

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

The Ways of God.

According to the Rev. Arthur Pringle, there are a great many Pagan survivals in Christianity. The discovery is made rather late in the day; but for the moment we are rather more concerned with that gentleman's way of enforcing his statement. It seems that during the War a soldier had just torn a leaf out of his Bible to use for shaving. Immediately after he was shot dead, and as he fell he said, "That's just like God." The incident may be true or false; but we feel certain that had God killed all who used their Bibles for other than devotional purposes, the German troops would have had a walk-over. Those on India paper were often used for cigarette-papers, and those on stouter material were put to uses about which we had better not speak. The curious thing is that Mr. Pringle thinks the view that God killed those who offended him is a Pagan view. On the contrary, we venture to say that it is most Christian in character. Indeed, if Mr. Pringle will turn to the fifth chapter of Acts, he will find the story there of two persons, a man and his wife, who were struck dead for trying to swindle the apostles. And is not Christian history full of similar stories? What of the "infidels" who have been struck dead for blasphemy? Of the catastrophes that have been sent on man because of his wickedness? Was not the European War itself declared from scores of pulpits to be the punishment of God on man because of his sins? And really, if there is a God, he ought to be doing something. At a time when there is an increasing demand that everyone shall earn his or her living, it is not to be expected that a God who does nothing at all will maintain his popularity. A God who went about punishing the blasphemer would at least be a God who attended to his own business. But a God who does not even do that becomes a negligible quantity in the affairs of men.

* * *

Christians and Pagans.

Of course, much of Christianity is Pagan—in the sense that its teachings, and its dogmas, and its symbols belonged to the pre-Christian religions long before they were ever re-named Christian. Indeed, if one were to take away from Christianity all that it borrowed from other creeds, what remained would not be worth bothering about. Virgins conceived god-begotten children

long before Jesus Christ is said to have been born. Holy men worked miracles, were tempted by evil spirits, cured the sick by faith, made the blind see, demi-gods were crucified and raised again from the dead, long before the world had a version of these things from the Christian Church. People taught brotherhood and love before the Christians were heard of, and they robbed and lied and murdered as freely as Christians have done throughout their history. These things are all Pagan, they are Christian, they are religious. Even the art of torturing in order to induce a profession of faith, and of burning the unbeliever as an act of homage to God, is not quite Christian in origin; although, to give Christianity its due, it developed this side of religious activity, and applied it with a thoroughgoing and ruthless universality that none of the Pagan religions ever dreamed of. In only one thing could it honestly be claimed that Christianity brought a new feature into religious life, and that is the extent to which it developed the art of deliberate lying in connection with the perpetuation of belief. Nothing like the disregard for truth even among the best, or the deliberate forging and lying among the worst, that is found in the Christian Church, was to be seen in "Pagan" times. It forged documents and falsified records. It lied about friends and foes with heroic impartiality—even though with different aims. It made slander and reckless statement so common in connection with religious advocacy that their presence in the pulpit has ceased to excite comment. Certainly there are some original features about Christianity, but they are not those upon which emphasis is usually placed.

* * *

Christianity and Savagism.

A well-known author wrote us the other day that in his opinion there was an intellectual dishonesty which Christians seemed to acquire with their earliest years—which numbers of them never outgrew. That, we fancy, will become a commonplace with people in the future, as it is the considered opinion with some of our clearest thinkers to-day. And this cant of the Pagan elements in Christianity is a case in point. For, clearly, Christianity is not more moral, nor more sensible, nor more liberal than were the Pagan religions. And it is certainly not more peaceful. Pagan Rome could keep the peace of the world with an army of no more than 400,000 men. Christian Europe would utilize almost that number at a holiday review, and we have lately seen the spectacle of five million men from the British Empire alone take the field against the most Christian country in Europe—with the exception of Spain—a country which owes its decline to the prevalence of the Christian religion. To say that the Christian religion has Pagan elements in it is one thing. That is only part of the wider statement that all religion comes to us from the past. Indeed, if we probe the matter to the bottom the true parent of all religion is the savage, and if we take out his contribution there is nothing left in religion that anyone need bother about. But to say that

there are Pagan elements in Christianity, with the assumption that these are the things that bring religion into disrepute, and that if these are removed there is some kind of a "pure religion" left, is an expression of that intellectual dishonesty which Christianity seldom fails to develop in its supporters. Take away Paganism and savagery from Christianity and what is left is a complete blank. Between enlightened thought that is really honest, and Christianity, there can be no commerce. You may disguise the primitive medicine man in the robe of the modern priest, or the primitive nature rituals in the stories of the birth, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, or the magic working and miracles of the savage in the petitions of the modern devotee, but a very little thought enables one to pierce the disguise. And then it is not a question of discarding the Pagan elements and retaining the rest. When we have given up all that knowledge and honesty call upon us to give up, there is nothing left. We have nothing but the history of a delusion, the memory of a mistake.

Loss or Gain.

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But let us be just to the Pagans. Christian misrepresentation, with its control of education and of the instruments of publicity, has set on foot the legend that whatever be its faults the Christian religion represented an advance on the religions of the Pagan world. But that is simply not true. The conquest of the Christian represented an all-round triumph of reaction and retrogression. It carried the world, not forward, but backward. It enthroned intolerance where tolerance had reigned. It glorified ignorance where knowledge had been appraised at high value. Can anyone seriously maintain that the Christian stories of an after life, with their pantomimic heaven and brutal hell, were really an advance on the conception of the future life? Was the Christian pantheon, with its emasculated and anæmic saints, a genuine improvement on the pantheon of the Pagan world? At the side of the old Greek gods, with their representations of physical strength and beauty, the pain-drawn figure of Jesus shows to but small advantage. Was the world really better for the exchange? What benefit had the world in dethroning the Pagan philosopher and enthroning the Christian theologian? It seems a poor exchange to swap Plato for Tertullian or Socrates for Torquemada. Take the Pagan writers, even on such questions as the existence of God or of the soul, and you have wise men struggling with an obvious absurdity. Take the Christian writers who succeeded them—and to make the comparison fair, and deadly, take them on the same topics—and you have a crowd of foolish fanatics making the absurdity the more apparent by their own incurable folly. No one who was not a monk or a fool would have preferred to live in Europe for the first thousand years after the establishment of Christianity than to have lived in the Rome of the Antonines or the Athens of Socrates.

The Cant of Peace.

* * *

Even on a topic that we have all felt keenly of late, that of peace and war, the Pagan world will compare well with the Christian one that succeeded it. We are within a few days of the old Pagan festival of Christmas, and the Churches will be filled with all the usual talk of peace on earth and good will to men. But when has Christianity ever brought this about? Instead of wars becoming more infrequent under Christian rule they have become chronic. Christian countries have never failed to make the profession of the soldier the most honoured, without humanizing the occupation or diminishing the occasions for its exercise. And we have just finished (?) the largest and most brutal War

in all history without any organized effort on the part of the Christian Churches to either minimize its ferocity or to avert the severity of its consequences. We have seen the wholesale starvation of a people deliberately adopted as one of the weapons by which the conquering nations decide to work their will. We see poison gas and the wholesale bombing of defenceless villages adopted as regular methods of warfare. We see the Christian nations declaring that their armies must be kept up and ready, in spite of the fact that if the Christian nations of the world could trust each other wars would be practically impossible. The world will hear as much this Christmas as ever of the "Christian message of Peace on earth and good will to all men," but, fortunately, a much larger number than usual when they see what the world has become under Christian auspices, will know the hollowness of this century-old cant.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man."

A REPLY TO THE "FREETHINKER."

SUCH was the title of an address delivered before the St. Matthew's Church Men's Meeting at Dyson Road, Forest Gate, on Sunday, November 30. The speaker was the Rev. W. R. Matthews, M.A., B.D., Dean of King's College, London. The discourse consisted of a courteous criticism of my article on the same subject which appeared in this journal for September 21. It would have been fairer to all concerned had the reverend gentleman seen fit to reply to me in the *Freethinker*, for obviously there could have been but few in his audience who had either seen or even heard of the article criticized. Through the kindness of Mr. Henry C. White, who took the address down in shorthand, I have had the opportunity of reading it. While cordially thanking Mr. Matthews for the courteous tone of his criticism, I am impelled, with equal courtesy I hope, to answer him.

Mr. Matthews began by calling attention to the "outstanding fact that there is only one portion of the world that seems to be able to progress." He did not inform his hearers what exactly he meant by progress; but he did say that "it is a remarkable thing that science, philosophy, and the arts have developed in the European nations only." Assuming, for argument's sake, the accuracy of that statement, I beg to point out that it in no wise supports the claim that progress has been due to the influence of religion, because it is an incontrovertible fact that for many centuries the Christian Church violently opposed all scientific progress, invariably persecuted and often put to death all progressive thinkers, and held the fine arts in severe bondage to itself. Does the reverend gentleman really believe that there was any genuine progress made in any direction during the Middle Ages when the Church was absolutely supreme? Did the eminent Saint Bernard of Clairvaux make for progress when he hounded to death such moderate advocates of the claims of reason as Peter Abelard and Arnold of Brescia? Was the Spanish Inquisition an efficient instrument of progress? Why, the only civilization worthy of mention in Europe during the Middle Ages was the creation of the Arabs, who were dominated, not by religion, but by their love of ancient Greek and Roman learning; and who, during their comparatively brief rule in Spain, were converting that interesting land into a place fit for heroes to live in. And why were these heroic lovers of wisdom so ruthlessly driven out of Spain by the Christian Church, if not for the reason that they favoured and worked hard for progress? Besides,

is not Mr. Matthews aware that European progress, on any large comprehensive scale, began, not under the inspiration of religion, but as the result of the revival of letters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries?

There are a few matters of mere opinion on which I am obliged to disagree with Mr. Matthew. In Judaism and in primitive Greek religion it was a common belief that rewards and punishments were to be administered in this world. Inasmuch as that teaching seemed to be contradicted by the facts of life, the centre of gravity was very slowly shifted from this world to the next. This idea is beautifully handled by Professor Gilbert Murray in his masterpiece, *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, particularly in the lecture entitled "The Failure of Nerve." The older religions of the Western world were being considerably modified, and, in some instances, almost completely displaced by the Oriental cults, whose main emphasis was laid on the individual soul and its need of salvation through "a mystic union with a dying and resurrected Saviour-God, an Osiris, an Adonis, an Attis, a Mythra." There was thus introduced a radical change of emphasis. In the first place, it was a well-nigh universal conviction that the end of this world was close at hand. There are divines not a few who hold the view that the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, preached by the Gospel Jesus, was not intended for this vale of tears at all, but for some heavenly sphere beyond the stars, and that the legislation for it in the Sermon on the Mount is of such a character as to make it utterly unsuitable for earthly existence. Taking the New Testament, as a whole, the contention of those divines has the appearance of being well founded. Paul and John speak of the world as an object of contempt and hatred. To love both it and the Father at one and the same time is declared to be wholly impossible. As the Dean of St. Paul's said at the last Church Congress, Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of "other worldliness." In the hymns and liturgies of most of the Churches, the same sentiment finds oft-repeated expression. Christianity reminds us that "brief life is *here* our portion," that sorrow and care and even joy are short-lived, the life that endures being *there*. I am convinced that Mr. Matthews is radically mistaken in thinking that the Gospel Jesus taught anything about human nature as such. There is nothing in the record to show that he possessed any knowledge whatever about the world outside Palestine. The teaching of the orthodox Church throughout the ages has been that humanity is incapable of improvement without being wrought upon by supernatural power. It must undergo a second, supernatural birth before it can rise in the scale of excellence and worth, and Christianity has always claimed to be the only life-giving and life-nourishing power in existence.

It is perfectly true that Augustine was a man of genius, and wrote a few great books; but his City of God, like the Kingdom of God, was merely an interesting dream, which has never come true, and the same thing, on a grander scale, is true of Dante, whose conception of Church and State as the two departments of the Divine government of the world, met its only possible doom. My contention is that the Kingdom of God is an idea that has never found embodiment in human history. Augustine did much to mould the theology of the Church, but the Church and its theology have been and are but a dead weight in society, a veritable hindrance to progress. Why has Spain, not only stood still, but seriously retrograded? It was in the name of God and Christ that it expelled the progressive Moors and the non-Christian Jews; and that Christian country has been losing ground ever since. Russia, until quite lately, was a profoundly Christian, and, at the same time, the most

backward country in the world—a land groaning under the fear of the Lord, and reeking with all sorts of unspeakable horrors; would Mr. Matthews call Russia a country of progress? Speaking broadly, history bears witness to the truth that most of our genuine European progress has been made in defiance of the Church and its hierarchy. The Church justified slavery in Great Britain and America until public opinion became too strong for it to continue its defence of it any longer. Some of the most prominent Abolitionists in the United States were bitterly denounced from the pulpit as abettors of Atheism.

In reality what Mr. Matthews presented his audience with was, as one who was present remarks, a series of "old fallacies dressed up anew." This becomes more evident still in the second part of his address, which commences with the entirely true statement that "if we are going to make any real progress it must be founded on a moral basis." That is frankly admitted by all Secularists. After making so excellent a start, the reverend gentleman goes astray in the very next sentence, which is as follows: "The fundamental thing about man is not that he is an animal, but that he has a mind, and unless you can satisfy man's higher mind you cannot make any progress at all—you may, on the contrary, with all your inventions, have fallen back into a worse state than that of barbarism." But what has that, if true, to do with man's alleged need of supernaturalism, or even with placing progress on a moral basis? More irrelevant still is "what we are going to say to everybody":—

You are going to give up something which you have hitherto considered a private right, to subordinate your personal interests to the larger good of the brotherhood of humanity. We are trying to get you to merge and subordinate your private interests into the good of the whole.

I do not recognize any fundamental difference between man and the animals. I do not believe that man possesses anything of which there is no trace in the ant-heap and the bee-hive. Surely, Mr. Matthews does not mean to say that man is the only being on earth that thinks; if he does not, what is the force of the statement that the fundamental thing about man is that he has a mind? To me it is a meaningless statement, and is certainly not true. Most animals have a distinctly psychological life, and as soon as gregariousness appears life begins to be placed on a moral foundation. The social instinct in the ant and the bee rests on an essentially moral basis. Mr. Matthew's great mistake is that he treats morality as if it were not in existence until man appeared on the scene.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be concluded.)

The educated wealthy minority, having freed themselves from the Church hypnotism, believe in nothing at all, and look upon every faith as an absurdity, or as merely a useful means of keeping the masses in subjection. The immense, poor, uneducated majority—consisting of people who, with few exceptions, are really sincere—being still under the hypnotism of the Church, think they believe in what is suggested to them as a faith, although it is not really a faith, for instead of elucidating to man his position in the world it only darkens it. This situation, and the relations of the non-believing, insincere minority to the hypnotized majority, are the conditions which shape the life of our so-called Christian world. And this life—both of the minority which holds in its hands the means of hypnotization, and of the hypnotized majority—is terrible, both on account of the cruelty and immorality of the ruling classes, and of the crushed and stupefied condition of the great working masses.

—Tolstoy.

A Saucy and Spurious "Science."

Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour?

—Shakespeare, "Much Ado About Nothing."

Thus do I make my fool my purse."

—Shakespeare, "Othello."

SCIENCE and religion have ever been deadly enemies. Scientific teaching and investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty, has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organization of Priestcraft has always been brought to bear against science on the ground that it is a solvent of faith. This resistance of the various Churches of Christ to the prevalent opinions of scientists has no clear claim to our respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory were all in turn received with contempt in the same venerable quarter, we are inclined to attribute that resistance, not to the weakness of the scientists' arguments, but to the priestly dislike of knowledge.

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of God, and the early chemists were regarded as agents of the Devil. Physiology and medicine were opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were also opposed by the clergy. They resented inquiry, preferring that their dupes should explain natural phenomena by mythological invention.

After these many centuries of opposition, a lady attempted to build a golden bridge between religion and science. As the lady hailed from the land of tall buildings and tall statements, the new evangel was not hid under a bushel. It was spread abroad in the approved methods of patent medicine advertising, and to-day the Gospel of Mrs. Eddy bids fair to rival the older evangel of Jesus Christ. The newest of new Bibles, *Christian Science: A Key to the Scriptures*, of which the American Lady-Saviour was the author, appeared in 1866, and is now in its two hundredth edition, and the cult is everywhere growing in popularity.

The new evangel has been received by tens of thousands of half-educated religious people, reverent of learning, quite unable to discriminate it from its adulterated imitation. Mary Eddy, quite as indiscriminating as any of her readers, was equipped admirably by a nodding acquaintance with theology, metaphysics, and a pseudo-scientific vocabulary, and the gift of a tenacious memory, to give them the thing they longed for. One of her biographers says that Mrs. Eddy's "task was to re-Christian the verities." This beautiful nonsense means in effect that the Lady-Saviour uses common terms with an uncommon meaning, a habit which is sometimes associated with patients in mental institutions.

Mrs. Eddy was brought up in an atmosphere of Transatlantic piety, and, naturally, the Bible was her text-book; but she reads into the old work new meanings. This new rendering is Christian Science. She says:—

God I called Immortal Mind. That which sins, suffers, and dies, I called Mortal Mind. The physical senses, or sensuous nature, I called Error and Shadow. Soul I denominated Substance, because Soul alone is truly substantial. God I characterized as Individual-Entity; but His corporeality I denied.

The last sentence shows that Mary Eddy was not a Christian. When she says that "soul alone is truly substantial," she is saying that black is white, and that a square is a circle. Such paradoxes are startling, but in Christian Science they are as common as "leaves in Vallombrosa."

Words are Mary Eddy's stock-in-trade. Her pomp of court and her priesthood are verbosity—mere words. There are five hundred pages of polysyllabic words in her book. To a reader familiar with the sober use of scientific terms, her explanations and definitions are delirious jargon. They are the bastard offspring of a riotous imagination playing, in the light of half-grasped ideas from the scientists, upon resonant words. For example, here is a—definition:—

Matter, mythology, mortality; another name for mortal mind; illusion, intelligence, substance, and life in non-intelligence and mortality; life resulting in death, and death in life; sensation in the sensationless; mind originating in matter; the opposite of truth; the opposite of God; that of which immortal mind takes no cognisance; that which mortal mind sees, feels, tastes, and smells in belief.

The author of this evangel from Earlswood, this farrago of nonsense, has been hailed appropriately as a teacher "second only to Jesus Christ." It was only proper, therefore, that she should regard matter, mythology, and mortality as synonymous. Even the Master, who considered a "whale" was a "fish," could hardly improve upon this colossal blunder.

The topsy-turvy nature of the new evangel is shown by another quotation from the divine revelation:—

The metaphysics of Christian Science prove the rule by inversion.

For example:—

There is no pain in truth, and there is no truth in pain.

Yet Mary Eddy, with pain, regrets that ontology receives less attention than physiology, and relates the following improving anecdote, worthy of the saucy and audacious writers of the Holy Bible:—

It is related that a father, anxious to try such an experiment, plunged his infant baby, only a few hours old, into water for several minutes, and repeated this operation daily, until the child could remain under water twenty minutes, moving and playing without harm like a fish. Parents should remember this, and so learn how to develop their children properly on dry land.

Truly, a fishy story! It is as believable as the yarn of Jonah and the Whale. What, in the name of common sense, did the Lady-Saviour suppose ontology to mean? It is fitting that such a teacher should give her disciples a form of prayer and a confession of faith which bears the same resemblance to the "Lord's Prayer" that margarine does to butter. Observe, the high-priestess of the new faith strutted in borrowed plumes, and charged three hundred dollars for a dozen lessons. No American oil-king, no beef-trust baron, no provision profiteer, ever kept a keener eye or a tighter fist on money—the only material thing in existence which Christian Science allows to be real. She never allowed a dollar that had no friends to get by her alive. In short, Mary Eddy was a religious "boss" like General Booth the first.

We set out in a spirit of inquiry to make a serious examination of Mary Eddy's claims. But this non-sensual system makes us tired; for of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books which have emanated from the half-crazy brains of religious maniacs, this book is one of the worst. It is more incoherent than the Christian Bible. Beside it Joe Smith's *Book of Mormon* is a plain unvarnished tale; and the ravings of Joanna Southcott but simple prose. The *Forty Coming Wonders* of Prophet Baxter is shrinking modesty compared with the impudent effusion of Mary Eddy. This Yankee Bible takes the breath away, and makes the head swim. No other less colloquial phrase can so aptly

describe the effects of claims so far from sanity. One reels back from the insane heights of Christian "science" to the simplicity of a rational system such as Secularism, suited to the requirements of the age, and freed from ignorance and superstition.

MIMNERMUS.

Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites!

ACCORDING to Dr. Dillon, the Great War has "made the world safe for Hypocrisy." This is certainly true in the sense that it has made the world *unsafe* for the honest expression of opinion on many subjects; but it would seem also to have made the barefaced practice of hypocrisy more common and less liable to challenge. The greatest instance of this on record is the new manifestation of the cupidity of the clergy. Formerly these saintly souls made profession of a disinterested zeal for religion, and endeavoured to appear as if they followed their Master out of pure love when they heard his voice crying to them, "Give all to the poor and follow me." True it is that in private they sometimes expressed themselves otherwise. I will never forget the remark made to me by a clergyman in the South of Scotland in reply to my deploring the existence of a large and well-filled prison there. "Weel, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good," he said; "if there were no prison, there would be no prison chaplain: and I am prison chaplain!" Publicly, however, the meek and lowly attitude prevailed. Now, in these changed times, the Dark Forces are voicing their claims with the zeal and insistence of a trade union agitator. In the Diocese of Carlisle they have made a corporate demand for "a living wage of £400 or £500 a year": £8 or £10 per week. In that same diocese they denounced the Railwaymen for demanding £3 per week, and one zealous clergyman "blacklegged" at the railway fitting shops. The citizens showed their appreciation of this truly Christian attitude by mobbing the reverend gentleman, who unfortunately escaped (under police protection) with slight injuries, mostly sartorial. But the whole country is witnessing this clerical clamour for greatly increased pay, for pay much in excess of that claimed by the workers; and this excess is "justified" by the tacit or spoken assumption that the clergy *must* be supported in large houses, with servants, conveyances, libraries, and all the accessories of the well-to-do. One of their number recently wrote to the *Times* a whining complaint that he had been forced to dismiss his gardener and coachman, and to do with two indoor servants only. Truly a man of sorrows, a worthy follower of that Son of Man who had not where to lay his head! As the Rev. J. B. Cochran truly remarked in addressing a congress of clergymen in the South of Scotland, during a discussion of the stipend question, "Religion can't be run on a sentimental basis; it must be run on a business one!"

One more very barefaced instance of clerical materialism occurred at Barrow-in-Furness this week. The vicar of St. Luke's, whose church and vicarage, by the way, are within a few hundred yards of the workhouse, made a public statement as to the chaplaincy of that institution, which has roused the ire of the Board of Guardians. "Nobody wants the responsibility of such a position," he said, "not to mention the meagre emoluments attached thereto." Now, the Board of Guardians point out that the reverend gentleman receives £30 for the chaplaincy, and only puts in half-an-hour on Sunday morning, and, occasionally, half-an-hour during the week. One speaker remarked that he ought to feel glad of the opportunity of ministering to the unfortunate, the lonely, and the aged poor, even without pay, instead of "grous-

ing" and backing out of it for financial reasons. The Board agreed to write demanding an explanation from this Reverend Father-in-God.

It may be suggested that this outspoken selfishness is really an advance towards honesty. But I cannot admit of men who continue to teach the religion of Jesus, to preach with pious upturned eye the very doctrines which they openly repudiate in their daily lives. What is to be said of a priest of the religion of peace who preaches the precept of turning the other cheek to the smiter, and also presides at militarist meetings, or acts as a recruiting-agent, first obtaining exemption for himself? Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Preachers of renunciation and "other worldliness," whose worldliness can scandalize a Board of Guardians! With the intellectual dishonesty of a Jesuit these men teach doctrines they neither believe nor act upon, and without even the Jesuit's excuse that he acts for the glory of the Church alone, still more without the Jesuits' readiness to sacrifice himself for that end. Self-seekers, commercial-minded buyers, and sellers of truth, what shall be said of them? Only the words of Voltaire fit our need: "destroy the Infamous!"

H. TRUCKELL.

Acid Drops.

We suppose size impresses some people. Evidently most of our "spiritual" guides are of this opinion, for they are arranging to publish the largest Bible in the world. It is to be hand-written throughout, and all sorts of celebrities will write a verse or two of it. The King and Queen will head the list. The Bible, when finished, will be over five feet in height, and three-and-a-half feet wide. It is then to be placed on show, and will be taken to "the Overseas Dominions as a great witness to the word of God." That will be enough for many. For ourselves, we cannot see that a lie is the more convincing because it measures five feet instead of six inches, or that nonsense becomes sense if you enlarge it. Still, we can quite imagine some people feeling that a book that size *must* be good. And of such is the kingdom of heaven.

The Bishop of London says he has known several cases of people who have been driven out of their minds through Spiritualism. That may easily be the case; but we feel that Nature has protected his lordship from any such disaster.

The Bishop of Birmingham, writing on the low birth rate, wishes to "foster the ineradicably implanted desire for parenthood, which is inherent in every human heart." His lordship might address a circular letter to all the nunneries and monasteries of Europe.

The Republican group in the Italian Parliament is introducing a Bill for the abolition of the oath. There is said to be considerable support given to the measure among other groups, most feeling that the time is ripe for its abolition. It looks as though England will soon be a storehouse for these mediæval curiosities, and will serve to illustrate in the political world what Australia does with specimens of plants and animals. Freethinkers will remember the fight of Charles Bradlaugh on the oath question, but all he could gain was the privilege of dispensing with it. And the valuelessness of it is clear to all. "So help me God, it's true," is more often than not the preface to a lie; and the man who asserts that the Members are better, or more sensible, or more truthful because they take the oath deserves to be sent to the House of Commons for life.

The Carlisle Magistrates have decided that, although during the War concerts were allowed on Sundays at which a charge was made, this can no longer be permitted. What a lovely religion Christianity is! When it is a question of

making war, anything may be allowed. But if it is a question of, not killing people, but providing rational enjoyment for them, then it is taboo. No wonder the late Sir Hiram Maxim was told when he was pottering about with life-saving devices, "If you want to makê money, invent something that will help these Christians to kill one another." The man who gave that advice knew his Christians.

M. Vandervelde says he saw with surprise, when in England, Mr. Arthur Henderson rise before a meal and solemnly offer a prayer. To a Continental Socialist the surprise is excusable. It takes this country to produce a hybrid of the character of the Christian Socialist. Abroad men generally try to find out where they are, and, if they succeed, publish their discovery. Here we generally avoid the discovery, or, if it is forced upon us, try to find some midway term that will convince both sides that we are with them. Result, a state of sloppy sentimentality and hazy thinking, that gives humbug a veneer of decency and pillories the sturdy thinker as a crank or an impracticable person.

The following occurs in the course of a review in the *Nation* of December 6:—

If the word religion is to be extended to cover all earnest care for mankind, it becomes indistinguishable from morality. That we quite agree with, and cannot see that the use of the word "religion" by people who are not really religious is any more than an amiable concession to those whom it is hoped to disarm by suggesting an underlying agreement where no such agreement really exists. And history and experience shows that you cannot placate Christians. You can only fight them and defeat them. Religion is not morality nor is morality religion, and it is useless trying to camouflage the one with the other.

The London Zoo has a number of new tenants. There is nothing, however, likely to rival the whale who housed the prophet Jonah.

In an article on the prevention of consumption, the *Evening News* prints the following: "No, it's not God's will that things should be so. It's man's folly." Evidently the editor believes in a limited-liability Deity.

The clergy, in spite of their superior airs, are very like ordinary folk. The Rev. C. J. Wigand, Workhouse Chaplain, of Winslow, Bucks, has resigned because the *Guardians* refused to renew his War-bonus.

One can generally trust a parson in office to more often take the wrong than the right side in any humanitarian measure. Recently the *St. Pancras Guardian* had before them a proposal that some unmarried mothers should be employed in the nursery, the mothers to have with them their infants, so that they might continue to feed them. This seems to us quite a humane and sensible proposal, but it was nevertheless thrown out. Miss Vance and others strongly supported the proposition, but its principal opponent was the Rev. E. L. Metcalfe, and he succeeded in inducing a majority of the *Guardians* to reject the proposition—presumably in the interests of "morality." It never seems to strike these good people that, whether married or unmarried, the right person to look after an infant is its mother. And the reciprocal influence is almost certain to be beneficial.

A Lowestoft Baptist pastor says that modern dancing is simply "playing into the hands of the Devil." This statement suggests the Stone Age of religion.

According to an American publication, the *Twentieth Plane*, Colonel Ingersoll is now a close neighbour of Lincoln, Emerson, and Whitman, in the next world, and in a "spirit message" Colonel Bob communicated the information that "we sleep four hours like your Edison." We wonder if these three distinguished men all sleep in the same bed?

The Bishop of Pretoria believes in prayers for the dead. His reason is a purely professional one. The people, he says, want prayers for the dead; and if his Church doesn't permit it, they will seek some other Church that does. That is quite frank. If you want to do business, you must stock your shop with the kind of goods that people require. Prayers for the dead or soothing syrup for the living, the modern clergy are quite careless so long as business is brisk.

From the *Daily News*:—

Bolshevism is reaching into strange quarters. A little girl of my acquaintance said to her mother last week: "Mummy, I'm not going to say my prayers to-night, an' I'm not going to say them to-morrow-night, an' I'm not going to say them the night after, an' if nothing happens then I'm never going to say them again."

The story is quite good, although we remember meeting that little girl quite twenty years ago. But perhaps that was her mother, and we are dealing with the second generation. And it would never do for the *Daily News* to say that it took a story from the *Freethinker*. Still, we may console the writer that more than he find the *Freethinker* very good to steal from.

Bishop Welldon declares that a Christian gentleman could not lie. The Holy Bible declares all men to be liars, so there you are! In any event, the Christian must believe a good many falsehoods, or else he ceases to be a Christian.

His lordship, the poor Bishop of London (bachelor, £200 weekly) has once again been delighting congregations with his views on economy and Church finance. It is quite clear that his lordship is not happy among figures, "He cannot help it," said a witty Irishman, "he lives in the *Waste*—End of London."

The Vicar of Leeds says there are clergy who do not get enough to eat. He should pray for the return of the ravens who fed Elijah, the prophet.

In an article in a literary contemporary, it is stated that "the moralist professes to find the modern dances (imported from the Puritan and teetotal United States) hopelessly immoral." We know that "moralist." He is generally a parson.

War, says the *Evening News*, always makes for violence and crudity. Really! And this after for four years talking day after day of the men being splendid, and the women being immense, of the altruism generated by war, of the brotherhood of the trenches, etc. For over four years our newspaper press poured its stream of lies, and now that the War is over we are told that wars always make for violence and crudity. When the next occasion arises all the old lies will be repeated, and the mass of the people, learning nothing from experience, will devour their morning and evening papers with the trustfulness of a fly alighting on a sheet of prepared paper. Newspapers should be organs of enlightenment, they are more and more organs of demoralization.

The new Bishop of Bradford says that he would not have accepted the "call," but that he and his wife turned up as texts for the day what they regarded as a clear call from God. So we must take it as granted that God who could not interfere in the War, takes a decided interest in who shall be Bishop of Bradford. And man is said to be a rational being.

For jumping over tombstones in a churchyard at Aldershot four boys were fined ten shillings each. They were, it was stated, waiting for their friends to come out of church.

The Church of England Enabling Bill has passed through the Houses of Parliament. Put in a nutshell, this precious Bill enables the Church of England to derive national benefit from national funds without national control and State supervision.

The "Freethinker."

THREE weeks ago I promised a statement with regard to the future of this journal. I have nothing alarming to say, and what I have to say will surprise no one who knows the state of the printing trade.

During the five years of war we struggled against raising the price of the *Freethinker*. We did succeed—thanks to the generous help of our readers—in keeping the paper at its pre-war price, and I think this is about the only journal in Britain which achieved that distinction.

When Armistice came we consoled ourselves with the reflection that if things did not get better, we had at least got them at their worst. In that we were mistaken. Since November, 1918, there have been two rises in wages in the printing trade, and a third is now due. The exact amount of this it is impossible to say at the moment, but it will mean a substantial addition to cost, and this on top of a wages bill that is already more than twice the pre-war figure.

Now, if nothing is done, this would mean keeping the Sustentation Fund as an annual feature, and it would also mean that next year the new increase would have to be added to the present deficit. But I do not think this is a good thing to do in face of the present situation. Friends have been so good, and given so readily, that I feel it my duty to do away with the necessity for their giving, if it is at-all possible. And I think we must face the fact that values are permanently altered, and that we must adjust ourselves to the changed circumstances.

It must also be remembered that the income of the *Freethinker* is derived solely from sales. Its advertising revenue is almost a negligible quantity; it makes no charge for advertising any Secular Society, and it has no subsidy in any shape or form. Of its importance to the Cause I need say little. Without it our Movement could not be where it is, and even though it is without capital, it has during the past four years issued a large number of new publications, and has revived the literary side of our propaganda.

Briefly, what I propose to do is this. **Commencing with the New Year's Issue, which also is the First Number of a New Volume, the "Freethinker" will be enlarged to Sixteen Pages and the Price will be increased to Threepence Per Copy.** Purchasers will thus get more reading matter, and the paper will get a larger income. I also calculate that the paper will then be self-supporting, and there will, I think, be no further need for the Sustentation Fund. The increase in size and price will enable many things to be done in connection with the paper that cannot be done under present conditions. What these new features are will be seen as they appear, which will be determined by circumstances that are necessarily of an indeterminate character. We shall, however, with the New Volume commence the compilation of an index, which will be published, with title page, each year.

This is the only plan by which I can see, at the moment, to bring the paper back to its full size, open up greater opportunities of usefulness, and place the *Freethinker* on a self-supporting basis. But I shall be pleased to have the opinions of as many readers as possible as to the proposed change, with any alternative suggestions they may have to offer.

With regard to subscriptions. These will be as follows: 13 weeks, 3s. 9d.; 26 weeks, 7s. 6d.; one year, 15s. In each case postage is included. So far as those whose subscriptions are already running, these will be regarded in the light of a contract, and the paper will be sent at

the old rate to the end of the period for which payment has been made. If any care to send the additional amount, the concern is theirs.

It is not without some disappointment that I abandon my ambition of making the old paper pay its way at the old price. But one must recognize the inevitable. And I may console myself with the reflection that but for the largely increased circulation since I became Editor, it would not pay its way, even at the advanced price. Moreover, threepence to-day is only three-halfpence in pre-war values, and so instead of a rise, there is really a reduction. Anyway, I think it may be taken for granted that I would not take any step affecting the paper without the most careful consideration. Of the thirty years I have given to Freethought work, nearly twenty-two of them have been given to the *Freethinker*. During that period there has been only one week in which an article has not appeared from my pen, and in addition to that being something of a journalistic record, it is a guarantee that I am not likely to do anything that would jeopardise either its security or its utility.

Should conditions take a turn for the better, no one will be more pleased than myself to see the paper restored to its old price. For the present, I am convinced that the plan proposed is the best in the circumstances, and I am reckoning on the hearty support of all the readers of the oldest Freethought paper in Europe. In that direction I feel sure there will be no disappointment.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

December 21, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 21, Glasgow ; December 22, Paisley.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—T. Fisher, £1; Woman Reader, 5s.; O. Baumgartner, 4s.; S. E. Owe, £1 1s.; C. S., 5s.; J. Roberts, 2s. 6d.; W. E. Hickman, 2s. 6d.; Failsworth Secular School, £1 1s.; J. L. Fenister, 10s.; E. Youall, 10s.; E. Lyons, 2s. 6d.; J. H. Gartrell, 10s.

C. LEWIS.—There are certainly some people whose minds cannot be altered in relation to religion or anything else. But the majority are susceptible to argument, and the only thing is to keep on pegging away. One must remember how much there is against one in the attempt to make people Freethinkers, and so be content with whatever ground is secured. And every little tells.

E. S.—Thanks for cuttings. Always welcome.

R. J. THOMPSON.—We are much obliged to you for securing us two new readers.

H. J. STENNING.—Will try and find room later, but are dreadfully overloaded with MSS. at present.

KENNETH DESMOND.—Will publish in the New Year. Thanks.

H. M.—Sorry for delay, but we are simply overloaded with MSS. We could run a daily *Freethinker* without exhausting our supply. We hope to publish soon.

J. EDWARDS.—Sorry we did not get your report of Mr. Lloyd's Swansea lectures in time for use in last week's issue. Still we are pleased to hear of the fine impression he made upon his audience. We are not surprised at that. We should be surprised were it otherwise. And you will be pleased to learn that your own opinion is one that is shared by all Freethinkers.

ONE of our readers in Perth would be glad to hear of the address of another *Freethinker* reader in the district for the sake of setting up an intellectual companionship. We shall be pleased to help in the matter. Please address this office.

H. TAYLOR.—We are greatly appreciative of the interest shown in the *Freethinker* by the Failsworth Secular School.

V. HORN.—Sorry we have not room for so lengthy a letter. If you can summarize your case, we will try and find room. We do not at all appreciate your apology for time-serving Socialists

who are afraid to come to grips with the religious question. Clear thinking and straight speaking is surely as essential in sociology as it is in theology. Our pamphlet on *Socialism and the Churches* was written to call attention to the need for more vigorous thinking and more straightforward speech among social reformers. And we are glad to see, from the attention it is arousing, that it is having that effect.

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.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen is away in Ireland this week, and some of his correspondence will have to wait to be dealt with till he returns. We are indebted to Mr. Lloyd for seeing the paper through the press during the Editor's absence. And it will certainly be none the worse on that account. We are fortunate in our friends.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (December 21) in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, Manchester. His subject in the afternoon is "A Freethinker's View of the League of Nations," and in the evening, "How Christianity Began: a Christmas Story." We hope local Freethinkers will each bring along a Christian friend, particularly to the evening meeting. It will serve as a corrective to the Christmas "slush" that will pour from the pulpits.

Next Sunday (Dec. 21) Mr. Lloyd pays a visit to Glasgow. It is some time since Mr. Lloyd visited that city, and his arranged lectures in October were cancelled over the railway strike. His many friends there will welcome the chance of seeing and hearing him once again. He will lecture in what is now the usual meeting-place of the Branch, and we have not the least doubt that it will be crowded to the doors.

The second edition of Mr. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* has been in hand for some time, but it is almost impossible nowadays to say exactly when a book will be ready. The delay is entirely owing to the binders, but we hope that it will be ready directly after Christmas. We make this announcement in reply to numerous inquiries about the work. The book has been revised and enlarged, and, judging by the number of inquiries, we should not be surprised if the second edition went off more rapidly than did the first one. The work appears to have established itself as a standard one on the subject.

Owing to the Christmas holidays, the *Freethinker*, dated December 28, will be published on Monday 22. We shall, therefore, be unable to use any notices that have not reached us by December 19.

The Executive of the N. S. S. is arranging another course of Sunday afternoon lectures at South Place Institute during the Sunday afternoons in January. Mr. Cohen will open the course on January 4. His subject will be "Do the Dead Live?" In view of the wave of Spiritualism that is passing over the country, the subject should prove attractive. May we ask the help of our London readers in getting these lec-

tures as widely known as possible? A full announcement of the course will appear in our next issue.

Mr. Lloyd had bad weather but delightfully enthusiastic meetings at Maesteg. In the afternoon the chair was taken by Mr. Webb, and in the evening by Miss Whitby, of Cardiff. Miss Whitby has brilliant and highly popular gifts, and is an exceedingly effective platform speaker. She is undoubtedly destined to occupy a high and honourable position among the leaders of progressive movements in this country; and it is pleasing to record that she is a thoroughgoing Secularist.

Mr. H. Black, Secretary of the Manchester Branch writes:

Manchester Branch N. S. S.—Mr. Dan Griffith's first visit to our Branch on December 7 was in every way a success. His lectures were much appreciated, and it was a considerable disappointment both to Mr. Griffiths and his good audience at the evening lecture that questions had to be cut short to enable him to catch the train home to South Wales. Will members keep in mind that our next social is on the 27th when we hope to be able to give the children a happy evening.

Lady Dorothy Nevill has published a volume of *Life and Letters*, in the course of which she tells the following story of Lord Orford, her father, who was asked by the Norwich Bible Society to become their President. He replied:—

Sir,—I am surprised and annoyed by the contents of your letter—surprised, because my well-known character should have exempted me from such applications, and annoyed because it compels me to have even this communication with you.

I have long been addicted to the gaming table. I have lately taken to the turf. I fear I frequently blaspheme. But I have never distributed religious tracts. All this was known to you and your Society. Notwithstanding which, you think me a fit person to be your President. God forgive your hypocrisy.

I would rather live in the land of sinners than with such saints.

HEROES.

There is the Open Secret Society of the heroes. Their mystery has been published in books, in songs, in world famous deeds of life and death, to all men of all nations and languages; yet only the heroic brotherhood really comprehend it, and are fully possessed by its inspiration. Other men may have transient glimpses of its meaning, and may thrill with its divine enthusiasm in rare moments; but soon the great door shuts, and they are cowering again in the darkness and the cold; nor can they even truly remember these rare moments in other hours and days, though they remember well enough the words of the chant, or the details of the action with which the inspiration happened to be connected. But one of the brotherhood understands and feels always. The mystery which he understands so thoroughly and feels so triumphantly is simply this: That in the whole range of the universe from highest heaven to deepest hell, there is no thing or circumstance, creature or being, dreadful to a man; that out of himself there is nothing which a man need fear; that no nature can be born into a realm unconquerable by that nature; and moreover, that the most dazzling lightening of ecstasy leaps from the blackest storm of danger. But neither he who writes, nor he who reads, is any nearer to the heart of the mystery through this interpretation; if he is of the brotherhood his pulse beat in unison with the throbs of this heart before; if he is not of the brotherhood his pulse will never beat in unison with these throbs—save at intervals and for moments similar to those in which the hands of a clock that does not go agree with the hands of another which is keeping true time.—James Thomson ("B. V.").

PRIESTS.

Where priests have much influence the gods have little; and where they are numerous and wealthy, the population is scanty and miserably poor. War may be, and certainly is, destructive; but war, as thou well knowest, if it cuts off boughs and branches, yet withers not the trunk. Priests, like ants, corrode and corrupt wherever they enter.—Landor.

Some Dangers of Freethought.

THE man who so enlarges his mental horizon that he cannot accept the popular religious and social beliefs, certainly increases his happiness, but he runs into some dangers.

One of these dangers is that he may grow too conceited. When we have emancipated ourselves from the bald absurdities of conventional religion, we look back on them with contempt, and when we see some of our friends still clinging to them we are apt to forget how real they once were to us, and assume an air of superiority. I call this a danger because it weakens us to fancy that we are so wise that we can scoff at other people's honest beliefs, however foolish they may seem to us.

The Church is still a powerful institution, and superstition is deeply rooted in the sentimental instincts of ignorant people; to undermine them we should cultivate the strength of that wisdom which is strong because it is wise, and modest because it is strong.

Another danger is that we may become hard and bitter towards people who hold beliefs obnoxious to us, and towards those institutions, such as the Church and the State, which are fabricated by, and in a sense composed of, such persons. When we suffer ourselves and behold the misery that follows the teaching of men whom we consider to be hypocrites, thieves, and tyrants, and yet see these men installed in the highest positions in society, Church and State, by the very people who suffer at their hands, we are naturally inclined to hate these men, and to denounce them for what we believe they are. Such bitterness, however, only arouses increased bitterness against us, and does nothing to remove the injuries complained of, besides affecting our own serenity of thought and temper. And although every step of the formation of the Church and State was made with the purpose of enriching and empowering the privileged classes at the expense of the honest workers, yet it could not have been otherwise. If it could have been, it would have been. Both Church and State are monuments of the shrewdness, strength, and narrow selfishness of the few, and the stupidity, weakness, and superstition of the many. But they cannot be beaten down by hatred or violence. They will melt slowly away by enlightenment, as an iceberg melts under the rays of the sun. And, as it is irrational to hate institutions, so is it to feel bitter towards individuals. Most of those who lord it over, and live luxuriously on the labour of their fellow-men, do not realize what they are really doing; nor could they do these things without the consent and approval of their superstitious slaves. To me, it seems at first incredible that any sane man could possibly imagine himself to be the vicegerent of God on earth, and endowed with infallibility. But, on reflection, I can understand that the Pope may honestly believe thus of himself, for the human brain is a curious organ which plays as it is played upon, and it is possible that the Pope honestly holds an opinion of himself so extraordinary as to make him appear to me either a liar or a lunatic.

It is also very strange to me that a millionaire can find himself possessed of an enormous unearned income arising from certain bits of paper—bonds and title-deeds—while most of the workers who produce his wealth possess little but ungratified wants, and never suspect that there must be something wrong with a system that gives great riches to the idler and gaunt poverty to the worker. And it is still more strange that such a man can go to church and listen to all that Christ said about the rich and poor, and never suspect that he cannot possibly be a Christian.

And yet when we consider the queer pranks of the human brain, and the difficulty most men find in thinking correctly, we are driven to believe that most millionaires quite fail to understand what is involved in their conduct. And we Freethinkers, who have emancipated ourselves from the prevailing superstitions of the day, will do well to avoid the small conceits and hatreds which often characterize those who are still in bondage. It is for us to show that clear thinking leads to largeness of mind, fairness of judgment, and mental poise. Observe the childish international squabbles that go on between the rulers and the rows among the politicians in the course of their schemes for power and spoils. Observe the silly quarrels that occur in the Churches about events that never happened, and are of no consequence whether they happened or not.* Rulers bristle against each other, and lead their wretched peoples on to mutual slaughter. Politicians wrangle and hurl names at each other, each in his anger, telling the truth about the other. Christians quarrel, hating, persecuting, and vilifying each other. And all this has been going on for ages. Freethinkers should stand aloof from all such contemptible work, and win their way by persistently and dispassionately advocating their honest opinions, and trusting to the certainty that other men will adopt them if they are true.

Moreover, just in proportion as we struggle through the wilderness of superstition and approach the happy land of reality, our path grows more and more lonely. We can no longer listen with pleasure to the religious preacher, or the political speaker, or the half-way poulitice reformer. Books, magazines, and newspapers that once pleased us are seen to be so full of specious fallacies and glittering falsehoods that they lose all their old relish. We run quickly against the limitations of our old friends—the points beyond which they cannot, or will not, think. People draw away from us, and we draw away from them. Our social intercourse is apt to be reduced to inquiring the price of butter or remarking that it is a fine day. Orthodox people live in such an atmosphere of religious and political jugglery, and have so many companions to share and sympathize with them in their errors, that it is easy for them to drift along, with their gods and angels, ghosts and fairies, baseless hopes and butterfly fancies. But with the Freethinker it is not so, and he must possess great strength of character to enable him to press forward, however lonesome the path may be. To go back is impossible; but so dear to man is the companionship of man, that to go onward all alone may well try both our courage and our confidence. The orthodox people are consciously or unconsciously studying us Freethinkers. Every mode of thought will be ultimately accepted or rejected, as it tends to make its adherents happier or not. If our way of thinking turns us into conceited critics of orthodox people and their beliefs; if it makes us hard, bitter, and unlovely, it will not attract men though truth be on our side. But if it makes us large-minded and generous toward those who disagree with us; if we become, as may be expected, fair in our judgment of others; if we grow actually happier—by which I mean braver and more cheery in our thoughts and demeanour—our opinions will commend themselves to those who hold them not.

It is wise for Freethinkers so to bear themselves that all who meet them shall have to admit how much more useful, honest, and agreeable they are for having emancipated themselves from the superstitions which darken the mind and poison the life.

G. O. WARREN.

Oh, that Paradise!

I'm but a pilgrim here,
Heaven is my home.

I WAS once engaging in the gentle art of "tub-thumping" at the entrance to a public park in a city that shall be nameless.

In the course of my remarks I had the temerity to state that it was the eschatology of the Christian Church that was responsible for the adherence of its followers. To this day, I'm not sure what caused the outburst from the crowd. Perhaps it was because they didn't know what I was talking about, or if they did, that they knew I was speaking the truth and didn't like it; but whatever it was that caused it, the tempest raged. When it subsided and I withdrew from my hiding-place behind a blade of grass, I asked: "If it isn't fear of what lies *Beyond* that makes you Christians, what is it?"

And a dear old lady answered: "It is the love of Christ." "But why do you love Christ?" I asked.

A great silence fell upon the crowd. The *greater love* was dumb.

From a street corner a short distance away came the squeaking of an harmonium and a discord of voices wrestling with the delightful effusion. "There is a happy land."

That "happy land" is the summit of Christian hope. Their imaginations can evolve nothing more wonderful. All their efforts are directed towards this glorious consummation.

Christianity is based on two premises—a heavenly Heaven and a hellish Hell. If you take them away, what have you left? Certainly not a religion.

Before you can get anyone to believe in your religion you've got to threaten him and then cajole him. Christians are experts at this.

This magnificent religion, despite all its fine talk of altruism and brotherly love is the quintessence of selfishness. They deny the right of admittance to their celestial roof-gardens to all but their own select coterie.

I have often wondered whether a Protestant hates an Atheist much worse than he hates a Roman Catholic. These two sects of worshippers of the "true God" are about as happy in one another's company as a mud lark on a frosty morning.

It's a game. And the cause of it all is that little heaven and hell. *Fear* is the father of the gods.

There was a time (not so very long ago) when Catholics and Protestants used to go to the stake because their opinions differed as to whether bread became flesh in fact or in fiction.

Do you think they cared a — anything you like—for flesh or soul? It was the little heaven they were after, and they didn't mind whether they arrived as a cinder or a sausage so long as they did actually get there. Of course, nowadays, the clergy do not pay so much attention as they used to the "father's house of many mansions." They are much more interested in seeing to it that there is a sufficiency of rooms in their own houses.

They are beginning to agitate for higher wages. But it isn't "our Father, which art in Heaven," they are asking for their daily bread.

He who feeds the sparrows is apparently oblivious to the prayers of his disciples. They are starving—on paltry pittances ranging from £10,000 to £500 per annum. Of a truth, they are much to be pitied! They are determined to have the best of both worlds.

It's a sad world, my masters! — "ah, but there is a better world beyond." Yet we can't be too sure of that better land — "eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die."

Who said you couldn't serve God and Mammon at once? Whoever it was, he hadn't been very attentive to the Holy Writ. Moreover, he hadn't seen our clergy of to-day. And if we do reach this celestial paradise, what shall we see there? There'll be a lot of harps and singing. And, I suppose, we'll all join in the chorus. It must be some sort of perpetual smoking-concert without "smokes."

But you don't get these free. Oh, no; that would be too good to be true. They hand you a ticket marked "John iii. 16," and tell you you need do no more. But thereby hangs a tale. This free salvation costs in "voluntary" offerings over £7,000,000 per annum in the Church of England alone. What the 13,000 beneficed clergy and the 6,800 curates cost the country he who numbers the hairs on our heads alone knows.

If I may be permitted to make a suggestion to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he should commence retrenching by abolishing Paradise, and thereby stop the waste of the Lord knows how many millions a year. But, in the absence of this official recognition, we must continue to do our bit by ridiculing this mockery of civilization.

The ancient Greeks had their Elysian Fields, their Islands of the Blest. These weren't so silly as our Paradise, but they were silly enough to evoke the laughter of Lucian, who guffawed so uproariously at the idea of Helen of Troy living with a band of charming young men without eloping with one of them that all the ancients joined in the fun, and the Islands of the Blest became a thing of the past.

If we could only make Christians see Paradise in its true light, they would laugh too, and shame it into disappearance. Rudyard Kipling has a poem, *The Last Chanty*, in which he describes Paradise after the end of the world. It is a serious Christian effort to envisage the eternal bliss of heaven. Let me explain it to you. God wants to "gather up the sea." Then we have a series of objections. The objectors show the motley crowd that inhabits Paradise. There are "the jolly, jolly mariners," "Judas that betrayed Him," "the souls of the slaves that men threw overboard," "the gentlemen-adventurers—Fetter'd wrist to bar all for red iniquity," and, lastly, "the soul of a gray Gothavn 'speckshioner.'"

These gentlemen manage to persuade God to change his opinion.

Then stoop'd the Lord, and He call'd the good sea up to Him,
And 'stablish'd His borders unto all eternity,
That such as have no pleasure
For to serve the Lord by measure,
They may enter into galleons and serve Him on the sea.

This is written in all good faith. It is as about as good a job as anyone could make out of such poor material.

Of the other extreme, Hell, Dostoeffsky tells a harrowing tale, which describes the feelings of the majority of people towards that abode of the lost souls where "the sublime mystic of the Galilean hills" has said "there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The father in the great novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, leads an immoral life. He does not pay his dues to the Church, etc. He is threatened with Hell. The priest tells him that he will be dragged down by hooks and chains, worked by demons. The whole of old Karamazov's theology consists in disputing as to whether or not there is a roof to Hell, for if there is, he cannot be pulled down by the aforesaid hooks, etc.

This is a plain man's philosophy. He is interested because it affects *himself* physically. There is no love about it. But you and I, reader, needn't worry about either Heaven or Hell, for we shall never reach either.

H. C. MELLOR.

DOGMATISM.

Dogmatism, said Douglas Jerrold, is only puppyism grown to maturity. This sarcastic wit never said a truer thing. We call a young fellow a puppy when he is conceited and impudent, and we call a man dogmatic when he betrays the same qualities in controversy. Yet every Church prides itself on being dogmatic. Rome is dogmatic and Canterbury is dogmatic. Without dogma there is no theology. And what is dogma? An opinion, or a set of opinions, promulgated by somebody for the blind acceptance of somebody else. Arrogance, therefore, is of its very essence. What right has one man to say to another, "This is the truth; I have taken the trouble to decide that point, and all you have to do is to accept what I present you"? And if one man has no such right to impose his belief on another, how can twenty thousand men have such a right to impose their belief on twenty millions? This, however, is precisely what they do, without the least shame or compunction. Before we are able to judge for ourselves, the priests thrust certain dogmas upon us, and compel us to embrace them. Authority takes the place of judgment, dogmatism supplants thought. The young mind is rendered slavish, and, as it grows up, it goes through life cringing to the instruments of its own abasement.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

FOUND OUT.

Come, let us damn him—he has fallen—

He that a week ago

Was listed with the high and mighty

Is mean to-day and low.

We knew he lied and gouged and cheated

To gain his wrongful ends,

But he was rich and we were flattered

To be among his friends.

Come, let us damn him—he is branded—

The law has brought him low—

He was as bad before—we knew it,

But it wasn't proved, you know.

—S. E. Kiser.

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