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Views and Opinions.

The Church and the Age.

All the Churches have been for some time considering what is to be done to recapture some of the ground lost during recent years. The pretence that all was well could no longer be maintained, and, reluctantly, one may assume, the fact had to be admitted that the Churches were losing their hold on the people. The Nonconformist Churches have held various meetings, and the Church of England set itself to make a systematic survey of the situation. The Archbishops appointed a large and representative committee to survey the field and report, and we notice that among those appointed was the Rev. the Hon. Edward Lyttelton, late Headmaster of Eton, whose pen has been busy for some months in these columns. This committee sat during the whole of 1917, and during 1918 issued five separate reports, covering some hundreds of pages. These reports will not be cheerful reading for pious souls. They are one lengthy admission of the failure of the Church to maintain its hold on the world. And in many directions its analysis of the causes of this failure is quite sound. There is only one direction in which, as Freethinkers, we raise a word of protest. It is rather too hard on the clergy. It blames the clergy as being in many cases "deficient in spiritual earnestness, in intellectual capacity and outlook." But why blame the clergy? Assuming that the pulpit could still command the best brains of the age, which it cannot, even that would not get over the fact that what the clergy have to offer the public is a wholly discredited article. The age has swept by the Church; it has outgrown it; it has left the Church hopelessly in the rear; and this not merely because the men in its service are lacking, but because it is trying to satisfy the adult intellect with the fairy tales of childhood.

Touching Bottom.

The committee are on firmer ground when they point out, in dealing with the causes of the failure of the Churches:—

There has been a gradual severance between the sacred and the secular as department after department of life has risen into independent activity. Religion has become one department among many, instead of the animating and guiding spirit of the whole.....While there has been an increase in the intellectual attain-

ments of the people, the intellectual capacity and equipment of the clergy has not increased in a like proportion.A hundred years ago the Church had few competitors for the services of the abler men of the middle and upper middle classes. The political, intellectual, and industrial changes which have come over the world have greatly altered this. The complexity of modern life and the vast development of civil administration demand a large and ever-increasing number of the best men.

Now, all this strikes us as only another way of saying what has already been said, namely, that the age has outgrown the Church, and it is outgrowing Christianity. Christianity grew up in a little world; it was only fitted to a little world. Its cosmology—a flat earth, a solid sky, the earth the centre of the universe and man the centre of the earth, marvels and miracles, angels and devils—all belonged to another age than ours. If the Church could have retained that world, there would have been no decay of faith. But every advance in knowledge, every step in development, was insensibly drawing the best men away from the service of Christianity. Art, and science, and politics, and literature, each drew off from the Churches the clearest brains and the strongest characters. The world-theatre became too vast for the scenery provided by the Churches. Theories that seemed respectable in the old world of the fifteenth century became ridiculous or contemptible in the world of to-day. The logic of life has become too strong for the logic of doctrine. We do not think the committee is correct in saying that "the minds of the clergy have become cramped." It is nearer the truth to say that it is chiefly the naturally cramped minds that enter the Church.

* * *

A Futile Effort.

What these five volumes of reports are expected to effect we do not know. It is certain they will bring no one back to the fold. At most, they can only keep one or two timid souls from straying. Atheism, positive disbelief, is to-day too strong to be affected by anything the Churches can do. Disbelief has got beyond the stage of contradicting; it teaches. It does not merely oppose religion; it explains it. It not only warns religion that it must clear out of a long occupied territory; it claims to have established a protectorate over it. Meanwhile, it has set up a very effective blockade, by restricting the supplies of raw material. Religion, if it is to live awhile, must contrive to do so by subsisting on what it already possesses; it can receive no large reinforcements. It is in the position of a dwindling army occupying an invested position, with no hope of the siege being raised or abandoned. While the weapons of defence are all of an obsolete pattern, the weapons of attack are of the newest description, and directed by men who have the fullest confidence in their efficiency. Religion to-day is out-ranged, out-fought, and out-manceuvred.

* * *

The Modern Attack.

What has been said is not mere rhetoric. Were it so, it would not have been worth the saying. In little

more than half a century the whole form of the attack on religion has undergone a profound change, and few defenders of Christianity, and even some of its opponents, seem aware of the fact. It is almost pitiful to observe how blind are certain defenders of the faith to the nature of the present situation. They write elaborate disquisitions to prove that no single person among the early Christians could have invented the character of Jesus, and ignore the fact that everything that makes the character—teaching, doctrine, symbols, were ready to hand before the early Christians were heard of. While the relationship of both the Old and New Testament stories to a universal system of mythology is being demonstrated, pious defenders are fruitlessly discussing the age and authenticity of the Biblical documents. They do not realize that these questions have now only a literary and historical interest. If it were shown that Moses really wrote the Pentateuch, and that the writers of the four Gospels actually walked and talked with Jesus, all that would be demonstrated would be that certain things were believed. It would not prove that the things believed were true any more than the belief of certain people a couple of centuries ago that old women travelled through the air on broomsticks, proved the reality of witchcraft. Or ignoring the fact that the belief in God is completely undermined by anthropology, we have elaborate disquisitions on what the idea of God might mean, or ought to mean, when the real attack is that the belief began in a delusion, and remains a delusion to the end. Current religion seldom, if ever, meets the attack that is made on it. Its time is spent in slaying imaginary enemies, or in taking positions that no one troubles to defend.

* * *

Emptying the Baby with the Bath.

And this is really what strikes one in reading these five volumes of reports—an almost complete want of appreciation of the nature and strength of the Free-thought attack. It is the basic conception of the supernatural that is now on trial, and unless the validity of that is established nothing material is achieved. Shortening services, and making Churches otherwise more attractive will avail but little. We have no doubt but that if Church services entered into real competition with places of amusement a temporary success might be achieved. If a variety programme fills a hall during the week, there is no reason why it should not fill a Church on Sunday. Only it must be depressing to a sincere believer to find his "glorious Gospel" playing second to a brass band, or a couple of vocalists, or a cinematograph. And it cannot be inspiring to clergymen to announce that they will make the services shorter and more attractive if people will come to Church. Nor will an improvement in the character or intellectual calibre of the clergy be more successful. It is not the character of the man that is on trial, but the nature of the teaching. And how can that be changed without surrendering the whole position? The only effective plan whereby to permanently fill the Churches is by emptying them of Christianity.

* * *

The Restoration of Belief.

It is the restoration of belief that the Churches really need, and that is next to an impossibility. Christianity is to-day passing through a process that has overtaken other religions in their day, and the end will be the same now as then. Nearly 2,000 years ago Lucian pictured a council of the gods discussing the state of faith, much as the Archbishop's committee has been, and one of the minor deities says to the others: "Let us be candid. All that we have cared about has been a steady altar service. Everything else has been left to chance,

and now men are opening their eyes. They perceive that whether they pray or don't pray, go to Church or don't go to Church, makes to difference to them. And we are receiving our deserts. Our advocates are silenced. If you wish mankind to reverence again you must remove the cause of their disbelief." As men found out the hollowness of the religion of the first century, so they are discovering the worthlessness of that of the twentieth. The Christian priest is now as discredited as the Pagan Augur. Disbelief is general. Its manifestations are everywhere. It permeates our literature, it is implied in the bent of our teaching, it is becoming embodied in institutions. If Lucian had been a member of the Archbishop's committee he would have given the same advice: "You must remove the cause of disbelief." And he would probably have added under his breath: "You might as well try to remove the earth from its orbit."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Baseless Assumptions.

III.

CHRISTIAN theology is based on the assumption that man is not under the law of causation. What is called Freedom of the Will is a theological necessity out of which there is absolutely no escape. To deny that man is morally a free agent is equivalent to holding God responsible for all the evil in the world. The Freedom of the Will is the theologian's city of refuge, into which he runs when pursued by Antitheistic logicians. If man is not free, God is the greatest sinner in existence. We are assured that moral agency would have been impossible apart from freedom of choice. In other words, God made man imperfect in order that he might rise or fall, become noble or ignoble, good or bad, just as he should happen to feel inclined. That is the theological explanation of the alleged fall in Eden. Adam deliberately chose evil and fell, and his choice and fall became the choice and fall of the whole race "descending from him by ordinary generation." As the Shorter Catechism puts it, "all mankind sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression." Of course, the theologian does not admit that God made man imperfect, freedom being, to him, not at all synonymous with imperfection. Indeed, the Westminster divines declare that "God created man after his image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." They ask, "Did our first parents continue in the state wherein they were created?" and answer: "Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God." But, surely, a being possessing God's image, and sharing his knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, could not choose evil as his portion, and thereby violate his own nature. Adam, if perfect, though finite, could no more have done wrong than God himself. It is not the quantity, but the quality, of a being that determines character. An evil choice is the fruit of a faulty constitution. After all, the doctrine of Free-will does not exonerate the Creator from blame as regards the so-called fall of man, for evil would be as impossible a choice to a finite will, if holy, as to an infinite will; to the creature's will as to the Creator's. But, we are told, without freedom of choice man could not have developed into a moral agent, and we answer by asking, why not? It is universally admitted that God has no freedom of choice between good and evil; but is he on that account an immoral or unmoral agent?

The point to be emphasized at present, however, is that man's freedom of choice, in the theological sense,

is a baseless assumption. It does not exist at all. A man's choices are simply his character in action, being neither unnatural, anti-natural, nor supernatural. Metaphorically speaking, we have two selves, a higher and a lower, or two natures, a better and a worse, and we have to choose between them; but as a matter of grim fact, we invariably follow the stronger, irrespective of its quality. There may be a dozen different motives clamouring for recognition, but the strongest always prevails. Determining conditions are never absent. I drink bovril because I like it better than tea; but if, in spite of this preference, I choose tea, there are circumstances which render the choice inevitable. A drunkard is a slave of the craving for alcohol, and his salvation is impossible until a wholesomer craving becomes dominant. In reality, every act of the will is a necessary act, the only act possible in the circumstances. Every deed of my past life was absolutely unavoidable. Sometimes a person will say, "I could so easily have made a different choice, had I but known, realized, or foreseen the consequences." Such an observation completely undermines the case for Free-will, because it implies that every action is determined by an inexorable law. Even H. W. Garrod, in his *Religion of All Good Men* (p. 224), says:—

To all intents and purposes the will is not free, where we really want Free Will it fails us, and the assertion of Free Will is more immoral and inhuman than its denial. In the great crises of life, in the hours of mortal moral struggle, we feel our own impotence, and we know by experience that of others. And, in general, in the minor affairs of life, we all act on the assumption that the will is not free. We all suppose, from our knowledge of a friend's character and circumstances, that he will, under given conditions, act in a particular way: that in fact he cannot act otherwise.

Now, Professor Hough represents the Determinist as claiming not only that man is "a part of a vast mechanism," but also that with the movement of the wheels of that mechanism "he has really nothing to do and in the midst of whose processes he is absolutely helpless." No Determinist of any ability and standing has ever expressed such a view. On the contrary, as Sir Ray Lankester well says:—

Modern science, taking it as it stands, without inquiring into the gradual steps by which it was cleared of traditional superstitions, baseless assumptions, and ignorant fancies, has arrived at a systematic interpretation of the phenomena which we call "Nature" as a vast and orderly mechanism, the working of which we can to a large extent perceive, foresee, and manipulate so as to bring about certain results and avoid others (Preface to Hugh Elliot's *Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*).

Man does have something to do with the working of the vast and orderly mechanism of Nature, nor is he absolutely helpless in the midst of its processes. Whilst a part of that mechanism and obliged to submit to the laws thereof, he can, in the exercise of his intelligence, not only understand it to a certain extent, but make it his servant. Though firmly gripped by the strange law of heredity, it is within his power so to manipulate the law of environment as to bring it to bear more or less beneficially on that of heredity. What else is education but a process of gradually creating an improved environment for the rising generations so that in future heredity may work for the good of the race? Meredith understood this well when he so wisely sang:—

Thou under stress of the strife
Shalt hear for sustainment supreme
The cry of the conscience of Life:
*Keep the young generations in hail,
And bequeath them no tumbled house.*
There hast thou the sacred theme,

Therein the inveterate spur,
Of the Innermost. See her one blink
In vision past eyeballs. Not thee
She cares for, but us. Follow her.
Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.

—*Poetical Works*, pp. 453-4.

Yes, man is free to reason about himself and the rest of the Universe, but his ability to construct a mental picture of the vast and curious mechanism, as it works with perfect precision and undeviating definiteness, even to the exclusion of the possibility of the efficacy of human prayer, does not indicate that he is outside the system he so eloquently describes, but is rather an illustration of the exquisitely refined and complicated character of the higher operations of the machine. So far from refuting the conclusion that Nature is supreme, subject to no external interferences, the argument itself moves along lines which merely represent her at her highest, latest, and best. There is no such thing as "a freely choosing mind." The movements of the mind are as strictly guarded by law as the movements of the planets.

Dr. Hough expatiates on the need "to analyse our denials"; but what he has been dealing with hitherto would be more accurately described as the affirmations of Rationalism, and his contention is that these affirmations refute themselves in that they are too ingenious and subtle and move too freely to be regarded as belonging to the mechanism of Nature. Curiously enough, he makes no attempt to disprove their truth, or to establish the reality of the supernatural. His foe, evidently, is Atheism, and according to him, the only place where, during the four years of War, there was no Atheism was the bloody battlefield, and his claim is that "the insight of the front trenches must be made the insight of every day life"; but, so far, he has failed to advance a single argument to show that Theism is better for the world than Atheism, or that the affirmations of Freethought are false.

J. T. LLOYD.

Bertram Dobell.

Lofty designs must close in like effects.

—*Robert Browning*.

The mind and the body are one and the same individual.

—*Spinoza*.

"KERIDON'S" pleasant references to the late Bertram Dobell in the *Freethinker* of January 26 recall the unique personality of a man who shed lustre upon the bookselling profession. He lived to a ripe age, full not of honours, of which he received and coveted none, but of honour, and of that satisfaction which comes from completed work. Not only was he a great bookseller, but he was a remarkable man. In his profession, where the contents of books usually interest the customer and not the seller, he was, perhaps, the foremost member in England. He did not sidle up to his customers as to natural victims, but was ready to talk to his intimates of the books which lined his shelves from floor to ceiling, which he knew so well. When a customer called at his shop, he was treated as a friend, and not as a "claim" to be "jumped," as they say in the beautiful American language. Not since the great days of the famous Bernard Quaritch, who had a European reputation, has the bookselling profession had so distinguished a representative.

Dobell's place of business, "in streaming London's central roar," was a rallying-place for book-lovers. During his professional career, he knew all the prominent book-hunters, and a legion of eminent people who

have been more than book collectors. In the leisured time "Dobell's," like some of the large West-end booksellers, was something of a resort for literary folk generally, and many famous people found their way across Dobell's doorstep. Gladstone has visited the shop, and so has Cardinal Vaughan, and Bishop Boyd-Carpenter often. Moncure Conway used to delight in the crowded shelves, and so did G. W. Foote and Joseph Wheeler. Robert Buchanan, John Davidson, Arthur Symons, and Francis Thompson were loving book-buyers, and to them might be added a host of names. For literary enthusiasms levels all class distinction, so that the statesman rubbed shoulders with the poor journalist, and the bishop jostled the curate, in scanning the contents of the shelves. There was no need for the sweet uses of advertisement, for this quaint bookshop drew book-lovers from everywhere by the quiet magnetism of literary possibilities. Dead to the charms of literature was the man who could pass those closely packed shelves crowded with all kinds of books, from tiny Elzevirs to elephant folios describing what forgotten magnificence. What charms those shelves held! What first editions, what seductive volumes, were spread before the ever-changing crowd!

Bertram Dobell himself was so much more than a mere tradesman. Scholar, poet, critic, bibliophile, with a rare zest for the bye-paths of literature, he did notable service in his day. At great cost to himself he published a *Dictionary of Privately Printed Books*, with notes which displayed his great knowledge. To the magazines and reviews he contributed from time to time articles full of sound judgment and learning. He rescued manuscript works of Thomas Traherne, the seventeenth-century poet, and delighted all lovers of literature by issuing them in book form. Another poet saved from oblivion was William Strode, the author of *The Floating Island*, played before the Court of Charles the First. By far his greatest achievement, however, was his service to James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, to whom he was introduced by Charles Bradlaugh, then editing the *National Reformer*, in which paper the poem first appeared. In conjunction with the publishers of William Morris's books, he issued Thomson's great poem, and later printed other of the poet's works, together with a memoir, which recounted in modest language his care for the wayward genius who wrote the finest pessimistic poem in the language.

A thorough Freethinker, Bertram Dobell was a staunch supporter of the Secular Movement, and he knew intimately the leading "intellectuals" of his day. He wrote verse himself, scholarly and dignified, and a pathetic interest attaches to the posthumous volume, edited by his son, *The Close of Life, and the Approach of Death*. These striking poems speak eloquently of their author's claim to one of the highest places among literary booksellers. Not only are the verses of uncommon ability, but the human note must appeal widely. Apart from his love of books, his principal recreation was the theatre, which he frequented regularly for many years, and he contemplated publishing his impression of the plays and players of his time.

One day I surprised him in the act of writing a poem. He covered the manuscript with a book, rose from his chair, and walked shyly away from me towards the bookshelves. He turned his eyes, reflective, calm, wise, full upon me, and with a little laugh, designed to ward off any criticism, said: "I am not altogether a shop-keeper." It was true. "He was a scholar, and a ripe, and good one."

MIMNERMUS.

Religion's Real Disintegrators.

MR. LLOYD in his article, "The Cross Symbol" (*Freethinker*, January 12), provides much food for thought. "We are told," he observes, "that opposition to the doctrine of the Atonement is not nearly so pronounced as it used to be. Multitudes of people do not consider it worth their while to denounce it in angry terms; they show their disbelief in it by leaving it severely alone." The orthodox press may boycott Freethought, but it cannot galvanize the indifference of the thousands who are deserting Church and Chapel into enthusiastic belief in the fundamentals of Christianity. The sentence upon religion is promulgated *sub silentio*. People who are not versed in the mysteries of theological acrobatics, who are bewildered by the gyrations of metaphysicians, cannot very well make their thoughts and feelings about the absurdities of religion vocal. They, therefore, simply disregard and ignore religion. The complacent cleric of the twentieth century entrenched behind Government and Press sandbags—and money bags—can afford to smile at ebullient and violent hostility; but if he possesses any imagination whatsoever he cannot afford to ignore the operation of forces like indifference, contempt, and ridicule—unexpressed for the most part—but none the less *real*.

People become indifferent to religion when they find it out. It is only the unknown that is terrible, and then only to the uninformed and the unintelligent. Ignorance and fear breed religion. And parents and offspring can only find a home in the primitive mind. The supreme duty of Freethinkers is to kill the monsters and their reptilian brood.

The craving of the clergy for "effect," and their reliance upon spectacular shows, are symptomatic of the disease that is gnawing at the vitals of priestcraft. "Liberal" religionists are always telling us that there is no such thing to-day as priestcraft; but active Secularists too well know from experience that new presbyter is but old priest writ large. The name may change, but the *thing* itself in essence remains the same. Every cleric is a pope at heart, and we have it on the authority of the poet that "the hert's aye the pairt aye that makes us richt or wrang." The clergy is a very powerful profession, but it is past the zenith of its power. No doubt, as a profession, it will take a lot of killing, because of the centuries of obsequious subservience it has enjoyed. Professional consciousness carried to extreme limits fills the individual professional man—parson, doctor, or lawyer—with an arrogant belief in his own superiority which is merely a subject for jesting in enlightened eyes. It is, in the majority of instances, the profession that gives the nonentity the appearance of an entity. Reverence for puppets is only possible to ignorant, terrorized, and credulous minds. And to such minds reverence for worth which is not associated with some superimposed, dictatorial authority, is scarcely ever possible. Might and its trappings, in the darkened eyes of the ignorant, monopolize all that is worthy.

This brings us to make another and very striking distinction between the dependent and independent mind. In the case of the former, what compels obedience to a decree is the person or authority that issues the decree; while in the case of the latter, obedience depends upon the quality of the thing decreed. If the decree is not approved by the independent mind, it will not be obeyed. Thus independence—individual independence—is one of the chief disintegrators—if not the chief disintegrator—of religion. "Asking reasons" is a crime on the part of the orthodox Christian. What do the sacred lines say?—

God's Law is *Perfect*, and converts
The soul in sin that lies.

The kernel of mystical religion—and a religion without mysticism can only be classified as a philosophy—is that man must obey without asking reasons. And that is why we assert that one of the most powerful disintegrators of religion is individual independence. The more astute clerics know this well; their recognition of the fact explains their attitude to educational and other reforms. Man may not have any charter of emancipation delivered to him until it has first passed through the hands of the parson and been duly stamped with this *imprimatur*: "Passed by (Church) Censor."

Another disintegrator of religion is the demand for better conditions of life in the world that now is. It would have shocked the grubby, long-nailed saints of old to observe how keen people of sense nowadays are in having bathrooms in dwelling houses. Those old saints would have looked upon Sanitary Inspectors as inventions of the Devil; very much as they are regarded by owners of paying slum property to-day. The idea that a stiff course of wretchedness is a good preparation for a life of eternal bliss is dead. If a man's mind can be sufficiently seared by pain and suffering, the promise of future happiness is but a mockery. And what is happiness to one may not be happiness to another. But at any rate, the community as a whole is entitled to protect itself, and to insist that anti-social conduct on the part of its members shall cease; and if by inculcating in the mass of the people habits of cleanliness, care of the body, and love of knowledge, some crusted and long-cherished tenets go under—well, it is not likely that the sanest and most progressive members of the community will worry. But it will mean more nails in the coffin of religion, driven home by still another disintegrator.

IGNOTUS.

Acid Drops.

A Jew named Samuel was walking in Hyde Park and was accosted by some Catholic ladies who offered him some religious tracts. Mr. Samuel explained that he was a Jew, whereupon a Catholic came forward and offered to convert him. Whereupon a controversy occurred, and, in the end, Mr. Samuel was charged with uttering language that was "obscene, indecent, and blasphemous," although the charge before the police court appears to have been one of obscene language calculated to cause a breach of the peace, and contrary to the bye-laws of the park. Mr. Samuel was found guilty and fined. Against this conviction Mr. Samuel appealed, and Mr. Justice Darling and Mr. Justice Avery dismissed the appeal.

Now, we do not know Mr. Samuel—he is not a Freethinker—nor are we aware of what were the precise words he used, or was accused of using. For all we know they may have actually been "obscene" or "indecent," or they may only have appeared indecent to the chaste ear of a Hyde Park policeman. We do not know, and Mr. Justice Darling took care that the public should not know. It is because of this that we are writing. When Mr. Samuel's counsel was about to read the words used, Mr. Justice Darling said:—

Do you absolutely want to read these words? We have them before us. It would be grossly offensive to a number of people.

The counsel, who could, obviously, have pressed the point, gave way, and what Mr. Samuel said remains unknown to the general public. Now, this is an old trick of judges, and counsel should have insisted upon the words being read. How can the public be sure that the words were really indecent in the sense that an unprejudiced man or woman would use the word. Nothing is easier than to label language as "obscene" or "indecent," and the only guarantee there is of a proper use of such epithets is for the words used to be repeated in court. It is grossly unfair to any accused person not to do so. A trial in public should mean publicity

for the actual offence, not merely publicity for a technical description of it. The counsel in question would have been justified in withdrawing from the case unless justice was done his client by the actual words being read in court. Mr. Justice Darling is, we understand from newspaper reports, in favour of publicity in all cases; it is strange that he should draw the line where religion is attacked. Anyway, we advise all who may be brought before a court on a similar charge to insist on the exact words being publicly read. They will get their way if they insist, and it will be some check against unfairness or partiality of treatment.

The number of school teachers killed in action or died of wounds is 1,856. The clergy, of whom there are 50,000 in the country, were exempted from military service.

The Rev. W. Bradley fell dead while walking on the Queen's Park Golf Links at Bournemouth. Had he been a Freethinker, the dear clergy would have traced the hand of Providence in the event.

The clergy like to pose as the successors of the Apostles, and humbly suggest that bishops are elected by the Holy Ghost. A daily newspaper, referring to the election of the Bishop of Worcester makes the grim comment: "in practice the Crown's nominee is accepted." The clerical boast is merely Worcester sauce.

"Witchcraft" has been discredited in all civilized countries, but, now and again, there are signs that the belief still lingers. In a case at Swaffham County Court, a farmer told the judge that he had a cow "bewitched," and the "spirit" went up in a flame. The Court was astonished at the avowal. Such beliefs are not so astonishing in a country in which people are taught to reverence the Bible, a book which endorses witchcraft and other superstitions.

Mark Twain had a brother who had belonged to five different religious denominations, but his record is quite eclipsed by Sir Henry Lunn. According to the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, this eminent Christian possesses a multiple personality. A clever business man, he is a mystic. In close touch with politics, he conducts "Retreats for the Soul." Although his friends are ornaments of society, he remains a Methodist local preacher. A confirmed and communicating member of the Church of England, he is a Methodist class-leader, and an elected representative to the Wesleyan Conference. He is also a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America.

The Bishop of Kensington presided over a Conference at Church House, Westminster, when resolutions were passed declaring that Parliamentary and Municipal disabilities of the clergy be removed, and that a deputation wait upon the Prime Minister to facilitate the matter. Laymen would be well advised to look up the record of the votes of the clergy in the House of Lords before they follow the advice of their "pastors and masters."

Pious newspaper editors have much to answer for owing to their habit of pandering to the lowest class of readers. Here is a writer in the *Daily News* saying "slums are not sent from God, nor created by the Devil." Is it not possible to write on economics without dragging in the vocabulary of a discredited theology?

Spurgeon was the last preacher of any note who attempted to "keep hell alight." After Spurgeon's death, Pastor Dixon, of U.S.A., did his best to "keep the home fire burning"; but now Dixon is resigning the pastorate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Who will stand up for Satan now?

A "Country Pastor" writes to the *Daily News*, suggesting that the superintendents or secretaries of the Y.M.C.A. village huts should be paid. It is quite plain that this pastor comes from the country.

The natives of the Pacific Islands are following in the wake of the Tasmanians and others. They are being "civilized"

off the face of the earth. The missionaries have forced them to wear clothing, and this has led to a development of consumption—a disease practically unknown in their "uncivilized" state. Venereal disease, contracted from Christian traders and sailors, has also been busy in their midst; and in general, and as usual, the natives appear to have contracted the white man's vices in exchange for the surrender of their native virtues. Still, they have had the benefit of the glorious Gospel, and that recompenses for much.

In aid of the relatives of those who lost their lives in the *Iolaure* disaster, a Sunday concert was recently arranged to be held in Inverness. Permission to hold the concert was only given after considerable opposition in the Council Chamber, and the Disaster Fund Committee wired from Stornoway protesting against the concert as a "flagrant breach of the sanctity of the Lord's Day." Ultimately the concert was abandoned, and the "Christian conscience" was appeased. A strange thing is the Christian conscience! It was permissible to make shells, and guns, and poison gas on Sunday, because this was to wage war. But when it comes to something of a humanitarian order, the "Christian conscience" is indignant. Poor Inverness! It has a lot to unlearn.

One of the wisest things we ever heard said about Scotland was by a Liverpool preacher. He said the only thing that kept the humanity of Scotland alive was whisky. Something had to be adopted as a counter-irritant to its terrible religion, and whisky was the only thing at hand.

The Church Association recently held meetings at Caxton Hall, Westminster, for "humiliation, thanksgiving, and prayer." A leaflet distributed at the meetings called attention to a few national sins, including desecration of Sunday, neglect of the Bible, materialism, love of pleasure, etc. It is almost sufficient to make a bronze statue burst into smiles.

We see from the *Melbourne Age* that a pious yarn told by Rev. H. Hewett, in St. Paul's, has reached the Antipodes. According to Mr. Hewett, after the first battle of the Marne, Lord Roberts said to Kitchener, "Only God could have done this, Kitchener." And Kitchener replied, "Yes; somebody must have been praying." We wonder whether presenting two British generals as candidates for an idiot asylum is an offence under Dora. If it had appeared in an anti-War journal, it would have probably been thought so. But it is worth noting that two of the speakers are dead. The third, Mr. Hewett, is alive. But he is quite safe—unless Sir Oliver Lodge calls up Roberts or Kitchener, and inquires.

The War must be over. The dear clergy are beginning to discard their khaki uniforms in which they were too proud to fight.

A curious case of conversion is reported in an evening paper, "Every day since the War," a Parisian midinette said, "I used to go to Church at noon and cry. Now I come to the Young Women's Christian Association and sing." This is simply a conversion from Church to Gospel-shop. "It doesn't cut any ice," as our Transatlantic friends say.

The Dean of Wells preached in Latin at the opening of Convocation of Canterbury in St. Paul's Cathedral. The choice was a happy one. A dead language is a suitable medium for a dying religion.

The Bishop of Chelmsford declares that the dear clergy are very much underpaid, and he asks the public to raise a modest half million pounds to augment their salaries. Why should the Bishop worry the public at all? He has only to petition Providence which sent the kindly ravens to feed the prophet Elijah.

"Music," says the Bishop of Northampton, "aids the coffers of many causes." Has his lordship heard a Salvation Army band playing "The bells of hell go ting-a-ling, a-ling"?

It is amusing to find that there are two Jewish huts in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association. One is in the Strand, and the other in the Tottenham Court Road. As the Christians stole the Jewish God, it may be that the huts are offered by way of expiation.

Preaching on the "Gift of Life," the Dean of Chichester said there are more than 80,000 kinds of beetles alone. He did not explain what happened to them in Noah's Ark.

At the opening of the Sinn Feiners' "Parliament," Father O'Flanagan offered prayer in the Irish language. It is to be hoped that the invocation was understood when it reached the Throne of Grace.

Mr. John Rankin, shipowner, of Liverpool, has presented the Liverpool Cathedral Building Fund with the sum of £20,000. Those who have been complaining at the huge profits made by shipowners during the War will now have their indignation allayed. The rest of the country may have had to find the money in the increased price of goods, but the Church reaps the benefit thereby. And the end sanctifies the means.

The revolt in Portugal, which aimed at bringing the deposed Manoel back to the throne, appears to be collapsing. The leaders of the Republic are Freethinkers or anti-Clericals, and the revolt seems to have been due to Church influence, and to have been engineered by the Jesuits. As usual, Church and Throne hang together—for fear of hanging separately.

In Bohemia the intellectual leaders are also largely made up of Freethinkers, and the Church is raising complaints against the Government. These complaints may be well or ill-grounded—we have no means of knowing; and the tameness of the English press prevents the public knowing. But the complaints of the Clericals is no proof that there is real cause for complaint—it only means that the Church is not getting it all its own way.

The Chinese Government is burning its entire stock of opium—the sale of which was forced upon it by this country—the value of which is estimated at twenty-five million dollars. Oh, these simple-minded heathens! Had they been Christians they might have decided, in a fit of moral fervour, to get rid of opium; but they would have sold out their stocks to other people. So their conscience would have been eased and their pockets filled.

Addressing the City of London Church Workers' Union on January 30, Dean Inge said that if the Russians could only find a Napoleon "we might find ourselves fighting side by side with the Germans sooner than we expected." Certainly stranger things than that have happened, and if it does we are quite sure that the clergy will be offering up prayers for the success of our gallant and Christian Allies. It is a fixed peculiarity of these natural groupings that one's enemy is always a blackguard, and one's friends high-minded and chivalrous gentlemen.

The official mind insists on religion, no matter what else is wanting. During the recent outbreak of Sinn Fein prisoners in Belfast Gaol it appears that some of the prisoners were taken to chapel with their hands handcuffed behind their backs. We hope this induced a proper and pious state of mind in which to listen to the sermon?

Five churches at Caversham have been broken into and damaged. It is curious, for, during the War, Providence is alleged to have protected church-furniture on the Continent.

The War is over—really, if not officially. Prussianism is defeated, militarism is crushed—in Prussia. But we have now a conscript Army—for the purpose of winding up the War; and that will probably be followed by some form of conscription for ordinary times. So is militarism defeated—in Prussia. Militarism in Britain is another matter.

NOTICE.

THE *Freethinker* is now distributed to the Trade through all the principal wholesale Newspaper Agents, and may be ordered from any Newsagent or from any of Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son's railway bookstalls. To those who wish to have the *Freethinker* supplied through the post the terms are: 3 months, 2s. 8d.; 6 months, 5s. 3d.; 12 months, 10s. 6d., post free.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

February 9, afternoon, Blaina; evening, Abertillery; February 10, Abertillery, Debate; February 23, South Shields; February 26, Coventry; March 2, Swansea; March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester; March 30, Leeds.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—February 23, Manchester; March 2, Maesteg; March 9, Ferndale.
- W. H. EAGRES.—G. W. Foote died in October, 1915. The book you refer to was noted at the time of its appearance. It is not worth dealing with again at this date.
- S. HOLMES.—Mr. Cohen's *Woman and Christianity* will be out soon. It has been ready, so far as we are concerned, for some time. It is only waiting for machinery and binding, and the delay here is due to shortage of labour.
- E. E. STAFFORD.—Send it on when you are ready. The difficulties in the place to which you refer may be overcome in the near future.
- A. BOYD.—Thanks for reference.
- W. ROSE.—There is a badge—an enamelled one—already in existence for N. S. S. members. But they are out of stock at the moment, and the supply cannot be renewed for a time owing to the high cost of materials.
- P. SIMPSON.—There is nothing unusual in believing God, and we fail to see why you spend five pages to acquaint us with the fact. You say you know God has helped you, and we are also inclined to say, "God help you!"
- C. E. W. (Six Bells).—We quite agree with you as to the dangers of the insidious spread of various superstitions. The only cure we see is to go on making Freethinkers.
- W. DARGE.—Don't despair, even of Inverness. Scotland, as a whole, is ripe for a very active Freethought propaganda, and we should be surprised if Inverness has escaped the general movement of advanced thought.
- R. A.—A connection has been set up between Stonehenge and many things, including Phallic worship, but we are unable to say with what amount of truth.
- MAJOR WARREN.—Received with thanks.
- EDUNSON.—We are obliged for MSS., but we regret we are unable to make use of same.
- B. F. B.—The *Freethinker* attacks all religions, whether Christian or non-Christian. That should be sufficiently obvious to anyone worth bothering about, from the fact that it attacks the belief in God and a soul. Naturally, this paper is more concerned with the Christian religion than with others, because in this country that is the immediate enemy. It is the citadel we are attacking; when that is taken, there will not be much trouble with the outlying positions.
- C. T. SHAW.—Thanks for cuttings.
- THE SECRETARY OF THE MANCHESTER BRANCH writes:—"Mr. Thresh's lectures last Sunday met with the strong approval of his audience, and an enthusiastic demand for a return visit. The afternoon subject on 'Insect Life' was much appreciated, and in the evening the account of his experiences as Master at Ruskin House School was received with great attention. Mr. J. T. Lloyd visits the Branch on February 23, and Mr. C. Cohen will conclude our lecture engagements on March 23. Will all members make a special effort to attend on both these dates, so we may have a successful wind-up of this our second season?"
- E. C. ROUND.—There is some prospect of the discussion between the Editor and Dr. Lyttelton being reissued in book form. Mr. Thorn's articles may be reprinted later.
- S. H.—Send along the addresses, and we will see that the literature is sent.
- 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 of marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen has a fairly busy time this week-end. It is not quite certain at the time of writing whether he may lecture at Newport on Saturday evening. But on Sunday (February 9) he lectures at The Institute, Blaina, at 3 o'clock, and at the Tillery Institute, Abertillery, at 6.15. On Monday evening he is holding a debate with the Rev. J. Towns in Bethany Baptist Church, Six Bells, at 7 o'clock, and this means catching a very early train on Tuesday morning to see the *Freethinker* through the press. And some people are striking for a 40-hour week!

We are asked to announce that on Sunday a train leaves Newport at 9.20 for Abertillery and Blaina, calling at all stations, and returning from Abertillery at 7.20 p.m.

North London Freethinkers are asked to note that a discussion will be held to-day (Feb. 9), at the St. Pancras Reform Club, between Mr. Percy Muir, of the C.E.S., and Mr. E. Burke, on "Freewill or Determinism?" The discussion commences at 7.30.

We publish this week the new edition of *The Jewish Life of Christ*, with elaborate preface and appendix by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler. The story of Jesus as the illegitimate son of a soldier named Pandera is a very ancient one, although the Hebrew version of which the present is a rendering dates from the Middle Ages. Still, the story is replete with interest to all interested in the New Testament story, and should therefore prove attractive to many outside the ranks of avowed Freethinkers. It is certainly a production that no Freethinker should be without, and probably not one Christian in a thousand is aware of the existence of such a work. The pamphlet is printed on good paper, with a stout coloured wrapper, and we bespeak for it the widest circulation. The work is reprinted at the original price of sixpence. Not to republish, in these days, at an advanced price is worth noting.

The Secretary of the Pinlco Branch of the Discharged Soldiers' and Sailors' Federation has sent a protest to the War Office against the Camps' Library, which works in conjunction with the War Office and the Admiralty, declining to continue sending the literature of the R. P. A. to the soldiers. The action of the Camps' Library is an expression of pure bigotry, and is quite unwarrantable. We are not, however, surprised. The official mind is bad enough, but when it is a Christian mind into the bargain, it is simply intolerable. Our own practice has been to send the parcels direct to the soldiers for distribution, and we believe this to be the better plan. These parcels have been sent very liberally to all parts of the War area, as well as to home camps and hospitals, and we believe all have been received and distributed. We are still keeping up the bombardment.

Just as we were going to press we received an article from Dr. Lyttelton, in continuation of the discussion running through these columns. This will appear next week.

The Birth and Development of Gods.

III.

(Continued from p. 57.)

INNUMERABLE are the myths which explain the entrance of that fell-sergeant death into the world. According to the Hebrew legend, men and women would have lived for ever had not the subtle serpent persuaded the inquisitive Eve to pluck and eat the forbidden fruit. The Golden Age is always in the past, when mankind experienced happiness unalloyed, and poverty and pain were unknown. But the dread intrusion of death has banished that joyful day, and the many myths of man's mortality usually ascribe the triumph of death over life to some accident or misfortune for which men or the lower animals were responsible. Some of these stories associate the moon with death and resurrection. The waxing and waning of the lunar orb probably suggested to early humanity that man was once immortal like the moon, and when he died, it was only to be reborn after three days. Even in our own religion, the deified man Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried, and rose from the grave after three days, much like the moon.

In savage Africa and Australia this moon myth is common, while in far distant Fiji and the Caroline Islands the silver orb is associated with death's cold embrace. In these Eastern islands it is asserted that in happier early periods death meant only a transient slumber from which men soon recovered. Men died on the last day of the dying moon, and returned to life with the first appearance of the new moon. They were all the better for their refreshing sleep. This halcyon time was ended by an evil ghost which transformed this slumber of death into a sleep from which men never awoke.

The serpent is a widespread symbol of immortality, and was believed to renew its life when it cast its skin. Therefore, if men were able to renew their skins, they too might endure for ever. Several myths dealing with the origin of death revolve round this conceit. One of the most striking of this group of mythical stories is related from the Admiralty Islands. Frazer thus narrates it:—

They say that once on a time there was an old woman and she was frail. She had two sons, and they went a fishing, and she herself went to bathe. She stripped off her wrinkled old skin and came forth as young as she had been long ago. Her sons came home from the fishing, and very much astonished were they to see her. The one said, "It is our mother," but the other said, "She may be your mother, but she shall be my wife." Their mother heard them and said, "What were you two saying?" The two said, "Nothing! We only said you were our mother." "You are liars," said she, "I heard both of you. If I had had my way, we should have grown to be old men and women, and then we should have cast our skin and been young men and young women. But you have had your way. We shall grow old men and old women and then we shall die."

With that she reinvested her body with her withered skin and became a wrinkled crone. Thus the old woman's sinful sons deprived the world of endless life.

In various of these tales the divinity desired that man should permanently escape death, but the god's excellent intention is invariably frustrated by some unforeseen event.

The late Andrew Lang pointed to the "high gods" of some primitive races as evidence of a faith in a superior power entirely apart from the customary spirits or

demons. And many who are anxious to save at least a remnant of the Theistic hypothesis allege that the theories of Tylor and Herbert Spencer fail to explain the native belief in the existence of anthropomorphic beings of exalted power in Australia and elsewhere. Apart, however, from reasons for suspecting that these beliefs have been coloured by recent missionary teaching; and even were it proved that high gods were part of the native theology before the arrival of the missionary, it still remains to be shown that ideas of a Christian character were not first introduced into the native superstitions by stranded mariners and other foreign visitors at an earlier date. But even if these powerful divinities prove purely indigenous, there is no real reason why they could not have been evolved from the departed ancestors of the aboriginal tribes whose spirits, leaping the confines of earth, have ascended to the realms of the sky. Indeed, Spencer and Gillen, who lived among the natives, and carefully studied their customs and beliefs, mention a couple of these supposed supreme gods as mere bogies employed by the men to keep the women and children in order. Again, these alleged sky gods are linked up in native belief with the spirits of the dead. Ghosts are rarely visible in broad daylight, and their nocturnal preferences are connected by the savages of Central Australia with the stars. The bright stars of night are regarded both as the souls of the departed, and as the fires they kindle to warm themselves in their spiritual home in the heavens.

It is a significant truth that races at the same approximate stage of culture in every part of the globe hold substantially similar religious ideas. The least advanced races entertain the most primitive modes of faith, and step by step, as we ascend in the scale of civilization, the more elaborate and refined supernaturalistic concepts and customs become.

The rude natives of Australia are among the most primitive of mankind. The Island Continent is not only the habitat of archaic races, but also constitutes the chief refuge of many ancient types of floral and faunal organisms which have long been eliminated in geographical areas where the conflict of life has been more severe. In the Central and least favoured region of Australia, we encounter religion in its infancy. Spencer and Gillen inform us that the Central tribes have no conception of any superhuman power superior to the spirits of their departed kindred. With the solitary exception of the Gnanji, who deny to women the possession of souls that survive death, despite their belief that all men are endowed with them, all the other numerous tribes are convinced that people of every kind born into this world are the reincarnated representatives of defunct humanity. In terms of this primitive theory, every man and woman experiences his or her second time on earth. During their period of probation, the disembodied spirits of the dead do not depart to any heavenly dwelling-place. These ghosts remain near their living friends, and lurk behind rocks, in pools, and the hollow trunks of trees, expectantly awaiting the appearance of a passing female, whose body they enter, and are thus enabled in due course to be born again as children. This is apparently the only theory of conception and birth which any of these untutored aboriginals entertain.

The ideas of the Australian natives concerning the ghosts of their ancestors clearly furnish the foundation for the deification of the dead. The forefathers of the tribe who dwelt on earth in distant *alcheringa* days are supposed to have been gifted with powers vastly superior to those of present times. Wonderful stories are related of their prodigious achievements, and although the veneration and awe which their doings inspire have not yet reached the stage of worship, it is undeniable that

but for the advent of the white invader these treasured traditions would have ultimately given rise to a cult of the dead.

While the spectres of the dead in Central Australia haunt the country in which they lived while awaiting their incarnation as infants, in other parts of the Continent, the souls of the departed are believed to travel underground, or to journey to their home in the sky.

With other tribes, the soul not only persists beyond death, but it retains consciousness and power to vent its anger on the surviving natives. The Dieri accordingly place offerings of food on the grave of a notable tribesman, while a fire is kindled in cold seasons for the benefit of the ghost. In some cases the corpse is pinioned, to prevent the vengeful spirit from emerging from its grave. With the development of propitiation and worship of the dead, the sacrifice of the wealth of the living to the demands of the dead steadily increases. The genesis of this serious economic waste is manifested on a small scale among the lowly Australians. But, as Frazer pointedly says:—

When we pass from this custom in this its feeble source, and follow it as it swells in volume through the nations of the world till it attains the dimensions of a mighty river of wasted labour, squandered treasure, and spilt blood, we cannot but wonder at the strange mixture of good and evil in the affairs of mankind, seeing in what we justly call progress so much hardly earned gain side by side with so much gratuitous loss, such immense additions to the substantial value of life to be set off against such enormous sacrifices to the shadow of a shade.

(To be continued.) T. F. PALMER.

The Jesuits and the War.

IN years gone by, various people have warned me, in a solemn manner, to beware of the plots of the Society of Jesus. In a remote Devonshire village, an elderly lady, whose knowledge of the world's affairs could not have been very extensive, assured me, with intense conviction, that the Jesuits were the chief danger to civilization. And I remember an old gentleman at Leicester who used to carry about, day and night, a volume which exposed the vile designs of Jesuitism. He offered to lend it to me for a few hours, but wished it to be returned ere sunset. No doubt, the reader has met such instances.

The subject was revived for me by the receipt the other day, from a zealous Nonconformist acquaintance (also in Leicester!), of a pamphlet written by a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. As it was printed at Londonderry, the thunder-and-lightning style of the pamphlet can be imagined. One passage will be enough as a sample:—

Yes, but for the Church of Rome, which Adam Smith so aptly stigmatized as "the most formidable combination ever framed against the liberties of the world," not even the Kaiser's unswerving and unscrupulous ambition would have proved equal to the challenge he has thrown down to the nations of both hemispheres. To the Jesuits he is indebted for that perfected system of espionage which has enabled him to achieve what his legions might have found impossible. He obtained the last prayers of the Black Pope, as the General of the Jesuits is called, for the success of a war carried on by means the most fiendish on record; for, as if the resources of the earth were insufficient, the heights of the air and the depths of the ocean have been laid under tribute to furnish new methods for destroying human life.

As these views apparently date about two years ago, the Presbyterian writer could not be expected to foresee the position in 1919, unless he had recourse to the prophecies

of *Daniel* and the *Apocalypse*. It is now evident that, if the Jesuits planned the War in the German interest, their capacity for intrigue is not of the first class.

As to the Church of Rome in general, I do not think it particularly desired the victory of one side or the other, its main motive being, now as always, to preserve its own organization and its hold upon the minds of people over as large a part of the globe as possible. If I were in charge of the Roman policy, I should tell the Catholic clergy in any country that they were perfectly free to espouse the national cause even if such action brought them into collision with Catholics in other nationalities; only they must, all the time, glorify the Faith and Practice and Social Value of the Church of Saint Peter. And, as a matter of fact, this policy is in operation.

This policy is also the Jesuit policy, applied with method, and with a special view to influencing the opinions and education of the upper and ruling classes. Some people seem awfully afraid of the Jesuit schemes. It appears to me that the Jesuit aims do not, by any means, demand supreme brain-power. The purpose being to maintain an existing theological order, and to widen it if conditions allow, the organizing capacity needed is only such as promotes, say, an Oil-trust, or a Bank-amalgamation, or Stock-Exchange speculations. And if anybody believes such capacity is of the highest quality, I am sorry for his intellectual standard. A third-rate mentality always suffices for commercial success, or for the support of ancient creeds and privileges. Shrewdness is a useful asset. It is not so great as artistic insight, or moral and social invention. The Jesuits are shrewd. They are not inventors.

Hence I have never felt the anxiety which many persons feel about the dangers of Jesuitry. I have, indeed, one tremendous objection to the Jesuits, and that is to their secretive methods. But the Jesuits are not singular in such practices. The modern world, Protestant or Catholic, swarms with secrecies, and I object to the whole lot of them. I object to secret diplomacy, secret patents, secret business accounts, secret profits, secret incomes. I object to people trading under assumed names, or (barring very exceptional circumstances) writing articles or letters in the papers over names not their own. I even object (again, barring very exceptional circumstances, such as delicate questions affecting personal repute) to letters being marked "Private and Confidential." Therefore, the opposition of governments, during the last three centuries, to the manners and customs of the Jesuit Society, has my sympathy. But the traps set to catch Jesuits might be profitably used for catching other anti-social agencies.

Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus in the first half of the sixteenth century, was a very honest and devoted zealot, far nobler in character than most of his successors in the Order. He sincerely believed the Roman Church ought to, and could, save the world, and establish righteousness, and that the cunningest brains of the Church should be organized against Protestantism, Freethought, and the Devil. I only wish every supporter of freedom of the mind was as enthusiastic as was Loyola. It was his misfortune to ally this splendid zeal with a declining creed; but his Spanish and military training had given him no insight into the emancipating movement and its promise of eventual triumph. He supported the Cause which he regarded as divine, eternal, and best calculated to secure the people's good. Things being as they were in Europe, and the popular intellect having reached only a certain level, the continuance of Roman Catholicism was inevitable. If Ignatius Loyola had not produced his policy for maintaining that system, somebody else—with a Society of

Mary, or the Comforter, or what-not—would have come forward with a similar project necessitated by the social conditions.

Attack the social conditions. Criticisms and censure of priestcraft and obsolete creeds are necessary and wholesome. But, as I see the problem, our main reliance should rest upon change of the social and intellectual atmosphere by means of a sound popular education. It is a matter for congratulation that public thought in this country is awakening to the need. I wish, with all my heart, we could, in this time of political crisis, say as much for Ireland; for if ever any community stood in want of real, good, modern schools it is the Irish. But it is something to have England less sleepy than it was in 1914. Mr. Fisher's Act has not given us half what the people truly need, and both the Freethought world and the Labour world accept its inadequate terms far too easily. But it is a stage that helps towards the next stage, and the next. Those next stages must place the training colleges for teachers, as well as the Primary and Secondary Schools, on a Humanist basis, and create people's universities.

And, if I were a Jesuit, I would sweat and toil overtime, with very brief intervals for meals, in order to delay those stages.

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

IS THERE A "GOD," AND IS THERE ANY PURPOSE IN THE UNIVERSE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—No greater and more complex problem has ever baffled the wits of mankind since prehistoric times than that involved in the solution of the inquiry which serves as the title of this letter.

For thousands of years this alluring topic has been the bone of contention, in some form or other, in private circles, on public platforms, and in scientific journals; *and yet the world is no wiser.* True, many "reputed" scientists have asserted, in the most emphatic language it is possible to frame, that "*God*" is a *non-existent factor*, and that *there is no purpose in creation*: but hardly are the words uttered than the contention is rebutted and scornfully repudiated by an army of reputed "scientists" of the orthodox "evangelical" or "ecclesiastical" order, who "resolutely," if not very intelligibly, champion the opposite creed.

Obviously, what concerns us is to decide which of these conflicting camps is right; and if neither is right, how, and in what particular, they have erred, and what is the correct solution of this seemingly unsolvable puzzle.

To deal with our subject in a manner that is most likely to be intelligible to the greatest number, we must approach it in a scientific or philosophic spirit, and the first step in the consideration of the problem under discussion is to discover why doubts should be harboured by reputed and professed scientists in relation to a subject which is elementary and fundamental, and upon which the lives and happiness of the whole human race depends. It only requires a moment's reflection to determine that the respective disputants in every case of controversy heretofore confined themselves to mere speculative assertion, unsupported by any philosophic testimony; in other words, being strangers to natural science or physical laws, *they omitted to consider causation.*

In these circumstances, it becomes self-evident that both camps of thought are working in wrong grooves, with a mited mental horizon to draw upon, which does not include the objective they are in search of; hence the never-ending disputes, and the failure of both in their quest.

Obviously, before we can reconcile our minds to the doctrine of the existence of "God," we must be prepared, by having before us some concrete definition of what we are called upon to visualize, mentally or ocularly; it therefore follows, as a logical corollary, that we must have a definite

understanding of what is meant by the terms "God" and "purpose."

No one can doubt that these two terms were originally framed to define specific manifestations, and unless we are informed what the respective manifestations were or are, or, alternatively, what they are supposed to be, it is self-evident we have no clue whereby we could identify them. In other words, for instance, we cannot decide whether God has any substantial existence until we know what "God" is, or is meant to imply.

Heretofore, owing to the defective system officially patronized, called "Education," which is in vogue in our universities, colleges, and schools, words have been used, and their orthodox pronunciation has been impressed upon the minds of pupils, without teaching their corresponding significance. Hence, every scholar, after leaving these establishments, finds himself the repository of a veritable dictionary of elegant words, or labels, to which each pupil is left to attach the missing substance or significance.

It need not cause surprise, therefore, that no two persons in the British Empire, or in the whole English-speaking world, will, or can, furnish the right definition, or identical definitions, for qualitative nouns, even of such simple terms as "Truth" and falsehood, light and darkness, heat and cold, good and bad, right and wrong, honesty and dishonesty, morality and viciousness, and such being the case it can hardly cause surprise that the same bewilderment exists universally in relation to God and the Devil, purpose and aimlessness.

As the contending schools of thought, Freethinkers and hypnotized thinkers have not deemed it necessary to touch upon the subject of terminological precision, I am left to submit an explanation based upon evangelical or ecclesiastical assertions, and Biblical lore, which, although merely a vague record of traditional biography, gives us some clue to the truth.

For example, we are taught that the ecclesiastical deity, or God, is good, that God is life, that God is light, that God is knowledge, that God is power, that God is "Love," and that God is peace.

Now, if we reverse the order of description which must apply, we find ourselves confronted by a bountiful vocabulary of select and choice terms, provided by ecclesiastical magnanimity and wisdom for the faithful or unfaithful to select from alternatively should the term "God" not meet with their approval as a fitting label to illustrate the evangelical deity.

Thus, we may select at discretion, "good," "life," "light," "knowledge," "power," "love," and "peace," to identify the deity we are asked to believe in the existence of.

For my part, as a Freethinker and general scientist, I take advantage of evangelical liberality for the "purpose" of my theme, and select preferentially the term "Power" as the most appropriate label wherewith to identify the reality without wishing to interfere with the like privilege accorded to others who may prefer to employ any of the other terms named, or any of a host of unstated terms which the limitations of space and forbearance forbid the reproduction of, it being understood that each and all of said terms are synonymous, which, meaning precisely the same thing, are interchangeable at will.

The reason I select the term "power" as being the most appropriate or most expressive, and, therefore, best calculated to convey an intelligible illustration of the reality, is the fact which must be obvious to the most thoughtless among us, that it is "power" or "positive energy" which governs the universe, and "power" it is which must be the dominant factor, or what is known as the "first cause" or "origin" of life.

These latter terms I consider to be *misnomers*, because God is described as "Immortal," "Eternal," "Infallible," "Omniscient," and "Omnipresent," so if God is "Power," power must be endowed with similar attributes, wherfrom we must logically deduce *there was no first cause or origin of life*; that "Power" always was, always is, and always will be, the same applying to "life," which is an interchangeable name for "Power."

From the foregoing there is only one logical conclusion, namely, that there is a "God" in the sense outlined, but debaters are at liberty to select alternative terminology to express their convictions.

With regard to the term "purpose," by the same process of philosophic analysis, we reach the conclusion that the word "purpose" is simply an alternative terminological description of the motive, reason, or cause for the various manifestations which are in eternal operation defining the forms of kaleidoscopic variety into which "power" or "God" is transmutable, and which "power" assumes, before our eyes, by the process we call "evolution" or "transformation."

As natural laws are immutable, and every effect or evolutionary change must have a cause whereby the said change is produced, I think it is irrefutably proved, and must be clear to the mind of every Freethinker, if not to the hypnotized, who think by proxy, that there is a purpose, and a mighty purpose, in the universe, although that purpose is an unknown quantity to the hypnotized ecclesiastical mind.

In conclusion, I must add, in completion of my theme, that as all terrestrial or astral objects, visible or invisible, which are usually designated as created matter, are simply manifestations of the deity called "God" or "Power," it must be apparent that even the evangelical "personal" God is a reality, illustrated by Man which, or who, is the highest manifestation of transmuted power. But for man to be endowed with the corresponding faculties of immortality, infallibility, omniscience, and omnipotence, he must be a free agent, a "Freethinker" in substance, and absolutely unfettered by ecclesiastical or official superstition and hypnotism. The hypnotized mind lacks power, and is a slave to the tyranny of ignorant dogmatism, to which causation and natural laws are a sealed book.

A. WATTERS.

There is now no pillar of cloud or of fire to guide mortals; the heavenly apparition does not appear even in extremities.—Mark Rutherford.

The Humanitarian works by Joachim Kaspary, out of print, can be studied in the Reading Room of the British Museum, London. They will, however, be Revised and Published as soon as possible.

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National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 30.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.—Also present: Messrs. Baker, Braddock, Brandes, Davidson, Eager, Gorniot, Lazarnick, Leat, Neate, Palmer, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Spence, Miss Kough, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, Mrs. Rolf, Wood, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

Monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

New members were received from Belfast, Birmingham, Coventry, Glasgow, Manchester, Maesteg, and the Parent Society, thirty-two in all.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange for a course of lectures to be held at South Place Chapel on April 27, and May 4 and 11.

Correspondence was read and some minor business matters transacted and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

Population Question and Birth-Control.

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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.**

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Maurice Maubrey, "The World's Redemption."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Freewill or Determinism." Opening by E. Burke; Reply by Percy Muir. Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. J. B. Johnson, "Is the Bible True?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "A Revaluation of Nineteenth Century Writers."

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Shaller; **3.15**, Messrs. Saphin, Dales, Yates, and Kells.

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): 6.15, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The New World and the Old Faith." Monday (February 10) Debate.

BLAINA (The Institute): 3, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?"

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Old and New Members cordially invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Harry Snell, "President Wilson: The Moralist in Politics."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. Stewart, "Vegetarianism as a Scientific, Sensible, and Sporting System of Living."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Morley's Restaurant, Porth): 2.30. Important Business; also Lecture by A. Peters, "The By-Products of Coal."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, First Floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, Mr. J. Fothergill, "Books"; 7.15, Lecture Arrangements.

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