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Views and Opinions.

Science and Religion.

The religious mind seldom takes kindly to science; the religious leader never. Circumstances may, with the latter, call for a cessation of active hostilities, but scientific claims are always viewed with hostility, and every opportunity is seized to emphasize their shortcomings. It could not well be otherwise. Both religion and science claim dominion over the same empire; both deal with the same universe, both come before us as interpretations of the same set of phenomena. You may choose one explanation or the other, but you cannot adopt both—that is, with any valid claim to logic and sanity. If the universe, with all its phenomena, is the expression of an intelligent purpose, then the implied claim of science to explain it in terms that are ultimately reducible to matter and motion is invalid. Or, in more concrete instances—if miracle be a fact, universal causation is a delusion. If the New Testament theory of demonism be true, the scientific theory of disordered nerve action is a delusion. And so on through numerous contrasts. The religious and the scientific interpretations are in direct conflict. They have been in conflict since the dawn of positive science. And the conflict will continue until science has wrested from religion the entire domain of human knowledge, actual and possible.

\* \* \*

A Forced Truce.

Consequently, when a Christian preacher talks about science, one must be prepared for certain things. One will usually get a good deal about the failures of science, but very little of its successes. Much about its (ethically) Materialistic outlook, but not much of that lofty idealism which is characteristic of nearly all great figures in the history of science. You will be told what science cannot explain, but will hear little of how much it does explain, and there will be a complete oblivion to the fact that the limitations of existing knowledge is one of the common-places of the working scientist. Above all, there will be a positive gloating over the ignorance of science, as

though that were something to be proud of, and as though religion possessed knowledge where science was bound to confess itself at fault. And to the psychologist these things are instructive. They prove that, in the person of the bulk of its leaders, religion is substantially where it was. They know that the reconciliation of religion with science is all humbug. Every step of scientific advance means a loss of territory to religion. Given a universe scientifically explained, and religion becomes a sheer anomaly. It has nothing to say, it has nothing to do. It can tell us nothing about the world we do not know without its aid. Its god becomes an absurdity; its ministers a social outrage.

\* \* \*

Darwinism and the War.

In Manchester, Bishop Welldon has been lecturing on "Christianity and the War," and one would think the least said, by a parson on that topic the better. For the War is a fact that cannot by any means square with the Christian theory or with Christian claims. No reasonable person can harmonize this international slaughter with the "providential" government of God. Nor can it be adjusted to the claims made by the Christian Church as a civilizing, humanizing power. Of course, one admits the clergy are in a difficult situation. They cannot talk about the War with profit, nor can they remain silent without loss. They suggest doubts and rouse opposition whichever course they adopt. So Bishop Welldon carries the War into the enemy's camp. He says:—

The speculative basis of the War, and the spirit in which it has been waged by Germany, lay in the doctrine of evolution, or the struggle for existence, which was sometimes called the survival of the fittest. These doctrines had taken stronger root in Germany than in England. The whole of the theory of Darwinism had profoundly affected German thought and teaching. Germany had relapsed into a lower moral state, and that relapse was at least partly due to the absence of a consciousness of sin, and the unwarranted faith in the assurance of human progress.

That settles it. Germany went to war because it had adopted the theory of Darwinism. And all the other nations were planning, and plotting, and annexing, and preparing for war—because Darwinism had not taken so strong root with them.

\* \* \*

Evolution and God.

Poor Darwin! Directly after he died a Roman Catholic bishop said he was burning in hell for having written the *Origin of Species*. Now Bishop Welldon saddles him with the responsibility for the European War. And yet one seems to have heard of wars before Darwin was born, or Darwinism heard of. And what is the good of finding fault with Darwinism, anyway? If Darwinism, if evolution, be true, it is no more than a statement of certain natural processes. And as no scientific man doubts the truth of evolution, the one who should be blamed is Bishop Welldon's God. For



on the Bishop's own theory, evolution is God's way of working. He designed the struggle for existence; he made it the condition of the development of animal life. Germany may be responsible for much, but it really had nothing to do with establishing the order of nature. Nor is it true that evolution has taken stronger root in Germany than in England—and it would be a national disgrace for us if it were true. The hypothesis of evolution has taken "root" with the world of science everywhere. No one doubts it—except bishops and smaller theological fry. And we would advise Bishop Welldon to stick to discussions on incense, and candles, and vestments, and other ecclesiastical tomfoolery. He is evidently at sea when talking about evolution.

\* \* \*

#### Implications of Darwinism.

But the implications of Darwinism? These are, probably, what Bishop Welldon had in mind. Do these favour war? General Bernhardt said, yes, although he was not a scientific authority. And on our side Lord Roberts, and Lord Kitchener, and Theodore Roosevelt, and Spenser Wilkinson, and scores of others agreed with Bernhardt. The biological benefits of war has been the common talk of militarists all over the world. They argued that a species progresses by the elimination of the unfit. The stronger survive, the weaker are killed off. And, therefore, war by killing off the weaker, or the less fit, makes for progressive improvement. That is the theory; but it is quite false, and scores of German and other writers on science, ethics, and sociology have pointed out its falsity. Modern war does not eliminate the biologically weakest but the biologically strongest. The halt, the lame, and the blind are left behind. It is the healthiest and strongest that go to the battle front and fall. That is so obvious that it scarcely needs elaboration. Modern war means the elimination of the strongest and the preservation of the weakest.

\* \* \*

#### Evolution and Society.

Apply Darwinism to the group and the theory fares still worse. Man is a social animal. That is a root fact that dominates all other considerations. His survival, as an individual, is not a mere test of individual fitness, it is far more a test of *social* fitness, of his ability to fit into the social structure. No man in a human group pays the full price of a biological deficiency. The division of labour prevents this by finding a special occupation suitable to his natural endowments. And his "fitness" to his social environment is largely a question of mental and moral qualities. The extreme anti-social character is suppressed, the markedly social character is encouraged. Fitness thus tends to be expressed in terms that really makes for the general advancement of the world. For, be it noted, *it is not the biologically prize animal that is the fittest in human society but the socialized man or woman.* It is, in fact, the gradual alteration in the significance of "fittest" that makes the present War so disastrous. For the same process that has given "fittest" a social value within the group is fast giving, if it has not already given, it the same significance between groups. The interdependence of the world is growing. The hypothesis of evolution describes the lines on which that growth is taking place. And in a recognition of the real nature of the process lies one of the strongest incentives to work for human betterment.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

It is with diseases of the mind as with those of the body; we are half dead before we understand our disorders, and half recovered when we do.

## The Newest Apologetic.

### IV.

It is a formidable charge against the Christian religion that in the exact degree in which the belief in it is sincerely and fervently held it engenders an utterly intolerant and savage spirit towards all who either repudiate it altogether or even advocate unauthorized versions of it. A Christian of the New Testament type has no right to be on terms of fellowship with either opponents or corruptors of the Faith. Even the Gospel Jesus himself was at heart a persecutor. The Scribes and Pharisees were wholly intolerable to him, and he cursed them with the utmost severity. Indeed, intolerance is a Christian virtue, and it is historically verifiable that the decline of persecution in modern times has been accompanied by a corresponding decay of Christian belief. Let it be continually borne in mind, then, that, on the assumption of the truth of Christianity, the cultivation of the spirit of intolerance, so far from being a fault, is a duty of first-class importance. Our contention has always been that a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ cannot sit down, with folded arms, while damning heresies are being disseminated in the land, without being guilty of disloyalty to his Divine Lord. Therefore, it is alone on the assumption of its untruth, that we have ever utilized persecution as an argument against Christianity. In his little book, *The Achievements of Christianity*, the Rev. J. K. Mozley, B.D., frankly admits that his religion has systematically practised appalling cruelties and shed a vast amount of blood. He says:—

It is true that in the Middle Ages the Church felt it an incumbent duty, fully accordant with the genius of Christianity, to repress heresy, and to hand over obstinate heretics to the secular arm for punishment. It is true that the Inquisition, especially in Spain, was responsible for an immense amount of suffering, inflicted under the supposition that it was pleasing to God. It is true that the Reformers were by *no* means prepared to repudiate the use of force against their theological opponents, and that in England, under Elizabeth, Roman Catholic priests were cruelly put to death. It is true that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europe was drenched with blood as a result of the "religious" wars. It is true that religious toleration and the granting of full civil rights to those who did not profess the established faith of their several countries, to Jews and to unbelievers, was long in coming and was bitterly opposed. In a word, this charge, even when allowance is made for exaggeration by these anxious to paint Christianity as a whole, or some section of Christians, at its worst, is a serious one, and must be candidly and seriously dealt with (pp. 50, 51).

Of course, no one conversant with the history of the Church, could honestly deny the truth of such a charge, and Mr. Mozley deserves no praise for his frank admission of its truth. And yet we do congratulate him upon his statement that "all Christians to-day would acknowledge that for many of the things that belong to their own past history there is no possible excuse." But let us be quite sure which things they were for which there is no possible excuse. At this point Mr. Mozley displays no inconsiderable amount of ingenuity. Among the things enumerated as admitting of no justification were the pushing to indefensible lengths of principles in themselves arguable; the twisting of judicial forms to the detriment of justice itself, "as when an accused person before the Inquisition could employ no pleader on his behalf"; the occasional deterioration into sheer cruelty of what might have been viewed as righteous vengeance, "especially in connection with the Inquisition in Spain." To cut a long story short, Mr. Mozley perceives that



"the fact that men believed they were serving God, and following out the will of Christ, did not save them on occasion from—I will not say—measures of the most drastic sternness, but not even from gross outrages and cruelties." The real question, however, is "whether the repressive measures of the Middle Ages and the religious wars that followed the Reformation were so undoubtedly wrong and condemnable in themselves, that the observer of these facts has a right to feel biased by them against Christianity, and, indeed, to look on them as facts whose force no defence can parry." This is how Mr. Mozley deals with the subject:—

The whole question of toleration is much more difficult than the assailants of the Christian record in this matter allow. Modern feeling, Christian and non-Christian alike, runs in other and wider grooves than those which limited sentiment and opinion five hundred years ago. Christians, as well as others, have learnt from the past, and have come to emphasize afresh those elements in the Gospel which are unfriendly to the use of force in matters of religion, and to distrust the logic which builds up a theory and policy of repression on the unquestionable sense of the seriousness of wrong belief which pervades the New Testament. But to allow our present feelings to dictate our judgment of the past, to compound for sins that we in our modern civilization may be inclined to, by damning, with an indignation however real, those we have no mind to, is to reveal the spirit, not of the sober and intelligent critic and historian, but of the boisterous and undisciplined partisan (53, 54).

Whilst there is much truth in that extract, the whole of it is vitiated by an obvious fallacy. The author takes the existence of true and false religious beliefs for granted, though he possesses no data upon which to base an intelligent judgment on the subject. What the Church persecuted in the Dark Ages was, not "every kind of moral poison," but every kind of theological heresy. The Albigenses were morally a superior class of people, and on the score of mere morality there was no complaint against them, but because they held views condemned by ecclesiastical authority, upwards of a million of them were cruelly murdered. It is a truism nowadays that no theological opinions whatever can be proved to be either true or false. They lie completely outside the sphere of proof or disproof. Mr. Mozley says:—

I must point out that we ought not to make our modern assumptions of the unimportance of intellectual error and the absolute right of speculative freedom the tests whereby to judge Christians of past ages. We have no very good ground for the former assumption, and as to the latter, however great be the advantages of complete speculative freedom, the disadvantages are not inconsiderable (p. 52).

It must not be forgotten that Mr. Mozley is an apologist, and that as such alone he has written his book. To him "theological" and "intellectual" are seemingly synonymous terms, and "theological error" is "moral poison." As a theologian, he asserts that it is sheer unreasoning dogmatism to limit the results of every kind of moral poison to the present life; but he does not see that it is equally dogmatic to extend the consequences of anything beyond the tomb. The dogmatism always begins with the theologian, while the Freethinker contents himself with simply denying anybody's right to dogmatize at all in such a region. As a matter of fact, the main difference between Mr. Mozley and ourselves is that, whilst he deems it expedient to offer excuses for the persecution practised in past ages, we undertake to justify it on the ground that people should have the courage of their convictions, whatever they may be. It is not the persecutors that we judge, but the religion which makes them such. It is not Martin Luther or John Calvin we denounce, but the hideous theology that produces such monsters. The reason why the Church

of to-day does not persecute on the same scale as her predecessor of the Middle Ages did is that she lacks both the power and the intensity of belief requisite to do so. On occasions, indications are given that, if she had the power, the fires of persecution would once more blaze out as fiercely as ever, the spirit being indeed quite willing, but the flesh hopelessly weak; but such occasions are few and far between. Generally speaking, the Christian religion is now not even the ghost of its former self.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Coleridge's Table-Talk.

That which will stand of Coleridge is this: the stimulus of his continual instinctive effort to get at and to lay bare the real truth of the matter in hand, whether that matter were literary or philosophical, or political or religious; and this in a country when at the moment such an effort was almost unknown.—*Matthew Arnold.*

"NOT one man in a thousand has either strength of mind or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. I repeat it. Not one man in ten thousand has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be Atheist." This is a quotation from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Table-Talk*, of which a new edition has been published by Mr. Milford, with an introductory essay by Coventry Patmore. It was a man with a big heart and a big head who said that. It loses none of its force from the fact that Coleridge was a Christian, although not an ordinary one, for he was a man of real and unmistakeable genius. Always he wore his "rue with a difference." Coleridge had read too much, and thought too much. Some of the best men he knew, such as Charles Lamb, were heterodox. His close friend, Wordsworth, was not without a suspicion of Pantheism, and the world was ringing with the Rationalistic message of the French Revolution. Coleridge knew that it was not stupidity and heartlessness that made men doubt the existence of "god," but sleepless intellect that would not be lulled by priestly incense, and sympathy that not only saw, but felt, the miseries of man.

Coleridge was as great a talker as Dr. Johnson, but he had no Boswell at hand to record all of his remarks. His friend, Robert Southey, said that Coleridge's mouth "seems incapable of being at rest." Southey was hard to please, for he had the richest talker in England in the same house with him, and it only made him peevish. The explanation is that Southey had a commonplace mind, and was the antipodes of Coleridge. In all Southey's shelf-full of books there is not any spark of genius. Charles Lamb, who was a genius, had a very different impression of Coleridge's talk. Writing of one of the poet's visits, he said: "I am living in a continual feast. Coleridge has been with me now for nigh on three weeks." The picture which Thomas Carlyle gives of Coleridge at Highgate Hill is exceedingly graphic, and endorses Lamb's view:—

Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. He had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. No talk in his century, or in any other, could be more inspiring.

Coleridge did other and finer work than talk across the dinner-table. Endowed with an intellect of the first order, and an imagination at once delicate and splendid, Coleridge left enough poetry and criticism to place him in the front rank of authors. This is no disparagement of his conversational ability. Except Selden's *Table Talk*, there is hardly so rich a treasure-house of wisdom



in the language than Coleridge's *Table Talk*. It represents the mature thought of a princely intellect equally at home in the book of the world and in the world of books. His friends had better entertainment than food and wine, for there have been few such brilliant talkers than Coleridge. The pages of his book show us how an accomplished man, famous for his conversation, entertained his company near a hundred years ago. For, like Lord Mansfield, who, in his youth, "drank champagne with the wits," Coleridge enjoyed the best of good company from first to last.

The contributions which Coleridge made to modern thought, rich, ample, and suggestive as they are, have all the characteristics of his varied and eventful life. In whatever he attempted, he drove the shaft deep, and gave us samples of the wealth of ore lying in its confines. Although he worked these mines only at irregular intervals, and passed from one to the other, yet, by stimulating others, he caused the ground to be explored as it never was before in England. If it cannot be said that he left a complete system, yet it can be said, and it is a noble tribute, that he made it possible for others to grasp the principles underlying all systems. His contribution to the literature of power is almost unsurpassed by any modern writer.

Yet, great as Coleridge's genius was, he suffered from laxity of fibre. He wrote a lot, and the notes he made would have been a task for most men. But he was incapable of continued and concentrated labour. Intellect he had; the frenzy of poetry was in his eyes; but he was indolent. The result was he illuminated the world, not with a steady light like Shakespeare, but in meteoric flashes, which, in Milton's expressive phrase, "made darkness visible."

The living Coleridge was ever his own apology. Men and women who neither shared nor ignored his shortcomings not only loved him, but honoured him. He must have had a rich and royal nature to have gathered about him such choice friends as Wordsworth, Scott, Lamb, De Quincey, Byron, Hazlitt, and Sterling. In fancy we cannot fail to conjure up his placid figure during his later years—the silver hair, pale face, luminous blue eyes, the portly form clothed in black, slow walk, benignant manner, and the inexhaustible talk that was the flow of a golden sea of eloquence and wisdom. A great man and a great poet, the wings of his imagination wave easily in the ether of high Olympus. Yet how forlorn the end! For more than thirty years he was the slave of opium. It broke up his home; it alienated his wife; it ruined his health; it made him wretched. Back of all this he was the slave of irresolution and character, some of the enervating dejection of Hamlet, which kept him for ever at war with himself, and at last cast him out upon the homeless ocean of despair, to drift away to ruin and to death. Before its fierce and pitiless blasts he was driven by the storm like his own mariner:—

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide, wide sea.

A brief dawn of unsurpassed promise and achievement; a trouble as of clouds and weeping rain; then a long summer evening's work done by the setting sun's pathetic light—such was Coleridge's day, the afterglow of which is still in the sky. A dreamer of dreams, it is in his descriptions of his visions that he is most original. Poet, mystic, seer, he dreamed continually. He knocked at the portals of the world of imagination and caught glimpses of its magic, and it is this that gives him his secure, his exceptional place among the masters of English letters. His hand opened the magic casements on the perilous seas sailed by "the Ancynt Marinere," and the fairylands of "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel."

MIMNERMUS.

## The Orb of Day.

VI.

(Concluded from p. 109).

FEW realize the depth to which this world's temperature would decline were the solar radiance cancelled. The exact lowering of temperature remains undetermined, but there is general agreement among those best qualified to speak that the temperature at our planet's surface would decline at least 300 degrees Fahrenheit below zero. A certain sum of planetary heat arises from the earth's interior, but almost all the heat existing at its surface is derived directly from the sun's rays, while the heat evolved from the combustion of wood and coal, and the energy of wind and water power, represent the indirect effects of solar radiation, either past or present. The writer remembers an otherwise reasonable man who persistently asserted that the sun cannot be a heated body, and he insisted that this is conclusively shown by the fact that when we ascend a mountain, or rise in a balloon, the temperature, instead of increasing steadily, falls. According to his theory, as we leave the lower earth and approach the sun then, if the sun be really a hot body, the very opposite would necessarily happen.

Yet, despite the utter insignificance of the elevation above the earth's surface attainable by man in comparison with the radius of our planet's orbit, an appreciable increase in the intensity of the sun's rays does accompany the ascent beyond the lower particle-strewn terrestrial atmosphere. On the surface, astonishment seems warranted at the fall in temperature at great altitudes, notwithstanding the increased radiation from the sun. Simple, however, is the explanation of this seeming paradox. Solar rays heat those substances only that absorb them. Transparent materials, such as glass, absorb little radiant heat, and the clearer the atmosphere the more readily heat rays pass through it unchanged. Lamp black, however, is a powerful absorbent which intercepts nearly all the rays and transforms their energy into heat. And in varying degrees this is true of many other substances. Now, near the earth's surface, the atmosphere is in touch with the soil which is highly absorbent, and is heated by contact with it. At great elevations the freer air is less in touch with the ground, and as it transmits the solar rays with avidity it is very slightly warmed by them. Even more, air at high altitudes contains carbon-dioxide and other constituents, all of which serve as rapid radiators of heat into surrounding space. Thus, the upper currents are cold, and their refrigerating powers are all the greater on mountains where strong winds usually prevail.

As it rises the atmosphere thins materially, and warm currents ascending into the upper regions heat the attenuated air less than they would do were the density of the atmosphere uniform. Air currents rising from the globe's heated surface expand as they move upwards and are, in consequence, cooled. The marked frigidity of high table lands, such as the plateau of Tibet, is largely attributable to the dryness of the upper air. The moisture arising from the Indian Ocean fails to influence the tablelands of Tibet, because in its passage through the atmosphere to a height so great it is so seriously reduced in temperature that it is mainly precipitated either as rain or snow. Water vapour, although practically transparent to light, and likewise to over 80 per cent. of all the solar rays, yet acts as a potent absorber of the rays emitted by the relatively cold earth. At the lower levels where water vapour is abundant in the atmosphere it serves to delay



the escape of terrestrial rays into space. Owing to the avidity of the air environing the highlands of continental countries, particularly in their inner areas, the cooling of the earth through radiation proceeds more rapidly than in regions nearer the ocean, with the result that conditions of cold prevail. In mountainous districts the general surroundings are favourable to depressed temperatures, for the sun's radiation is obstructed, and such areas are constantly subjected to cold blasts.

The solar rays, until recently, were regarded as forming three separate phenomena. These were classified as actinic or chemical rays; light or visible rays; and heat or invisible rays. As Dr. Abbot states:—

These distinctions are now known to be misleading, for the rays which affect modern photographic plates extend in the spectrum from far beyond the furthest violet to far beyond the furthest red, and the rays which can produce heat include all these and many more still further beyond the red. All rays may be totally transformed to produce heat, however they may differ in their effects upon the eye, or in different chemical substances. All these rays travel with equal velocity in free space, and this velocity is about 300,000 kilometers (186,000 miles) per second.

The wave lengths of visible rays vary greatly, and their respective vibrations per second range from 430 to 750 millions of millions. Photographic processes disclose rays which vary in length from 0.0001 millimeter to wave frequency of 3,000,000,000,000,000. By delicate heat measurement wave-lengths of extraordinary range have been determined. All are of solar origin, while many others are probably intercepted by our atmosphere as they speed from the sun towards the earth.

Although absolutely indispensable to us, the sun, and, indeed, the whole solar system, occupies an extremely small position in the universe. Our luminary is only a tenth-rate sun, one of that mighty host of suns or stars of which more than one hundred million are accessible to the astronomer. Our orb, while hotter than some suns, possesses a much lower temperature than others. Like other celestial bodies, the sun sails with its retinue of worlds on a ceaseless voyage through space. Our orb is larger than some stars, while others vastly exceed it in mass, in motion, and in lustre. Arcturus appears to be a sun of far greater magnitude, and shines with a brilliance at least 100 times the brightness of the sun. And while our luminary travels at the rate of a few miles per second only, the star Groombridge No. 1830 speeds with a velocity of 200 miles per second, and Arcturus rushes through the heavens at the tremendous velocity of 380 miles per second. Throughout unthinkable ages, the sun and his family have been flying through space towards the constellation Lyra. Every day of our lives we are nearer to it by about a million miles. Yet so unspeakably vast are the stellar distances that the solar system will not reach the present position of the star Vega, towards which we are travelling, until over half a million years have passed away. Nor does it follow that when the sun arrives in that region where Vega is now shining that the solar globe will meet that majestic star. For Vega is proceeding on its own journey, and is departing from its present position nearly as rapidly as our system is approaching it.

It has long been realized that all flesh is grass. The herbivorous animals derive their nourishment from vegetation, and carnivorous creatures devour the flesh of their less ferocious plant-eating neighbours. Every representative of the floral kingdom depends, directly or indirectly, upon the activities of the sun. The higher plants of the field and forest not only furnish sustenance, but provide an endless variety of commodities for

building, manufacturing, and other purposes essential to civilized life.

Various chemical constituents enter into the composition of plants, but carbon is their most important element. Plants differ in their methods of obtaining carbon. There are the Autotrophic—the self-nourishing—which, under the influence of light, obtain it through their foliage from the carbonic acid gas of the atmosphere; while the parasitic plants secure their nourishment from the superior vegetation to which they attach themselves. Lastly, the inferior Saprophytes absorb their nutriment in large measure from decaying organic matter. All vegetation is extensively composed of water, which is indispensable to the vital activities of the higher flora. Water is essential to all green vegetation, and the enormous quantities drawn from the soil and evaporated through their leaves by forest trees are simply astounding. According to Von Hohnel, a large birch tree will discharge into the atmosphere in one day eighty pounds of water. Therefore, "If 200 such trees grew on an acre, their water output in a season would perhaps reach 1,500 tons." Apart from the sun, this liquid would immediately assume the solid form; and solar energy is also essential to evolve and sustain the atmospheric currents upon which the rainfall depends. Temperature and moisture on our planet depend absolutely on solar activity. Thus we discover that the orb of day is not only the dispenser of light and heat, but the lord of life as well.

The outcome of a collision of two dark stars, the primeval nebula afterwards evolved into the sun, planets, and moons of our system. As our planet cooled, and the life-bearing stage was reached, those chemical elements which form living substances combined to give birth to protoplasm—the elementary material of organic Nature. The Earth Mother was then made germinal by the embraces of the all-creating sun. A poet of true genius, William Watson, in his "Ode in May," has pictured in splendid verse the genesis of life on our globe. Thus he sings:—

For of old the Sun, our sire,  
Came wooing the mother of men,  
Earth, that was virginal then,  
Vestal fire to his fire.  
Silent her bosom and coy,  
But the strong god sued and pressed;  
And born of their starry nuptial joy  
Are all that drink of her breast.

And the triumph of him that begot,  
And the travail of her that bore,  
Behold, they are evermore  
As warp and weft in our lot.  
We are children of splendour and flame,  
Of shuddering, also, and tears;  
Magnificent out of the dust we came,  
And abject from the spheres.

O bright irresistible lord,  
We are fruit of Earth's womb, each one,  
And fruit of thy loins, O Sun,  
Whence first was the seed outpoured.  
To thee as our Father we bow,  
Forbidden thy Father to see,  
Who is older and greater than thou, as thou  
Art greater and older than we.

T. F. PALMER,

Concealment regarding a question of such vital importance as the truth of Christianity is to be deplored; while an attitude of indifference on a subject that should be of surpassing interest to us all can only be characterized as amazing—unless, indeed, the real explanation be that men have ceased to believe.—*Philip Vivian.*



## Belief in God.

*A Lecture by the late G. W. Foote, at St. James's Hall, on October 29, 1909.*

I AM to speak to you to-night on why men believe in God. Of course, the word men is used generically. I would have made it men and women, but it would have been much too long a title. The ladies must regard themselves as included, but all Acts of Parliament don't include them. On this occasion there is no reservation whatever; nay, I am inclined to think that a very large number of men believe in God simply because a woman, in the form of their mother, taught them so. I should say that not one man or woman in ten thousand in this or in any other Christian country believes in God for any other reason than that of early education; and one corroboration of this proposition is, that just according to the education is the name and personality of the God who is believed in. In England, a man is taught to believe in a composite kind of God: God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and, indeed, one ought to say, in many cases, God the Devil, too; and I am not sure that the Catholics do not add a fifth, far better than all the other four put together—the Goddess, the Virgin Mary; and if I had to make a choice, I would rather worship a beautiful woman than I would worship an old person who never had a child.

Now, if you were brought up in Turkey, you would swear by Allah—a god who has no rival and no partner. That, of course, is a sneer at the expense of the Christian Deity, which is at least Trinitarian.

If you were brought up in the Southern part of Africa, you would be a believer in "Mumbo Jumbo"; and just according to the geographical accident of birth, is a man's religion in after years. The place of birth settles it. But why? Because of the education (rude or complex and intricate) which is obtained in the part of the world where he happens to be born. I heard Lord Coleridge—the late Lord Coleridge say from the Bench at the time of my own trial under the Blasphemy Laws—I heard him say to the gentlemen of the jury that "you and I, gentlemen, would probably be of the same religion if we had not been brought up in it"; and if I had had to speak after the judge, instead of before him, I should have challenged that statement. Because, as a matter of fact, all the missionaries, in all parts of the world, make practically no impression upon the native heathen population. Just as men are brought up, so they live; and as they live, so they die. The solicitations of religion at death are simply the consolations which they have been accustomed to in life. Whoever heard of a dying Christian sending for a Mohammedan dervish? Whoever heard of a dying Mohammedan sending for a Catholic priest or a Protestant parson? Every man dies comfortably enough in the creed in which he has been brought up, unless, of course, there is so much hell-fire in it that no one could possibly die for it.

But if people believe in God and tell me that they believe because they think, I say that I don't believe that one in ten thousand has given five minutes serious and consecutive thought to the matter during the whole course of his life. You know little children are put upon their knees—a thing they never take to kindly—you have got to keep them there—a child will always get up if he can, which shows that there is something artificial about the whole business. But he is put on his knees, and in this country he is made to repeat the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." Our Father! and sometimes that little boy has no father alive; and sometimes he has a father alive who might better be dead; and sometimes he has a father

alive whom neither he nor his mother ever sees; and although he cannot find his own father always, he is taught to be quite sure about his other father "which art in heaven," and that is farther off, when the earthly father has deserted him, than any Board of Guardians could possibly wish. And, by-and-by, when he grows up, he is taught what is called "The Apostles Creed." The very name is a fraud. The Apostles had as much to do with framing it as you or I. According to a tradition, the Apostles all stood in a row, and the first began "I believe," the next said "in God the Father," and the next said "Maker of Heaven and Earth," and so the inspiration ran through the twelve until it came to the last, and all that was left for him to say was "Amen." Well, that is the only part of the creed I believe in.

Now, in that creed, the boy—the girl—is taught to believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. The largest order on record! Why, fancy teaching a boy or girl, who can't yet make anything worth making, to believe in the maker of heaven and earth! Any child can use that expression; not one man or woman can understand it. In fact, religion consists of unintelligible propositions stated in artificial language. Do you know why they drone so in places of worship? why they talk through their noses? If a man were to say right out in a plain, honest, commonsense address to commonsense people:—

The Father is incomprehensible, The Son is incomprehensible, The Holy Ghost is incomprehensible, yet there are not three comprehensibles, but only one comprehensible.

You could not stand it like that. People would all laugh in his face, but if you were to stand and say it in the way in which people say it in church, you know nobody would think of criticizing it. Why, what does it matter what the thing means when you say it like that? You take it without criticism; you swallow it.

Lord Forbes says that religion is like a pill; if you chew it, you will never swallow it. And that is why the priests of all religions want the children.

They know, if you come to a grown-up man or woman with a pack of nonsense, he or she is likely to look at you. If you come to a grown-up man or woman and say, "Here is a nice little box; there is something that will make you happy for ever and ever, and the price is only 7s. 6d.," you will find very few purchasers. But if you get hold of a little child and teach him that, he will pay 7s. 6d. a year as long as he lives. Why don't they let the child alone? They can't afford it. No religion in the world dares to let a child grow up strong enough to think for himself before they commence to operate upon him.

And you notice they always teach a child what is of no use to him. I defy anybody to point out one single clause in the Apostles' Creed (setting the Athanasian Creed aside altogether) which is of the slightest importance to any man, woman, or child in this world. It is all about the next. And a healthy person always feels that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

They never teach a child anything they know. Every religion teaches a child to say "I believe," "I believe." That is what they start with. That is the unit. They get that unit well planted in the child's mind, "I believe." What? Never mind, the religious teacher says. Get the "I believe" well in first. That is the unit; then we add the ciphers to complete the sum at our pleasure afterwards.

Now, I call that a nefarious business. I would not prejudice my own child in favour of Freethought. I would give my child the absolute right to think for his own self, and there is no other freedom really than that.



Certainly you have the right to tell your child what you please, or if other people tell him things which you don't believe, you have the right to say that you personally don't believe them; but you have got no right to demand that your child should not believe them; and I believe that if you only practise respect for the intellectual rights of the child, you will have future generations of men and women who will dwarf intellectually and morally everything that the world has ever seen.

I believe, however, that if we believe in God to-day because we were taught so, there must have been a time when people believed in God because they thought so. Now, when and where did people first believe in God? In the old dark days of human or semi-human savagery. All the great world religions, such as Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Judaism, are only special weavings on special looms of the raw material of savage superstition. All the great religions have their belief in providence, worship, prayer, miracles, sacrifice; and all this clearly shows us the savage origin of religion.

If you asked a savage, for instance, why he believes in dead men living, he does not give you a long rigmorale which, at the finish, may mean nothing at all. He says: "I know it. I see them; I talk to them; they talk to me"; and if you ask him further, you discover that he sees them and talks to them, and they talk to him in his dreams. Ah, you say, "it is a dream"; but the savage makes no distinction between one memory and another. He has not reached that stage of sociological criticism. Put yourself in his place, and you will see that you would be obliged to conclude as he does. While he has been lying there, and his companions—his squaw, perhaps—assures him that he has never budged, he has seen dead people. He may even have fought dead enemies, embraced dead friends—talked with them, they with him; and when he awakes and recollects these things, he can only conclude that while his body was lying there quiescent, something else has been out of him, and has seen these distant places and these dead people, and talked with them. With his feeble information, he is nevertheless logical. He concludes that they are living, and that when finally his dull nature breaks up, and the something which went out of him in sleep goes out of him finally at death, that something will go into ghostland with the dead people whom he has seen and spoken to in his dreams. Now, then, the soul goes in and out of the body, and a most elaborate superstition has been based upon that.

Go back to your Old Testament; read how the Israelitish prophet came to bring back to life a little boy. The prophet stretched himself on the boy seven times, and at the seventh time the boy sneezed. Why did he sneeze? Ask any parson, and he will probably say, "I really don't know." Why did the boy sneeze? Because the spirit or soul which had gone out of him came back through the nose. That is the way the soul went in and out; and if your soul came back through the nose, you would naturally sneeze.

And during the Middle Ages exorcists went about, and you may see pictures of them casting out devils, and the devils generally went out through the nose. Why? Because the breath went in and out of the nose; and the breath was the life, so they concluded. We know it is the life, but it's a necessity of life; and still, you know, they will bring a glass to see if dead people will stain it in any way, to discover if they are still breathing. Well, the soul went in and out of the nose, and I have sometimes thought that it was for that reason that the gentlemen who trade in the ghostly business select that organ to lead us by.

(To be concluded.)

## Acid Drops.

The longer the War continues, the more ridiculous do our "spiritual pastors and masters" make themselves. When the War commenced, they were full of the "spiritual uplift," the "bracing moral tonic," war had given the nation. Now, rather late in the day, the bishops are beginning to declaim against the "vice" and "immorality" amongst the soldiers. And even now they lack either the intelligence to see or courage to say that this alleged "immorality" is a necessary consequence of taking millions of men in the full flush of manhood, separating them from all influence of normal social existence, and keeping them under the anti-social conditions of a military life. The things complained of are not an incidental or accidental result of war; they are one of its normal consequences. You cannot have war, you cannot have even militarism without actual war, without debasing the moral life of a nation. We said this when the War began. We have been saying so ever since. And after three and a half years of war, the Bench of Bishops apparently have not the intelligence to see it or the courage to say it.

The other day Lord Coleridge, in presiding at the trial of a soldier, said we must not judge a man who had spent three years at the Front by the standard with which we judged other people. The remark was a very sensible one, and should provide food for reflection. This man, and millions of others, has been engaged in devoting a lengthy period to either killing or preparing to kill a number of his fellow-men. The killing may be inevitable; it may be quite justifiable. These things may be admitted, but they are beside the point. And the point is that, however justifiable the slaughter may be, the brutalizing process cannot be avoided. Human life becomes a cheap thing. The sight of slaughter makes men hard and callous. And when these men return to civil life, it is impossible that these consequences should be wiped out all at once. Lord Coleridge said only what every sensible person knows to be true. To say otherwise is either stupidity or cant.

The dead hand is an important factor in religion, and the huge sums left for the furtherance of the Christian superstition should make Freethinkers think furiously. The fortune of the late Sir Edward Wood was sworn at £172,649, and the residue of this huge sum has been left to the Baptists.

The new Bishop of Hereford, Dr. Hensley Henson, preaching at the Temple Church, said that "the founders of the Christian Church were humble, obscure, and uneducated men." The Bishop did not explain how the Gospels were written in Greek by these "uneducated" folk.

The *Westminster Gazette* says: "it was emphatically for the promotion of science that Henry VIII. founded Trinity College, Cambridge." Henry's devotion to science was not so marked as his attachment to the ladies.

Christians are ashamed of the dogmas of hell-fire and eternal torment, but they are disingenuous in their apologies. The *Times Literary Supplement* says: "The doctrine of hell has undoubtedly often been presented in the past by popular writers and preachers in a form which would make it impossible for any right-feeling man to regard the maker of hell with any emotion short of pure loathing." "Popular writers and preachers" is distinctly good, when one remembers that the dogmas of hell-fire have been presented without a break from the days of Jesus Christ to those of Billy Sunday.

The Rev. George Charles Wallis, Vicar of Ormesby, was fined for hoarding food. Evidently, Brother Wallis thinks that the ravens who fed Elijah have retired from active service.

Shelley was a very modest man, and he would have been admonished at the interest that book collectors take in his



works. The poet's *Refutation of Deism*, published in 1814 at a few pence, was sold recently at the Huntingdon Sale in New York, and realized the enormous sum of £690, which is a record price for a pamphlet.

Lord Hugh Cecil calls upon the Archbishop and Bishops of the Province of Canterbury "to make clear beyond dispute or doubt that the Church in common with the whole Catholic Church teaches as an essential part of the Christian Faith that our Lord was born of the Virgin Mary without human father, and that the narratives of his Nativity in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke are not poetical legend but historical fact." Lord Hugh is only a layman, but being a sincere Christian, he is to be admired for his courage in so uncompromisingly championing the cause of faith against that of reason. They are miserable trimmers, despicable time-servers, who treat as beautiful parable or poetic legend the alleged fact which alone would make a Divine Incarnation conceivably possible.

Lord Hugh Cecil is also perfectly justified in insisting upon the principle that "no person should be made a deacon, ordained a priest, or consecrated a bishop in the Church of England who does not thoroughly hold and will not faithfully teach the truth of the Church's teaching in regard to the Nativity of our Lord." When it is a question of more or less of an absurd or impossible belief, we are decidedly in favour of the more, even of the most, as against the least. Nothing can be more degrading, or more dehumanizing, than to subscribe a creed with mental reservations, and for the rest of one's life to play the hypocrite, as many of the clergy are known to do. The only consistent Christian is a thoroughgoing Catholic.

The secularization of Christianity is going on in the United States much the same as in the Old Country, and Mr. G. W. Coleman, an American Baptist, has been describing the efforts of the Bostonians to attract "non churchgoers and the unorthodox" to the Churches by means of "the Open Forum" Sunday meetings, held for the discussion of "vital public questions." The sincerity of the movement may be estimated by the motto on the platform, "Nothing offensive to race, class, or creed," which reduces discussion to the level of a Bible class.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc declares that the miracle at Lourdes had changed the mind of modern Europe, and was the special providential act designed to upset the Materialism of the nineteenth century. The "miracle" was the alleged appearance, in a grotto, of the Virgin Mary in 1858 to a local French girl, and the holy lady must have been then over eighteen hundred years' old. If the "miracle" did not upset the Materialists, it certainly was a "providential act" to increase the revenues of the Catholic Church.

We referred last week to the taking over of Church property in Russia by the Bolshevik Government. As a supplement to what was then said, and as a comment upon the talk of "outrage" and "robbery" in some of the English papers, it may be well to remember that no later than 1904 an Act was passed by the British House of Commons (5 Ed. VII. c. 12) giving the right to the State of refusing to allow a religious body to have more property than in the opinion of appointed commissioners it can usefully employ in the service of its religion. This clearly gives the State the right of confiscation. We had forgotten this Act when writing last week, but it is clear that if the Bolsheviks were inclined, they might appeal for a precedent to the Britain of 1904.

The Rev. J. MacMorland, Chaplain to the Forces, says the Church has little attraction for the men. They have not lost all religion, for they have found a new one of their own. This was a relation of loyalty, comradeship, and good fellowship. And yet, says Mr. MacMorland, it was nothing but the living word of Christ resumed in a new form. Now, what on earth has loyalty, comradeship, and good fellowship to do with "the living word of Christ"? They are amongst the most primitive of the social virtues, and have about as

much to do with Christ as with the man in the moon. The fact is that Mr. MacMorland, being a chaplain, must find somewhere a place for Christ. The loss of religious faith in the Army is patent—so patent that the clergy are forced to admit it. But Christ must come in somewhere. Hence Mr. MacMorland's apology—which most people will take at its true value.

A terrible fire occurred last week at the Grey Nunnery, Montreal. The newspapers report the death of nearly 100 babies, ranging from a few days old upward, and a number of wounded children. Those who have thanked God for preserving them from German torpedoes on the sea or German bullets on the land may, perhaps, ask themselves what he was doing not to pay a little attention to these hundred helpless children in Montreal. Atheism does not, of course, take away the horror of such a catastrophe, but at least it is free from the additional horror of belief in a God sitting aloft and watching the conflagration.

A Lieutenant (R.N.V.R.) writes to the *Nation*, asking:—

Why do clergy and bishops, Churchmen and theologians, have such an exaggerated opinion of their own importance? Who, among the workers, literary, scientific, commercial, care "tuppence" for the opinions of the representatives of the Church? What experience have they of the Church on the problems (sexual, political, breadwinning) of the majority? Their opinion on vital questions is, to use a Canadianism, "damn all."

Of course, the opinion of the clergy on any vital problem is worthless; but they *talk*, and large numbers are fooled by their talking. If they ceased talking, no one would bother about them for long. We may be thankful that a smaller number every year attend to their talking.

One would scarcely have thought it, but, according to Cardinal Bourne, the true spirit of the Catholic Church is shown in—

its passion for fair treatment and for liberty; its resentment at bureaucratic interferences with family life; its desire for self-realization and opportunities of education; above all, its conviction that persons are of more value than property.

If only Cardinal Bourne would explain how it happens that liberty has always been weakest where the Catholic Church has been strongest, that the Church's interference with family life forms one of the most disastrous chapters in European history; that education is poorest in Roman Catholic countries and centres, and that the Church has been one of the greatest "grabbers" of wealth and property, we should be rather more convinced. As it is, we have only Cardinal Bourne's statement, and, with many, the word of a cardinal is *not* above suspicion.

Canon Streeter has edited a volume of essays on "Immortality," which contains, among other things, an exposition of Biblical teaching respecting hell. You can always trust Christians to introduce hell in such discussions among themselves, but they keep the lid on when in the company of Freethinkers.

Twenty-four German missionaries have been shipped to this country from West Africa, and are now interned in London. Quite an ironical situation in a Christian country.

The dear *Daily News* is getting quite facetious. In a recent issue it asks: "Will Lord Rhondda go down to history as 'Lord of the Manna'?" Some of the pious readers of the *News* will be asking the editor to mend his "mannas."

Lady Nott Bower declares that many girls are marrying feeble-minded men, whom they would not have looked at before the War. This may account for the number of curates' weddings recorded recently.

"Fellowship of Silence" services are to be held in London churches during Lent. A cynic might call them wordless plays.



## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 3, Sheffield; March 17, Southampton; March 24, Manchester; April 7, Goldthorpe; May 5, Abertillery.

## To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 24, Manchester; March 17, Abertillery; March 24, Leicester; April 28, Nuneaton.

L. MUSKETT.—We are not responsible for the accuracy of the report; our only care is to see that it reaches us from what we believe to be a responsible source.

R. PARKER.—We quite recall you, and hope with you that the lectures will be resumed. As you say, the parsonic screed you enclose is rather "cool" in its impudence; but that is a way parsons have. Taking extra copies and distributing them is a good way of making the paper known.

J. M. K.—Sorry we are unable to use MSS.

MAJOR WARREN.—Received with thanks. As early as possible, but we are very much crowded with MSS. at the moment.

J. A. REID.—We also don't quite know what the clergy would do with Atheists if they could have their way. But we expect it would be something in the boiling oil way.

J. DRISCOLL writes *apropos* of last week's article on physical punishment in school that he was forced to protest against this in the case of his own child, and the protest seems to have been sufficient to stop it. We incline to the opinion that in the vast majority of cases the use of the cane is an indication of ineffectiveness on the part of the teacher.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings. Have passed on the review enclosed.

H. RAWLINGS.—Pleased to have been of service. The fact of our advice having achieved its purpose is sufficient thanks.

E. MAIN.—We note your opinion that God gives man every chance of repentance. Our opinion is that it is the other way about. Man has given God innumerable chances of behaving himself better, but with no tangible result, so far as we can see.

J. A. K. (Glasgow).—Thanks for verses, which we regret we are unable to use.

E. PUTSON.—Pleased to know you are resolved to go on doing all you can to secure that thousand new readers. You appear to have worked with judgment and good results. Paper is being sent to addresses given.

H. JONES.—Received too late for use this week.

*The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

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*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, giving as long notice as possible.*

*Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.*

*Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*

*Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*

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

## Sugar Plums.

Next Sunday (March 3) Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures at the Builders' Exchange, Cross Street, Burgess Street, Sheffield. The afternoon meeting is at 3.30, evening at 6.30. We hope there will be a good muster of local friends.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester, to-day (February 24) at 3 and 6.30. His subject in the afternoon is "Religious Mania"; evening "Christianity and the War." Both subjects ought to attract good audiences, and we hope that the local friends will not alone be present themselves, but will see that they bring a

friend with them. The Manchester Branch is working hard, and deserves all support.

Following the letter of Mr. Breese, published last week, one of our readers writes that in his turn he is devoting special attention to inducing newsagents to display copies of the *Freethinker*, and this has resulted in securing several new subscribers. He asks whether this policy cannot be systematically followed all over the country. We see no reason why it should not be done; and when it is done, the results are always good. Meanwhile, we are pleased to note that a very general effort is being made to secure that thousand new readers. We are receiving letters reporting one here and two there, and many are secured of whom we hear nothing, but can only judge from the demands made at this end. There is a *large* public awaiting the *Freethinker*, if only it can be brought into touch with it.

London Freethinkers will please note that Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner concludes the present course of Sunday afternoon lectures at the West Central Hall, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, with a lecture on "Belief, Make-Belief, and Unbelief." The lecture commences at 3.15.

The *Globe* is not a Radical publication, but it raps the Bishop of London over the knuckles in a recent issue. It appears that the Bishop is apparently consumed with anxiety because wet canteens have been started in connection with the special battalions for lads of eighteen. The *Globe* says; "We trust it will comfort His Grace of London to learn that these canteens only supply beer, and that the liquor is of such low alcoholic content that before it produces anything akin to intoxication the imbibers—to use an expressive if inelegant Americanism—must have 'his back teeth under water.'"

The Church of England is not only an old-fashioned institution, but it is centuries out of date. At a recent meeting of the Upper House of Convocation the question of the inclusion of King Charles the Martyr in the Church Calendar was debated with becoming solemnity. This strange devotion to ancient history may partially account for the astonishing attitude of the clergy concerning the present national crisis.

## "Wet Canteens."

WE hear, alas! the Bishop's voice upraised.

(His bleating seems a part of London's roar!)

We hear such things as strife and hate well praised  
In gushing adulation of the War.

Of "loathesome immorality" we hear,  
And learn how stubborn is the soldier's brain;  
That in the face of death he does not fear,  
Nor does he think of purgatorial pain.

The Bishop is depressed because the men,  
Who fight a War he acquiesces in,  
Seem prone to disobedience now and then,  
And die like heroes, steeped in fearful sin!

Good, gentle Christ! what age is this, we ask,  
Wherein such clergy, paid by Mammon State,  
Scream their foul thoughts, and give themselves the task  
Of conquering lust with War's ignoble hate?

There is a host of men beneath the sod,  
Out there in France where bishops never go;  
Who gave their all, and never prayed to "God,"  
Who died because they thought it must be so.

Fat bishops with their motor-cars and gold  
May batten on the sacrifice of these;  
May raise their hands in modesty, and scold  
The minor faults of soldiers who displease.

There is no "God." There is no Deity  
Who watches o'er the stricken widow's head,  
Or cheers the orphans in their misery,  
A God would strike each dreadful bishop—dead.

ARTHUR F. THORN.



## John Smith in Khaki.

### III.

(Concluded from p. 102.)

I HAVE not had any very flattering things to say about the influence of religion. The religion of the bulk of mankind can only affect morality for the good—if it does so at all—through the crude agency of bribes and threats. To my mind, real morality cannot come in until all bribes and threats are abandoned, and the appeal is made to justice, honour, and mercy in terms of their intrinsic worth. But the logical inferences to be drawn from religious doctrines and the actual conduct of the people professing them differ. People are, in the main, as superior to the crudities of Christianity in actual practice as they are inferior to the extravagantly idealistic altruism which that great composite and inconsistent sect also includes. Few Christians really believe in the fine teaching of universal love, and still fewer ever attempt to carry it out; but happily, the horrible doctrine of eternal punishment and other barbarous teachings are also silently but definitely dropped. The consequence is that much that is done nowadays in the name of religion is really secular activity.

A word about that curious chap the "Christian" in the Army. There is nothing very curious about *him*, but it is a strange reflection on the power of Christ, as they call it, that in a country where the vast majority are supposed to be Christians, there should be an inner group whose claim to distinction is that they take Christianity seriously. Still more curious is the use of the word "conversion" in connection with those who, from being Christians in a general sense, become Christians in a particular sense—or "get religion."

These are rare birds. They are generally harmless. They soon betray themselves by the use of such words as "blooming" for emphasis; which generally elicits some chaff from their fellow-Christians. Nothing worse than chaff is ever thrown at them; and, indeed, if they have "got it bad," and are known to be sensitive about it, they are generally saved even that. The Army is no place to suffer for your religious faith.

I think it only reasonable to admit that there is some good in evangelical religion (for your "Christian" is almost invariably of that ilk). The evangelist will not admit that there is any good in my philosophy, but I feel strong enough to give away points like that, and would sooner give him a peg to hang an argument on than justify a charge of being as narrow-minded as he is. His cardinal virtues, apart from the ridiculous "virtue" of belief in a certain brand of theology, are a series of don'ts. Some of these don'ts are of doubtful moral value, but others are salutary enough. If evangelism saves a man from drunkenness or venereal disease it scores. Let him rest in peace with it. It would be more likely to drive me to drink. *Chacon a son gout*. But Freethinkers never need hesitate to pursue their propaganda from fear of robbing some poor cripple of his moral crutch. No amount of argument would ever drive the thinnest wedge of reason into the skull of such a man. No man is ever converted by arguments alone. You must first prepare his mind for their reception. And he who attempts to prepare the mind of the man who is temperamentally inclined to religious mysticism for the reception of arguments that only appeal to reason and common sense, might as well sow spuds in a sandpit.

I once tried to get up a debate of a sort with one of these Lord's anointed. I was willing to accept the idiotic title, "Which is the Better, the Christian Life or a Life of Sin," but even with poor me weighed down with the

implication of being the Devil's advocate, he backed out of it. He practically admitted that although I should not convert him (which I had not the least expectation of doing), he feared the effect of the argument upon the audience. Is it not passing strange that a fervent believer should fear to display the wares of God in competition with those of the other party, where there was a fair field and no favour? Surely he, with the help of Jesus, could have made a good show.

The object of this note has been to indicate briefly what seems to me the general attitude of the men of my country to morals and religion. The more spectacular virtues of heroism and self-sacrifice I have purposely refrained from discussing, for the reason that they are dealt with very amply elsewhere at the present time. The libel on Englishmen as regards physical and moral deterioration that patriots of a certain class used to indulge in, has been sufficiently silenced by the glorious deeds and patient endurance of the "common" man in this long day of agony. There are many other things that ought to be said, but I fear to tax the reader's patience further. It is hard to lay down the pen without saying a word about the moral significance of the War itself and the people who are responsible for it, but as I have no wish for a melodramatic exit from this best of all possible worlds, I refrain.

If, as I have suggested, the attitude of the average man towards religion is indifference, it may be asked, is our propaganda then worth while, or are we flogging a dead horse? I answer that our work will be done when every man and woman has definitely forsaken superstition for Secular philosophy, and not before. We are not out to make people indifferent about the vast questions raised by theology. We want to get rid of the God-idea because we consider that anthropomorphism is a paltry attitude of mind towards the great problems of space, time, and destiny. To many whose keen intelligence and warm sympathy with the aspirations of democracy to free itself from the domination of capitalists and aristocrats is not balanced by that ability to appreciate the value of disinterested research which is necessary to the philosophic mind, every activity which is not concerned with satisfying some material need may seem a waste of time. That is one of the most profound and disastrous mistakes that any who work for the betterment of mankind can make. Men and women have heads beside stomachs. All honour to those who work for the bodily health and comfort of the multitude. More power to their elbow, and may their tribe increase. But the culture or neglect of the nobler functions of the mind will alone determine whether men and women are to sink to the level of the swine on whom they feed, or stride, graceful, majestic, and beautiful among the lower creatures of this earth, like the Gods and Goddesses of that glorious race who first raised aloft the standard of love, beauty, and liberty.

HERBERT W. THURLOW.

## The Organism as a Whole.

To those who have allowed themselves to be influenced by pulpit twaddle concerning the abandonment of "Materialism" by the scientific world, we warmly commend a careful reading of the latest work by Professor Jacques Loeb.<sup>1</sup> Professor Loeb is one of the world's leading experimentalists in biology, and is dowered in an eminent degree with that quality of "scientific imagination" which Tyndall declared essential to all valuable scientific work. And in addition to this scientific

<sup>1</sup> *The Organism as a Whole*, by Jacques Loeb. Putnam; 12s. net.



imagination, Professor Loeb possesses the not less necessary quality of courage. He has not alone the quality of mind which enables him to plan experiments and to detect the significance of the results; he has also the courage to state those results in a plain and uncompromising manner. He writes as a convinced "mechanist," which is the newer, and perhaps better, name for Materialist, and finds no use for the "vitalism" of writers such as Dreisch, or the "Directive Force" of Sir Oliver Lodge. In his own words:—

The ultimate aim of the physical sciences (is) the visualization of all phenomena in terms of groupings and displacements of ultimate particles, and since there is no discontinuity between the matter constituting the living and non-living world, the goal of biology can be expressed in the same way.

There is "Materialism" or "Mechanism" in a sentence, and the whole of Professor Loeb's work—particularly his *Comparative Physiology of the Brain and Psychology*, published in 1900, and his more recent *Dynamics of Living Matter*—emphasizes this point of view.

Every living animal is a chemical machine. That is Loeb's basic view, and his experiments go far to prove its soundness. Theologians have dwelt upon the wonders of "instinct," and all their wondering has brought us not a step nearer understanding. Years ago, Professor Loeb set himself to understand. Why does a moth fly towards the light? Why does a flower turn towards the light? Why does a caterpillar crawl towards the end of a branch in search of food? By a series of experiments, Professor Loeb showed that these "instincts" were no more than the consolidated consequences of the effects of light and heat operating on the organism. A fly will lay its eggs on meat, but not on fat. "A directive instinct," cries the theologian. Not so, says Loeb; the meat provides a chemical stimuli, causing the fly to deposit its eggs. In the fat, these stimuli are wanting. It is a chemical reaction we are studying, not a metaphysical conundrum.<sup>1</sup>

Again, a few years ago the question of how a spermatozoon could cause an egg to develop into an individual was a "mystery." Professor Loeb took the unfecundated eggs of the sea urchin, raised the concentration of the water by the addition of a salt, and, behold! the egg was fertilized without the spermatozoon. He obtained the same results with the eggs of the star-fish, of worms, and of molluscs. The "mystery" of fecundation had become a physico-chemical phenomenon.

In the present volume Professor Loeb takes the reader with him in the discussion of such questions as the chemical laws of genus and species, the determination of sex, animal instincts, the mechanism of mendelism, etc. We wish to specially note two intensely interesting chapters on "The Influence of Environment" and "Adaptation to Environment." A few popular delusions are corrected here—not popular merely with the general public, but also with those who lay claim to some amount of scientific culture.

We much regret that considerations of space prevent our writing at greater length on a most important statement of the fundamentals of the case for Materialism. Necessarily, the work is rather technical in form and language, but there is nothing which readers of average education and intelligence will not easily master. And every reader will have forced on his mind the conclusion, that the more exact our knowledge of the mechanics of the living organism becomes, the more is "Materialism" justified. The conception of the organism as one with the

<sup>1</sup> A number of these experiments are fully described in the author's *Studies in General Physiology*, 1905,

rest of nature, and as a complex of forces that meet us in a simpler form in other phenomena, is a working postulate that not only dominates every scientific worker, it is the only one that is possible to a sound science.

Professor Loeb dedicates his book—

to that group of Freethinkers, including D'Alenbert, Diderot, Holbach, and Voltaire, who first dared to follow the consequences of a Materialistic Science—incomplete as it then was—to the rules of human conduct, and who thereby laid the foundation of that spirit of tolerance, justice, and gentleness which was the hope of our civilization, until it was buried under the wave of homicidal emotion which has swept through the world.

Held in check, we believe, not buried. But it is well to find so brave a testimony to the heroic Freethought fighters of the past.

PHILIP SIDNEY.

## New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

### X.—THE CROSS.

EVENING shades fell. Stars sparkled. Under the olive trees of the Garden of Gethsemane, a band of the disciples sat, while the Master, a stone's throw off, knelt and prayed, and he said—

"Father, if I must needs drink of this bitter cup, I will. Not my will, but thy will, be done."

An angel, whose face gleamed in the darkness, stood at his side, comforting him; and the face of Jesus was bedewed with sweat.

The disciples fell asleep.

A noise!

"My Lord, are you here?" cried a voice—the voice of Judas Iscariot; and Judas kissed Jesus.

"We arrest you," cried a group of constables, as they seized the Master of Demons.

A scuffle took place; the disciples had awoke, and one had drawn a sword, and slashed a constable's ear. A touch of the hand of Jesus healed the ear. Then said Jesus,—

"Darkness is now in power."

In a chamber of the High Priest's house were gathered Lecturers, Pious Men, Priests, and Temple-Men. More joined them during the night. When dawn came, they would hold a meeting of the Sanhedrim, and decide what to do with the man they called false prophet. Meanwhile, a charcoal fire in a brazier was lit, and guards and other folk basked in its warmth. Peter the Pilot had crept in among them. Jesus was watched by constables.

A servant-woman said, as she pointed at Peter,—

"This fellow is one of the Galilean mob! He is a comrade of the wicked agitator!"

"It's quite untrue, quite!" replied Peter.

A cock crew. The dawn had arrived.

Jesus looked at his timid apostle, and Peter went out, and wept bitterly; for he remembered how the Master had warned him at the Supper.

The council was now held, the High Priest being in the chair. The question was, whether Jesus pretended to be the Chosen Man, the Christ.

"Are you the Christ?" he was asked.

"You shall see me, the Son of Man, sit on the right hand of the Almighty God."

"Do you mean you are God's Son?"

"Ah, God's Son! You have called me what I am," answered Jesus.

"To Pilate, to Pilate with him!" shouted the Lecturers, Pious Men, Lawyers, Priests.



One councillor had silently slipped out. It was Joseph. He was a believer in the Kingdom.

Pilate, the Roman Governor, sat in a hall of his mansion. Guards, helmeted and bearing swords and spears, stood near his seat, and at the entrances, and in the court-yard.

"Sir," cried the crowd of priests and Pharisees, "this man is an agitator from Galilee; a traitor; a pretended King of the Jews; a most dangerous criminal."

A short examination followed. Pilate soon saw that Jesus was a harmless sort of prisoner; and he bade the guards march the prisoner to the neighbouring palace where lived the real King of the Jews—Herod Antipas—the man who caused the death of the Baptist.

However, Jesus stood before him as dumb as a stone. Not a word could be drawn from him. Herod scornfully said,—

"Let him be the festival King, if he is so fond of Kingship."

With roars of laughter, and with rude antics, the Roman soldiers arrayed Jesus in a gorgeous robe, and salaamed before him as to a king. Then the festival king was led back to Pilate, a multitude hustling at his heels.

"Well," said Pilate, "as this is the Passover festival, and, by old custom, a jail-bird is to be released at your pleasure, choose now who it shall be. I advise you to choose King Jesus, and then he can go free."

Confused shouts arose.

"Crucify this traitor! Give us Bar-Abbas! The Galilean to the cross! Bar-Abbas to liberty!"

Pilate gave way to their wishes. The jail-bird, Bar-Abbas, a murderer and plotter, was set free. A wooden cross was fetched from the barracks, and an African Jew happening to pass at the moment, the cross was laid upon his shoulders, and he carried it. A noisy multitude surged through the gate of Jerusalem, and up the hill Golgotha, which was round like a skull. The hill was also named Calvary.

Women followed Jesus, crying in pity.

"Daughters of Jerusalem," said Jesus, "weep not for me, but for your children, who will grow up to see the days of awful ruin."

On the top of Golgotha three crosses were set up, and Jesus was nailed on the middle one, and a thief was crucified on his right, and another thief on his left; and the people gazed at the three men dying.

"Father," prayed Jesus, "forgive those that kill me; they know not what they do."

The soldiers shared the prisoners' clothes amongst themselves.

Lecturers and Temple Men scoffed,—

"Ha, ha! Why doesn't the Christ, the Chosen Man, set himself free from the cross?"

"King, King, come down!" jeered the soldiers.

Somebody fixed a scrap of parchment, on a tablet, over the Pioneer's head, and on it was scribbled—"King of the Jews."

"Yes," groaned one of the thieves, "if you are the Chosen Christ, help yourself, and me, and my mate."

"Hush," cried the other thief, "hush, comrade! You and I are guilty; this man is innocent. He is no rogue. And, perhaps," he added, "you will remember me, my Lord, when you are in your Kingdom."

"To-day, my friend," replied Jesus, "to-day you will be with me in Paradise."

Hours before sunset, shadows, black shadows, crept over the city, and the Temple, and the Place of a Skull, and the crowd, and the three crosses; and, in the Temple, a great curtain split from top to bottom, as if a gate opened for someone to pass through. And Jesus,

uttering a loud cry, bent his head, and died.

The people slowly dispersed.

Calvary was a silent hill. Soldiers kept guard over the three dead.

The Roman captain, who had charge of the crucifying, muttered,—

"This man they call king was a righteous man."

Before midnight, a visitor presented himself at the porch of Pilate's mansion, and asked to see the governor. It was Joseph the councillor; and, as he was a person of rank, he was permitted to go in.

"Sir," he said to Pilate, "I beg, as a favour, that I may bury the body of the King of the Jews."

Pilate smiled,— "Oh, yes."

The descent from the cross soon took place; and the body of Jesus was wrapped in white linen, and borne to a garden which belonged to Joseph, and here a cave had been hewn out of the side of a rock for the purpose of a tomb. In this sepulchre the dead Master of the jinn was laid.

Women, soft-footed, had followed, watching.

Hastening to a house in the city, the women busied themselves in mixing sweet ointments, with which to embalm the body of the Wonder-worker.

The sun rose. The women, who had toiled all the night, stopped their labours. It was Saturday, the holy Sabbath. Next day, the day of the Sun, as the worshippers of the god Mithra would call it, they would go to the rock-tomb.

\* \* \* \*

Slaves who enraged their Roman masters were often nailed to crosses, to die a dreadful death. But the people of the ancient ages had happier ideas of the cross. It might make them think of the Father and Mother, whose joining in marriage was a beautiful Cross of life; and such was the belief of the Egyptians, with their Tau, or sign of the cross. It might make them think of the great world, divided by lines pointing north and south, east and west, in the way of a cross on a Good Friday cake. The ancients cherished the cross, as an ornament to be worn, as a symbol (or sign) of life and the world, as a thing to be worshipped.

Some of the people of Asia were wont, at the spring season, to dress up two men as kings, one a king of the Good, the other of the Evil; and, of these, one must die. In such a custom, or rite, the men chosen for the two kings would be prisoners from the jail, of whom one would be spared, the other slain. Perhaps, at Jerusalem, such a custom was kept up. Perhaps Jesus, with whom the scribes were so angry, was thus marked for death as a "King of the Jews," and the Romans may have allowed the poor prisoner to die as a king, crowned in mockery by his enemies.<sup>1</sup>

It is very likely that, in the first and second centuries—the days of Josephus the Jew, Plutarch the Greek, and Trajan the Roman emperor—people would act plays, or dramas, in which the Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the Death on the Cross, and the Burial, and other scenes were performed in the presence of crowds of spectators. The audience would listen in deep silence to the talk at the Supper-table, gaze with hatred at the kissing Judas, weep when the women wept, and sigh when Jesus sighed the prayer of forgiveness for his murderers. Eagerly they beheld the descent from the cross, the burial in the rock-tomb, the mixing of the sweet balm by the women. Whispers would pass round,—

"The next scene will show the Risen Christ."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. G. Frazer's *Scapegoat*, note on "The crucifixion of Christ."

<sup>2</sup> The theory of the Trial and Crucifixion-drama is given in Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*.



Sometimes, the scenes would be acted one way, sometimes another. And, if you look at the Gospels in the New Testament, you see how the story was told with different dialogues and different tableaux.

F. J. GOULD

### The Specialist.

"WHERE is the young scamp? This requires severe treatment." And I reached for the family corrector.

"Now, Jack," said Minerva, "you really must not interfere this time. This is a case for the specialist. I have sent for the Rev. Mr. Teachem to call and examine Tommy."

"Specialist! The Rev..... What has the parson got to do with it? What do you mean by 'specialist'?"

"Suppose Tommy were sick—physically sick—and you didn't know what ailed him, what would you do?"

"Give him a dose of castor-oil and send for the doctor, of course."

"Precisely! That is what I have done. The clergyman will be here directly."

"Minerva," I said soothingly, "this trouble is going to your head. You must not allow it to get such a hold. I admit I am rather shocked myself to hear that Tommy swears; but, after all, what's in an oath? I mean, of course, an occasional and appropriate swear-word on the lips of a man of judgment and discretion. The boy is still too young to be permitted the—the....."

"The free use of the verbal safety-valve of temper?" suggested Minerva.

"Quite. Thanks. But the fact that he has dared to taste the forbidden fruit of the English language should hardly cause a woman of your sense and experience to—er.....Come, come, my dear, don't you worry. I'll attend to Tommy. You sit down here and rest a bit, and after your poor head is better, you can tell me all about it."

"Jack," said Minerva, regarding me with that calm, appraising look of hers, "you set me wondering what made me marry you....."

"Well, I hope....."

"When you talk such nonsense. You do not appear to realize that Galileo lived and worked in the seventeenth century."

"Now, what in heaven's name has Galileo got to do with Tommy's bad language?"

"Everything. Galileo discovered that the world moved."

"And so caused Master Thomas Spratt to say 'damn' three hundred years later. I see! New demonstration of the evolutionary theory: Darwinism, Herbert Spencer, and all that sort of thing."

"Now, dear, do be patient while I explain. Don't let it be said that Galileo lived in vain. Had Tommy said a swear in the days of Galileo, Tommy would have been spanked—*hard*."

"Long live Galileo! Tommy *will be* spanked. *Hard!* Tommy's father swears it."

"Now you are off the track again," she grumbled. "The point is, Galileo is dead. You may have been too busy at the office to notice it, but he died quite a long time ago—and spanking has gone out."

"In consequence?"

"M'm! It might be better to say that spanking has gone out because Galileo *lived*, since we owe it to him that things move. But the real point is that spanking is as obsolete as blood-letting. Science has proved each to be a useless and wasteful dissipation of energy. The medical specialist has been followed by the moral specialist—for this is the age of Reform, you know."

"Be careful, my dear," I warned her. "Too many Reformers spoil the State. Withdraw the right to spank and the institution of Fatherhood will crumble to the ground." But just then the Vicar was announced, and I missed the opportunity of proving my case.

"Good evening, Mr. Teachem," said Minerva, "I am so glad you were able to come. I am worried about Tommy, and wish you would look at him and tell me what you think."

"Tommy!" The Vicar was puzzled. "What is wrong with Master Tommy? Not sick, I hope?"

"Yes—*very*," replied Minerva. "Or perhaps not very. He may be only a little sick. I—I don't quite know. That is why I sent for you to examine him."

"But, my dear Mrs. Spratt, if the boy is sick, surely you should have called in Dr. Thom, not me." And the dear, good Vicar radiated astonishment.

"Oh, no," explained Minerva; "It's not that kind of sickness. Tommy is ill morally."

"Ah!" murmured the Vicar, getting into his professional stride at once.

"Yes, he used bad language to-day, said a swear-word, and—and—and I feel so miserable about it," Minerva, tearful, broke off abruptly.

"My dear, good lady," purred Mr. Teachem, "I am extremely sorry. But you must not worry over much. Boys will be—er—the sons of men, you know. I shall have a talk with Master Tommy, and all will be well."

"But please understand me," urged Minerva. "I have already given Tommy his castor-oil. (The Vicar gasped.) I mean I have myself administered the usual dose of texts and goody-goody talk generally prescribed—but it's no good. Tommy seems suddenly to have grown beyond the stage when that sort of thing is effective. He has been with his father so much of late."

Before I could think of a sufficiently biting protest she had swept on, and, when I caught up, was saying, "and as I look upon you, Mr. Teachem, as our specialist in morals, I do wish you would make a careful examination of my little boy and tell me how it stands with him."

"Most certainly," said the Vicar. "Although I can only claim to be a sort of general practitioner myself, I think I shall be able to diagnose Tommy correctly. Where is the patient?"

"Confined to his room," said Minerva. "If you prefer to see him alone, the maid will show you upstairs."

"By the way," observed the Vicar, as he turned to go, "there is no hereditary taint, I take it?"

"My people," I replied, "have all been respectable grocers for generations. Wholesale."

"I had a grandfather in the Indian Army," confessed Minerva.

"Ah!" said the Vicar. "Those grandfathers! They will reappear. I know them."

"But he wasn't my favourite grandfather," explained Minerva.

"That may have made a difference," said the Vicar. "We'll see."

"No," reported the specialist on his return; "Tommy has inherited nothing objectionable from your grandfather, Mrs. Spratt. He has a perfectly sound moral constitution, and is merely suffering temporarily from a slight infection—caught, apparently, on the golf-links yesterday."

Minerva looked hard at me, then harder at the family corrector.

"The point is," said I, reaching over and throwing the thing in the fire, "Galileo is dead; and spanking has gone out."

F. L. B. G.



## Correspondence.

## EXISTENCE OF GOD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like to have an expression of views from the readers of the *Freethinker* as to the attitude we should adopt in discussing the question of the existence of God.

I have come to the conclusion that, from a diplomatic point of view, it would be better in the interests of Secularism, if Freethinkers were to press Christians to give in clear language their conception of "God" rather than we should say there is no God, or that we know of no God.

The other evening I had a discussion with a gentleman who is the superintendent of a large Sunday-school. I asked him to define exactly what he meant by God. He said what he understood was, that God was a word meant to convey the meaning—the spirit of goodness, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of justice, the spirit of mercy, and the spirit of truth. He had over and over again expressed himself thus, and at a meeting of the Y.M.C.A. years ago had shocked the infantile notions of quite a number of those present.

Now, with this conception of God, we, as Freethinkers, can scarcely disagree, but we accept these as human qualities, and their existence is quite demonstrable.

Where this friend and I came to disagree was in our beliefs as to what happened to the spirit or soul after death. He had a hazy notion that the spirit or soul continued to live on in another world, and that we were put into this world to prepare for the next, which would be eternal.

My friend thought the Book of Genesis was a fairy tale, and the Garden of Eden a myth, but he firmly believed in the immaculate conception and the "bodily" resurrection of Christ. He had no notion as to where Christ went or as to whether his body now occupies space, or still exists in the form of flesh and blood, but he is convinced that Christ's body rose from the grave, and he now sits at the right hand of God, who is in heaven, which, when you remember his conception of God, is absurd. My friend says he doesn't care whether people believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, the immaculate conception, or any of the other dogma as taught by the Church, so long as a man lives an upright life as taught by Jesus Christ, and then he is a Christian. Quite a number of Christians are at this stage, and there is now very little of the original faith to cling to.

Freethinkers can live the good life without the least reference as to what Christ said or did. We have quite as good a conception as to what is right or wrong as Christians have, and they have no special claim to the common virtues.

I think, when occasion arises, we should get our Christian friends to say exactly what they mean in plain, every-day English without mysticism of any kind, and a different construction would then be put upon their statements.

"FREETHINKER."

## Society News.

West Central Hall (London).—Last Sunday's lecture by Mr. Palmer on "The Antiquity of Man" was greatly appreciated by the audience, and many of those present voiced the wish that our lectures could be more widely advertised. We hope that London Freethinkers will fill the hall to-day, when Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Charles Bradlaugh's daughter, will occupy the platform.—E. M. VANCE, Gen. Sec.

North London Branch, N.S.S.—Saturday's air-raid was responsible for a smaller audience than usual at the St. Pancras Reform Club. This is very regrettable as the debate between Mr. Percy Muir, the well-known Christian Evidence exponent, and Mr. T. F. Palmer, well repaid those who were present. We hope the audience all reached home safely before Sunday's aerial bombardment commenced. Truly our propaganda in London is conducted under difficulties these days or, rather, nights! Next Sunday Miss Nina Boyle, of the Women's Freedom League, opens the debate. Miss Boyle's name ought to be sufficient advertisement to fill the hall to overflowing.—H. V. LANE, Hon. Sec.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.

## INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N W, off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Miss Nina Boyle, "Women's Place in the World." Open Debate.

WEST CENTRAL HALL (31 Alfred Place, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, W.): 3.15, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Belief, Make-belief, and Unbelief."

## OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK. 11.30, Messrs. Shaller and Saphin; 3.15, Messrs. Swasey, Kells, and Dales.

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beevor Street): 3, Important Meeting. All Members are requested to attend.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate); 6.30, Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, "Thoughts on the War and After."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Religious Mania"; 6.30, "God and the War."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (12A Clayton Street East): 3, Members' Meeting.

NUNEATON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Palace, Queen Road): Mr. T. F. Palmer, 2.45, "The Story of the Evolution of Life"; 6.30, "The Birth and Death of Worlds."

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Waverley Hall, St. Mary's Road): 11, "Is there any Evidence for the Survival of Human Personality." Open Discussion, for Members only. Affirmative, Mr. C. Terry. Members are particularly asked to attend.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, High Street, Swansea): Mr. Joseph McCabe, 3, "Science and the Hope of Immortality"; 7, "Adult Education and the Churches."

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