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Views and Opinions.

Woman and Christianity.

According to the New Testament, Christianity began with a woman, and certainly women were among its earliest supporters. According to many of its present-day critics, it will end with women as the last adherents of a decaying cause. Only a very small proportion of the population attend church, and of these a considerable majority are women. The phenomenon arouses reflection. Why should this be so? The ideal society is one in which men and women march side by side—not merely in a physical, but in a moral and intellectual sense. Their functions in life are not contradictory, but complementary. The one cannot be held back without injury to the other. Why, then, should women continue to give their support to Christianity in a much larger measure than men? If the reasons for the rejection of Christianity by men are adequate, why are they not equally powerful with women? That the feminine mind is less logical than the masculine, we do not believe. Its social training has been different, but that only means its present state is the product of male egotism and domination. Some tell us that while man can get on without religion, woman needs it. That also we refuse to believe. We do not believe that woman is the perpetual child of the human race—always to be held in tutelage by the male, either husband or priest. Religion is essential for all or none. Growth is as true of the female as of the male mind. Woman no more needs Christianity than man, and there is even less reason why she should continue to support it than man.

* * *

Woman and the Church.

What have the Christian Churches done for woman that she should do so much for the Churches? The favourite pulpit plea is that to the influence of Christianity woman owes her improved position and release from a position of degradation and inferiority forced upon her in the old Pagan world. Nothing could be farther from the truth. During the whole of European history it has been Christian influences more than any other that fixed upon her the stamp of inferiority, and insisted upon her subordination to the male. From the ancient Roman world Christianity took over a tradition—legal and social—and a practice that went far towards

placing the two sexes upon an equality. Christianity created a public opinion and formulated laws that for nearly a thousand years arrested progress in the matter of sex equality. She was regarded as the source of all evil, a centre of contamination ever threatening the spiritual safety of man. In the whole of the feudal legislation, woman's rights were curtailed, ignored, or destroyed. The freedom conferred upon her by the later Roman law was wiped away. She was made incapable of holding property when married, was deprived of rights and privileges that were conferred upon men; and wherever the influence of Christianity has been strong, the opposition to the emancipation of woman has been vigorous. Nor was any improvement effected in her position until the growth of Freethought towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century forced the question to the front. A mere list of the names of the men and women who have fought for the equality of the sexes—from the time of Mary Woolstonecraft onward—is enough to prove that the movement owes its being and its strength to the growth of Freethought.

* * *

Woman and the Bible.

How could Christianity make for the emancipation of women? Look at the position of woman in the "Holy Bible." It is one of subserviency throughout. Woman forms no part of the original plan of creation. She appears on the scene as an afterthought. In the Ten Commandments she is lumped in with her husband's oxen and asses, and "other things that are his." She is early made responsible for the introduction of evil, and whenever a discreditable bit of business is required a woman is brought in to do it. She is not numbered among the "congregation of the children of Israel," nor is her presence required in any religious service. In the period of purification ordered after childbirth, the days of purification after the birth of a girl are twice as many as in the case of the birth of a boy. Wives are bought and sold, and there is no sign that the consent of a girl to marriage is necessary. If the husband required divorce, he obtained it by giving the woman a "bill of divorcement," and sending her away. Polygamy is general. Nearly all the Biblical characters have more than one wife, and in later times many eminent Christians—Luther, Milton, Bishop Burnet, and others—held that Christianity did not condemn polygamy. In the New Testament we have the old story continued. Twelve disciples are selected, but there is not a woman among them. The association of women with Jesus is to serve, not to teach or to stand as the equal of the men. Paul lays down the law concerning women with a dogmatism and a narrowness that is almost amusing in its crass stupidity. Marriage may be permitted, but only as the lesser of two evils. Women are to keep silence in the Churches, and if they would learn anything to ask their husbands at home. Man is the head of the woman as Christ is the head of the Church. Man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man.

and she must not usurp authority over him. And wives are to obey their husbands, "even as Sarai obeyed Abraham." Were Paul's injunctions carried out the number of careers for women would be very few indeed. As it is, every woman teacher and preacher is a direct negation of the Pauline injunctions.

* * *

Christianity in History.

The consequences of these teachings are seen in the subsequent course of European history. For vituperative extravagance the early Christian writings stand without a peer. Woman became the synonym for all that was evil and spiritually dangerous. A clergyman of the standing and scholarship of Principal Donaldson is driven to confess that the influence of Christianity was to lower the character of woman and restrict the range of her activity. In the very early Church she was allowed to perform the functions of doorkeeper, but even this was taken away from her before long. Woman, to cite Principal Donaldson, became in the eyes of the Christian Church a mere female animal with no other purpose in life save that of rousing the passions of man and wrecking his immortal welfare by her wiles. In Germany, Luther said that woman should confine herself to the kitchen and the cradle. In Scotland, Knox thundered against the "monstrous regiment of women," and declared that Scripture had formally withdrawn from her all power of rule or control over the affairs of the State. In other parts of the world her political incapacity was asserted and backed up by lavish quotations of Scripture. Professor Karl Pearson not inaptly sums up the general influence of Protestantism on woman by saying that it offered her "domestication or prostitution, subjection or social expulsion." It took years of struggle to induce the Wesleyan Methodist Conference to admit women as delegates—a favour only conferred upon them in 1909. In this the Wesleyans had the Church of England in sympathy with them as was seen by what occurred as late as 1916. Here a number of London clergy actually threatened to go on strike if women were allowed to preach in Churches in connection with the "National Mission of Repentance and Hope." It was declared "contrary to the teaching of holy scripture and to the mind and general practice of the whole Catholic Church." From the time of Christ to 1916 the story is continuous. Woman was the inferior animal. Scripture authorized the practice, and practice supported the teaching.

* * *

How Long?

Woman is awakening at last. One half the human race is in revolt against the dominance of the other half. And it is important to note that a very large proportion of those in revolt are not blind to the existence of the real enemy. These see that religious prejudice lies behind, and is responsible for the major part of the disabilities under which she has suffered. "Thus saith the Lord" has been the enemy to reform here as elsewhere. "I suffer not a woman to teach" is the command that has been hurled at woman whenever she strove to take her place by the side of man as a fellow-worker for the improvement of the race. How much longer will women shut their eyes to the lessons of the past, and their ears to the call of the present and the future? How much longer will she permit herself to be made the tool of a priesthood from the control of which man is rapidly freeing himself? Thousands of women, among the best and the brightest of their sex, have already taken the forward step. The time is ripe for the rest to follow their example. When that takes place we shall see the triumph of a real and useful trinity—that of the man and the woman, wide eyed and

open-minded, treading life's path as real companions on the greatest of all journeys, with the child as the living symbol of their confidence in the future of humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Do the Bishops Believe?"

SUCH was the title of Mr. Horatio Bottomley's article in the *Sunday Pictorial* for October 19. The article was suggested by the fact that at the recent meeting of the Church Congress at Leicester the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were not boldly reaffirmed. Why such pronouncement should have been made is not at all clear. Ought it not to be taken for granted that the bishops and their clergy believe? Have they not all accepted the Thirty-nine Articles as accurately embodying their working creed? Mr. Bottomley is not a theologian, and there are expressions in his article which betray his ignorance on certain points. He says, for example, that "the central personality of Christ was the subject not of metaphysical refinement, but of categorical assertion," the truth being that the latter was distinctly the offshoot of the former. Even the so-called Apostles' Creed, despite its apparent simplicity, is rooted in "metaphysical refinement," and did not receive its final form for many centuries. Every "categorical assertion" in it implies a metaphysical hypothesis insusceptible of historic verification. Later creeds, it is true, are much more metaphysical in form, though not in substance. The Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the decree of Chalcedon, and the various Protestant Creeds, are all steeped in metaphysics. We do not know how many cores Christianity is supposed to have. Mr. Bottomley evidently imagines that it has several, for he refers to its "central" core. Be that as it may, it is beyond doubt that Mr. Bottomley wholly misrepresents Christianity when he says that its "central" core is "the grandest ethic that the world has seen." So-called organized Christianity, the Christianity of the New Testament and the orthodox Church, is not an ethical system at all, but a supernatural scheme whereby "sinners lost and ruined by the fall" can be saved through faith in the finished work of Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. Besides, a comparative study of religions has clearly demonstrated that what is styled the Christian ethic is by no means "the best that the world has seen."

Mr. Bottomley seems to infer, chiefly from their silence, that the bishops do not believe the cardinal doctrines, or historic principles, of the Christian religion; in a word, that they no longer accept as historical events the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. He does not wish them to believe. He concludes his article thus:—

I return to my question, "Do the Bishops Believe?" If so, the evidence, much of it from their lips, is sadly misleading. If not, then I have indicated a line of honest action that may convert what is now a mere sectarian body into a true Church of England—a Temple of Brotherhood, broad as the bounds of man's eternal need.

Mr. Bottomley is one of the latest converts to the Christian Faith; but it does not yet appear how much of it appeals to him as true. What orthodox divines regard as its core, he regards as false, and he fancies that the bishops and clergy generally stand where he does. Some of them do. Dean Inge, in the course of his paper on "The Christian Doctrine of the Future Life," read at the Church Congress, said: "We can no longer believe in a localized heaven and hell, and I cannot pretend to

myself that the belief in a resuscitation of our bodies stands where it did." There are multitudes, however, who still swallow all the great creeds, among whom is the Rev. D. Kennedy-Bell, M.A., B.D., who, in the *Sunday Pictorial*, replies to Mr. Bottomley's article. Mr. Kennedy-Bell is as yet neither a bishop nor a dean, but one of the "humble curates"; but he asserts that he believes, "without reservation, in the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ," and he further asserts "that this is the belief, equally without mental reservation whatsoever, of the overwhelming majority of the Bishops." To what extent the reverend gentleman's declaration is true we cannot determine. Naturally, the bishops themselves will take no notice of Mr. Bottomley's challenge, nor any other of the dignitaries of the Church. We are persuaded, however, that the curate is nearer right than the popular journalist. Touching the Apostles' Creed, Mr. Kennedy-Bell affirms:—

Every time that creed is recited each individual member of the Church signifies his adhesion, if he is an honest man, to the miraculous nature of the Faith which has come down to him as a heritage from the past.

There are those who recite the Apostles' Creed without believing it. Matthew Arnold did so, so did R. H. Haweis, and so do hundreds of thousands to-day. To Liberal Christians everywhere Jesus is only a man, and miracles are non-existent. Mr. Kennedy-Bell is, doubtless, a whole-hogger of a believer; he can believe without rhyme or reason, and false enough many of his beliefs are. Here are a few examples:—

The Founder of the Christian religion remains to day, in spite of the progress of nineteen centuries, the Ideal of the social reformer. Even those who cannot accept the statement of his divinity are prepared to admit that no such life has ever been lived in the world before or since. His character has never been equalled, let alone surpassed, in history or fiction. His Sermon on the Mount remains the inspiration of statesmen and rulers, and offers the only basis upon which to achieve the realization of the brotherhood of man.

Reason and history unite in characterizing such utterances as at once wholly untrue and absurd. The reverend gentleman is blinded by prejudice and cannot see the world as it is. The Jesus he depicts is the most dismal and tragic failure that the world has seen. He says that "every attempt to explain Christianity away as a purely human system of morals has singularly failed." Of course it has, for Christianity is *not* a human system of morals, but an alleged Divine plan of salvation by faith, and, as such, it has proved the most gigantic farce conceivable, as the facts of life abundantly and infallibly testify.

Mr. Kennedy-Bell prides himself upon possessing a deeper and more accurate knowledge of Rationalism than Mr. Bottomley can possibly have, because, as he puts it, "I have been down to the lowest depths of Rationalism myself." So far as his reply to Mr. Bottomley is concerned he supplies no evidence whatever that he even understands what modern Rationalism really is. Liberal Christians are not Rationalists. They may deny the miraculous, even the supernatural, in its relation to the person and life of Jesus; but they believe in God and in Jesus as God's chosen revealer to the world. Professor Harnack is a Liberal theologian, but he is not in any degree a rejector of the supernatural as such. The same thing is true of the Rev. Dr. Bacon, Professor of New Testament Criticism and Exegesis in Yale University. Both are scholars of acknowledged width and depth, but they are not Rationalists, and would strongly resent being taken as

such. Judging Mr. Kennedy-Bell by his own account furnished in his article, he was never a Rationalist. He admits that he always retained "an intense reverence and admiration for the character of the Christ," and that "by holding on to that, full, complete, perfect faith came." Of that one "prop" he never let go, and so never touched "the lowest depths of Rationalism." Let us see what that one "prop" means:—

That one final proof is the living Power of the living Christ to do just the same for men to-day that he did in Galilee of old. The one final test of Christianity lies in the religious experience of believers themselves. That Unique Personality can attract, control, and change lives to-day.

So important does the reverend gentleman consider the passage that he put the first sentence in italics; but he does not realize that he gives the case for Christianity completely away. If Christ can do no more for men to-day than he did in Galilee of old his cause is doomed to extinction. The men of Galilee rejected him, and at Jerusalem he was condemned and put to death. His followers numbered less than two hundred, and with one or two exceptions the very names of these perished with them. The great theme of the Church Congress, held in 1913, was the Kingdom of God, and the President of the meeting of the Congress recently held at Leicester sorrowfully said:—

A decisive chapter of history has been written since 1913. This lends a striking significance to the fact that the theme of the last Congress was the Kingdom of God. For the events that have happened since would seem to announce its failure.

That is profoundly true. The events of the last five years do announce, in the completest and most emphatic manner, the utter failure of the Christian religion. There are a few fanatical people, chiefly clergymen, whose livelihood is derived from it, who reap a rich harvest of joy from their glowing faith, and Mr. Kennedy-Bell *naively* affirms that this is "the one final test of Christianity." He is right. There is absolutely no other test, and under this test it wholly collapses. For the life of the world, for the welfare of society, it has never done anything. Its moral and social impotence is colossal.

Mr. Kennedy-Bell's claim to superior knowledge is disproved by his own statements. He asserts that "the passing of the nineteenth century witnessed the breakdown of the old Materialism." As a matter of fact, Materialism, as a philosophy of the Universe, was never so rife as it is at this moment. We could introduce him to hundreds of ardently avowed Atheists in almost any moderately large town in Great Britain. Is he not aware of the fact bemoaned by so many of his brethren that churches and chapels are rapidly emptying? Does he not know that the power of the priest is a thing of the past? How groundless, therefore, is his contention that "there never has been an age in the world's history more favourable for a sympathetic presentation of the message of the Church than the present one"? If that were true churches and chapels would not be large enough to accommodate the crowds eager to hear it. Instead of that it is the cinemas and the concert-halls that are thronged on Sunday evenings. Christianity has had its day, and is now passing through a process of disintegration.

J. T. LLOYD.

I need no priest to promise me a second life, for I can live enough in this life, when I live backwards in the lives of those who have gone before me, and win myself an eternity in the realm of the past.—*Heine*.

The Triumph of Secularism.

But John P.
Robinson, he

Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee.

—J. Russell Lowell.

THE long-promised revival of religion has never materialized. Dean Inge, no mean authority, declares bluntly that "Religion remains as impotent as it was before the War." The recent Church Congress endorsed this view. The most important matter agitating the clergy, apart from the question of their salaries, is the unpopularity of the Church. And the clergy are prepared to do almost anything to turn this unpopularity into popularity.

The clergy recognize the fact that the Church is hopelessly behind the times. The Bible for example, is full of things that startle the modern reader. And the rising generation can no longer be coerced into submission to clerical authority. Young men are interested in such matters as labour unrest and social questions, and they cannot be attracted to the Church by special hymns and oleaginous sermons on Brotherhood. Even such drastic action as to convert a parish hall into a debating hall for one evening a week does little except to wake up the few remaining young men in the congregations.

Nor is this unpopularity of the Church to be wondered at. The votes of the bishops in the House of Lords are sufficient to rouse the lasting hostility of all right-thinking persons, and their shameful opposition to all progress shows how antagonistic the Church has been to all Democratic aspiration. The bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to the Universities of their own country, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers. They opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London borough councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in prison, or the use of the lash in the Army and the Navy. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working classes have been opposed by these purse-proud prelates, thirty-nine of whom share £180,700 a year. Indeed, their record carries its own condemnation. No Democrat can view with satisfaction a powerful caste in the country that saps the very springs of morality, that encourages mental and moral confusion, and that hinders the wheels of progress in the way that the State Church, with its Bench of Bishops and its 25,000 clergy, does. It is the enemy of democracy, and should be unpopular.

The plain, blunt truth is that Christianity is found out. Men are no longer able to accept upon mere trust the religious ideas that satisfied their remote ancestors. Over the pulpits of the fast-emptying churches is inscribed "To the glory of God." That is the voice of the past. Secularism sounds the triumphant note of the future, "To the service of man." Based on fables, supported by brute force, trading on ignorance, the clergy will find the conscience of the race rising above their outworn ideals. Christianity has long enough darkened the earth, and separated man from man. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which marches to certain victory under the banners of Liberty and Fraternity.

MIMNERMUS.

'Tis education forms the common mind;
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.

—Pope.

Atheism and Agnosticism.

Tracing the origin of things to their furthest ken on orthodox lines, we arrive, it is alleged, at an author who did the impossible and inconceivable thing of creating the present system of visible things from nothing. But, unfortunately for this deduction, it also warrants us, who see further than our fathers, to ask the equally legitimate and more pertinent question, "Who, amid the eternal sequences, was the author of this author?" and the mere fact that we can ask such a startling genealogical question, and get no intelligible answer, disposes of the supposition in its entirety.—*Redcote Dewar*, "From Matter to Man," p. 3.

Many a sleepless night of my childhood has been passed fretted by the question: "Who made God?"—*Professor Tyndall*, "Fragments of Science"; 1885; vol. i., p. 383.

I tell you there is no God; that the creation is a chimera; that the eternity of the universe is no more inconceivable than the eternity of the spirit; that because I do not know how motion has been able to engender this universe, which it knows so well how to conserve, it is ridiculous to remove this difficulty by the suppositious existence of a being that I know less.—*Diderot*, "Philosophic Thoughts," p. 4.

Millions of prayers have been vainly breathed to what we now know were inexorable laws of nature.—*Lecky*, "History of European Morals"; 1886; vol. i., p. 55.

AGNOSTICISM was invented to camouflage the Atheism to which the philosophers stood committed by their exclusion of all supernatural intervention in the evolution of the universe. It seems desirable to make our position with regard to Agnosticism perfectly clear.

The clergy, by long, persistent, and systematic lying, had succeeded in making the word "Atheism" stand for everything evil, vicious, and depraved. To give only one example: they declared that the crimes committed during the French Revolution were wholly due to the Atheism inculcated by the French philosophers, whereas every student knows that the revolutionists never broke with religion. Robespierre, the ruler during the "Terror," during which the worst crimes were committed, was fanatically religious. He established the worship of the Supreme Being throughout France, and, at the opening ceremony instituting that worship, caused a colossal group of emblematical figures, one of them representing Atheism, to be publicly burned. Robespierre declared: "If God had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him"—which a witty Frenchman declared was exactly what had been done. Lamartine, the historian, in his *History of the Girondists*, from which the foregoing facts are taken, although himself a profoundly religious man, cannot disguise the facts. He observes: "Robespierre felt these truths profoundly. It is necessary to state, however repugnant one may be to believe it, that he did not only feel them as a policy which borrows a chain from heaven to fetter men more surely with it; he felt them as a convinced sectary, who himself first bows down before the idea which he desires to make the people adore."¹ As John Morley observes: "The Committee of Public Safety despatched Hebert, and better men than Hebert, to the guillotine for being atheists. Atheism, as Robespierre assured them, was aristocratic."²

St. Just, known as "The Exterminating Angel," was of the same opinion, and declared war on Atheism. Chaumette, says Morley,—

was accused of conspiring with Hebert, Cloutz, and the rest, "to destroy all notion of Divinity and base the government of France on atheism." "They attack the immortality of the soul," cried Saint Just, "the thought which consoled Socrates in his dying moments, and their dream is to raise atheism to a worship." And this was the offence, technically and officially described, for

¹ Lamartine, *History of the Girondists*, vol. iii., p. 434.

² Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, p. 349.

which Chaumette and Cloutz were sent to the guillotine (April, 1794), strictly on the principle which had been laid down in the Social Contract (of Rousseau), and accepted by Robespierre."¹

Marat, who contributed as much as anybody to the massacres of the Terror by his constant demand in his paper, the *Ami du Peuple*, for heads for the guillotine; Marat, the "obscene spectrum," as Carlyle calls him, "had written a work in favour of the immortality of the soul," and was a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Lamartine says: "The Gospel was constantly open on his table; and when this was noticed, 'The revolution,' returned he, 'is in the Gospel. Nowhere is the cause of the people more energetically pleaded, or more maledictions heaped on the head of the rich and powerful of this world. Jesus Christ,' continued he, bowing reverently when he uttered the name, 'Jesus is our Master.'"²

The Girondists, on the other hand, who were exterminated in their efforts to put a stop to the massacre, counted several Atheists among their number. Brissot, their leader, refused the consolations of religion offered by his friend, the Abbe Lambert, before his execution, declaring that nothing could be more holy than to die "for having refused the blood of his fellow-men to scoundrels." Condorcet, the great philosopher; Cloutz, the humanitarian; and Andre Chenier, one of the greatest of French poets, all perished in the same cause, and were all declared as uncompromising Atheists.

Yet, in the face of these stubborn facts, we find the Rev. Robert Hall, in his sermon entitled "Modern Infidelity Considered," declaring "that the reign of atheism was avowedly and expressly the reign of terror; that in the full madness of their career, in the highest climax of their horrors, they shut up the temples of God, abolished his worship, and proclaimed death to be an eternal sleep; as if by pointing to the silence of the sepulchre, and the sleep of the dead, these ferocious barbarians meant to apologize for leaving neither sleep, quiet, nor repose to the living."³ And Hall was not a common ranter, but was considered by many good judges as the best preacher of his time, his works even finding a place in Bohn's Classical Library of Standard Works.

This is only one sample of the campaign of lies which has been carried on from time immemorial against Atheism and Materialism. Among others are the Infidel Death-bed lie, the free-love lie, and legions besides. They have come from the cathedral and the tin tabernacle; from the archbishop down to the street ranter; a perfect Niagara of lies. All manufactured by Christians who pretend that it is impossible to be truthful, honest, and charitable without religion!

It was, as we have said, to avoid this stigma, that the English philosophers declined to adopt the title of Atheist and coined the word Agnostic.

But, literally, the two words have the same meaning, both are derived from Greek words. The Greek word Gnostic means to know or one who knows. The prefix A—without, turning it into Agnostic—without knowledge.

The word Theist means one who believes in a God, the Greek prefix A—without, turning it into Atheist—without God. Taken literally neither involves a denial of God, but simply being without knowledge of God. Mr. Foote, our late leader, used to say that the difference between an Agnostic and an Atheist was that one wore a pot hat and the other wore a cap. However, the

popular idea of an Atheist is, and always has been, that of one who denies the existence of a God or Gods.

For my part, I do not believe in the existence of any God or Gods, meaning by God or Gods, a being or beings who created the universe and exercise a guiding and controlling influence over it. If by the word God people merely mean the universe as a whole, then I say they are merely playing with words. You cannot endow the universe with personality by labelling it God, any more than you can get nourishment out of chalk by labelling it cheese.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

The honours were to the ladies in a discussion before a recent meeting of the Dundee Education Authority. One of the teachers at Broughty Ferry referred to the Bible as "A book of tricks." In Scotland this could not pass without notice, and the matter came before the Religious Instruction Committee which decided to relieve Mr. Davie, the teacher, of the work of religious instruction. On the matter coming before the superior authority, the Dundee Education Authority, Mrs. Hubbard moved that the action of the Committee be disapproved. She said there were things in the Bible which the clergy never brought up and other things which they forgot. Miss Hubbard supported and objected to religious instruction in the schools. But the motion found only three. We don't know who was the third, but we suppose three sensible people on one Council of twenty is a very large proportion. And the honours are with the ladies. They ought to be members of the N. S. S.

According to the Bible, the prophet Elisha sent some bears to gobble up some very naughty children who called him "baldhead." It is a good thing for the little folk of to-day that they do not live in Bible times, for a daily paper assures us that "the present generation will undoubtedly go bald before its time," and no exception is made in favour of the men of God.

The loaf is to cost more, and the "Bread of Life" will also prove more expensive if the parsons get larger salaries.

The Summertown (Glasgow) United Free Church, in announcing a change of service, remarks dolefully that "men who have been on service are not likely to come to an ordinary Bible class," and so hopes that others will attend. And this after that much-boomed religious revival!

The Chinese labourers, who did work behind the lines in France during the War, are now being sent home. They ought to be able to inform their heathen relations of the manner in which Christians love their enemies.

The King has presented a Bible to a scholar at Sherborne Elementary School. There is no mention in the alleged report that he echoed his illustrious grandmamma's words: "This is the source of England's greatness." Perhaps that myth is at last dead.

The Bishop of Liverpool's suggestion that the highly paid ecclesiastics should devote a large portion of their incomes for the relief of their poorer brethren should be specially addressed to the Bishop of London. Although the Bishop of London receives £200 weekly, he contends that he is travelling towards the workhouse. As he is a bachelor, we tremble to think what would have happened to his lordship if he had a wife and nineteen children.

Bishop Chavasse, speaking at the Liverpool Diocesan Conference, declared that "a bishop's income at the present time is an anxiety to himself, a butt for the scorner, and an embarrassment to the Church." As the bishop's income is

¹ Morley, *Rousseau*, p. 206.

² Lamartine, *History of the Girondists*, vol. ii., p. 444.

³ Robert Hall, *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 277 (Bohn's edition).

about £80 a week, it is an "anxiety" that many would shoulder willingly.

Owing to a compositor's slip, an advertisement in a London paper read: "Capital wanted. A god, sound proposition, requires further capital." That compositor set better than he knew. Gods do require a lot of money, and their representatives are anything but absent-minded beggars.

The *Christian* has an article, "The Way Out from the Higher Criticism." Most Christians prefer "the old, old story" told in the old stupid way.

The Vicar of Westbury-on-Trym, Glos., during a church service, protested against the form of War memorial chosen for the district, saying that an obelisk was a heathen symbol. One of the choristers rose and said: "I protest against your statements without information and without knowledge," and then walked out of the building.

Pity the poor clergy! The late Miss M. J. Lawford, of Leighton Buzzard, left £500 to the Rev. D. H. Jones, whom she requested to conduct her funeral. The parishioners of Thorney, near Peterborough, have raised £2,000 for increasing the vicar's stipend. Canon Dyke, of Sheffield, died and left a miserable £15,421.

Oh, those journalists! Writing on the subject of "the new poor," the abject wretches who die of want in £80 a year houses, the yellowest of the yellow press remarks: "The case of the clergy is the saddest of all." This is very sad. Do these dear parsons disguise themselves as vagrants and sleep in the open spaces and under railway arches? Or is Crockford's *Clergy List* compiled by idealists?

Dean Inge says: "Religion remains as impotent as it was before the War." No wonder the orthodox considers he is "the gloomy dean."

The serious mining accident which recently happened at Levant, Cornwall, led the vicar of the place to reflect that during the War other places were bombed while Cornwall escaped. Therefore they should thank God "from the bottom of their hearts that they had been kept safe from those awful disasters." Apparently the Lord had meant to give Cornwall a turn so soon as he got through with the War. Nothing like trusting oneself to the Lord. He is bound to hit you sooner or later.

It is ancient jest that the English take their pleasures sadly, but for innocent irony the book, *Mr. Punch's History of the Great War*, is worth remark. It is as odd a combination as Ally Sloper's *History of the Twelve Disciples*.

After thirty-five years' service as Chaplain of the Cane Hill Lunatic Asylum, the Rev. C. J. Crawford has retired. He will now address the feeble-minded in ordinary places of worship.

The Lord's Day Observance Society had a bolt from the blue recently. A complaint was sent in that circulars, issued for the Society, had been addressed on Sunday on account of pressure of work. The matter was explained satisfactorily, and the management saved from damnation.

A South London "miracle" has been very quickly discounted. The case was quoted with others in an account of alleged cures at the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Bermondsey. It was claimed that a crippled boy's feet were cured through visiting a shrine; but it was subsequently ascertained that the boy was a patient at the Orthopædic Hospital, and had been operated on twice.

The Rev. J. C. Gibson, of Christ Church, Kennington, announces his intention of answering from the pulpit questions that may be put to him. Most parsons prefer the safety of the coward's castle.

A return shows that the population of the City of London, excluding the County Council area, is a very small one. In the City the Church of England has fifty-five rectors and vicars, who divide amongst them about £45,000 a year, without reckoning their parsonages. A large proportion of the resident population are Jews, policemen, and caretakers.

The Rev. Percy Dearmer has made the great discovery that nearly all churches are ugly. "It is beauty that is wanted," he adds, pathetically. Maybe that is true. But pious folk will keep on erecting thirty pound iron buildings, with four-and-sixpenny bells.

"Some priests' wages are lower than porters," declares that staunch Catholic, Sir W. Dunn. He should have addressed that remark to the Throne of Grace, and not to the pampered congregation at Rotherhithe, where he spoke.

What Secularists these Christians are! At Brotherhood meetings, and in churches and chapels, they discuss labour unrest, social problems, politics, cold weather, and colds in the head, but seldom a word about religion itself. Presumably, it is too much to expect them to bring an out-worn superstition up-to-date.

The Eton hare hunt, which was stopped during the War owing to the need of food economy, may be revived. Who was it said that the ideal of Eton College was "brawn, not brains"?

"Parsons Hit by the War" was a headline in a London paper. This sounds ironical, for the clergy did not hit anybody during the War.

One leader-writer in a daily paper, referring to the alleged poverty of the clergy, quotes Goldsmith's line about the village preacher who was "passing rich on forty pounds a year." It does not alter the fact that actual cases of starvation amongst Church of England parsons are as rare as penny eggs.

Be Content.

SAID the parson, "Be content;
Pay your tithes due, pay your rent;
They that earthly things despise
Shall have mansions in the skies.
Though your back with toll be bent,"
Said the parson, "be content."

Then the parson feasting went
With my lord who lives by rent;
And the parson laughed elate
For my lord has livings great.
They that earthly things revere
May get bishop's mansions here.

Be content! Be content!
Till your dreary life is spent.
Lowly live and lowly die.
All for mansions in the sky!
Castles here are much too rare,
All may have them—in the air!

THOMAS MAGUIRE.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—"Stick to the Free-thought of Bradlaugh, and fight the lot," was the prevailing note of the discussion which followed an eloquent address by Mr. A. D. Howell Smith on "Some Approaches to a New Religious Synthesis" on Sunday last. Although Mr. Howell Smith placed a very appealing ideal before North London Freethinkers, they remain unconvinced that Secularists, who work for the abolition of all religions, should attempt to instal yet another. May we ask for a good attendance on Sunday, November 9, when Mr. Cyril E. M. Joad will give an address on "Thought and Temperament"?—F. AKROYD.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 9, Edinburgh; November 16, South Shields; November 23, Leicester; November 30, Birmingham; December 7, Sheffield; December 21, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 16, Leicester; November 23, Manchester; December 7, Swansea; December 21, Glasgow; December 22, Paisley.

H. MEADOWS.—It would be easier to advise if you would let us know the particular course you feel inclined to follow. We were glad to see your article in the Press. It is stimulating, and will do good.

L. MAYLAND.—We have never issued a challenge to anyone in our life. Neither have we ever refused a challenge to debate when the opponent was worth spending time on. But we neither write, lecture, nor debate for the fun of the thing.

J. A. TOMKINS.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

H. YOUNG.—We do not think it advisable to keep the Sustentation Fund open for an indefinite period. It is bad enough to ask once a year. To ask all the year round is too much.

A. PALMER (Madeira).—Our Shop Manager is writing you. Pleased to learn that the attempt of your friend to convert you to Christianity has led to his becoming a Freethinker.

C. HARPUR.—We have a pamphlet in hand on another subject by Robert Arch, which we hope to soon publish. There is a Government Report on Prisons which should contain the information you desire.

DR. N. WILSON writes: "Accept my thanks for your two fine articles on Evolution. They emphasize points that are too often overlooked, and make one wish that you would write an exposition of the whole subject, with applications to current sociological and ethical questions." We may act on the suggestion when we have cleared other things out of the way.

C. HEATON.—Quite a good way of calling attention to the *Freethinker*. Thanks.

S. HUDSON.—Sorry to hear you have been unwell. Hope you are now quite recovered.

V. CAIMLAR.—We remember the occasion. Hope to meet you again in pleasanter circumstances.

W. THOMSON.—Knowledge Publishing Co., Ltd., 42 Bloomsbury Square, W.C.

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.

To-day (November 9) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Free Gardener's Hall, Leith Walk, Edinburgh. The morning meeting will be at 11.30 and the evening one at 6.30. We hope that our friends in the district will do their best to see that the meetings are well attended. There are plenty of heretics in Edinburgh, and room there for a very energetic propaganda. Next week Mr. Cohen pays a visit to South Shields. A larger hall than usual has been engaged, and the Shields friends seem determined to fill it. We hope they will succeed.

Mr. Cohen had splendid meetings at Glasgow on Sunday last. A full hall in the morning and a very crowded one in the evening, with keen interest during the lectures and a number of questions afterwards. The Branch is preparing for a strong forward movement in the West of Scotland, and we think the time is quite ripe for it. New members were made at Sunday's meetings, and there was a brisk sale of literature. Mr. Hales made a very able chairman at both meetings, and musical selections before the evening lecture was a pleasing feature of the proceedings.

We were pleased to see a letter in *The Times Literary Supplement* from Mr. Eden Phillpotts, protesting against the use of the expression "Tom Paine." Mr. Phillpotts well says: "We do not speak of Tom Huxley, or Tom Carlyle, or Tom de Quincey. Doubtless some subtle disparagement was originally implied; but is it not time that the author of *The Rights of Man* should receive the common courtesy paid to his peers?" That is well said, and we hope that the protest will have some effect. But while Paine was the author of *The Rights of Man*, he was also the author of *The Age of Reason*; and that, we fancy, made his offence unforgivable. So came the policy of disparagement, and references to Paine as crude, and coarse, and brutal, etc., which have now become a tradition with those who know nothing of Paine, and whose hatred of him is proportionate to their ignorance.

That is a very old and a present practice of religion. And it is illustrated in regard to this journal. The *Freethinker* has the honour of being called all the names that Paine is, or was, called. How true they are readers will know. Still, they do serve their purpose. They keep Christians from reading the *Freethinker*, and even succeed in getting some very timid heretics to repeat the cry. For people are terrible cowards, and if you give a movement or a paper a bad name, there are always plenty who will fight shy of it because of that. The policy is: Don't mention the *Freethinker*, or, if you must do so, refer to it as crude or coarse, and that will be certain to keep people off. Yet we venture to say that even the friends of the *Freethinker* would be surprised to discover into whose hands the paper goes week after week. For pure Freethought, we venture to say that no paper in this country has ever wielded the influence that does this journal. It has readers among all classes, from the Universities down to the man in the street. And its enemies know its power. Hence their hatred.

Apropos of the above, it will be remembered that last week we printed in the report of the discussion on the L.C.C. relating to the sale of literature in the parks, some remarks by Mr. Walter Reynolds in which he said that he voted for the prohibition of one issue of the *Freethinker* because it contained a paragraph which "no decent man could read in a public assembly." Now, we happen to know all the passages on which the action of the Parks Committee was based, and we have no hesitation in saying that anything more stupid—from even the standpoint of an intelligent Christian—it would be impossible to conceive. No passage of that kind was in any copy of the *Freethinker* under consideration. And the remark of Mr. Walter Reynolds was one of those vulgar slanders that have their birth in an essentially vulgar and not too clean mind. We challenge Mr. Reynolds to produce any passage from the *Freethinker* that answers the description used by him. One day, when the moment arrives, we may print all the passages to which exception was taken. At present we let the matter rest where it is.

But the one thing that comes out of the discussion is the hatred of retrogressive, and the fear of compromising, minds for a paper such as the *Freethinker*. They know that we cannot be either frightened or bribed, and these poor, stupid, people, who are mentally away back a couple of centuries or so, imagine we can be suppressed. One of the good things about the reactionary is that he will not learn, and is thus always exposing himself to defeat. The influence of the *Freethinker* is growing, growing, growing, and the bigots know it. But its influence is not a tithe of what we hope to

one day make it. The sun is rising, and all the bats and the owls are feeling uncomfortable.

To-day (Nov. 9) Mr. A. B. Moss is renewing his acquaintance with a Birmingham audience, after a lapse of some years. Mr. Moss is now one of the oldest speakers—in the sense of years of service—on the Freethought platform, and we hope that he will have the audience he deserves. He lectures in the Repertory Theatre, and that is an environment in which he will feel quite at home. Local "saints" will attend to the rest. Mr. Moss has been a member of one of the London Councils for twenty-five years, but has not this time sought re-election. He will, therefore, be able to devote the more time to Freethought. For our part, we desire to place on record the fact that during the time he has been on the Council he has never failed to keep his Freethought well in evidence whenever opportunity offered, and has never in the slightest degree concealed or minimized it in his public work. And that is the highest compliment we can pay him. So many forget their Freethought when they seek public support at the ballot-box.

Now that the propagandist season is with us we hope that our readers will not forget that extra thousand readers for which we asked some time ago. We have no fault to find with the increase in circulation, except that we want more in order to keep pace with the increasing cost of production. Paper is cheaper, but costs have advanced in other directions, and another substantial rise in wages is imminent. We cannot economise more than we have done, and the only other way is to increase sales. This can be done with the aid of our readers. And there should be no difficulty in getting copies when needed. The *Freethinker* is now taken by all the wholesale agents in England and Wales, and by Messrs. Menzies in Scotland.

"Freethinker" "Victory" Sustentation Fund.

A FULL statement of the reason for this Fund was given in the *Freethinker* for September 7. It is only necessary to say now that it owes its existence to the greatly increased cost of production resulting from the War. War conditions still prevail, but it is hoped that the present will be the last occasion on which it will be necessary to issue an appeal for this purpose. The future is cloudy, and no certainty can be felt in the present state of the country. But we are very hopeful. The circulation and the influence of the *Freethinker* are growing, and we are therefore encouraged to believe in the brighter days ahead. If we find we have been over sanguine, we shall not hesitate to say so. But one must needs be hopeful to carry on the fight for Freethought.

Eighth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged £304 9s. 6d. F. Cresswell, 10s. C. J., £3. Old Reader, 5s. T. Y. R., 10s. H. Young, 5s. A. Taylor, £1. Miss Black, 10s. Valentine Caimler, £1 1s. S. Hudson, £1. C. Heaton, 5s. N. A., 2s. 6d.

Per H. Black (Manchester Branch N. S. S.): Mr. and Mrs. Pulman, £1. G. Bailey, £1. D. Mapp, 12s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Monks, 10s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Black, 10s. 6d. Miss E. Williams, 10s. W. V., 10s. T. Storey, 6s. J. W. Drake, 6s. English, 5s. J. Booth, 5s. Mr. and Mrs. Emery, 5s. Freethinker, 5s. Mr. Ramsden, 2s. 6d. T. Greenwell, 2s. 6d. J. Smith, 2s. 6d. S. R., 1s. J. T., 1s. A. Baker, 5s.

Total, £319 18s.

Some acknowledgments are held over till next week.

Heaven's Methods of Publication.

FROM the legend of Heaven, as usually told, we may gather that the angels and saints in Super-cloudland only talk one language, and interpreters are not required. As soon, therefore, as a Czecho-slovak enters the pleasant grounds, of which St. Peter has the key, he is able to converse at ease with a Japanese or an aboriginal Patagonian. The tourist needs no Phrase-book, and the inhabitants never have to run (as I have seen school-children run in the class-rooms in the United States) to the dictionary on the desk. No language difficulty exists in Heaven.

On earth, things are different. We have no universal language in practice. To be sure, there is the admirable tongue, Esperanto, created out of the radical elements of Western and Central European tongues by the genius of Dr. Zamenhof. I learned it a year or two since, and would cordially commend it to the attention of the 16,000,000,000 of my fellow-citizens on the earth, if it were possible for this issue of the *Freethinker* to reach them all. Unfortunately, though Esperanto has already a considerable vogue, it is not yet available for publishing important news to everybody and everywhere. And here I may remark upon the singular fact that this excellent language was invented by a man of Jewish race, though I fancy Zamenhof was not an orthodox Hebrew in the faith of the Torah and the Synagogue. One might have expected Esperanto to be born from the brain of a Catholic or Baptist missionary—a Xavier or a Carey—who would have seen in it a more rapid means of propagating the Gospel on a world-basis.

But one would imagine a far better plan for promoting a saving faith for all mankind would have been to institute a universal language at the beginning of our history, and to have kept it free from corruption, and from the competition of rivals. If Heaven had messages to dispatch to earth, it was of the highest consequence to ensure that everybody should hear and understand. No doubt a Theological College could provide very many reasons for our unhappy variety of speech. Theological Colleges are maintained in order to explain what cannot be explained, and they do it with zeal and perseverance. But to those of us who live on another plane of intelligence than that of Theological Colleges, it is perplexing to learn that the supreme Yabweh confounded the speech of our fathers, and made it so hard a task for his messengers to carry his proclamations and special communications to the tribes and nations. If Heaven had decided to make its announcements known directly to each person, as happened in the days of Adam, Cain, and Noah, the public would have had no reason to question the ways of Providence. But, after the confusion of tongues at Babel, the method of direct manifesto from Super-cloudland was less and less employed. The New Testament notes a few survivals, as, for example, when two angels, in white clothes, appeared to the Eleven Apostles just after the Ascension of Jesus, and told them their Leader would return. Ten days later, at the Feast of Pentecost, a language-miracle did indeed take place, and the Christian disciples were able to relate the Gospel story to strangers who came from various foreign lands to Jerusalem.

As years went on, and the earth became more populated, and languages and dialects actually increased in number, the obstacles to publishing the tidings of salvation were seriously multiplied. America was colonized, perhaps from the Pacific islands and the east coasts of Asia. The American Indians, Aztecs, and Peruvians added to the total of the world's tongues,

Duty grows everywhere, like children, like grass.—Emerson.

and therefore added to the barriers between their salvation and themselves. When the Spaniards arrived, and (according to some accounts) were prepared to do their best to enrol the Indians in the Catholic Church, the language difficulty fatally intervened, and, like impatient teachers, the Spaniards beat their wretched pupils. In fact, they often massacred them.

In 1919, when the Christian evangel has existed for the best part of 2,000 years, its publication to the human race is still impeded by this extraordinary, and, one ventures to say, unnecessary difficulty. It is certainly true that the inconvenience of diverse languages is a Godsend to the British and Foreign Bible Society, which is enabled to give comfortable employment to troops of secretaries, translators, printers, and agents. Moreover, the public meetings convened by the Bible Society have a great use in sustaining, in the breasts of our British middle classes, feelings of superiority, mingled with pity, towards the Heathen. In this respect, the Society has rendered a contribution towards moulding our national character. It does occur to some of us, however, that it would have been better to arrange a plan of salvation which would have built up the British character without involving such serious delay in redeeming the Heathen.

Would it not have been a more rational method if, on the Day of Pentecost, some such language as Esperanto had been miraculously and officially established all over the inhabited world? The first Christian lecturers and plenipotentiaries would then have been able to train a band of converts, who, in turn, without any labour of learning a fresh vocabulary and grammar, would have passed the life-saving message on to other nations, and so, in a very short period, the publication would have been universal and complete. Church services in the Middle Ages would not then have been performed in a language (Latin) unknown to the common people. I grant that this would have deprived the clergy of the privilege of appearing more learned than the vulgar crowd; just as the modern lawyers (and, I rather think, many representatives of science) would have been obliged to state ideas and facts in a plain and simple manner, understandable by the Man in the Street. Both Law and Science, as well as Theology (the Queen of Sciences), have been heavily loaded with Latin and Greek pomposities. This style of talk has tended to make Theology, Law, and even Science, into the monopolies of small cliques, who earned large fees. But the welfare of the people ought to prevail over the delights of a few monopolists.

I affirm, then, that the confusion of tongues at Babel was a mistaken policy. I affirm that the opportunity of introducing a universal language on the Day of Pentecost was missed, with lamentable effects on the destinies of mankind; for larger masses are still unreached in consequence of difficulties of language. I do not blame the Lord of Heaven for the miscalculation and the failure. We know, from many accounts, that Heaven strongly resembles earth in its fashions, procedure, and even its imperfections. I suspect that Super-cloudland is plagued with a bureaucracy. Clerks who like an easy job, and officials who write lengthy notes to one another's Departments, are no doubt responsible. They have wasted the centuries. There is not the slightest sign of the globe becoming Christianized. And the creator of Esperanto was a Jew—a very noble Jew, indeed, but hardly the man to do the work of the Christian evangelists.

F. J. GOULD.

The veneration we have for many things entirely proceeds from their being carefully concealed.—*Goldsmith.*

Pages from Voltaire.

II.

Instructions of the Superior of the Capuchins at Ragusa to Friar Pediculoso on his setting out for the Holy Land.

(1768.)

(Continued from p. 541.)

XIII. WHEN from the kings you shall go on to the prophets, you will experience, and make us experience, ineffable joys. Don't forget the slap in the face which the prophet Zedekiah gave to the other prophet, Micaiah.¹ It was not merely a problematical slap in the face like that of the Jesuit of which Pascal tells us.² It was a slap in the face certified by the Holy Ghost, whereof we may deduce important consequences for the cheeks of the faithful.

When you are in the company of Ezekiel your soul will expand more than ever. You will behold at first (chapter i.) four animals with the face of a lion, of an ox, of an eagle, and of a man; a wheel with four faces like unto the water of the sea, each face having more eyes than Argus, and the four parts of the wheel going along at one time. You are aware that afterwards the prophet made a meal by God's order of a whole parchment volume. Be careful to ask all the prophets you may come across what was written in this volume. But that is not all; the Lord God laid hands on the prophet to bind him.³ Bound as he is, he traces the plan of Jerusalem on a tile; then he lies on his left side for three hundred and ninety days, and for forty days on his right side.

XIV. If you should breakfast with Ezekiel, dear brother in God, take care not to alter his text, as you have already done; it is one of the sins against the Holy Ghost. You have had the temerity to say that God commanded the prophet to bake his bread with cow-dung. It is much better than that. Read the *Vulgate Ezekiel* iv. 12: *Comedes illud, et stercore quod egreditur de homine operies illud in oculis eorum.* "Thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man in their sight." The prophet ate of the defiled bread and cried out: *Pouah! pouah! Domine deus meus, que anima mea non est polluta.* "Ah! Lord God, I have never tasted such a disgusting meal." And the Lord God accommodatingly made answer, "Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung."

Always preserve the text in its purity, dear brother, and alter not the smallest point.

If Ezekiel's meal was a trifle high in smell, the Israelites' dinner of which he tells us was rather cannibalistic⁴: "The fathers shall eat their sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers." You will notice that the fathers eat the children who are plump and tender; but that the children eat their hard-rinded parents; is this the new cookery?

XV. There is a great dispute among the learned over the thirty-ninth chapter of this same Ezekiel. It involves the difficulty of deciding whether it is to the Jews or to every beast of the field that the Lord promises that they shall drink the blood of princes. We believe that it is to both man and beast that the promise was made. Verse 17 undoubtedly refers to the beast of the field, but verses 18 and 19, and following, refer to the Jews: "Ye shall be filled at my table with horses..... and mighty men." They eat not only the horse, like the Scythians in the army of the Persian king, but the riders also, like worthy Jews; therefore what goes before refers to them also. You will see the use of intelligence in the study of Holy Writ.

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 24.

² Ezekiel iii.

³ *Lettres provinciales* (xix.).

⁴ Ezekiel v. 10.

XVI. The passages in Ezekiel that are most essential, the most consistent with public morality and virtue, the most apt to inspire modesty in young women, are those where the Lord speaks about Aholah and her sister Aholibah. You cannot too often repeat these admirable passages.

The Lord said to Aholah:—

Thou has increased and waxen great, thy breasts are fashioned, thine hair is grown¹ (*Grandis effecta es, ubera tua intumuerunt, pilus tuus germinavit*). Behold thy time of love was come. I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skins, and girded thee about with fine linen and with silk. And I put a jewel on thy forehead and earrings in thine earsBut thou didst trust in thy beauty and played the harlot because of thine own renown and pourest out thy fornications on every one that passed by.....(*Ædificasti tibi lupanar!*) Thou hast built unto thee an eminent place.....Thou givest gifts to all thy lovers and hirest them.² *Omnibus meretricibus dantur mercedes, tu autem dedisti mercedes cunctis amatoribus tuis, et seq.,* therefore thou art contrary from other women, etc.

Her sister, Aholibah, was still more corrupt³: "She doted upon her paramours whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses: (*Et insanivit libidine super concubitum eorum quorum carnes sunt ut carnes asinorum, et sicut fluxus eorum fluxus eorum.*)" The term for seed is much more expressive in the Hebrew. We are not certain that we ought not to render it by a forcible expression which is used at court, by the ladies, on certain occasions. That is a point we leave wholly to your discretion.

After a candid examination of these fine passages, we advise you to pass lightly over Jeremiah who ran stark naked through Jerusalem harnessed with a pack saddle;⁴ but we ask you not to pass over in silence the prophet Hosea whom the Lord God commanded to take to wife one of the loose women of the city⁵ for a reason which may seem frivolous to you. Some time afterwards the Lord God commanded him to love an adulteress, and he bought her for fifteen pieces of silver and an half homer of barley.⁶

Nothing could be better adapted, our dear brother, to form the minds and hearts of young people than learned commentaries on these texts. Do not omit to give the value of the fifteen pieces of silver given to the lady, we take it to be equal to seven-and-a-half francs; as you know, we Capuchins buy in a much cheaper market.

Englished by GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Correspondence.

TRADING MISSIONARIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sending you by this mail a copy of *On Guard*, from which you will see the agitation afoot with regard to German Missions. It is, like all the other correspondence and articles on the subject, informative from our own particular Freethought point of view.

With the particular animus against the Germans I am not concerned. What interests me, and I feel sure will interest you also, is the trading and exploitation of the native under the guise of religion. The Bible is used as a booster for business—so much so that all missions are alike in this respect.

Recently I trekked for three months in the low country, and came across several flourishing Swiss Missions, the members of which arrived among the natives penniless. Religion, clothed in zeal and humility, secured from the

natives the erection of huts for the missionaries, besides gifts of food, etc. So soon as the latter acquired a working knowledge of the language, the transition from spiritual servants for the honour and glory of God into masters and merchants for personal gain took place. The Gospel was preached for profit, and salvation sold for monkey-nuts or other produce.

The native in charge of my wagon told me that his missionary levied on him a number of bags—I think one-fifth—of monkey-nuts, and also 10s. in gold, per annum. The native kicked at the 10s. The missionary, however, was determined on getting the monkey-nuts, so told the native: "No monkey-nuts, no Jesus."

I would much have preferred that these missions were attacked on their merits, and not partaken of a purely anti-German character, because all these inland missions are seen on the same lines, and are a disgrace to those who promote them, however conscientious they may be in their contributions, in contradistinction to the missionaries themselves, who are one-eyed apostles of profit, open and unashamed.

With the best of wishes that you may long live to promote the best of all causes in the brilliant manner that you are now doing.

E. P. BEER (South Africa).

[The letter which our correspondent cites states that the missions are so many trading stations, owning many thousands of acres of land, and utilizing the religious object as a means of exploiting native labour. In the letter German missions are selected as examples, but there is no reason for believing that, in many cases, there is any distinction between German and other missions. Only a day or two ago we had a long letter from a correspondent in the New Hebrides pointing to the trading concerns carried on by the Presbyterian missions there. In trade or at the back of the trader is true of many missions, and it is highly significant that missionary activity is always greatest where the commercial possibilities are most obvious. It is the religious analogue of the desire of this and other countries to carry the blessings of civilization where oil, and rubber, and coal, etc., abound. The dividends express only the Lord's blessing on the enterprise.—EDITOR.]

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.

SIR,—Just a few lines on your recent charges lodged against Socialists and the Socialist Party.

In the first place, I observe a large proportion of your pamphlet is taken up in criticizing the hypocritical attitude of Ramsay Macdonald in regard to Religion and Socialism, but I very seriously question whether Macdonald can be regarded as a Socialist at all. The founders of Socialism have always declared as part and parcel of their system of Society the "Class War," the "Social Revolution," and the "Materialist Conception of History." These Socialist principles (which, being a critic of Socialists, you will of course thoroughly understand) were laid down by Marx and Engels, and accepted as part of Socialist principle by the Liebknechts, Bebel, Bonger, Lassalle, Larfargue, and at the present day by all Socialist parties all over the world. Ramsay Macdonald accepts neither of these principles; so I fail to see where you are even justified in representing him either as a typical Socialist or in any way truly representing their ideas. In fact, practically all these apologists for compromise between Religion and Socialism might be subject to the same criticism. The only three Socialist parties in England to-day—i.e., the B.S.P., the I.L.P., and the S.P.G.B.—are all three Marxian, and therefore definitely Materialist; so I arrive at the conclusion that your criticism is only effective against sham "Socialists" and "Labour Fakirs," and not at all applicable to the Socialists who maintain the Socialist principles of Marx and Engels.

But now I will change my tactics from defence to attack. The Socialist maintains that it is only by the establishment of a system of Society based on the common ownership of the means of distribution, manufacture, and exchange that the human race can be emancipated from the thousand and one social evils and oppression inherent in all societies based on the private ownership of property. That private ownership, in turn giving rise to the establishment of a privileged class, that class, by controlling political machinery at hand lives by exploiting the labour of the toiling majority, and this creates what the Socialist calls "The Class War" from which proceed all "Strikes" and social discontent. The Socialists

¹ Ezekiel xvi. 7.

² Ezekiel xvi. 33.

³ *Ibid.*, xxiii. 11.

Jeremiah, xxvii. 2.

⁴ Hosea i.

⁶ Hosea iii.

have thrown over religion as "the opium of the people," they have identified their cause as *the* cause of the people, they are the avowed enemy of hypocrisy whether religious or temporal, and they have consistently maintained the overthrow of the present system of society as the *only* means of salvation for the people. The Secularist is always saying: "help me kill religion first," but why should not the Socialist say to the Secularist: "come and help me destroy the vampire from which not only the *power* of religion but of which ALL social evils proceed. And, indeed, what guarantee have we that if the world became Secularist to-morrow that the condition of the working classes would thereby improve.

R. F. TURNEY.

[We have been compelled to abbreviate Mr. Turney's letter, but we have not interfered with his argument. For ourselves we need only point out that what we are concerned with here, and in our pamphlet, is to expose the fallacy that Socialism is in any way religious or connected with religion. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald is only one of a crowd of leading Socialists who play to the Churches in this way. For the rest, Mr. Turney agrees with us that religion is used to blind men to their real interests in life. But he says, if we awaken them to their real interests, religion will die. "If." There is much virtue in that "if." For our part, it seems plain that the way to remove blindness is to restore sight. And we really don't see how working men, or others, will realize their needs until the blinkers of religion are taken off.—EDITOR.]

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCT 30.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Moss, Neate, Palmer, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Miss Pitcher, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed. The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Birmingham, Edinburgh, Falkirk, South London, Swansea and the Parent Society (17 in all).

The report of the Propagandist Committee Meeting was received and their various suggestions adopted. Mr. Cohen was asked to draw attention to these through the medium of the *Freethinker*.

Reference was made to the report in the current number of the *Freethinker* of the services rendered to the Committee of Protest against Prohibition of Sales of Literature in the L.C.C. Parks by Mr. Harry Snell on the occasion of the recent report of the L.C.C. Parks Committee on these sales. It was resolved that the thanks of the Executive be made to Mr. Snell for his splendid defence.

It was reported that, despite the unfavourable weather, the experiment of afternoon lectures at South Place had resulted in three meetings which decidedly warranted the attempt.

Instructions were given for arrangements to be made for a course of lectures at Stratford Town Hall during January, and the Secretary requested to make enquiries as to other suitable halls.

Other matters of minor importance having been dealt with the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

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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, near Edgware Road): 8, E. C. Saphin, "The Founding of the Christian Church."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Cyril E. M. Joad, "Thought and Temperament."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. C. Ratcliffe, "The Mission of Secularism a Substitute for Religion."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, H. W. Nevinson, "Ireland Now."

OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Ratcliffe, Saphin, Baker, and Dales.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. A. B. Moss.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Free Gardener's Hall, Leith Walk): Mr. C. Cohen, 11.30, "Why Men Believe in God"; 6.30, "Christianity, the Army, and the Nation."

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's Rooms): Members meet every Sunday at 6.30.

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