware of the real import of such a confession? Does he know that, by implication, it denies the Divine origin and character of the Church, gives the lie to some of the most solemn utterances attributed to Jesus, and implies the non-existence of the three persons in the Holy Trinity? From this conclusion there is no logical escape. In other words, Mr. Campbell is himself, inferentially, a teacher of the very Atheism he abhors. There is no getting away from the fact that to arraign the Church is to impeach the Holy Ghost. For whatever the Church does or neglects to do its Head must be held responsible. Mr. Campbell maintains that almost from the beginning the Church has totally misunderstood and misrepresented the inner meaning of Christianity; but if that is true, what about the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, whom Jesus promised to send immediately after his own departure, and who, when he came, was to guide the Church "into all the truth," and "convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment"? If, therefore, the Church has perverted the truth entrusted to her custody, it proves that Jesus neither revealed the Father nor sent the Holy Ghost; or, in other words, that Jesus was not what the New Testament represents him to have been. This is, of course, a point which never occurs to Mr. Campbell in his vehement indictment of the orthodox Church.

Instead of courageously facing the only real issue the reverend gentleman envelops himself in emotional vapor. Listen to him:—

"The typical mind of to-day is the Agnostic, the mind that disclaims positive knowledge of the reality behind all the phantasmagoria that we call life. We are not so sure as our Christian forbears were that we can interpret the ways of God. But can we not be sure of *himself*? I affirm that we can, and there is only one way to do it. Live the love of Christ which passeth knowledge—that is, which transcends the categories of the intellect—and you are living the life eternal, which is the knowledge of God."

This is sentimentalism carried to its most absurd extreme. The love of Christ is a Pauline invention,



a theological figment, doing service in connection with the various speculative interpretations of the death of Jesus. No one knows this better than Mr. Campbell does. In Paul's view, which is not the view now cherished at the City Temple, Christ's love expressed itself in his dying for the salvation of a race that lay under the wrath of God. Christ loved a lost world, and on the cross offered himself as a ransom for its redemption. That is to say, apart from the theology which Mr. Campbell repudiates, we know absolutely nothing about the love of Christ. Therefore, when a man, using Pauline phrases in a non-Pauline sense, urges his hearers to "live the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," and assures them that by so living they shall know God, we must reluctantly inform him that he is recklessly trifling with words, or talking arrant nonsense. The Pauline "love of Christ which passeth knowledge" is a radically different thing from the love which the Gospel Jesus is supposed to have inculcated as a human duty; and this love has been enjoined, in its main features, by every great teacher from Confucius and Buddha down to our down day. Which of the two forms of love does Mr. Campbell mean?

And thus we come at last to his demonstration of the proposition that Atheists actually know God, though they do not believe in him. He pictures his hearers in possession of the knowledge of some great love, mother's, wife's, or sister's. Then he expatiates on the mystery and wonderfulness of a woman's love. His delineation of it is profoundly true and very beautiful. Here is a man who is down on his luck. His old friends and acquaintances, one by one, have dropped him, and he feels bitter towards all of them. But there is still one woman who believes in him, and clings to him, overshadowing him with the mantle of her deathless love. Now, to this imaginary victim of misfortune and folly, Mr. Campbell says:—

"You scorn the suggestion that there is such a thing as the love of God; if there be a God, you think, he is mercilessly trampling on you. Look again, I command you, and bow your head in penitence and shame. It is the love of God with which you are dealing at first hand in the limitless loyalty of the brave woman who is standing by your side though all the world has forsaken you. And that response of which you are conscious, that feeling of respect and regard for her which is rising in your heart, poor and meagre though it be, is the love of God seeking to possess you wholly and conform you to the image of Christ."

Such is the new Atheism, for the above teaching is logically entitled to no other name. To love and be loved is to know nothing but love. In no other sense can love be identified with knowledge. "Never say you do not know God," Mr. Campbell says to the doubter; "you do." Nevertheless, love is not an expression of God, but a product of evolution. Time was when the Universe was without it. Primarily, love is nothing but sexual attraction. Its roots are in the vegetable kingdom, where it exists and works, probably, quite unconscious of itself. In the simplest and lowest animals it is still nothing but the instinctive drawing of male and female towards each other; and as we trace the ascent of life through countless ages we can watch the gradual evolution of love until we see it at its highest and best in the human race. But even in its human form it was at first almost exclusively synonymous with sexual affinity. It is only among the most advanced of civilised nations that it has matured into a passion that has more or less transcended its sexual barriers. And yet the highest and noblest love known, even to Mr. Campbell, is the unselfish love of a woman for a man. Then, without any warrant except that of discredited theology, he assures us that this human love is the love of God, and on the basis of that dogmatic assurance he informs us that we, convinced Atheists and Agnostics though we be, know God. We return the compliment, and firmly declare that, on his own showing, Mr. Campbell, disguised as a Theist, is sowing broadcast the seeds of Atheism. Why not fling the disguise away and join the Freethought army?

J. T. LLOYD.

### Puritanism and Progress.—III.

(Continued from p. 260.)

THE essential aim of Puritanism was truly expressed by Carlyle as the resolve "To see God's own law universally acknowledged for complete as it stood in the holy Written Book, made good in this world." So far, true; but this can never mean in practice more than an individual's own opinion of what is "God's own law." And that always has meant, and always will mean, tyranny in the State and intolerance in private life. I do not deny either the logic or the inevitability, from the Christian point of view, of such an attempt. On the contrary, it is almost a necessity. It is an endeavor that religious people are bound to make sooner or later, foredoomed to failure though it may be. Historically, there have been three attempts in the world's history to govern a State in accordance with what people thought to be "God's own law"—one Græco-Catholic, the other two Protestant. The first attempt, as Lecky points out, was made in the ancient Byzantium—our modern Constantinople. The city was refashioned by the first Christian Emperor. The new religion was supported by all the force and all the wealth of the State. It professed to derive its morality, its inspiration, its whole rule of life from Christian sources. And with what result. I will let Lecky supply the answer. He is dealing with the Christian period exclusively.

"Of that Byzantine Empire the universal verdict of history is that it constitutes, with scarce an exception, the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed.....There has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all the forms and elements of greatness, and none to which the epithet *mean* may be so emphatically applied.....Its vices were the vices of men who had ceased to be brave without learning to be virtuous.....The history of the Empire is a monotonous story of the intrigues of priests, eunuchs, and women, of poisonings, of conspiracies, of uniform ingratitude, of perpetual fratricide. After the conversion of Constantine there was no prince in any section of the Roman Empire altogether so depraved, or at least so shameless, as Nero or Heliogabalus; but the Byzantine Empire can show none bearing the faintest resemblance to Antonine or Marcus Aurelius, while the nearest approximation to that character was furnished by the Emperor Julian, who contemptuously rejected the Christian faith. At last the Mohammedan invasion terminated the long decrepitude of the Eastern Empire. Constantinople sank beneath the Crescent, its inhabitants wrangling about theological differences to the very moment of their fall."

Next in order came the establishment of Calvin in Geneva. From about 1540 to 1740 Calvinism ruled in Geneva. Every detail of life was regulated by the Gospel according to John Calvin. A profession of religion was incumbent upon all, and not alone was a public confession required, but ministers were empowered to visit people's houses and inquire into the state of their faith. Gaiety became a crime. Women were imprisoned for dancing, and men for disrespect towards ministers of religion. Conformity in religion was secured, and during its maintenance the higher mental life of Geneva remained an intellectual blank. While France, Italy, and England were each bearing their share in the task of scientific research and discovery, Geneva remained dumb beneath its attempt to govern a people in accordance with "God's own law." Not a single scientific name appears, while one that ventured to visit the city—Servetus—was burned, with green faggots, to vindicate the glory of God. Even on its favorite ground of moral discipline, the effect of Calvinism was bad. It secured an outward and hypocritical conformity at the expense of a really healthy moral sense. The case is well put by one Genevese writer:—

"To those who imagine that Calvin did nothing but good, I could produce our registers, covered with records of illegitimate children, which were exposed in all parts of the town and country; hideous trials for obscenity; wills in which fathers and mothers accuse their children not only of errors but of crimes.....I could instance multitudes of forced marriages, in which the delin-



quents were conducted from the prison to the church; mothers who abandoned their children to the hospital, whilst they themselves lived in abundance with a second husband; bundles of law suits between brothers; heaps of secret negotiations; men and women burnt for witchcraft; sentences of death in frightful numbers; and all these things among the generations nourished by the mystic name of Calvin.\*

This in a place to which the English Puritans looked longingly and enviously, and of which John Knox said, "Elsewhere, the Word of God is taught as purely, but never anywhere have I seen God obeyed so faithfully."

The third and last, not only the last, but, in all probability, the final attempt to run a State on Christian principles, is that of Puritanism in England. With several aspects of this I have already dealt. The general moral results have yet to be noticed. And here one has to fight against the most obstinate of prejudices. The world has been so long imposed on by the religious picture of the typical Puritan that it has become quite attached to the imposture. He has been drawn as an austere person of pronounced and upright character, purifying life by his intense moral fervor and inspiring it to higher flights by his strong religious convictions; an earnest champion of right and a fearless opponent of wrong, from whom the English people derive their best elements of strength and independence. This conception of Puritanism has been fostered, it seems to me, for two reasons. Dissenters—who pose as their descendants—reap a certain self-glorification in idealising their reputed ancestors. Other Christians, because of the obvious awkwardness of not discovering a great, even though abused, good in something so obviously Christian, have also encouraged belief in this myth. And once the myth is established, writer follows writer, either through sheer carelessness or because of a characteristic timidity that prevents so many authors running counter to a generally received opinion.

How writers of repute are blinded by this tradition a merely cursory examination of John Richard Green's statements has shown. That much the same actions that people praise seventeenth century Puritanism for have been done elsewhere in the absence of Puritanism, is a consideration that either never strikes such writers, or, if it does, it fails to exert any pronounced influence. Because the men who won the battles of Naseby and Marston Moor sang hymns and said prayers, therefore their courage was the outcome of Puritanism. But many of the Royalist leaders and soldiers also indulged in religious devotions before battle. Or to take other instances, the men who won at Agincourt or Crecy were certainly not conspicuous for either prayers or hymn singing, nor in more recent times have our soldiers gone into battle with religious phrases on their lips. People have opposed wrong and championed right who were the very reverse of Puritan in opinion and temper. In the French Revolution of 1789, in the struggle for Italian freedom, in the attempt to liberate the life of Russia from the crushing weight of Church and Czar, there was, and is, no trace of the essentially Puritanical temper. And one's conception of human nature would certainly be poorer than it is were such spectacles impossible without the incentive of an essentially irrational supernaturalism.

The things for which the Puritans are praised bear a very different aspect after a careful examination. I have already pointed out that, so far as the temper of the Puritans and their religious opponents was concerned, there is little fundamental distinction. At bottom they were aiming at the same thing, and that is at something which the modern mind has simply ceased to care about. Between the people who attach a vital importance to the use of religious forms such as vestments, the position of the altar, etc., and those who attach an equal importance to their destruction, there is little or no distinguishable difference. For the religious practices opposed by

the Puritans were not opposed because they were either unreasonable or the symbol of social injustice; this aspect of the case was either secondary or ignored. They were opposed because they were *religiously* objectionable, and this could only be done by people who attached as great an importance to religious posturing and religious formulas as did the most extreme Roman Catholic or the most ardent Episcopalian. The real representatives of the Puritans in this direction is not the present liberalising Dissenter, who pleads for a unity of religious faith underlying theological differences; he is a product of modern iconoclastic religious criticism. Their real representatives to-day are, religiously, fanatics of the Kensitite description.

So, also, with the Puritan attack on certain social customs. When we read of the Puritan outcry against certain "immoralities," we are inclined to give the word its modern value. And in some cases this may be justifiable; for, as one writer remarks, when the Puritans set out to reform the Church they took the world by the way, with the result that they inevitably denounced real evils along with imaginary ones. All the same, Macaulay's already quoted remark as to the grounds of the Puritan objection to bear-baiting goes deeper than at first sight appears. For, in denouncing admitted evils, the ground was often a religious, not a moral, one. Thus, in condemning the use of the Maypole, Philip Stubbes, in his *Anatomy of Abuses*, does so because it is a "stinckyng idol," which the people "leape and daunce aboute, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idoles." So, again, with gambling. To the Puritan, the chief offence in gambling was one of profanity. Casting lots was "an appeal unto God," and games of chance were sinful because there was "an appeal unto God" in matters of trifling value. Or, as it was solemnly said, cards and dice were sinful because in their use "that great and solemn ordinance of a Lott is expressly and directly abused and prophaned." Finally, over all stands the Puritan objection to healthy pleasures—asceticism more comprehensive even than that taught by the Roman Catholic Church—which could not fail to intensify by reaction even the real evils against which it properly protested.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

### Useless Miracles.

IN the light of modern Science, a rational thinker cannot for a moment find any room in his view of Nature for miracles. A miracle, to him, is not only something that does not happen to-day, but something which any believer in universal causation must hold to be an absolute impossibility. On one occasion we heard the late Charles Bradlaugh define a miracle as "Something which had not happened in the past, did not happen in the present, and was not likely to happen in the future"; and, for all practical purposes, that is as good a definition of a miracle as one need have.

As John Stuart Mill has well pointed out, in Nature there is a permanent and a changeable element; but man knows nothing of the permanent element in itself, he merely takes cognisance of the changeable or phenomenal element. In other words, he knows only phenomena, and he finds that each phenomenon is in itself an effect and a cause in a never-ending chain of causes and effects, and for a miracle to happen would mean the breaking of this interminable chain, which, to a rational thinker, seems an absurdity. In the light of this reasoning let us examine some of the alleged Christian miracles. Putting aside some of the Old Testament miracles, such as Noah's Flood, the Confusion of Tongues at the "Tower of Babel," the extraordinary conduct of the talkative donkey of the Prophet Balaam, the sun that stood still at the command of a Jewish general, the whale that swallowed a prophet whole and kept

\* Quoted in Dr. Henry's *Life of Calvin*, ii., 73, note.



him inside for three days and three nights, while the prophet offered up prayers of unendurable length, the fire that refused to burn three prophets—setting these aside as being too absurd for serious consideration, let us come at once to the alleged miracles of Jesus as recorded in the Four Gospels. It is alleged that the performance of these miracles demonstrated not only the infinite power of Jesus, but also his great goodness. Suppose, for the sake of argument, these miracles were really performed; suppose that Jesus actually did make the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dead to come out of their graves, the question we have to consider is, what utility was there in these performances when considered in relation to the world as we know it to-day.

Take, first, the case of the blind man who came to Jesus and besought him to open his sightless eyes. It was a reasonable request, and we are told that Jesus complied with it most cheerfully. We need not inquire too closely into the method of the performance; let that be taken for granted. Jesus merely used a little clay as material. He stuck this upon the patient's eyes. Gradually the poor man's eyes opened. The rays of light fell upon them. He saw things dimly; to his imperfect vision trees had the appearance of men walking. Gradually, however, the thin veil that obscured the sight was drawn aside, the rays of light fell upon the eye, penetrating the cornea, and at length reaching the retina; the whole picture of the surrounding scenery was reproduced upon the background of the eye: the man saw, and rejoiced! A wonderful performance, indeed, if it ever happened! We are not, however, questioning its performance; all we are asking is, what was its utility? The first observation I will make is this. If it was a good thing for Jesus to open the eyes of one blind man, surely it would have been better if he had opened the eyes of all the blind men in the neighborhood, or all who were willing to come to him for assistance? If that be so, is it not strange that when Jesus had wrought this wonderful change on the man that Jesus should then, in express terms, adjure him that wheresoever he went he should be careful that he should tell no man how this marvellous result had been brought about, or by whom? It may be said that Jesus did not wish it to be generally known that he possessed the power of restoring sight to the blind. But why not? Was he afraid that all the blind in the neighborhood, and all those who were in any way afflicted, would come and beseech him to cure them? And why should they not? If it is a kind or merciful or useful act to cure one that is blind, is it not more kind, more merciful, to cure a thousand? What would be said of a man who, having once done a generous act, should rest satisfied and declare that, having demonstrated his power to do good, he would do no more lest he should be pestered to death by persons anxious to receive benefit? Or what should we think of a surgeon who, having discovered how to cure a disease by a simple operation, should refuse to cure more than one person on the ground that, if he did, his practice would become so great that he would be unable to cope with all the demands upon his time and talent?

Moreover, if Jesus were really God, as it is alleged, and possessed supernatural power, why should he be so anxious to conceal the knowledge of this power from the people? Surely he was not afraid of winning too many followers, or of giving poor sufferers an opportunity of testing his powers? And if he were really afraid, then it must have been because he considered it a greater merit in a person to believe without ocular demonstration than with it. It may be acknowledged at once that restoring the sight of one blind man would be undoubtedly a useful action; but he who could perform such a wonder must have had the power to restore the sight of thousands. And it must be remembered that if Jesus were God, he was the author of all blind eyes, and it was incumbent upon him as a duty to restore the sight of them all.

Then let us consider another of his alleged miracles. He is said to have fed five thousand hungry persons on five loaves and a few small fishes, and after the repast his followers gathered up twelve baskets of fragments. Well now, if Jesus were capable of performing such a miracle two thousand years ago, how is it that he does not perform similar miracles when there are thousands of unemployed who need assistance and fail to get it? Why does Jesus leave the poor, wretched outcasts who congregate night after night on the Thames Embankment to the tender mercy of private charity, or to such organisations as the Church Army or the Salvation Army?—which are supported by all sorts and conditions of men, many of whom neither believe in the creed they preach nor the policy they adopt in reference to these poor, unfortunate waifs and strays. And if Jesus were God and existed to-day, as all Christians are bound to believe that he does, and if he deliberately willed that only those who "helped themselves" should survive, and all others should slowly but surely be pressed out of existence, often by a very cruel and painful process, should we not be right in saying that such a God as that would be worthy, not of respect, but of the execration of all honest men?

The performance of Jesus in walking upon the sea without Boyton boots would, no doubt, be interesting enough to the spectators, but what useful purpose it could serve would be hard to determine. Jesus is said to have cured one lunatic; some doctors of the present day have cured dozens; while some of the teachings of Jesus have since led to the production of thousands of cases of insanity. But perhaps the most useless as well as the most irrational of the miracles of Jesus was that in which he cursed a fig tree and caused it to wither away simply because it did not bear fruit out of season. What a senseless act for a wise and good and kind God to perform!

Surely it would have been more wise and more useful for Jesus to have caused the fig tree to have borne fruit out of season than for him to have launched forth a curse, which the tree could neither hear nor understand, but which nevertheless had such an effect upon its sensitive constitution that it immediately withered away.

Some people still affirm that these stories are true; and at all events that they believe them. Well, if such events ever happened, all we can say is that we not only doubt their wisdom, but we deny their utility.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### "Shall We now Apply Christianity to the Public Provision for the Poor?"

ON Sunday afternoon, April 17, I went to Whitefield's Church to hear Mrs. Sidney Webb's address on the above subject. We are all grateful to this lady for her work in the cause of social and industrial reform. Probably no one else in England, except her distinguished husband, can lay claim to so wide a knowledge of the problems which she has investigated.

I must say, however, that I was quite unable to see the connection between Christianity and the views which Mrs. Sidney Webb put forward for the gradual abolition of poverty. She stated that we are now able, owing to the spread of Christianity, to apply methods that were previously not available. Surely the assertion that Christianity is spreading is contradicted by plain and easily ascertainable facts. And though Mrs. Webb several times used the words "Christ's love and prevention," she did not once quote directly from the New Testament. Now the Churches have for centuries been citing their charitable work as one of their special claims to support, but the system of merely relieving distress is just what Mrs. Webb does not advocate. Sometimes this claim of the Churches has been emphasised in such a peculiar way as to make it difficult for one hearing the remarks of leading Christians on their achievements in the slums, and amid the social



wreckage found in all Christian countries, to avoid the conclusion that these men regard pauperism as an ineliminable element in the body politic, and are so enamored of the soup-kitchen that they prefer a combination of that institution and slum to a system under which both would be non-existent. To say this does not imply that those Christians who have tried to relieve poverty and suffering have not been actuated by a genuine sympathy. In all countries that have reached any stage of social development some attention has been given to the destitute. Christians, with characteristic arrogance, often assert that charity, in any proper sense of the word, was unknown before the advent of their religion. But scanty as is our knowledge of social life in Greece and Rome, and difficult as it is to draw comparisons owing to the differences between their economic conditions and our own, there is abundant evidence that the necessitous were sheltered and fed in Athens, while Lecky (*European Morals*) speaks in laudatory terms of the unemotional philanthropy of the Roman Stoics, and gives instances of private and public efforts to help the poor. Christian charity, indeed, was much less meritorious, because it was considered a means of grace, and the Catholic Church laid great stress on this theological aspect of alms-giving.

But the consciousness of the community is growing beyond charity. Among the poorest we find some who resent being philanthropised, who feel vaguely, or in many cases, perhaps, clearly, that pauperism is the natural concomitant of extreme wealth, and that the rich idler does no more good to the community than the indigent idler. Infamous agitators, often entirely devoid of the gentle influence of the Divine Democrat—I thank certain Labor advocates for this phrase, which looks so imposing in capitals—who said, "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," have helped considerably to further these unorthodox views concerning the almshouse and soup-kitchen. I may mention that one gentleman on Sunday prayed for the "realisation of Christ's kingdom on earth." What is the meaning of "Christ's kingdom," and how long have we been listening to this talk about establishing it on earth? "For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always" is not uttered as a reproach, as Christians sometimes assert. If the words are not meant as a sanction for the existence of poverty, they have at least acted as such by impressing upon the mind the idea that in our miserable world "these things must be." For the goal of true Christianity is the salvation of the soul, the goal of Humanism is the attainment of mental freedom—that is, of a self-reliant character. The whole emphasis of Christ's teaching is on the life after this, and his followers are, throughout the New Testament, exhorted to regard the chief good for which they can strive as existing in another world, and to keep their eyes fixed on that. Now we are told that we shall never abolish poverty until we alter the social environment, and the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, of which we have heard so much lately, is practically a plea for empowering local Health Boards and other public authorities to apply the principle of prevention, that we may not go on year after year producing new destitution and then relieving it. But where does Christianity come in? No one will ever tell us precisely the social order under which Jesus Christ intended that men should live, though his followers are always asserting that he could not have desired this or that state of things; and yet they have no authority to go beyond the New Testament. Mrs. Webb expressed her belief that the day will come when men will look back upon poverty as a thing of the past as absolutely as slavery is now a thing of the past. But the reference to the abolition of slavery in an address on the application of Christianity to the provision for the poor was hardly happy. Jesus Christ nowhere condemns slavery, because the compilers of the New Testament were habituated to the system. In most of the passages in the New Testament where the word *servant* occurs in the English version, the

original Greek is *doulos*—i.e., *slave*. Such texts as the following, "Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh" (Eph. vi. 5), and "Let as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" (1 Tim. vi. 1) would have a strange sound to modern ears, possibly to those of the gentlemen who attend Whitefield's. The truth is, just as the Church offered no opposition to the institution of slavery, her dignitaries often supporting it with texts from both the Old Testament and the New, until the consciences of men were awakened by those who were in many cases unbelievers, when, of course, professional clerics saw clearly that slavery was anti-Christian, so the social and political questions now being pressed home to the attention of all of us often did not seriously influence the minds of the faithful till others had prepared the way and social reformers began to despise Christ's other-worldism. and to seek a remedy for distress outside the Church. True, Christianity as a solution of social problems has been tried, and has failed. Failure was inevitable. The Christian and the Humanist world-views are as irreconcilable as Genesis and Geology. The Humanist finds in this life not only the highest, but the only, object of his work and reverence, whereas the Christian view, in any honestly accepted interpretation, is that our highest object of regard is the salvation of the soul, which can only be effected through one channel—a Savior sent from God. No teaching could enslave the mind more effectually; and, while the mind is enslaved, there can be no reform worth having. Is it any wonder that we hear on all sides complaints that the best-intentioned efforts to aid the necessitous are defeating their own ends and intensifying the evils they were meant to mitigate by weakening men's sense of responsibility and manhood? It seems to me—and I say it without wishing to be offensive—that Christ himself is a deadly enemy of mental freedom when he condemns unbelief and urges us to look to a Father in heaven, and that that is one reason why whatever good his followers have tried to do has been inextricably entangled with what is worthless, and why the reconciling and reconstructing Christendom of today, with its thousands of nominal adherents, cannot point to a single country or a single individual that is distinctively Christian, or give an exact statement or clear likeness of what Christianity is, notwithstanding that it has the effrontery to declare this religion superior to every other, and to spend vast energy and resources in trying to convert Buddhists, Confucians, Hindus, and others who have developed under conditions free from many of the bad features and influences under which the would-be converters were themselves born and bred. It would be better for the cause of reform if all social workers frankly admitted that the teachings of Christ are antagonistic to the new ideas, and ceased the conventional repetition of formulas about the "realisation of Christ's kingdom on earth," refusing even the semblance of support to a system which, though on the wane, may be bolstered up in the guise of Christian Socialism and Campbellism, and thus promote insincerity and shallow thinking, and do more harm in one way than the ugly old dogmas.

A. D. MCLAREN.

You can completely abandon a philosophic doctrine, but you cannot break away absolutely from a collection of beliefs in which blind and literal faith has borne sway; there is always something left; you still carry the scars and marks from it as slaves who are freed still carry on their flesh the signs of their servitude. You are branded in the heart, you shall feel the effects of it always; you shall have moments of dread and shuddering, of mystic enthusiasm, of distrust of reason, of need to represent things as being other than they really are, to see what is not, and not to see what is. The fiction that was early forced upon your soul shall often seem to you sweeter than the sound and rugged truth you need to know; you shall hate yourself for the sin of knowledge.—N. J. Guyau, "The Non-Religion of the Future."



## Why We Forbear.

(By GEORGE MACDONALD, in the New York *Truthseeker*.)

A COMPLAINING subscriber writes: "I see no more the column headed 'The Christian Life.' What is the trouble?"

There is division of opinion about the policy of chronicling weekly the offences of priests and ministers. We are told that the clergy are after all only human, and that consequently perfection cannot be expected of them. We suppose they ought to have the benefit of that plea, although we notice it does not go with them when made in excuse of other people. They use the opportunities of their position in a way a man of the world would not, placing themselves somewhat below the ordinary run of humanity, and then condescendingly admit that they are only human. Were they as human as they ought to be they wouldn't do it.

We have decided to suspend these reports for a while; otherwise we might present the usual list of clerical delinquencies. We could report the case of the Rev. S. D. Robinson, pastor of the First Methodist Church of Herkimer, N. Y., anti-saloon worker and general moral uplifter, who betrayed the most attractive and beautiful girl in the village, Miss Abbie Haynes, aged nineteen, confessed under pressure, and left town with his distressed wife. The girl was a valued church worker. The pastor was active in an organization formed to prepare young men for missionary work.

We could, if we chose to go on with the recital, mention that the Rev. James Thomas, minister of the Christian Church, was last month brought back from Marion, Ind., to Piqua, Ohio, to answer to a charge of rape made upon Ruth Rumpel, a seven-year-old child. Obviously, however, it were better these things were left unsaid, and the feelings of the religious world spared the pain of hearing them.

On the same consideration we suppress the fact that but a few days ago half a dozen young women of Everett, Washington, confessed to criminal relations with the Rev. M. A. Casey, who has withdrawn from the Methodist ministry at Tacoma and gone to California with his family. We overlook in similar manner the offence of the Rev. Mr. Jones of Greenville, S. C., arrested on a warrant for the forcible seduction of his half-sister, Lily Holmes. The gentlemen are only human.

At Evansville, Indiana, the Rev. H. D. Helwig forged a cheque for \$50 on a local bank and collected the money while on his way to Clarksville to preach a trial sermon. The Rev. John A. Gray, Congregationalist, was arrested on a paternity warrant sworn out by a young thing in his flock. But as Helwig paid back \$2, and Gray settled with the girl on a pecuniary basis, we observe the charity of silence.

The Rev. Samuel Sturdevant, Bishop of the Holy Church of the Living God, Pillar of the Ground of Truth, and Leader of the Holy Ghosters in Baltimore, committed assault and battery on Mrs. Rose Demmerd, one of his white disciples, and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. He is colored, and therefore likely to be a little more human than the white preacher, according to the argument, and shall pass unnoticed.

We should be revealing secrets contained in a private letter and imparted in confidence were we to give publicity to the affair of the Rev. Dean O'Brien, of Sandy Hill, N. Y., and the school-teacher. We need not enter upon details. The victim of the priest's lust came to his house, where she met his sister, who acted as his housekeeper, and the latter beat her unmercifully and put her out upon the street. The priest has gone to Virginia. As the case was not reported in the newspapers, although a court trial was had, we also suppress it.

Here is a recent one from Oxford, Miss.: Will Vaughan is dying and three others are dead because Rev. James Owens, a Scotch Baptist, believing his crusade against sin had been useless, suddenly went insane. "I am going to put you out of the way of sin," he shouted, grasping a gun. He killed his wife and his sister-in-law, Sarah McCauley, fatally wounded Vaughan, and killed himself. The Rev. Owens was insane, but to state the fact that religion was the cause of his insanity would harm the faith.

A fool and his (or her) money is soon parted. While sick, Eva Gegorski, of St. Joseph, Missouri, paid a priest named Rakowski \$300 for masses for the repose of her soul. When she recovered he refused to refund the money, and Miss Gegorski is suing him. It is all in the Roman Catholic family, and outsiders are not interested.

We lack the time and the inclination to relate how the Rev. Victor M. Patterson, Congregationalist, Middletown, N. Y., married a girl in Iowa, who bore him a child, and then got entangled with a young woman in Brooklyn. The New York *Sun* recently gave the matter a column space, and saved us the trouble.

On our forbearance, as here manifested, we invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of the brotherhood of sky-pilots.

## Acid Drops.

If you see it in *John Bull*, it is so. Sometimes, however, it isn't so. This happened when the editor passed without comment a correspondent's remark that in the crusade against the Puritanical type of Sunday he hopes the editor will not "fall into the Secularist trap" and belittle the necessity for a day of rest. We do not know what exactly is meant by "the Secularist trap," but if *John Bull's* correspondent is under the impression that Secularists wish to do away with a day of rest each week, he is quite wide of the truth. Their policy would rather lie in the direction of extending it. What they have tried to do, and we are pleased to see *John Bull* following on the same lines, is to endeavor to give the people a real day of rest, and by opening avenues for desirable physical, mental, and moral recreation, convert the Sabbatarian's day of gloom and demoralisation into a day of health-giving activity.

"In the mercy of Providence," said Mr. Winston Churchill, in the course of a recent speech in the House of Commons, it was not within the power of the Conservatives to disturb South African affairs. Whereat the Opposition laughed, and the more pious M.P.'s were shocked. Well, we are not surprised at the laughter, and we wonder what on earth, or in heaven, Providence has to do with the matter. Does Mr. Churchill believe that the present Government was selected by "Providence," while the Conservative Government was there against its wishes? "Providence" certainly allowed things to get very badly mixed in South Africa, and a large number of lives were, by the grace of Providence, lost in trying to straighten them out again. Perhaps all there is in the remark is that Mr. Churchill, like an astute politician, thought that a touch of the "Barebones Parliament" element might not be taken amiss by his Nonconformist supporters.

The Rev. Charles Joseph pins his faith upon the next world. In this, many of us have been wronged, plotted and conspired against, or have had our claims overlooked, our rights denied, and our ambitions crushed; but in that which is to come the oppressed and defrauded servants of the Lord shall be completely vindicated and amply compensated. Once there, all mankind shall be either perfectly happy in heaven, or wholly miserable in hell. There are to be no middle classes in eternity. But Mr. Joseph forgets two important facts. In the first place, he omits to mention that both worlds are equally the creation of his God. The present world is admittedly a heart-breaking failure. This is acknowledged by all. Scarcely anybody gets his dues here. What guarantee has the reverend gentleman that the second world will be an improvement upon the first? The second fact ignored by Mr. Joseph is that the world to come exists only in fancy. It has never been an object of knowledge. We are only authorised to characterise it, in Shakespeare's words, as "that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns."

The leading article in the *Christian Commonwealth* for April 20, entitled "The Historicity of Jesus," is from the pen of the Rev. W. E. Orchard, D.D., minister of the Enfield Presbyterian Church. As is well known, Presbyterianism has always been noted for its unbending orthodoxy. But this article shows clearly that even Presbyterianism is obliged to move with the times, or is, at any rate, becoming more tolerant. Dr. Orchard boldly asserts that "when you come to the Gospels themselves it must be admitted that a mythological process has been at work, especially in the Fourth Gospel"; and this is, of course, equivalent to admitting that the Gospel Jesus cannot be regarded as an entirely historical person. Coming from a representative of one of the most conservative churches in Christendom, such a concession is most significant. It proves that orthodoxy itself is at last beginning to collapse.

Dr. Orchard draws a line of demarcation between the Gospel Jesus and the Pauline Christ. He says: "The Gospels have what may be called 'Pauline' elements; but the standing marvel is that, while written later than the Epistles, they have so wonderfully escaped Pauline influence." The only legitimate inference from that statement is that, while the Gospel Jesus is more or less historical, the Pauline Christ—the Christ worshiped by the orthodox Church—has no objective existence, but is a mere figment of the mind. And yet we are told that Christianity is not a superstition!

The real, historical Jesus, according to Dr. Orchard, was only a man, yet a man so full of God that, in the course of



time, men began to think of him as more than man. And, consequently, "the Evangelists proceeded upon the hypothesis that if God had been seen in Jesus then he must have had a miraculous entrance into the world, a supernatural career, and his personality must have been surrounded with a theological nimbus. Yet the Gospels reveal a figure who cares for none of these things." The inference from that statement is that men under the influence of the Pauline Christ made unsuccessful attempts to write the biography of the human Jesus, and so rendered it quite impossible for all future generations to discover what the human Jesus, if he ever lived, was really like. Does it not also inevitably follow, not only that the Pauline Christ is a myth, but that God himself is a purely mythical being, just as much the creation of the imagination as the Eternal Christ? And yet we are told that the New Theology has secured for Christianity a fresh lease of life!

What evidences there are of providential care, if only wicked Freethinkers would open their eyes and see them. Here is one of many such. A boating party set out from Musselburgh, and were seen to be in danger of drowning. Two seamen went out to their rescue, but were drowned through the boat they were in upsetting. The original boating party managed, after all, to get safely ashore. They will doubtless thank "Providence" for their rescue. If the two seamen had been more callous they might have gone to church with them and joined in the thanksgiving. Being what they were, "Providence" swooped down and rewarded them by translation to "another place," leaving their friends and relations to marvel at its inscrutable methods. The moral of the story is obvious, and its value lies in the application thereof.

Nothing is sacred to the company promoter—nor, we may add, to Christians—if there is a likelihood of a profitable investment. We have received a prospectus of "The Sinai Petroleum Syndicate," with a proposed capital of £14,300. There is no mention of the Jews—ancient or modern—in the prospectus. Perhaps they will appear later. The document reaches us with the endorsement "Holy Moses!" in red ink, but we assume this is not official.

Quite recently a Bill for the abolition of corporal punishment for children between ten and sixteen years of age was introduced in the House of Commons. We are not aware of any reason that will hold good for not beating children between ten and sixteen that will not hold with equal strength against beating children under ten; but, so far, the principle has our support. We would simply prefer the Bill to apply to children of all ages—certainly so far as public authorities and officials are concerned. What we desire to note now, however, is that this proposal has raised the ire of a Liverpool clergyman, who believes in the Solomonic advice of not sparing the rod in order to save the child. The Rev. J. Wakeford, the clergyman in question, writes an article in the *Liverpool Daily Post* in which he expresses the fear that much support will be given to the proposal by persons who are more desirous of gaining popularity than they are careful of public morals; and, in saying this, apparently supports the infamous sentence of a birching and two years' detention recently passed on a boy of nine by the Hayward's Heath justices. Mr. Wakeford is the only person we have heard of who endorses this sentence, and we trust he is satisfied with the distinction thus easily obtained.

Mr. Wakeford "has no hesitation in saying that birching is the best form of punishment for most children for most offences," but adds that it should not be inflicted with the intention of causing pain or terror. From which we gather that, in his opinion, a birching inflicted in a proper and, we presume, pious manner, will be taken as a proof of affection by the child, who will feel quite delighted when it gets it. Mr. Wakeford also says that this is the only method by which the "ordinary child" can be convinced that brutality and selfishness is wrong. So that, by behaving in a brutal manner towards a child, you convince the child that brutality is wrong; by using our superior strength to thrash a child, the latter feels convinced that it is wrong for it to beat one weaker than itself. In our opinion, the child is far more likely to see in it an implied sanction for its own behavior, and to seek to balance the account by passing on to other children a taste of the same medicine it has just received. Children are much more reasonable than Mr. Wakeford imagines, and the "ordinary child" will, we are certain, be at a loss to discover why, if it ought not to beat one weaker than itself, an adult is justified in using his superior strength to the same end. And we are of opinion that the child's way of looking at the matter is the correct one.

Mr. Wakeford says that schoolmasters complain that children get out of hand in the absence of corporal punishment, and asks whether society has not a right to "supply discipline where necessary." Concerning the first, we believe that when children get beyond the power of a teacher, in all but exceptional cases, it is because the teacher lacks the ability to understand or the patience to train those under his control. It is to the average person much easier to thrash a child than to study its nature and discover the right method of dealing with it. Putting aside sheer passion, ignorance of what to do or of how to do it is the only intelligible reason why an adult thrashes a child, although it is far from a satisfactory reason from the child's point of view. The second remark of Mr. Wakeford's, that society has a right to "discipline" children is illuminating as showing his mental outlook. For here discipline is taken as the equivalent of corporal punishment, and no other kind of discipline is considered. But there are numerous other kinds of discipline besides this, while the objection is that, so far as making a child better is concerned, the disciplinary effect of a thrashing is *nil*. It does make a child afraid; it does make the adult rank, in their minds, as an overbearing tyrant; it teaches them the morality of making one's will prevail by sheer physical strength; and, above all, it develops cunning, untruthfulness, and unkindness, instead of opposite qualities. The advocates of thrashing children are now, happily, few. It is significant that one of its champions should be found in a Christian pulpit.

Dr. Campbell Morgan is an out-and-outer in theology. He believes not only that Jesus actually lived, not only that he was the Ideal Man, not only that he was clothed with Divine attributes, but that he was very God; and, believing this, he proposes to affirm the truth of it as God shall help him. We challenge Dr. Morgan to inform us what "very God" means. Mr. Campbell asserts that there is no difference between man's being and God's, though he never tells us how he found that out. Dr. Morgan maintains that the distinction between man and God is immeasurable, infinite; but he also omits to enlighten us as to how he made the discovery. The fact is that both Dr. Morgan and Mr. Campbell know no more about a Divine Being than the voriest Atheist does.

A writer in *Y Geninen*, the ably conducted Welsh national quarterly, charges the Welsh pulpit with "systematic hypocrisy." The hypocrisy consists in still preaching the old and erroneous doctrine of a verbally inspired and infallible Bible, while at the theological colleges the Higher Criticism methods and results have already been largely adopted. What the preachers aver is that the old views are good enough for the masses, and very much *safer* for the pulpit. Once the people become familiarised with the conclusions arrived at by scholars the power of the pulpit in Wales will speedily decline. This the ministers know perfectly well; and, in order to postpone the advent of their day of judgment, they are determined to withhold knowledge from their hearers as long as possible. To the ignorant, nothing is so precious as dogmatic orthodoxy; to the enlightened, nothing so intolerable.

The Rev. Thomas Spurgeon, speaking at the twenty-third Conference of the Pastors' College Evangelical Association, said there are yet "words to be spoken for God and the Holy Ghost." The truth is, according to him, that the Holy Spirit has been idling for some years now, and that, consequently, the Churches are without his dew. And it follows that God also, who only works through the Spirit, is not able to fulfil his purposes. So far as he goes the reverend gentleman is quite right, only he ought to have gone further and honestly admitted that the Holy Trinity has never interfered in the affairs of earth, and that it has not done so because it is nothing at all but a purely priestly invention.

The *Catholic Times* describes the organisation of the Catholic Truth Society as "an event of the first importance." We cordially agree that the organisation of truth in connection with any branch of the Christian Church is a noteworthy event. But as it is *Catholic* truth, we expect that the qualifying word will rob it of all value so far as the outside public is concerned.

The Rev. Father O'Connor has been calling to task an Irish Protestant bishop for encouraging Protestant missionaries in Ireland. He asks, Why not convert the people in England before attending to Ireland? Hear, hear. But we venture to point out that this is a dangerous argument for any Christian to use. Christians have long been asked, Why send out missionaries to the "heathen" before converting and civilising the people at home? Hitherto no reply has ever been made to the query. And some have suggested



that it is the decreased demand at home that is largely responsible for the anxiety to seek buyers for their wares in foreign markets.

The Bishop of Kennington says that medical missions are the golden key that will unlock doors that are not yet open to the missionaries. That is to say, people do not want our religion, but they do want our medical science. And the missionary, by means of secular medical science, introduces a book which tells them to throw physic to the dogs and trust in the prayer of faith to save the sick. In commercial life this would be called selling goods under a false trade name. In religion it is merely devotion in the service of the Lord.

*Apropos* of missionary work, it is a significant fact that during the recent outbreaks in China special animosity was shown to the Christian mission buildings. We do not, of course, approve the outbreaks; but the fact is, we repeat, significant in view of the missionary stories as to the eager manner in which the Chinese now listen to Christian preaching, and the high esteem in which the missionaries are held. Another curious fact is that the buildings are destroyed, but no lives are lost. And this would point to some controlling and organising influence at work. The truth is that the Christian missions represent a power within the Empire that openly sets the laws of the country at defiance, and needlessly outrages the feelings and opinions of the Chinese people. Christian missions the Chinese do not want, and, save under compulsion, will not have. As it is, Christian bigotry and impertinence blind us to the evil of forcing ourselves on a foreign and independent people.

When a young man cries out, "I know I have seen God," there is something seriously wrong with his nervous system; and unless he consults a specialist and follows his instructions, and eschews parsons, the likelihood is that before long he will find himself in a lunatic asylum.

A preacher is a witness, we are told; but a witness of what? Everybody witnesses a good many things during a lifetime; but a Christian minister must be a witness of the resurrection of Christ. What colossal folly. Nobody witnessed that alleged event. The disciples *said* that they saw their Master, or someone very like him, alive, some days after his death and burial; and it was on that *hearsay* that the Christian Church was founded. There never were any witnesses of the resurrection.

There is no limit to the nonsense talked in the pulpit. Principal Forsyth recently preached on the words, "The Master is here, and calleth for me," being Martha's message to Mary, on the arrival of Jesus, in connection with the death of Lazarus. To the Principal, however, these words are God's personal message to mankind. He is reported as saying that God does not send out a circular, but addresses an "autograph communication to every soul distinctly and individually." How interesting. We never knew before that the Divine Being was in the habit of issuing autograph commands. We would be delighted to see one of them.

The type of mind that brought Christianity to birth, and nourished it to maturity, is exemplified by a *Christian World* account of the alarm caused by Halley's comet to the inhabitants of the Hungarian town of Nagy Miklos. These people are "greatly given to religion," and the appearance of the comet was hailed as a sign of the approaching end of the world. The clergy accordingly announced that at four o'clock a.m. on a particular date the world would come to an end. The sacred banners and images were taken from the churches, processions formed, and prayers repeated. Half the people gave themselves up to prayers and supplication; the other half took another course. As the end of the world was so near they rushed to make merry while they could. Beer, spirits, coffee, meat, bread, etc., were bought, and while one portion of the people gave themselves up to religious ecstasy, the remainder inaugurated an orgie which, we are told, "beggars" description. Daylight gave the lie to the clergy, and possibly brought some glimmerings of reason to the crowd; but, in all probability, the former will survive the one, and the latter soon outgrow the other.

The story, we repeat, is illustrative of the type of mind that developed and accepted Christian doctrines. With a people at this stage of mental development there is no need to wonder how they came to accept the stories of miracle working and supernatural occurrences. The marvel would be if they were not accepted. People in this stage of mental development live in an atmosphere of the supernatural; the last thing expected by them is that proof of its reality

should be offered. Proof is only demanded in a later and more sceptical age, the very request for proof being a sure indication of the growth of a higher type of intelligence. Properly studied, these Hungarians provide valuable object-lessons in the history of mental development. Not that the type is confined to Hungary; on the contrary, it is found all over the world, and, as Professor Frazer warned the public not long ago, its existence constitutes a grave—in fact the only real—danger to which the more developed mental life of our own day is exposed.

Mr. Alexander—late of the Torrey-Alexander evangelistic combination—has been "charming" Welsh audiences with accounts of the great work he has done in Canada, Australia, Japan, and elsewhere. Now we come to think of it, great things always are done a long way from where these professional evangelists are working. While in Australia their conversions have occurred in England, in England their stories of conversion are Australian. Like miracles, they always occur somewhere else. The people present only hear about them.

The English Army never retreats—it "retires." The Methodist Church, in a similar vein, no longer speaks of its declining membership; there is an "arrest." Bearing in mind that in four years there has been an absolute loss of 9,869 members—without, of course, reckoning the increase of population—"arrest" is a good word. If *all* its members were to disappear, we presume they would call it a vacation.

There is to be a World's Missionary Conference shortly, and the Archbishop of Canterbury regards the meeting under one roof of Christians of all denominations, "as an object lesson of the most striking kind to the unity of Christian purpose, devotion, and endeavor underlying the differences which sunder us." What a striking lesson in Christian progress this is! After nearly two thousand years the Archbishop feels it is something to be proud of that all varieties of Christians can meet under one roof without the police being necessary to preserve the peace! And even then, it is to be observed, they are not meeting to discuss Christianity. If that were the case we should have a different object lesson to that indicated by the Archbishop. They are meeting in peace because their mission is one of spiritual, and sometimes material, plunder. It is a trade meeting, and as they all have substantially the same wares, and have to go to the same markets for purchasers, the object of the gathering is to see upon what lines the exploitation of the "heathen" can best be managed.

The Rev. Weaver Evans has just concluded a special mission at Watford. As a result, "fully twenty people were brought to decision for Christ," and the Church was quickened and enriched. For this mission, ample preparations had been made. The pastor had often called attention to it, explaining what it could or could not do. Prayer meetings had been held during the whole of the preceding week, and for many weeks supplications had been offered for the Divine blessing on the work. Committees had been formed; a general committee and ever so many sub-committees. Every house in the town had been visited and the inmates pressed to attend the services. The missionary was greatly aided in his work by a large evangelistic choir. And "fully twenty people" were saved. What a miracle! *But where did the Holy Ghost come in?* The truth is, that the very holding of special missions and the ingenious methods that must be adopted to insure their success only furnish another conclusive evidence that the Church and the Holy Ghost are total strangers to each other, or, in other words, that the Church is a wholly human institution.

We note with interest and sympathy a step that has been taken by Dr. A. F. Nightingale, Superintendent of Schools in Cook County, Illinois, U.S.A. He has decided that the teachers are to cease giving instruction in the details of battles and wars, but are to teach only their causes and effects. This is a much needed reform, and will do much to strip the glamor from warfare. And when people understand the real causes and the real effects of wars, we fancy few of them will take place. We should like to see a similar experiment tried in this country.

The Anglican Bishop of Ballarat, Australia, in announcing his resignation, says he is "going into deep poverty"—which is a circumstance that ought not to trouble a preacher of the Gospel. Roman Catholic dignitaries seem, however, to have been more fortunate in Australia than Dr. Green. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Ballarat left £16,000, while the Roman Catholic Dean of Bendigo accumulated about a quarter of a million.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

(All early dates cancelled until further notice.)

**To Correspondents.**

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.**—Previously acknowledged. £204 13s. Received since:—Twenty-five Years' Subscriber to *Freethinker*, 5s.

**WILL** correspondents please note that all letters not meant for Mr. Foote personally, but which contain matter of an editorial character, notices of meetings, etc., should be addressed "Editor of *Freethinker*"? Otherwise they cannot be dealt with in time for the following week's issue of this paper.

We find it impossible to acknowledge separately, either in this column or elsewhere, all the expressions of sympathy with Mr. Foote we have received during his illness. Will those who have written please take this note as an acknowledgment from both Mr. Foote himself and the acting editor? Meanwhile they may rest content that all goes well.

**D. CORRICK.**—Thanks for compliments *re Freethinker*. Your first question is based upon the assumption that "Freedom" means the absence of determination. But this is not, and cannot be, the case. A "free" man is not one whose actions are not determined, but one whose actions are in accord with the spontaneous impulses of his own nature. In this connection, therefore, with or without restraint is language that refers to the arbitrarily coercive action of one person upon another. The word "free" really has no exact scientific value; it is a legal or social term, and only used in science as a metaphor. Your other question demands an essay for a complete answer. All we can now say is, that "mind" and "matter" are mere names used to indicate certain phenomena, and that all experience proves that mental and material phenomena are always, and as far as we can see inseparably, associated. The onus of proof lies with those who assert the contrary.

**SAINT DENIS.**—Better late than never. We agree with you. Paine would be surprised to see his "beloved America" ruled by "the followers of the Lord and the dollar," but we prefer to believe, in spite of the power of both, that neither of them represent the best elements of American life, and that these will one day gain the upper hand.

**R. TAYLOR.**—The Church of England revenues are administered by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and are derived from various sources—rents, tithes, mining royalties, etc. There are also private endowments. We are unable to state the exact amount of these.

**S. V. G.**—We have no knowledge of your letter. If addressed to Mr. Foote it would have reached him just when he was confined to his bed, which will account for it not being acknowledged. The matter will be attended to later.

**THOMAS THOMAS.**—There is no prohibition in the Bible against suicide, although we presume clergymen, who think it *ought* to be there, make the denunciation of murder cover such cases.

**TWO BIRMINGHAM MECHANICS.**—Thanks for enclosure. Mr. Foote, as you will see from another column, is progressing favorably.

**F. HARDING.**—We would advise you not to take too seriously the Christian estimate of Dr. Ballard. His description as one of "the greatest living defenders of the Christian Faith" is amusing, but also instructive, as supplying the measure of the ability the churches can command. Questions must obviously be suggested by the occasion, and we daresay more could easily be asked than Dr. Ballard would care to answer.

**J. G. CARDEN.**—Glad to hear from one whose accidental acquaintance with the *Freethinker* led to complete emancipation. Mr. Foote will, we trust, be quite able to meet all friends at the Conference on May 15.

**R. J. WATERMAN.**—We agree with you that "the emancipation of the human intelligence from the thralldom of superstition is the only hope for the foundation of a sane and happy community." Unfortunately, this is a truth that many "reformers" fail to recognise, and thus fail in their own efforts in addition to obstructing those of others.

**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.

**WHEN** the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

**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. 8d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

**Special.****To All My Friends.***Monday Night, April, 25, 1910.*

I AM "progressing favorably," as the saying is. My original trouble, the wound of the operation, is diminishing daily, entirely to the doctor's satisfaction. But the collateral troubles, which are not uncommon in these cases, have been more distressing. On the whole, however, I am feeling stronger, and I look forward to meeting my friends face to face at St. James's Hall on May 15. I cannot possibly be at concert pitch by then, but I shall probably be a lot better than a played out performer.

G. W. FOOTE.

**Sugar Plums.**

We publish this week the Agenda of the National Secular Society's Conference to be held in London on Whit-Sunday. The Agenda is an interesting one, and some of the resolutions deserve, and should receive the most careful consideration. Members who are attending the Conference must make a point of bringing their membership cards with them or they cannot, unless personally known to the officials, gain admission. We hope that London Freethinkers will do their best to make the evening meeting widely known. The list of speakers is a good one, and the President of the National Secular Society will, we trust, meet a goodly array of familiar, and unfamiliar, faces on his first appearance in public after his illness.

To-day (Sunday, May 1) Mr. J. T. Lloyd delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. Those who have already listened to Mr. Lloyd will need no pressing to hear him again. Those who have not we advise to make a special effort in order to be present. Freethinkers in particular in the district should do their best to give Mr. Lloyd the meetings he deserves. We hope to hear of successful gatherings—good lectures we are certain to hear about.

Mr. Cohen commences his open-air speaking this season with two meetings to-day (May 1) in Victoria Park. This is Mr. Cohen's old lecturing ground, and he is pretty certain of good audiences. Still, the more who attend the better. Being in the open air, there is no fear of being crushed, and a large gathering is as helpful to the audience itself as it is to the speaker.

The open-air lecturing stations are now getting into full swing, and we are asked to announce the following. The Camberwell Branch commences in Brockwell Park to-day (May 1), at 3.15 and 6 p.m., with Mr. A. B. Moss as lecturer. At Jolly Butchers' Hill the Wood Green Branch commences its Sunday morning lectures, at 11.30. The Islington Branch intend running a course of lectures on Sunday afternoons in Finsbury Park at 3.30. The North London Branch resumes work with afternoon lectures, and occasionally evening ones, on Parliament Hill. Finally, the Kingsland Branch commences its morning meetings at the corner of Ridley-road, Kingsland-road. All these meetings are for to-day (May 1), and we hope that all Freethinkers who can will be present. Open-air meetings are none the worse for a good rally of Freethinkers, and often, when Christians are unpleasantly attentive, they are decidedly the better for their attendance.

**Shilling Month.****Easter Eggs for Freethought.****SIXTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.***(The Figures mean the number of Shillings.)*

J. Griffiths, 5; H. Jones, 2; J. R. Lichfield, 1; C. McCall, 3; Twenty-five Years' Subscriber to *Freethinker*, 5; B. Beal, 2; R. J. Waterman, 2; Three Leigh Freethinkers, 3; Saint Denis, 2½; H. J. Baldwyn, 2; J. G. Carden, 2; Two Birmingham Mechanics, 4; J. Terry, 5; W. B., 1½; Four Sheffield Freethinkers, 4; D. Corrick, 5; A. Forrer, 5. *Per Miss Vance*:—Thos. M. Brown, 2; Ogmole Vale Branch, 10; A. S., 2; R. D. Williams, 1.



## The Narratives in Genesis.

### LITTLE BENJAMIN.

ACCORDING to the narratives in Genesis, all the twelve sons of Jacob, save one, were born in Paddan-aram from six to thirteen years before that patriarch returned to Canaan. It was not until many years had elapsed after the return to the latter country that Jacob's favorite wife Rachel gave birth to a son, which the father named Benjamin, "son of the right hand." This was the son which the Yahvist writer had in his mind when he said that Jacob "loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age" (Gen. xxxvii. 3): whence the name "Benjamin" has become synonymous with the youngest of the family, the pet.

We hear nothing more of this son until the commencement of the seven years of famine predicted by the prophet Joseph in Egypt—which famine, when it came, "was in all lands.....and was over all the face of the earth." Then it was that "all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn; because the famine was sore in all the earth." Then, also, it was that Jacob sent his ten sons to that country with the same object, keeping his Benjamin at home. Upon their arrival in Egypt, Joseph, the governor, recognised them, and treated them roughly as spies, commanding them when they came again to bring their youngest brother with them in proof of their statement respecting themselves and their father. Upon reaching home Jacob, after hearing their story, flatly refused to let Benjamin go with them; but when starvation was staring them in the face he relented, and was persuaded to comply with the governor's request. At the second interview, therefore, Joseph had the pleasure of seeing his little brother Benjamin, the only one of his eleven brothers who was the son of his own mother, Rachel. Before sending them away he caused a silver cup to be placed in Benjamin's sack of corn, and after the brothers had gone a short distance he sent his steward after them, accusing them of theft. The sacks were searched, the cup was found, and the brothers were brought back into the governor's presence. Joseph, then, after hearing the case, adjudged that Benjamin, in whose sack the cup was found, should be his bondman, and the others might return home to their father. Thereupon Judah, who had given his word to his father to bring the lad safely back, made a long and affecting speech respecting his father and the son of his old age, and concluded by entreating the governor to let him take the place of Benjamin, and permit the latter to go back to his father (Gen. xlv. 18-24). From this address I make the following extract:—

"My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his age, a little one.....and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.....And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die.....Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us.....it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die.....Now therefore let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad not with me?"

After this moving speech Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and invited them and their father to come down to Egypt and sojourn there; for there were "yet five years in the which there should be neither ploughing nor harvest."

Leaving this matter for a moment, we have next an account, by the Priestly writer, of the going down of Jacob and his family to Egypt, and a list of the names of all that patriarch's descendants that accompanied him (Gen. xlv. 6-27). This list commences: "And these are the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt." Then follow all the names, which it is unnecessary here to set down;

after which comes the statement of the total number of individuals or "souls."

"All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were three score and six."

This total, when the names are counted, is found to be correct. Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were in Egypt already, and are not reckoned; neither are any of Jacob's sons' wives. In verse 27, where Joseph, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Jacob himself are included, the writer says:—

"All the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three score and ten."

This is also correct; there can therefore be no doubt as to the Bible statement that sixty-six persons, descendants of Jacob, accompanied that mythical patriarch to Egypt.

Assuming this list to be historical, it may be noticed that the writer of the "Acts of the Apostles" represents one of his fictitious characters as saying that the number that went down to Egypt amounted to seventy-five.

"And Joseph sent, and called to him Jacob his father, and all his kindred, three score and fifteen souls" (Acts vii. 14).

Many Christian commentators and apologists endeavor to reconcile the Old and New Testament statements by asserting that in the latter case nine of Jacob's sons' wives were included—which is, no doubt, ingenious. It would be more to the point if they first attempted to show that the Old Testament list of names is historically correct; for there are in it only two females to sixty-four males—a fact which seems to point to fabrication. But the catalogue of names in Genesis is not a true list; that is to say, it is not historical. It is simply a list of the names of the chief families of each tribe in later times. This may easily be perceived from the fact that not one of the so-called sons of Jacob, though comparatively young at the going down into Egypt, had any more sons born to him during the whole of his after life in that country—or elsewhere. The list, in fact, contains the names of all the reputed sons of the twelve patriarchs, whether born prior to the time of the immigration, or later on; and the list of names in Genesis, and the statements made regarding them only prove the thoroughly unscrupulous and mendacious character of the writer, as well as the unreliability of the narratives in Genesis.

As an example of the fraudulent nature of this list I select the statements respecting the little lad Benjamin. The going down into Egypt—supposing such to be true—took place only a few weeks after Joseph's last interview with his brother, when, as we have seen, the son of Jacob's old age was described as a "lad" and a "little one." Here is the list statement of this petted child who lived at home with his father:—

"The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin.....And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard" (verses 19 and 21).

Thus, in this list little Benjamin is credited with ten sons, all born in Canaan before the immigration to Egypt. The bare idea of the "little one" for whom Judah pleaded being an old married man with a family of ten sons, many of them, no doubt, having already reached man's estate, is in the highest degree ridiculous. We may, then, at once erase "the sons of Benjamin" from the list, and reduce the total by ten. Where, now, is the New Testament writer? and what becomes of the reconciliation of the professional Christian Apologist? Moreover, we find from Numbers and Chronicles that some of those described as Benjamin's sons were his grandsons and even great grandsons.

Num. xxvi. 40. "And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman."

1 Chron. vii. 12. "Shuppim also and Huppim, the sons of Ir."

The names "Muppim and Huppim" in Genesis become "Shephupham and Hupham" in Numbers



(xxvi. 39), and Shuppim and Huppim in the Chronicles. Ir or Iri was another son of Bela (1 Chron. vii. 7), and is probably the Ehi of Genesis.

Many other names in the list in Genesis can be shown by the Bible narratives themselves to be of precisely the same character as the foregoing "sons of Benjamin."

ABRACADABRA.

## Persecution!

OR

### The Attempt to Suppress Freedom of Speech in Chicago.—III.

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

(Continued from p. 268.)

BUT the Churches cannot afford to "fight fair." It has required twenty centuries of war and persecution to keep their creeds alive. I am not exaggerating when I say that these creeds are literally drunk with the blood they have shed. The shame and the pity of it! In fifty years of time, Charles Darwin revolutionised the thought of the whole world without the shedding of a drop of blood. There is a record to envy! Let the Churches cover their faces with their hands. Science needs only the pen. Religion sneaks behind the army, the throne, the Inquisition—for protection. To bolster up orthodoxy, Rationalism must be gagged, and the Independent Religious Society evicted from its hall. What sensible and honorable man who has ever thought of the matter, and in whose veins flows the blood of the world's saviors, would not prefer to be persecuted rather than to belong to a Church that has made history crimson?

Another symptom of the disease we are studying is that it never breaks out in a man except when he is in the majority, or in power. Persecution is always directed against the weak. This, in itself, is enough to give it a black eye. It is the *metier*, or trade of a poltroon. No really fine man can take any pleasure in it. *Noblesse oblige!* The University of Oxford expelled a young man whose name was Shelley, at the age of nineteen, on a charge of heresy. A great university against a mere lad! *Noblesse oblige.* The Pope of Rome, about three hundred years ago, dragged a poor prisoner, emaciated by long confinement in the dungeons of the Church, to the *Campo di Fiori* and burned him alive. An infallible Pope against an unfortunate student! *Noblesse oblige.* The powerful John Calvin, master of Switzerland and pope of Geneva, pounced upon a stranger in one of the pews of his cathedral church, and made kindling wood out of him for his parishioners to warm their hands against. *Noblesse oblige!* Ah, if the gods had only inspired their children with that sentiment! If the Orchestra Hall directors wish to persecute anybody, there is the Sunday Evening Club of Churches—powerful, influential, rich, and able to strike back. Or let them persecute the Roman Catholics. Deny the use of the hall to them! When the Catholics were weak they were persecuted in all the Protestant countries, but to-day who would dare to discriminate against them? If I were an archbishop I would be let alone.

But even against the weak, the Church never fights fair! If the Christian people of Chicago, for instance, wished to arrest the progress of Rationalism, their challenge to it must be open and above board. They must not try to strike it from under cover, or from behind screens. They must down its arguments with arguments, and not with money or prestige or strategy. And they must not seek to tie its hands before they condescend to measure their strength against it. Suppose I were to be challenged to a duel in which I had to accept such terms and conditions as my antagonist offered without giving me any voice in the matter at all. That would not be a duel; that would be murder. Fight fair! Unfortunately, however, the Church has

never, *never* fought fair. Did the Churches believe that they could win by fighting fair, they would never have resorted to persecution.

It might be asked that if the Churches, which are in control of the situation, do not believe in liberty of thought, how did we come to have any liberty at all? In a sense, it is true that we owe what liberty we have to the Churches. If the Churches agreed among themselves and pulled together, Rationalism would not have the ghost of a chance for free expression. To-day the Protestants call the Catholics *idolators*, for worshiping the Host; and the Catholics call the Protestants blasphemers for not worshiping the Host. In the Episcopal Litany one of the prayers asked for protection against the Turk and the *Pope*. From a selfish point of view, I am glad these two powerful religious corporations are "at daggers' point." It is our only safety. Goodness! If they were to cease fighting with one another and turned their guns upon us, what would happen to us? What would happen to the twentieth century? We are indebted for what religious liberty there is in America to-day to the sectarian divisions among Protestants and the incurable breach between Rome and Protestants. If I prayed at all, my morning and evening petition would be: "God Lord, do not let the Churches unite." The Sunday Evening Club is powerful to-day because, in a sense, it represents that very union which I dread. They could not take the hall from us as Presbyterians, nor as Baptists, nor as Episcopalians, nor as Methodists; but they are able to do *together* what they were afraid to do separately. Some people predict that eventually, in self-preservation, the various Protestant denominations, and, perhaps, even the formidable Catholic Church, will all be united in one body. I hope when that day comes, the State will be too strong and too independent to hand over the reins of government to the Church.

What helps the cause of the Churches to-day more than anything else, more even than persecution, is the inability of the average Churchman to think straight. He has a mind, but he has not been trained to use it properly. If the people could only think logically, the fabric of Catholicism, as well as of Protestantism, would come down like a house of cards. Let me illustrate what I mean by *straight* thinking. A Men's League is being organised by the Sunday Evening Club, and I hold in my hand one of its circulars. It contains the following important announcement:—

"This proposed organisation is suggested as absolutely non-sectarian."

The word "absolutely" is in large, black capitals. Ah! Are the churches really growing more liberal? We rub our eyes and look at the circular again, and we find that the real object of the organisation is:—

"To increase the influence of *Christian* citizenship."

Now we understand what they mean by "absolutely non-sectarian." Liberty, big enough to transcend the limits of Christianity even, is beyond them. They are incapable of seeing that Christianity is a sect too, and that there are in Chicago hundreds of thousands of people who are not Christians in any sense of the word, but who are as much interested in good citizenship as anybody else. But the churches cannot see that point because they have not been taught to think *straight*. The arms of the Church are not long enough to embrace the whole community. The big word with them is Christianity, not Humanity; God, not Man; in other words, it is not citizenship that the Sunday Evening Club is seeking to promote, but *Christian* citizenship—that is to say, sectarian citizenship—with its Puritan Sabbath, and Bible in the public schools. And this they call liberty!

I quoted to you some months ago from the catalogue of an American college, which reads:—

"The college believes in perfect freedom of conscience for all men."

We have scarcely finished applauding this magnifi-



cent declaration when we read in the next line that,—

"In accordance with this principle, all students are required to attend morning prayers and the morning and evening religious services and the Bible classes."

The Church education actually ruins a man's reason. It incapacitates him for clear thinking. There are thousands of men and women whom the Sunday-school and the pulpits have made intellectual cripples. But it is defective or crooked thinking that protects the Church. The framers of the above catalogue are, no doubt, honest men. I have no fault to find with their hearts, but what about their heads? How do they propose to reconcile *perfect freedom of conscience* with compulsory attendance at *Bible classes*? They do not see any difficulty in that at all. They are satisfied to use a popular phrase—"perfect freedom of conscience"—if they can do so without jeopardising the interests of their creeds. The promoters of "The Men's League of the Sunday Evening Club," no more than the framers of this college catalogue, realise that to call an organisation "absolutely non-sectarian," and then to limit its scope to making people Christians, or to offer "perfect freedom of conscience," to students, and then to drive them into your churches and Bible classes, is a contradiction in terms—an absurdity. I repeat, that the worst curse of orthodoxy is, that it destroys the soundness of our minds. It twists reason out of shape. To shout in the ear of the dead is not more unprofitable than to try to get a churchman to think straight. Most of the evil in the world is not done by wicked men, but by people who, though honest, are incapable of straight thinking.

Let me give you another illustration of crooked thinking, which has been, alas, a greater evil than anything else that the world has suffered from. Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian and philosopher, defended persecution by arguing that—

"False coiners are put to death; then why not men who tamper with immortal souls"?

And that argument is quoted with approval by all believers in religious persecution: We would close a gambling den because it ruins men financially. How much more should we close a hall in which a man ruins souls eternally? If a man who kills the body is punished, why should we spare the blasphemer who kills the immortal part of man? That, I repeat, is the kind of reasoning upon which is based the argument for violence against freedom of conscience in matters of faith. But a moment's reflection will again bring out the incapacity of even the ablest Christian who has at all passed through the mills of the Church to think right. A false coiner knows that he is robbing his neighbor. The heretic, on the other hand, believes honestly, although he may be mistaken, that he is helping his neighbor. The counterfeiter knows his money is false; the heretic believes his ideas are true. So you see there is a tremendous moral difference between a counterfeiter and a heretic. The latter may be honest; the former is always a cheat. You can punish the one, but you must enlighten the other. Before a man can be punished for his beliefs it has to be shown that he is dishonest in his beliefs; that he is knowingly trying to damn the souls of his neighbors. And the churchman begs the question when he compares a counterfeiter to a Socrates or a Jesus Christ—both of whom were heretics in their day. Yet this one bit of crooked reasoning came very near making our earth a hell.

Let me now call your attention to a more recent example of clerical incapacity to think straight. A prominent minister of one of the established churches of Chicago, in a signed communication, defends the action of the directors of Orchestra Hall against the Independent Religious Society. Let me quote his exact words:—

"I believe most thoroughly in the action of the trustees in not allowing a man to revile everything which is religious and moral in any hall which they control."

Another instance of perverse thinking! Not to agree with this reverend in religious matters is equivalent, from his point of view, to blasphemy. He does not even stop to consider that, in accusing me of "reviling everything which is religious and moral," he is bearing false witness against his neighbor. He is making a statement he cannot square with the facts. But he is not interested in telling the truth. He is interested only in defending his creed. When he was ordained, he took an oath to defend, not the truth, but the creed. He is living up to his oath. I do not "revile" anything, much less religion or morality. I have investigated, examined, criticised, but I have "reviled" nothing. I have not criticised Christianity for saying "love one another"; I have criticised it for saying: "He that believeth not shall be damned." I have not disagreed with the Bible for recommending purity of heart. I have denounced the Bible for saying: "He that *hateth* not his father, mother, wife, child, is not worthy of me." It is the Bible as a fetish, and not as literature, that we object to. But if the clergyman were to be good enough to make these fine and important distinctions, he would be thinking straight, for which he has neither the taste nor the ability.

Nor does this preacher stop to consider that, if my views offend him, his views might offend me. If I am under obligations to respect his feelings, shall he have no regard for mine? If my science is blasphemy to him, his superstition is blasphemy to me. If my freedom irritates him, his bondage to a book provokes me. Am I not also a brother and a man? Are not my feelings worth considering, too? Suppose we demanded the eviction of all the preachers from churches that do not pay taxes, but live on the charity of the public, for not thinking and believing as Rationalists do! How would the clergy like that? And why should they do to us what they do not wish us to do to them if we had the power? Where is the Golden Rule of Confucius and Christ?

(To be concluded.)

#### WHEN THE GOOD MAN DIETH.

Murphy: "Poor O'Reilly is dead. And a good old soul he was."

Casey: "Yis, and a thoughtful wan, too. Shure, before he died he called all his creditors to him and told them where they could borrow enough to cover what he owed them."

#### LED ON BY THE MINISTER.

"Then you don't think I practise what I preach, eh?" queried the minister in talking with one of the deacons at a meeting.

"No, sir, I don't," replied the deacon. "You've been preachin' on the subject of resignation for two years an' ye haven't resigned yet."

#### CHURCH BELLS FOR THE DUMB.

An attendant at a Kansas institute for the deaf and dumb was undergoing a pointless rapid-fire inquisition at the hands of a female visitor.

"But how do you summon these poor mutes to church?" she asked finally, with what was meant to be a pitying glance at the inmates near by.

"By ringing the dumb-bells, madam," retorted the exasperated attendant.

#### HIS POSITION DEFINED.

The theologian of the latest school, however, did not weakly waver between the two horses, but forthwith mounted both.

"No," he made answer, "I do not deny that the apostles raised persons from the dead. What I contend is, that if the apostles had been educated men, in the modern sense, they would have known that such a thing is impossible. That, briefly, is my position." And how, in the face of so signal a reconciliation of reason and revelation, was unbelief to maintain itself?



## National Secular Society.

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

ST. JAMES'S HALL, GREAT PORTLAND STREET,  
London.

WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1910.

### Agenda.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report. By PRESIDENT.
3. Reception of Report.
4. Financial Report.
5. Election of President.  
Motion by Bethnal Green, North London, Kingsland, and West Ham Branches:—  
"That Mr. G. W. Foote be re-elected President."
6. Election of Vice-Presidents.  
(a) The following are nominated by the Executive for re-election: J. Barry, W. H. Baker, J. G. Bartram, E. Bowman, R. Chapman, Victor Charbonnel, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, H. Cowell, W. Davey, F. A. Davies, J. G. Dobson, R. G. Fathers, Mrs. Fathers, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, J. Hammond, W. Heaford, S. L. Hurd, R. Johnson, W. Leat, J. T. Lloyd, J. Marshall, A. B. Moss, James McGlashen, G. B. H. McGluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, W. T. Pitt, C. G. Quinton, J. H. Ridgway, J. T. Ross, Mrs. Roleffs, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, G. Roleffs, S. Samuels, F. Schaller, H. Silverstein, W. H. Spivey, Charles Step-toe, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, Miss E. M. Vance, C. J. Whitwell, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood, G. White.  
(b) Motion by Executive:—  
"That Mr. T. Shore be elected Vice-President."  
(c) Motion by Mr. G. W. Foote, seconded by Birmingham Branch:—  
"That Mr. Horace V. Parsons be elected Vice-President."
7. Election of Auditors.
8. Motion by Renfrew Branch:—  
"That the N. S. S. Executive shall insert in the *Freethinker* once every three months the names and addresses of Branch secretaries, with places and times of meeting."
9. Motion by Mr. Victor Roger:—  
"This Conference is of opinion that in any suggested reform of a Second Chamber, it is imperative there should be an abolition of the hereditary principle, and also that no Bishop or Archbishop of the Church of England should be entitled to a seat therein by virtue of his ecclesiastical functions."
10. Motion by Mr. C. Cohen:—  
"That this Conference views with deep regret the growth of the spirit of militarism among the nations of Europe, and while recognising in this a crowning proof of the inability of the Christian religion to promote the higher interests of civilisation, deploras the encouragement given to the war spirit in this country by political leaders, and the waste of national resources in warlike preparations; and further regrets the absence of a wise and far seeing statesmanship which, by promoting a better understanding between nations, would pave the way for the substitution of arbitration for peace in all international disputes."
11. Motion by Mr. T. Thurlow:—  
"In view of the grave dangers to which this country is exposed by the ill-advised action of religious propagandists, supported openly or covertly by the power of the State, this Conference strongly protests against the power of this realm being used for the assistance of any religious sect desirous of propagating its creed among those weaker nations who possess treaty relations with the British Empire."
12. Motions *re* Lecture Platform:—  
(a) By West Ham and South Shields Branches.  
"That in the interests of the Society's work it is desirable that any member of the N. S. S. wishing to

lecture regularly from its platform on behalf of Secularism, should have his or her name submitted to the Executive for approval, and should obtain a certificate of proficiency from a committee appointed for that purpose."

(b) By South Shields Branch.

"In order to encourage the systematic study necessary to qualify for a lecture certificate, and to assist in defraying purchase of books, cost of classes, etc., the Executive of the N. S. S. be requested to confer with the Board of the Secular Society, Limited, with a view to arrange for a lecture scholarship, or scholarships, to decide on the terms of qualification, and to arrange for the granting of three prizes of £20, £10, and £5 respectively, to those attaining the standard of proficiency agreed upon."

13. Motion by Kingsland Branch:—

"That this Conference tenders its best thanks to Mr. G. W. Foote for his lengthy and valuable services to the cause of Freethought; it desires to specially mark its recognition of his work in instituting the Secular Society, Limited, and trusts that the latter may be the means of establishing a permanent headquarters for the Freethought cause in Great Britain."

14. Motions by Kingsland Branch:—

(a) "This Conference is of opinion that some arrangements of a more satisfactory nature than at present exists should be made whereby the wishes of deceased Freethinkers, concerning their interment, could be carried into effect; and that the plan outlined by Mr. Tom Shore in the *Freethinker* of March 20, 1910, should be taken as the basis of a scheme to be elaborated, printed, and distributed among Freethinkers."

(b) "That this Society should do all that lies within its power to substitute cremation for earth burial."

15. Motion by Executive:—

"That in view of the forthcoming International Freethought Congress, to be held at Brussels in August next, this Conference instructs its Executive to take such steps as it may consider necessary for the adequate representation of the N. S. S. on that occasion."

16. Motion by Mr. J. T. Lloyd:—

"Bearing in mind the repeated failures of the late Liberal Government's so-called Education Bills, considering, also, the impossibility of any lasting compromise between the various religious parties, this Conference deploras the absence from the present Government's program of a measure for the disestablishment of religion in the State schools, and calls upon the Government to put an end to the educational chaos by restricting the activities of the State to its legitimate sphere, and by the promotion of a Bill securing exclusively secular instruction in public schools, apply to the country at large the principles upon which it bases its proposal for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales."

17. Motion by Executive:—

"That this Conference, meeting for the first time since the judicial murder of Francisco Ferrer by the Christian government of Spain, in October, 1909, places on record its profound indignation at the barbaric action of the authorities in condemning to death one whose life had been devoted to educational and philanthropic work; it protests against the closing of the Modern School by the Government and the confiscation of its property as acts striking at the moral and intellectual well-being of Spain; and trusts that the fierce flame of indignation aroused throughout the civilised world by the death of Ferrer will not be permitted to subside by those who desire the liberation of Spain from the control of the historic enemy of freedom and progress, and that their efforts will be sustained and strengthened by the martyrdom of one of the noblest reformers of modern times."

The Conference will sit in the St. James's (small) Hall; the morning session lasting from 10.30 to 12.30, and the afternoon session from 2.30 to 4.30. Both are purely business meetings. Only members of the N. S. S. can speak and vote. A public meeting will be held in the evening at 7 o'clock in the St. James's (large) Hall. The President will occupy the chair on all three occasions. A luncheon for delegates and visitors will be provided at 1 o'clock.

By order of the Executive,

G. W. FOOTE, *President*.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): A. B. Moss, 3.15, "The Old Faith and the New"; 6, "Renan's Jesus."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon), S. J. Cook, a Lecture. Newington Green: 12 (noon), J. J. Darby, Christianity *versus* Secularism." Finsbury Park: 3.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Common Sense."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Only Believe."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.30, E. C. Saphin, "The Gospel According to Mr. Smith."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, H. Thurlow, jun., "The Message of Freethought."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "O! let us be joyful." The Green, Enfield: 7.30, H. Dawson, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God."

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "The House that Jack Built"; 6.30, "The Law of Liberty in Morals." Tea at 5.

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Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE, 2 Newcastle-st., London, E.C.

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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*Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.*

*Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.*

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire (by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

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