

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### God and Us.

Whatever we may neglect in this country we never overlook religion and our religious duties. Long before we provided the people with schools we plastered the country with churches. We praise God when we go to war, and when he has given us a victory we return thanks—with a hint that we hope to secure a continuance of his patronage in the future. We have daily prayers in the House of Commons, the efficacy of which is seen in the veracity and uprightness of its members. We have bishops in the House of Lords, and thus secure a disinterested spirit in public affairs. We thoughtfully provide the monarch with a religious creed, in order to avoid the danger of having one who should be non-religious. We may be careless of social conditions that lead men and women to prison, but we take care they shall have regular religious services once they are there. The making of the criminal may be our—that is, society's work, but we do see that he is not lacking in spiritual ministrations, even to the very scaffold itself. And every good Briton knows that God looks with favour upon our activities. To conclude otherwise would be to charge the Deity with want of judgment.

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### The Solemnization of the Absurd.

So one need not be surprised that both Houses of Parliament have decided solemnly to attend church on August 4, which is the anniversary of the outbreak of this most Christian War. We haven't yet heard whether the German Parliament will, with equal solemnity, march to its church and lay before the Lord its reasons why God should help the Fatherland; but, we daresay, something of the kind will be tried. In our own Parliament Mr. Lloyd George moved: "That the House will attend at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on Sunday, August 4, being the fourth anniversary of the declaration of war, to invoke the divine blessing on our just cause." We are not sure for whom the reminder, "fourth anniversary" was intended. Members of Parliament could hardly have needed it (many would recall it by their increased dividends). Perhaps it was a diplomatic hint to Deity that, after four years, it was time he bestirred himself and did something to show his real interest in the Allies. For one notes that the Christian service to which the Jews, and Atheists, and Agnostics, and

Nothingarians of the House are invited, is not, in the words of the motion, to thank God for already blessing our cause, it is to *invoke* his blessing. Perhaps it would be too much for even the British public for Mr. Lloyd George to say we have already had the "Divine Blessing." When we went to war with Germany we presented her with an ultimatum. Why not do the same here? Why not announce formally and publicly that, unless we have some clear indication of the Deity's good will within a given time, all the churches and chapels will be closed, the chaplain of the House dismissed, and the rest of the clergy put to some kind of useful service?

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### Proving Our Case.

Seriously, Christians have little for which to thank God in this War. For four years we have been witnessing a demonstration, on an enormous and costly scale, of the futility of the Christian religion. All the special qualities associated with religious wars—un-curbed ferocity, unlimited lying, and boundless credulity—have been manifested in full measure. And of the piety of the German people and leaders there can be no question. Yet it is these people of whom we read stories that show a complete unscrupulousness as to the means employed, so long as it is hoped they will achieve the end desired. What has been the value of centuries of Christianity in Germany? Has the Freethinker ever drawn a more damning indictment of the uselessness of Christianity than our own Christians unconsciously draw in their indictment of Germany? Would the Germans have been worse without Christianity? Are they the better for it? Some of our clerical leaders here are busy indicting "materialistic science" because, they say, it has placed all its resources at the service of war. But the *ethical* character of war is not altered thereby. To kill more quickly or more numerously does not alter the quality of war. And why blame science? Who is it that has utilized scientific discoveries to the end of slaughter? Christians. It is a Christian nation that, while comparatively indifferent to the claims of science during a time of peace, can pour out money like water to utilize scientific research for purposes of war.

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### God's Plan.

The Rev. Samuel Chadwick, addressing the Wesleyan Conference at Manchester on July 17, said he regarded—the war as part of a great world movement rather than as a thing detached. A materialistic interpretation of the universe and a rationalistic interpretation of knowledge had been unfolded. In Germany this found its highest expression. Its professors taught that might and right were synonymous, though the spiritual hunger of the people insisted on asserting itself again and again. When they were looking forward to a great revival, then came war. He believed, however, that the war was a part of this revival. It was in God's plan. Men could start war and devils keep them going, but God ruled them.

Mr. Chadwick is speaking—like a clergyman. A materialistic interpretation of the universe rules in Germany

no more than in England. It may rule in German scientific circles, but so it does here. And in neither country has it any vital connection with the forces that make for war. It is ethical Materialism—the thirst for more trade and territory, the mania for expansion and empire—that leads to war. And who is fit to cast the first stone here? And on what ground is the Christian Bernhardt or the Bible-loving Kaiser accused of “Materialism”? And if the War is part of the revival of religion, why complain of Germany? It is, says Mr. Chadwick, “in God’s plan”; although men start a war (as part of the plan), God rules throughout it all. Then it is all *his* business. We are only puppets in the game. All the filth, and disease, and slaughter of the War is in God’s plan—part of the revival he has arranged! Blasphemy is defined as speaking disrespectfully of God! We earnestly invite the attention of God Almighty to the Rev. Samuel Chadwick.

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#### Two Pictures.

Among the Bantu tribes of Northern Rhodesia, says Frazer, before an army marched to war the head chief prayed for days for victory, then he and his wives went to the shrines of the dead kings and prayed that the gods would keep the war-path clear from foes; and help them to defeat the enemy. Then the army was marshalled, and the chief performed a solemn war-dance; and the soldiers set forth in confidence of victory. In 1918, in this country, our war chief solemnly invites his subordinates to march with him to one of our shrines, also dedicated to a dead person, and join with him in prayers and songs and supplications to their God that he will clear our path of foes and lead us to victory over the enemy. Our war chief will not dance before the shrine; he will only kneel. His wife will not beat her breast; she will only sit demurely apart and pray. But except for these differences of detail, will anyone be good enough to point out what difference there may be between a Bantu chief going through his incantations to secure the blessings of his gods on the war the tribe has in hand, and our chief leading the Members of Parliament to one of our “joss-houses” on a similar errand? The prayers and songs are the same in spirit, the purpose is the same in kind, and the response will be the same in value. But which is the savage and which is the civilized person in these two performances? And so far as the ceremony is concerned, might not Bantu and Briton change places without any transfer of mental adjustment?

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#### Playing at Savages.

Is it not time we stopped this apeing of savages in the name of civilization? A crowd of educated legislators solemnly marching to a temple to ask the help of their Mumbo-Jumbo to give them victory in war! How many of them really believe that their procession, and their prayers, and their hymn-singing will have the slightest influence on the course of the War? It is an insult to their intelligence even to assume they believe. They know that, whether they pray or don’t pray, not a soldier less or more will be killed on our side or on that of the enemy. The “Divine blessing” will not make a soldier shoot straight, or give a foolish officer intelligence. Four years of war, four years of slaughter, of rapine, of incendiarism, of ruined homes and blasted lives, and the Parliament of a civilized people resolving on a church parade to secure victory! The Bantu chief calls his followers to pray to the tribal gods to keep the war-path clear of foes and to give them victory. Poor savages! The ignorance of such people is appalling.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## “Nearer, My God, To Thee.”

THIS well-known hymn is generally supposed to be the great city of refuge provided for the spiritual safety and consolation of the people of God when hard pressed by his and their enemies. It was specially constructed for that purpose by some Divinely inspired poetic genius. There is no other hymn in the English language that appeals with such soothing, steady, and comforting power to the children of affliction and sorrow. When the night is dark and the fires burn low and the storm is raging, how naturally, how irresistibly, the pious soul bursts into the wistful song—

Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!

We were told that, when the great Atlantic Liner, the *Titanic*, was sinking in 1912, the passengers kept cool and collected by singing this hymn. That may be more or less of a legend, but the fact remains that superstitious people, when calamity overtakes and threatens to overwhelm them, betake themselves to prayer, as so many Britons did lately when the God of Battles seemed to be favouring the Germans. It used to be a saying not long ago that even Atheists always call upon God when danger stares them in the face. According to this hymn, the goal of life is nearness to God, which we are to reach by prayer and supplication. Whatever happens, however heavy the cross or dense the darkness, whether angels beckon or devils pull back, our aim should ever be—

Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!

Is it not the proud boast of many of the clergy that this bloody War has been sent on purpose to drive the careless and indifferent back to God? The War, seemingly the direst curse, is thus in reality the greatest conceivable blessing. Stony griefs and clayey woes which look like formidable hindrances on the march of life, are but so many goads urging us upwards towards God. To free-thinking Ishmaelites all that may sound laughably absurd, and the absurdity seems to touch its climax in the last verse:—

Or, if on joyful wing  
Cleaving the sky,  
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,  
Upward I fly,  
Still all my song shall be—  
Nearer, my God, to thee—  
Nearer to thee!

Now, the very conception of nearness to God is in itself ridiculous. On theological grounds alone it represents an utter impossibility. Orthodoxy teaches not only that God is a being who fills and transcends the Universe, but that the whole of him is everywhere at one and the same time, and, naturally, to think of getting nearer to him is to touch the summit of irrationality. Coolly admitting this, the divines claim that they use the term “nearness” in a spiritual, not a geographical, sense. Very well; but what are we to understand by spiritual nearness to the Deity? By its very vagueness, “spiritual” is an adjective that covers a multitude of sins against Reason. Etymologically, spirit is nothing but breath or wind, and the adjective of necessity partakes of the quality of the noun. Judging by the recorded experience of the saints, nearness to God signifies an exceedingly pleasant sensation, and nothing more. It is simply an agreeable emotion which comes and goes. It may be induced by solitary meditation and prayer, by listening to impassioned religious discourses, or by being present and possibly taking part in noisy and excited Methodist prayer-meetings; but however

brought on, it is really nothing but a dangerous species of neurosis, and sometimes ends in raving madness. During the notorious Evan Roberts' revival a friend of the present writer got so near to God that he had to be confined for six months in a lunatic asylum. Is it not a recognized fact that most of the great saints of history were more or less insane, and that the degree of the insanity corresponded to the height of the saintliness? We can see them at their nightly meetings singing twelve psalms pointed out by an angel, as was their invariable custom in the Cœnobitic establishments of Egypt. They lived apart from the world in arid and rocky deserts, completely isolated from the occupations, amusements, and enjoyments of their fellow-beings. Describing them, Milman says:—

At the close of each Psalm, the whole assembly prostrated itself in mute adoration. In every part of Egypt, from the Cataracts to the Delta, the whole land was bordered by these communities; there were 500 Cœnobites in the desert of Nitria alone; the total number of male anchorites and monks was estimated at 76,000; the females at 27,700. Parts of Syria were, perhaps, scarcely less densely peopled with ascetics. Cappadocia and the provinces bordering on Persia boasted of numerous communities, as well as Asia Minor and the eastern parts of Europe (*History of Christianity*, vol. iii., p. 209).

In addition to these Cœnobitic communities, there were also thousands of hermits who lived in solitude, "some in clefts and caves; some in huts, into which the light of day could not penetrate; some of whom hung huge weights to their arms, necks, and loins; some confined themselves in cages; some on the tops of mountains, exposed to the sun and weather." Everybody is familiar with Tennyson's poem, *St. Simeon Stylites*; but few, perhaps, know the impression Simeon made on his own age, as described by Evagrius (H.E. i. 13):—

Rivalling, while yet in the flesh, the conversation of angels, he withdrew himself from all earthly things, and doing violence to nature, which always has a downward tendency, he aspired after that which is on high; and standing midway between earth and heaven, he had communion with God, and glorified God with the angels; from the earth offering supplications as an ambassador to God; bringing down from heaven to men the Divine blessing.

All such men and women, whether living in monastic communities, or scattered abroad in all sorts of solitary places as hermits, were regarded as saints, who were in the happy state of exceptional nearness to God; but, judged by common sense, they were the victims of severe mental aberration. No man, in his senses, could address the Divine Being in the terms Tennyson ascribes to St. Simeon:—

Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,  
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years,  
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,  
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,  
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps,  
A sign between the meadow and the cloud,  
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne  
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet and snow.

Even in the modern hymn there are not wanting signs that the writer was under the spell of a wholly unsound view of human life. Both the words and the tune to which they are set are morbid in the extreme; and, as one listens, the impression is made that the singers are trying hard to make the most and best of a thoroughly bad situation, or desperately endeavouring to enjoy their "stony griefs and clayey woes." There is an unwholesome sense of weirdness about the whole thing—an unnaturalness which cramps the finer instincts and potencies of our nature.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Circulating the Scriptures.

Christianity has never lost the instinct of universal dominion. *Bible Society Report.*

The only hope for the future of society lies in the absolute extermination of Christianity.—G. W. Foote.

AGREEABLY to the law of supply and demand, the annual report of the British and Foreign Bible Society makes its appearance. The one before us bears the title, *Deep Calleth Unto Deep*, a pleasant nautical alternative to a preceding issue which was entitled *The Book and the Sword*. In the piping times of peace less attention is paid to naval and military nomenclature, and less insistence is laid upon the warlike character of the Bible, which is often referred to as the work of the "Prince of Peace." However, variety is the spice of life, and the report before us covers so wide a field that it should appeal to the taste of the jaded Freethinker, bored to distraction by the multifarious financial appeals from the innumerable churches, chapels, and tabernacles of Christendom.

The editor of the report is a brilliant journalist, and he relieves the monotony of his plaintive appeal for money from his readers by introducing quotations from all sorts and conditions of writers, some of whom one hardly expects to find in a pious work of this kind. Pronounced Freethinkers such as Montaigne, Balzac, and Heine are dragged in by the heels to bolster the cause of Superstition, and even Victor Hugo is laid under contribution. Apt quotations are made from many authors, from demure Jane Austen to "that little ape called Keble," as grim old Carlyle dubbed the author of *The Christian Year*. These elegant extracts are used with the unerring skill of the patent medicine advertisers, who attract readers to their pills and potions by all the resources of literary artifice.

As an example of the up-to-date method of conveying information, one may refer to the statement that in the year under consideration the British and Foreign Bible Society issued a total of 9,539,335 Bibles, New Testaments, and portions of Scriptures. The total issues by the Society since its foundation have exceeded 284,000,000 copies of the Scriptures, complete or in parts. Versions of the Bible, and parts, have been circulated in 504 different languages, and 104 new languages have been added in the last eleven years. By the most stringent War-time economy, the Society's expenditure was brought down to £257,262; during a year, in which the report informs us, "when God makes bare His arm" and when "it is surely a solemn and inspiring thing to be alive."

This, it will be seen, is a decided mixture of keen business and oleaginous piety; but the reader must remember that the report is intended to invite subscriptions, and instructions as to legacies and the payment of cheques and money orders are given in detail in the volume. In previous years the public used to be informed courteously that H.I.M. the German Emperor and the Viceroy of India and other notable Christians had contributed, but of late these important names have mysteriously disappeared.

One thing the report brings out quite clearly, and that is, the Germans are not all Atheists. The Rev. Otto Schultze, who is an Honorary Foreign Member, writes that "the German missionaries in China will never forget the great help to their work given by the British and Foreign Bible Society." More testimony is given by the Rev. C. Schmitt, an interned missionary; whilst in an earlier report issued by the Society it was stated:—

During the first eight months of war, and mainly through the kindness of friendly Germans, 360,000

Testaments and Gospels went out from our Berlin depot.

The words of the editor of the report for 1915 settles the matter, for he must know where the Society's work is done:—

No feature of the War has been more grievous to English Christians than the hostility which it has created between the religious and theological life of England and Germany.

Despite the modern business methods, there is an old-fashioned theological flavour in the report which is reminiscent of the days of John Wesley, and the early corybantic days of Methodism. Listen to this account of a convert in the good old blood-and-thunder style so pleasing to our forefathers:—

Shortly before Christmas, 1916, the Bishop in South Tokyo confirmed forty-five Japanese in the pro-cathedral at Tokyo. One of them had just undergone fifteen years' penal servitude for deliberate murder, committed when he was a youth of nineteen. He looks a pretty good ruffian, but he's a dead-keen Christian.

With what art does the editor describe the dangers and risks of a colporteur's life:—

We hear of one man pelted in Egypt, another arrested in Italy, and another imprisoned at Athens. In Ceylon one colporteur had to hide from a wild elephant in the forest near Trincomalee. In Peru a colporteur was attacked and beaten by a fanatic. Several of our men were both robbed and beaten in China, and one was in danger of being shot as a spy.

• The most heroic action was not performed by a man, but by an English married lady, who, in the touching words of the report, "is not afraid to sell farthing vernacular Gospels in the streets of Lahore."

The reports of the colporteurs are full of literary surprises. Here is one. In a restaurant at Rome an agent was offering Testaments for sale, when a man took up one and said: "I have never seen this book before. Do you know the best book I have ever read? It is *The Imitation of Christ*." After further conversation the matter ended in a purchase by the phoenix of culture who had read *Thomas a Kempis* but never seen a Bible.

Ingersoll once said that when a thing was too stupid for the pulpit it was passed on to the missionaries. The truth of this jest is seen in the account of the work in China, where copies of *Genesis* and the *Book of Jonah* were sold and expounded literally. This happens, be it noted, at the time when the preachers at home are assuring their credulous congregations that the Book of Genesis is an early edition of *The Origin of Species*, without Darwin's tiresome details.

These are but a few specimens of the gems to be found in this work. That such an appeal is worth issuing is evident, for the balance-sheet shows receipts for the year totalling £250,657, including legacies amounting to £29,535. The expenditure amounted to £257,262. The report itself costs ninepence, so that it is evident that the directors are as shrewd as they are pious.

Figures such as these should make any Freethinker pause and reflect that Rationalist propaganda has to make headway not only against gross ignorance, but against a most heavily endowed system of superstition. The British and Foreign Bible Society is but one of many similar institutions which have enormous incomes. Hardly a week passes but one or the other of these organizations receive legacies, and collections are made constantly in the various branches associated with them. Against all this Freethought propaganda is most severely handicapped. Its publications are boycotted in public and private libraries, and few booksellers have the courage to stock them. In

spite of it all, the "intellectuals" are making headway. If Freethinkers would support systematically their own institutions there would soon be a great alteration, and the struggle would be carried on under far more favourable conditions. What is needed continuous support, for spasmodic supplies embarrass rather than help. If numbers of Freethinkers contributed small sums regularly for propagandist purposes, more literature could be issued and circulated. Every Freethought pamphlet, and every copy of the *Freethinker*, are ambassadors for reason against superstition. In fighting this stupendous battle, we are opposing a superstition entrenched behind mountains of money-bags. In money lies the power of the clergy and their Book, but, as Shakespeare reminds us, gold can "knit and break religions."

MIMNERMUS.

## Christianity and Dirt.

SIR,—Taking advantage of your courteous permission I select some notes in your June 30 issue as material for discussion. It is, probably, not a matter of importance what the selected topic is. My object is to show that between you and orthodox Christians there is very much less disagreement than is commonly supposed.

Mr. Cohen produces a number of interesting facts which are certainly evidence that various people, some centuries ago, who professed to be Christians were disgustingly dirty. There is no dispute as to the facts, and Lecky's trenchant summary of them is not too strong. The question now is what is to be inferred?

I think I am right in saying that Mr. Cohen infers from them a natural, perhaps, an inevitable alliance between Christianity and dirt. This would mean that professing Christians to-day wash less frequently than Agnostics—let us say British Agnostics so as to simplify the point as much as possible. I have an extensive acquaintance among Christians sincere and less sincere, and also among Agnostics. Judging from the evidence of the two principal senses concerned, I should say there was no difference whatever between the groups in their belief or disbelief in soap and the nail-brush, corresponding to their belief or disbelief in a Deity.

So that while I am heartily with him in your denunciation of dirt, I think Mr. Cohen has jumped too far in his inference from admitted facts. He writes: "This alliance between religion and dirt has been frequently manifested, and was in consequence of the ascetic preaching of Christianity combined with opposition to sanitary and medical science." Now, even if this be an accurate historical diagnosis, it leaves the reader still hungering for the only evidence that would be relevant to Mr. Cohen's view that there is a natural alliance between religion and dirt; evidence, namely, that during the last 150 years in England there has been such an alliance.

My opinion is—but I should be glad to be corrected—that down to about 1800 personal cleanliness, as we understand the expression, had hardly begun to be thought of among ninety-five per cent. of the population; that the chief religious revivalists in the nineteenth century welcomed the spread of cleanliness as cordially as any Atheists of the time. If that is so, the alliance between Christianity and dirt was only for a time, and was not Christian in its origin.

But I fancy Mr. Cohen would say that the admitted facts—about Stylites and the rest—are sufficient to prove his point. Let us examine them a little more closely. I know very little about these pious, dirty people, but would readily admit that they preached the duty of dirt as a way of pleasing God. But does that go to

prove that there is no God to be pleased? Or let us take Christianity in particular. Let us agree that very many Christians were at one time, for religious reasons, very dirty; that is a different thing from saying that there is any necessary connection between the *doctrines* of Christianity and dirtiness of person or habit.

We have, in short, to ask ourselves if religion is to be condemned for the folly or blindness or barbarism of its votaries. Of course, it is difficult not to answer with an emphatic yes. But everything depends on whether the follies, etc., are the outcome of the teaching or example of the founder. People believe the purest time in the history of any religion is directly after the foundation. Well, how does Christianity stand this test? As an answer, I point to the example in the teaching of Christ, who was not in the least ascetic, and taught, indirectly, such reverence for the human body that, in time, one race after another learns to wash. No doubt after a long time—but he foretold that there would be a great amount of failure in his work; and I care not how wild or unseemly has been the conduct of his followers, so long as it cannot be traced to his teaching or example. We treat other creeds with this much of consideration. Why not Christianity? For instance, I have known some vociferous Radicals, on coming into a property, suddenly become staunch Tories; but that is a reflection on them, not on Radicalism.

One word more. The worse one finds the conduct of Christians has been, the greater wonder it is that the creed still survives in vigour. And never before have Christians striven so hard as now to recover the primitive purity of their faith, by studying the doings and sayings of the Christ of History; rather than the Christ of later fiction.

E. LYTTTELTON.

## Acid Drops.

The plot regarding religious instruction is unfolding. A report has now been issued as a result of the conferences between Churchmen and Nonconformists which says that the following has met with agreement:—

In the first place, inasmuch as an education which excludes religion is incomplete, and, as incomplete injurious, it should be the concern of the State, which has assumed responsibility for education, to secure religious teaching during school hours for all children whose parents desire them to receive it, and also to provide adequate opportunity of study and training for teachers who desire to give it. We are of opinion that the nation generally would welcome legislation to this end if it could be attained without religious controversy. Secondly, it should be the concern of the Churches, in co-operation with the local educational authorities and the teachers, to determine what particular form the instruction so provided should take.

It is again observable that the whole question is considered, not as a citizen's question, but as one that concerns Christians alone. The different sects quietly and calmly arrogate to themselves the right to speak for the nation, and it is that assumption that should be challenged whenever possible. They represent Church and Chapel-goers only, and not all of them. And Church and Chapel attendants are not even a majority in the nation. Their claim to speak for the nation is sheer impudence.

The committee says it aims at securing religious instruction for all parents whose children desire it. That is not the case. It is to be given, as is the case now, to all children whose parents do not expressly forbid it. And the distinction is important. The parsons know better than to trust to parents clamouring for religious instruction. It is extremely probable that if parents had to ask for it to get it, the majority would not bother about religion at all. And nothing could be more dangerous than to permit the creation of a committee of clergymen to work in conjunction with local education committees. That would invite intrigue of all

descriptions, and any amount of underhand pressure brought to bear upon teachers generally.

In the circumstances, we again beg Freethinkers all over the country to busy themselves in this matter. We are gratified to know that, owing to our insistence, very many resolutions in favour of Secular Education have already been sent to Mr. Fisher from trade and other organizations, but we should like to see many more forwarded. If Freethinkers don't put up a fight here, no one else will.

Emma Dixon, a dressmaker, of Blyth, was fined £5 at Morpeth for telling fortunes. No one fines the clergy for telling people what will happen to them in "another world."

Catholic journals on the Continent state that there is a rumour in Vatican circles that the Nobel Peace Prize will this year be awarded to the Pope. The "peace" alluded to in the paragraph must be the peace which passeth all understanding.

A Wesleyan minister, the Rev. Josiah Mee, of Doncaster, dropped dead in the street outside the Central Hall, Westminster, where he had been speaking. Had he been a speaker at a Freethought Congress, there would have been an impressive moral.

Mr. George Lane-Fox, the late Vice-Chancellor of the Primrose League, was a Roman Catholic. It is curious to recall that the League was founded to commemorate a Jewish statesman, and that one of its objects is to uphold the Protestant religion.

"Dear Father, I am one of God's sheep, led astray from the fold," was the pathetic note left by a servant-girl of Moulton, Cheshire, who was found drowned. One of God's sheep! And what of the shepherd's care for his flock?

Mr. Rudyard Kipling has not always been complimentary to coloured folk, whom an old divine described as "God's image carved in ebony." Hence there is real humour in the circumstance of Mr. Kipling's portrait appearing in silhouette on the cover of a recent pamphlet. Unwittingly, the popular writer looks like the corner-man in a minstrel troupe.

According to a newspaper paragraph, charwomen employed in schools have been granted a bonus up to nine shillings weekly, but the highest bonus granted to women teachers is eight shillings weekly. This shows the real appreciation of education in a Christian country.

The British and Foreign Bible Society's report is nothing if not topical, and it declares that the Scriptures whisper "the sure and certain prospect of immortality" across "the uncounted graves of our young soldiers." This is very significant. It shows that the Churches are getting ashamed of their theological hell, and are becoming more and more humanized.

The clerical statement that the Germans are Atheists is refuted by the latest report of the above Society. Here are the facts concerning the Society's work for the peoples of Central Europe: "It has already published twenty-six million volumes in German, three million in Hungarian, two million in Bohemian, besides nearly half a million for other polyglot races in the Austrian Empire, 800,000 in Bulgarian, and 300,000 in Turkish."

Speaking at York Convocation the Bishop of Hull said:—

The bottom of Germany's idea in the present War was the need of expansion for her growing population; and if we were to have a League of Nations the Church must reconsider her attitude of blessing large families and saying "be fruitful and multiply." There must be moral restraint in the size of families.

The Bishop appears too sensible a man for his job. He ought to throw it up.

Our boasted civilization is largely veneer, and charity plays too important a part in the community. "In the hospitals of the London area alone, at this moment, between 11,000 and 12,000 beds are filled with sick, while every year 1,400,000 persons submit their sufferings to their ministry," says a writer in the *Daily News*. It is a bitter commentary that these hospitals have to depend upon the alms' dish; that the nurses are, as a class, overworked and sweated, and that the hospitals constantly tremble on the threshold of insolvency. Truly, Christian charity covers a multitude of shortcomings.

From the *Anglican Daily Times* of July 12 we see that Rev. N. H. Patrick is quite alive to the future. He says the Churches must show "more interest in the agricultural labourers, who have been neglected. Their wages would not be less than 25s., perhaps never lower than 30s. per week, and they would require all the care the Churches could give them." Now, does Mr. Patrick mean that when the agricultural labourer gets 25s. per week he will need careful guidance how to spend such an enormous amount of money on himself and family; or does he mean that if the Church attends to its business they may get more out of him; or does he mean that, with more wages, the labourer will be more independent, less subservient to "parson," and that the Churches may lose him altogether?

Journalists find out everything in time, and the London *Evening Standard* has found out why men are Atheists. The "intellectual," says our contemporary, does not believe in God, "because so many people believe in God." Our contemporary had better try again.

Rev. F. B. Meyer is disturbed on learning that the Anglo-American Baseball League have decided to hold Sunday matches. It fills him with "dismay"—which we can quite understand. For if people can get healthy outdoor—or indoor—entertainments on Sunday, the churchgoing population will be still further reduced. Mr. Meyer protests in the name of "religion, of the home, and of physical efficiency." Religion we can well understand. But what have the last two to do with it? Physical efficiency can hardly be encouraged by listening to Mr. Meyer, and we feel the home is quite safe without his watchfulness.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has been addressing an Intercession meeting at Buckhurst Hill, and asked how could we expect God to stop the War when out of London's six and a half millions you would not find a quarter of a million in churches, chapels, and mission halls? Evidently, keeping the War going is God's way of getting level with us. His lordship also asked, "Why was it we have not more men to send to the Front?" And replies, Because we had neglected the housing question, etc. A nice man is the Bishop of Chelmsford! This representative of God finds the chief reason for looking after the young is the need of men for the Army. We must breed quickly, and preserve what we breed, or we shall fall short of our supply of material for killing.

Sir Henry Lucy, writing in the *Daily Chronicle*, says that in the last year of the eighteenth century the then Archbishop of Canterbury kept house at Lambeth Palace on an income of £2,682. The Archbishop of York drew £1,610, and the Lord Bishop of London £1,000. These sums are far below the incomes of the present prelates, which are now £15,000 (Canterbury), and £10,000 each for the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London.

The Bishop of Hull has been saying to his fellow-clergymen that if they were to advocate a League of Nations the Church must reconsider her attitude of blessing large families and saying: "Be fruitful and multiply." Fancy the Church ceasing to stimulate wars and turning pacifist.

The clerical conscience is just as elastic as that of a school-boy who ties a tin-can to a poor dog's tail. The Rev. E.

Millard, vicar of St. Anne's Church, Grantham, was fined £10 for wrongly using foodstuffs in feeding animals and birds. Perhaps Mr. Millard, being in an exempt profession, has not yet realized that there is a War going on.

At Southend-on-Sea an intercession service was held on the Cliffs, and music was provided by a military band. Perhaps the promoters imagined that the more noise they made the greater their chance of a gracious recognition from Providence.

Describing the Protestant celebration of the Battle of the Boyne, near Belfast, the *Daily News* says "A witch-doctor on the Gold Coast might have been proud of the show." The same remark might apply to a number of religious observances.

From the *Star* :—

Speaking in Convocation the Bishop of Exeter said in some places in the country there was the church, a large parsonage, and nothing to do. "I know one man," he said, "who has not had a marriage in his church for twenty-eight years; there is one child in his parish; and now he is suffering from nervous breakdown."

William Taverner, who was sentenced at Chester Assizes to fifteen months' imprisonment for falsifying the books of the Middle Age Pension Friendly Society, and for obtaining money under false pretences, was a very religious individual, the *Star* notes that :—

He always opened his meetings with prayer; there were always one or two local chapel lights on his platform; and his talk was larded with pious expressions. He cultivated the personal appearance of a Methodist preacher, soft black hat, white tie, and black tail coat complete.

Taverner evidently knew his business, but was probably in too much of a hurry. Hence his downfall.

In the recently published *Life and Letters of Sir Joseph Hooker*, the famous botanist is quoted as saying: "The most candid clerical disputant I met with would allow the freest and fullest discussion, but only in Latin." Perhaps that clergyman thought the best way of defending a dying religion was to use a dead language.

Speaking in Convocation on the extension of the franchise, the Bishop of Exeter regretted that political meetings were not opened with prayer. It would be almost as exciting as singing "God save Ireland" at a Primrose League meeting.

Fancy religionists are not welcomed in the Army. At the United Methodist Conference it was stated that the Methodist recruits were often registered as Church of England, and men who were registered as Methodists were kept in camp on Sundays doing work.

The Gospel-Temperance folk will be uneasy at Mr. Ben Tillet's statement that the majority of the Conscientious Objectors are teetotalers, whilst the majority of the fighting men are non-abstainers. Perhaps the Cocoa Press will have something to say on the matter.

Cardinal Bourne has designated Saint Michael as patron-saint of the Allied airmen. Unfortunately, the Greek Church authorities have already nominated Elijah to the same post. Of the two, the prophet seems the better choice. At least he drove his "bus" up to heaven.

The old Wesleyan Chapel at Kempstone, near Corfe Castle, Dorset, has been destroyed by fire. It appears a fitting ending for a building in which so many folk have been threatened with flames.

The promised revival of religion is long overdue, and one result of the prolongation of the War is the stoppage of church and chapel building. Perhaps the faithful will now turn their attention to paying their debts.

## Save Your Papers.

WE hope our readers are bearing in mind the need we have for all their old papers, books, and magazines. We want as much as we can get, and as soon as we can get it. Send all you have in parcels of from fourteen pounds to one hundredweight to the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. If the bundles are just tied round strongly with string it will be enough. They should be labelled "Scrap Paper," and can be sent carriage forward. We will send labels on request, or, if possible, sacks when they are preferred. But we must have all your old papers as soon as possible. If old ledgers—without covers, please—and other business documents are sent, we will see that they are properly destroyed. Remember that no parcel is too small to send. Full schedule prices will be paid.

## To Correspondents.

- MATHEWS.—Received, acknowledged later.
- J. GREAVES.—Glad to hear from so warm an admirer of Mr. Foote. Many more widely known men have not left behind so many sincere friends.
- L. H. W. MANN.—Letter to hand, and shall receive attention. Will write you later.
- W. CUMMING.—Received with thanks, and will prove useful. You would further oblige by dating cuttings. It is sometimes necessary for reference.
- D. DAWSON.—Thanks for parcel, also for securing new readers. We are greatly encouraged by the ready help of our readers in both these directions.
- W. REPTON.—Will do as you desire. We have heard no news of Ambrose Bierce of late. He was a good writer, and some of his short stories in "The Midst of Life" were very powerful. He wrote his most "blasphemous" work under the name of "Dod Grile." His *Fiend's Delight* is a good specimen, but has been long out of print.
- F. VENABLES.—Man very early discovered the use of fire, the usual way of getting it being by rubbing dry sticks together. We agree with you as to the pity of reformers who have no belief in a God worth bothering about continuing to use the word as though they were more or less in agreement with the current religion.
- J. GAIR.—If you could secure a hall in Pontypridd in November or the latter part of October Mr. Cohen would arrange to visit the place. Sorry you were unable to come to Bridgend.
- A. ALDWINKLE.—Charles Bradlaugh joined the Freemasons in 1859. He belonged to a French lodge, which did not invoke the use of the name of the Deity. You will get particulars in the *Life*, by his daughter and J. M. Robertson. You are being written on the other matter.
- E. P.—We have received copies of Upton Sinclair's *Journal*, and, but for pressure on our space, should have "lifted" some paragraphs therefrom. It is a noteworthy publication, and the chapters on "The Profits of Religion" are very striking. Those of our readers who would care to investigate may secure a year's issues—twelve—by sending one dollar to No. 1513 Sunset Avenue, Pasadena, California.
- Dogo.—No single work would give you all you require. Mr. John M. Robertson's *Short History of Christianity* would probably be most suitable for your purpose.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- 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.*
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."*

*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.

We publish on p. 400 the first of Dr. Lyttleton's promised communications to the *Freethinker*. We feel sure that it will be read with considerable interest. Mr. Cohen will reply next week to the points raised. Meanwhile we suggest to our readers that the present would be a good occasion to introduce the *Freethinker* to Christian friends.

Mr. Cohen had two good meetings at Maesteg on Sunday last, the hall being quite full in the evening. Both lectures were followed with keen interest, and some lively discussion followed the afternoon meeting. This was Mr. Cohen's first visit to Maesteg, but he will be back again during the autumn.

The informal Conference of South Wales Freethinkers held at Bridgend on Saturday, July 20, holds out promises of important development in the near future. Both Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd were present, and both were much impressed by the character of the gathering. A number of towns were represented, including representatives from the Swansea and Maesteg Branches of the N. S. S. The meeting elected a Committee for the purpose of carrying out the work of the Conference, and we feel sure the result will be the formation of a number of new Branches of the N. S. S. and a more sustained propagandist effort.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures this evening (July 28) at the Tillery Institute, Abertillery. We are not informed as to the time of the meeting, but assume it will be either 6 o'clock or 6.30. We hope there will be a good meeting.

Mr. Lloyd writes: "In the article entitled 'Side-Lights,' which appeared in the issue of July 14, through some inexplicable trick of memory, I attributed the hymn commencing, 'God moves in a mysterious way,' to Isaac Watts, instead of to William Cowper, immeasurably the greater poet of the two. It was an unpardonable mistake, committed against knowledge, which, unfortunately, was for the time buried in my sub-liminal consciousness. For its resurrection, my thanks are due to Mr. Murray, of Aberdeen. I also tender humble apologies to the shade of the genial Olney bard."

Messrs. Watts & Co. are offering Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Short History of Freethought* for sale on the instalment system. The work is in two handsome volumes, running to over 1,000 pages, and is offered at 12s. 6d. Payment may be made in five monthly instalments of 2s. 6d. each. This is an offer of which many Freethinkers will be glad to avail themselves. It is a work that should be in the possession of all Freethinkers and reformers.

We regret that, owing to a blunder in our issue of July 14, the announcement concerning Mr. Palmer's addresses before the Christian Evidence Society read as though both were to be delivered at Craven Street, Strand. The second should have been announced for Tavistock Place. The mistake was made in the rush of Tuesday's work, and we apologize for the annoyance of those who were directed to the wrong address.

There is a vacancy in our publishing office for a lad of fourteen or fifteen. The labour is not arduous, neither does it involve long hours, and it affords a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with the routine work in a publishing office before launching out on a wider career. Particulars may be obtained any day on application to the Manager. No previous experience is necessary.

## The Story of the Tea Plant.

V.

(Concluded from p. 381).

AFTER the withering process has been completed, the tea leaf should be rolled in cool and clean surroundings provided with fresh air. The leaf is subjected to rolling for the purpose of rupturing the plant-cells which contain the juice of the tea. This stage of production must be most carefully conducted, for while the leaf requires bruising, it should not be torn. When the cells have been ruptured, their sap is set free to flow over the surface of the leaf, so that, when subsequently submitted to the drying stage, the water alone is allowed to escape into the atmosphere, while the substance extracted settles on the exterior, all prepared for easy dissolution when boiling water is poured over the tea in the home.

The rolling processes ended, that of fermentation begins. The elaborate researches of Kelway Bamber, the eminent chemist, prove that the "fermentation" of the tea leaf arises from the action of a plant ferment. This phenomenon is quite distinct from that form of fermentation due to the activities of micro-organisms, which promote putrefaction and decay. But if the "fermentation" generated by the vegetable ferment or enzyme is long continued, organic fermentation supervenes, and the leaf turns sour.

As a result of the rolling, the leaf curls up. This curl is more or less lost during fermentation, and most manufacturers afterwards re-roll their leaf to restore the curl. Some planters, however, refrain from this rolling, but others, more fastidious, roll as many as three times. This latter method is thus described by Wallis-Tayler: "The first time after the withering or limping operation has been effected; the second time when the process of fermentation has been about half carried out; and the third and last time after the completion of the process of fermentation."

For many centuries the Chinese have employed charcoal for drying their tea. And for a long time in India the fumes of open charcoal fires were deemed indispensable for the production of good flavour. This idea is now completely exploded. To-day, in India, the leaf is extensively dried by machinery, with highly satisfactory results.

The tea is first dried, in order to arrest fermentation, and then the leaf is slowly desiccated. All moisture is thus extracted, while the essential oil and other important tea properties are retained. It is imperative to guard against the loss of the essential oil, which is extremely volatile, and if the tea is wrongly treated, this oil will escape. The essential oil gives the leaf its flavour, and its loss is therefore serious. A temperature above that of boiling water is demanded for the initial drying of the tea. Tea is usually run through the drying machine twice, so as to secure its thorough desiccation. A temperature of from 230 deg. to 280 deg. F. is requisite for the first drying, while for the second, one of about 200 deg. will suffice.

After the drying operation is over, the leaf is sorted and sifted. Where choice teas are produced, as a rule, the following five classes are prepared. These are:—Broken Orange Pekoe, Orange Pekoe, Pekoe, Pekoe Souchong, and Pekoe Fannings. These products are of different qualities, and command different prices. Orange Pekoe is the best, while Pekoe Fannings—fine broken tea—proves least profitable to the producer.

After sifting, the separated teas are severally re-fired, and this operation completes the preparation of the commodity for the table. Moisture is highly injurious to tea, and even brief exposure to a damp atmosphere

proves very detrimental. The final firing just mentioned is designed for the purpose of evaporating any moisture absorbed by the leaf during the process of sifting and sorting. It is therefore for a short time subjected to a high temperature. The finished commodity is now conveyed to the packing department, and placed, either by hand or with a packing machine, inside lead-lined chests, or, better still, in steel chests, and then the tea merely awaits transport to the neighbouring market. Many experienced planters favour the plan of storing their products in bins for a time, before packing in chests. Tea certainly mellows and evolves a finer perfume when stored, so long as it is protected from the action of the atmosphere. The maximum flavour of tea is not attained until it is three months old, and, when hermetically sealed, tea will retain its prime quality for several years. But it is an all-essential condition that it must be perfectly air-tight, otherwise deterioration is certain to supervene.

All ordinary black teas are produced by the processes now described. Green tea, however, merits brief notice. Now, the main difference between black and green tea consists in the absence in the latter of fermentation, while the withering or wilting treatment of the former is replaced in the production of green tea by a rapid system of steaming. In the manufacture of green tea, the natural fresh colour of the leaf must be preserved if the product is to present a verdant appearance. After this tea is steamed, rolled, and dried, it displays an unprepossessing dingy green colour. The more delicate leaves retain their freshness, but the larger and older leaves are transformed into a dirty gray. Hence the "green" tea's uninviting aspect. To restore to the herb its original colour the use of pigments was employed. The sage Chinese long proved themselves adepts in the art of removing this blemish by resorting to the tricks of the adulterator. Green tea of splendid colour adorned the markets which owed its fresh appearance to the presence of prussian blue, tumeric, indigo, and other alien ingredients in its composition. Planters in India are largely opposed to the addition of pigments in the production of green tea. But in the various markets where green tea is in keen demand "finished greens" are the only teas purchased by the dealers. Manufacturers of these products are, therefore, driven to adulteration.

The vast bulk of Indian teas are pure black. But in the Kangra Valley green teas are elaborated for the Persian and Afghan trade. And there is still an extensive market for green teas, notably, in North America, a continent which continues the importation of the major part of its supplies from China and Japan. In other tea-drinking lands where green tea was once popular, the black variety is now in practically universal use. When the taste for the rich black beverage has been acquired the preference for the comparatively insipid green tea rapidly declines. This change will, probably, occur in the United States, and the export of Indian tea to the Republic will then materially increase.

Brick tea is a Chinese product, and is the only tea consumed in Tibet. The best Chinese brick teas are ordinary leaves pressed into the shape of bricks. But the commodity which enjoys the widest sale in Tibet is prepared from coarse leaves and stalks which usually form the prunings in India where they are burnt or utilized as manure. Were these waste materials turned into tea they would furnish a handsome profit to the planter, and a brick tea similar to that in vogue in Tibet is now being produced in India. The brick tea in general use in Tibet is employed as currency for dealings of all kinds. Tablet tea is also in demand, but this commodity is mainly manufactured in China almost entirely for the Russian trade.



Tea is seldom associated with turbulence, although the destruction of the tea-chests by the Americans in Boston harbour precipitated the War of Independence and helped to establish the famous festival of the fourth of July.

The largest consumers of tea are, in the order specified, the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia, Australasia, and Canada, while on a far reduced scale the beverage is used in Holland, Germany, France, Austria, and Denmark.

In 1864 practically all the tea imported into Britain came from China. In 1902, with a vastly increased consumption, only seventeen million lb. arrived from China, while over 277 million lb. were imported from India and Ceylon.

The cultivation of tea in Ceylon has progressed at a prodigious rate. Until 1880 there was no material export, but since that year exports have so rapidly expanded that in 1903 nearly 150 million lb. were shipped for abroad from that island. On a similar scale, the cultivation of coffee, for which Ceylon was long so celebrated, has constantly declined.

T. F. PALMER.

## Another Scientist's Profession of Faith.

From our earliest childhood we have been made familiar with the accounts of the sacrifice of bulls and goats, with the burnt-offerings and sin-offerings, with the ghastly details of the temple ritual, with the horrors of the professional shambles set up in Jerusalem. That the smoke of the fat of the victims ascended as a grateful savour to the Lord, seemed a perfectly natural statement; that the blood of the slain beasts, poured down from the altar over the temple floor, did not strike us as an abominable thing. It was all unreal to us, we had never seen it; it was, we were told, all typical of something in the New Testament.

When Saint Bonaventura dilating on the joys of the saints in the Day of Judgment, counts this among them that "He shall wash His hands in the blood of the sinner," he is using a metaphor which, however natural to one accustomed to the sights of the Hebrew sacrifice, is simply revolting to any right-minded modern. No less revolting is the degradation of language preserved for us in a hymn still sung in some Protestant Churches:—

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

For that ghastly conception it is difficult to express adequate condemnation.—*Professor Silvanus Thompson, "A Not Impossible Religion,"* pp. 150, 151, 155.

THE latest event in the theological world is the publication of the late Professor Silvanus Thompson's confession of faith, under the title of *A Not Impossible Religion*.

Professor Thompson was a great scientist; as a Professor of Physics his fame was international, he was an authority upon Electricity, Magnetism, and Light. The announcement that such a distinguished scientist had finished a work in favour of religion must have raised the highest hopes and expectations in the hearts of the beleaguered garrisons of the Faith. These hopes and expectations are not fulfilled in the book. Indeed, far from finding in the Sciences, with which he is familiar, facts to buttress up the leaning walls of Religion, the Professor pours the vials of his contempt upon those who make the attempt. He speaks of the "crude divagations of the new school of sentimental philosophers who mix physics and psychics for us in facile and graceful oratory. Because radium emits mysterious corpuscles, or ether-waves are found to be generated by electric sparks, we are not bound to deduce therefrom the probability that our dead friends can speak to us

through a planchette, or that the doctrine of the Trinity can be developed from the triple conservation of matter, of energy, and of ether. To the truly spiritual man who is groping after the eternal truth, these new fashions in philosophy are as unsatisfying as the old atheisms which they replaced."<sup>1</sup>

Later on he makes an attack upon those champions of religion, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor William James, and the redoubtable Bergson, who are always relied upon by the apologist as representing the opinion of the scientific world upon religion. Professor Thompson says:—

Almost alone Sir Oliver Lodge seems to attract the public ear on questions of religious controversy, though the interest which his writings have evoked seems to be due not to his competence in criticism or philosophy, nor to his scholarship, but to his cultivation of the science of psychical research. The newer psychologists, of whom the late Professor William James was the shining example, tickle our ears with the jargon in which they dress up the half-ascertained, half-unknown facts on the borders of our consciousness, and attract us by their skill in essaying the manufacture of an exact science out of the very elements of inexactness. One wonders in what terms the men of the next century after ours will estimate their labours. We applaud Bergson as if he were a second Plato, but we forget to ask him to define what he means by his favourite term "becoming." In all this whirr and noise of to-day, what single contribution is there that has been, or ever will be, of the smallest avail or help to the soul in conflict with itself.<sup>2</sup>

Of all the multitudinous religions and sects which exist to-day, Professor Thompson could not find one that he could subscribe to. Of the orthodox faith he says: "No one can read Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* without an appalled sense of the utter paganism which ruled, as well as of the utter profligacy which accompanied the triumph of the faith called 'orthodox.'" Of the other sects he says: "If the spectacle presented to-day by the immense variety of sects with conflicting doctrines and practices, all claiming to be the true exponents of Christianity, does not sicken the earnest seeker after truth, assuredly it saddens him. He finds the exclusiveness of the Roman or Anglican priest to grant remission and absolution for sin. The doctrines of the Plymouth Brethren and the Salvation Army are as impossible for him as the dogmas of the Greek Church. The shining eloquence which draws to the City Temple tends as little to his edification as the ethical paradoxes of South Place Institute. He looks in vain to Saint Peter's or to Saint Paul's, for at Saint Peter's there is a shrivelled pallid old man playing at holding the keys of heaven, yet himself ruled by the Curia, and at Saint Paul's there is a gorgeous performance attended by comfortable Canons who are not exactly like the fishermen of Galilee" (p. 21).

After another denunciation of Catholicism, Professor Thompson goes on: "And Protestantism from its thousand chapels every Sunday sets forth another Gospel, a 'plan of salvation' an invention of the theologians, a web of celestial tactics to outwit the devil and to rescue the soul from eternal torment in hell, by the aid of a bloody sacrifice. How utterly foreign to the Gospel of Galilee!" (p. 103).

For the Sacraments of the Church he professes the utmost contempt. "The rite of water-baptism," he declares, "alike of infant or of adult, with its accompanying piece of materialistic jargon that thereby we have been made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, we may

<sup>1</sup> Silvanus Thompson, *A Not Impossible Religion*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> *A Not Impossible Religion*, p. 202.

freely set aside as being of no importance and of much spiritual harm." Of the Eucharist, known among Protestants as the "Lord's Supper" and the "Holy Communion," and among Catholics as the "Mass," and regarded as the greatest of all the sacraments, he observes: "Modern chemistry has had this salutary effect, that it has rendered it for ever impossible for any educated person to believe in either transubstantiation or in consubstantiation as a fact. The bread remains bread; the wine remains the juice of the grape" (p. 126).

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

## Tales for the Ethiops.

IN a recent article, I gave some account of a gospel in the Coptic language, and closed with the reflection that, to me, the so-called Apocryphal gospels, such as the Coptic *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*, and the so-called Canonical Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*) were of equal historical value. That is to say, all alike were valuable as illustrations of the mind of the people who, in the early centuries, were slowly building-up the Catholic legends and doctrine. On the present occasion, I give a few notes on a gospel which French scholars have translated from an Ethiopic version,<sup>1</sup> but which is believed to derive from a Greek text, written in Egypt or Palestine. It is known as *The Testament in Galilee of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

The book opens with an address by Jesus to his eleven disciples, in Galilee, after his resurrection. Speaking to them as to "the Sons of Light," he tells of the end of the world, and the Day of Judgment; he prophesies earthquakes, drying-up of rivers, withering of vegetation, flights of devouring locusts. In particular, he foretells disasters to Syria, Cilicia, Pontus, Armenia, Phœnicia, Judæa, and his discourse is charged with groans, blood, and affliction.

In such revelations of early Christian psychology, one observes the remarkable difference between the attitude of the second and third centuries, and the attitude of the twentieth. In the one case, there is a sense of oppression and horror, relief from which is sought in heavenly visions. In the other and modern case, however much we suffer in the present War, the general thought of humanity is turned towards a reconstruction of civilization on earth, by human means, and in a spirit of hope and confidence. Eighteen hundred years ago, the race was far less sure of itself and its capacities than it is to-day.

Jesus proceeds to describe the approach of the Evil One, or Antichrist,—head flaming, right eye bloodshot, left eye blind, the pupils white, the lower lips swollen, the feet over-large, the limbs twisted. From Antichrist, and from all dangers, the Elect People are carried in safety to Paradise, where they dwell among angels for countless thousands of years; while the Sinners, who hated the commandments of the Lord, are consigned to fire.

Warnings are uttered against "false apostles," especially Simon and Cerinthus. Of course, to us Twentieth Century people, one apostle was no more false than another; and Simon and Cerinthus, who were Gnostic propagandists, had as much right to preach their conception of God and Spiritual Powers as the other propagandists had to circulate the more dramatic and picturesque folk-tales of Jesus, Mary, Shepherds, Wise Men, Miracles, Crucifixion, etc. But the reference to Simon and Cerinthus is an interesting reminder of the way in which a variety of ideas had to struggle for

existence and supremacy in what was to be Mediæval Europe.

The next section is practically a brief summary of the life of Jesus, his marvellous works of healing, and his rising from the dead. At this point, a curious passage occurs, in which Jesus portrays to the Apostles his position and rank in heaven:—

When I pass into heaven, I am clothed with the Wisdom of the Father, and with his Strength, and Power; I am like to the celestial beings, to angels, to archangels. I move among the Functions, the Powers, the Dominations, for I possess the fullness of the Wisdom of the Father who sent me; and the archangels Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael have followed me even to the Fifth Heaven.

And so on. The singular anecdote follows of the angel Gabriel appearing to the Virgin Mary to announce her coming motherhood. Jesus himself, who was to be her son, was the very Gabriel who figured as the messenger in the Annunciation.

The Apostles ask Jesus when the Day of Judgment will arrive. In the Canonical accounts, he replies that it is not for them to know the secret of the divine seasons. But in this Ethiopian gospel he openly informs them that the advent of the Father will date in the year 150. Since, however, we do not know the starting-point from which the Ethiopian evangelist reckons, we cannot make a definite calculation. But we can see how certain early Christians had become impatient of the use of vague terms, and demanded unmistakable figures.

Jesus relates to his friends how, after his crucifixion, he had gone down into hell and conversed with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Hebrew patriarchs and prophets. This hell would seem to have been merely a kind of Sheol, or cool and shady underworld—not a place of torment. Jesus baptized the ancient patriarchs, and thus enabled them to qualify for entrance into heavenly rest. In this legend we see an effort of early Christian logic to justify the translation of pre-Christian and orthodox Hebrews to Paradise, even though, through the accident of chronology, they had never been privileged to hear the preaching of Jesus in Galilee and Jerusalem.

Towards the close of these Galilean discourses to the faithful Eleven, Jesus recites a parable of the Wise Virgins. Here we have the tale of the ten women who slept while waiting for the Bridegroom's procession, five being wise because they had lamps filled with oil, and five foolish because they had no oil. But a new turn is given to the story. Jesus explains that the five Wise Virgins are Faith, Charity, Joy, Peace, Hope, and these sit down with the guests at the wedding-feast. The five Foolish Virgins, who are shut out from the banquet, are Intelligence, Knowledge, Obedience, Continenence, and Mercy. This division is surprising, and no interpretation is offered. The doctrine lying behind the parable is, perhaps, that of the superiority of certain moral aspirations to the qualities of wit, keenness, good manners, and mere good nature. It is an amateur and clumsy psychology, but, possibly, there is an attempt to discriminate between a noble temper and disposition, and a shrewd compliance with a social code in order to secure comfort and a respectable situation. At any rate, that is all I can make of it.

After Jesus has finished these revelations a clap of thunder is heard, lightning blazes, the earth trembles, the sky opens, and a luminous cloud carries Jesus upwards, while a multitude of angels bless him and shout,—

"Gather us, O Priest, to thee in the light of thy glory."

Portions of this Gospel, maybe, were produced in the

<sup>1</sup> In *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. ix. (1913).

second century, others added in the third. Some parts are popular narrative, and some—such as the passage about Christ among the Functions—incline to the dreamy, metaphysical scheme of thought which the Gnostics loved. Perhaps a rather uncritical collector of legendary odds and ends pieced them together, and the result is a considerable medley. One item—the portraiture of Antichrist—is somewhat original. It looks like an endeavour to associate moral ugliness with physical ugliness, and to present the Enemy of God as a kind of Caliban.

F. J. GOULD.

**Correspondence.**

**ATHEISM, ANARCHISM, AND ACCURACY.**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the course of a recent article in the *Freethinker*, Mr. A. B. Moss says:—

..... the doctrine of non-resistance carried to its logical conclusion would mean not only the abolition of our Army and Navy, of our law courts and police courts, our judges and our magistrates, but our police constables also, *and this would inevitably lead to the villain riding rough-shod over the virtuous*, and to the masses being left a prey to revolution and anarchy.

I must protest against this all too common misrepresentation of Anarchism, and against the inference conveyed by the portion which I have italicized in the above paragraph, that armies, judges, policemen, etc., exist to prevent rough-shod villainy.

Like Mr. Moss, I am rather fond of logical conclusions, and, just as the Atheist's view of life entirely without any conception of God is unthinkable to the Christian, so the no-government philosophy seems absurd to most intelligent persons, *who have never given the subject a thought*.

It is a commonplace with Freethinkers that organized religion is maintained largely to keep the people in subjection; exactly, but the reverence for government is inculcated for the same reason; indeed, investigation into the evolution of government shows that God and the State are twin oppressors. Mr. Moss, I feel sure, would think that we were more highly civilized, if we were *completely without* priests, churches, and all their socially wasteful and useless ceremonies, yet he has not outgrown reverence for the judge with his wig and his wisdom, and for the policeman (guardian of virtue and professional enemy of villainy) the "justice" of courts, and the belief that society could not exist without those repressive institutions.

If Uncle Joe were to say that the masses had become so degraded that they lapsed into immorality and Atheism, I am sure it would promptly be pointed out to him that disbelief in God had nothing in common with moral depravity. Yet Mr. Moss falls into the common error (there are many journalists who do it maliciously) of writing "anarchy" as a synonym for social confusion.

Standing on the battlefields of Europe to-day are millions of men whose sole immediate concern is slaughter. Armed with the deadliest of weapons human ingenuity has devised, supported by all the most scientific appliances for the destruction of life, these men, who are not Anarchists with bombs, but law-abiding citizens (with hand-grenades) of the best governed countries in the world, these men, having committed "man's first sin, obedience," are prepared at the word of command to shoot, bomb, asphyxiate, bludgeon and bayonet their fellow-creatures, to revolutionize even the physical character of the earth, and with great gallantry and courage to sacrifice their own lives.

While we contemplate this magnificent manifestation of the triumph of government, of discipline and order, let us recoil with horror from the awful prospect of "the masses being left a prey to revolution and anarchy."

J. EFFEL.

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