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Views and Opinions.

Christmas.

The twenty-fifth of December was a festive season long before Christianity was heard of, and it will remain a season when one looks forward with renewed hope, long after Christianity, as a religion, is numbered with the other historic delusions of the world. Even with ourselves we cannot help making the period of the winter solstice a time for congratulation that we have reached a seasonal turning point, and can look forward to the return of spring with its revival of vegetation and its renewal of sunny days and flower-sprinkled green fields. But to our remote ancestors, whose thought forms still surround us in the grim religions of the Churches—Christian and other—the season carried with it still greater significance, and no small amount of fear. Crouched in caves or huddled in rude shelters, winter brought with it discomfort and terror. The return of the strength of the light and life giving sun was a matter of doubt and anxiety. The short dark days filled them with apprehension, and the first indication of their lengthening brought with it a sense of relief. There was thus to these primitive peoples a literal rebirth of the Sun, which Christians to-day ignorantly celebrate with the alteration of an "O" for a "U." And with the development of the human intelligence and the elaboration of mythologies, the world saw a personifying of natural forces, and in its Christian form—which is really pre-Christian—the rebirth of the Sun-God after the death of winter with his complete revival at the spring festival and the promise of yet another harvest for mankind. Christmas and Easter are both nature—solar—festivals. Christianity simply took them over from its predecessors, adding little, confusing much, and lying more lustily about it as a more critical and a more informed intelligence came upon the scene.

* * *

A Dual Falsehood.

So far as Christianity is concerned Christmas embodies a double-barrelled falsehood. There is

the lie historical, and there is the lie moral. It claims to be the anniversary of one Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, crucified by Pilate, and raised again from the dead. It is nothing of the kind. There never was since the dawn of human life any person who came into being other than by the ordinary way. And there was never a person who, once dead, did not remain dead. We do not need elaborate enquiry nor a judicial examination to say these things; we know that such events never occurred. These stories are the creation of ignorance, perpetuated largely by knaves, and only accepted as literal truths by fools. Birth and death are not events that adapt themselves to the rank or quality of the individual. Great or small, genius or idiot, we come into the world in the same manner and we depart by the same road. As the Bible itself tells us, in this matter "man hath no pre-eminence over the beast." It is not the birthday of a man who became God that we celebrate on Dec. 25, it is truly the anniversary of a myth, of a number of superstitions that were already grey with age when the Galilean peasant was fabled to have been born. The anniversary was not even peculiar to the Christian deity. Hercules, and Osiris, and Bacchus, and Adonis, and Mithra, were all born at this season of the year, and all had their anniversaries celebrated in much the same manner. In this Jesus Christ did but follow the fashion. Writing of pre-Christian Syria, Sir James Frazer says that at the time of the winter Solstice "the celebrants retired into certain inner shrines, from which at midnight they issued with a loud cry, 'The Virgin hath brought forth. The light is waxing.'". The birth of Mithra was celebrated in the same way. In short, there is not a single ceremony attaching to Christmas, from Christmas trees to visiting, from new born gods to plum puddings, that we cannot trace back to our pre-Christian ancestors, and thence finally to the primitive savage, who is the true and "Onlie begetter" of all the gods that have ever afflicted a bemused humanity.

* * *

Peace on Earth!

So much for the historic lie of the Christian Christmas. It is now almost a twice-told tale. The teachers of Christianity know the truth, even though the pupils are being kept in ignorance. And the moral lie of Christmas is scarce less obvious. Christianity came, so runs the legend, to bring peace on earth and good will to all men. Has it done so? The first clear sight we have of Christians is that of a body of people whose savagery and malevolence were without bounds where religion was concerned. It made persecution a duty, and it raised intolerance to the level of a virtue. On the matter of war it has, perhaps, the blackest record of any religion under

the sun. The pagan world at least left warfare as it was; it was open to all to see it in its native brutality. Christianity gave it just that moral and religious covering that was needed to give it permanence. It sanctified war without humanising it. It gave the world a war of sects, and it established the sect of war on so firm a foundation that even to-day people are not civilised enough to be ashamed of it. The Christian Church took war under its patronage, and used it, as it has used all else, to establish its dominion over the mind of man. Step by step with the Christianising of the world we have seen the growth of the war spirit, the sanctifying of the spirit of slaughter, the petitions offered to the Christian deity for victory in battle, and thanks returned for enemies killed. Their very Churches are littered with monuments to soldiers, and with battle flags that are shot-riddled, or taken from defeated enemies. It was not without significance, and with an unconscious eye to the fitness of things, that two years ago a service was held in St. Paul's Cathedral with a couple of guns in full view of the congregation. It was a fit illustration of the way in which crude cunning harnesses brute force to its service. And yet it is this religion which has the impudence to call Mohammedanism a religion of the sword! Mohammedans might at least plead that they have not added hypocrisy to their militarism.

* * *

The Clergy and the War.

We have only just emerged from a colossal war. It was not a war forced upon a Christian people by non-Christians. It was created by people, in all countries, that had been for generations cradled under the dominating influence of the Christian Church. And when that war came upon the world in 1914 many were astonished to find the clergy in all countries active preachers of the gospel of war, and telling their followers that the first duty of a Christian was not to restrain the war spirit, but to kill as many of the enemy as possible. I do not know that there was any adequate cause for surprise in this. The clergy were only acting up to their record. In the whole of Christian history there has never been a war that has not received the active support of the established Churches. In our own country, there has not during the past two centuries been a period of twenty years—perhaps not ten—during which we have not been conducting a war somewhere or other. Not, of course, always with one of the "Great Powers," the modern nation thinks twice before it enters on a war with a powerful people—that is an indication of the kind of chivalry that warfare breeds. But we have been at war, nevertheless. And in all these wars, big and little, justifiable and unjustifiable, the clergy have never as a body been on the side of peace. They have always been ready to bless the cannon and to consecrate the battleship. Never have they had the decency to say that if the passions and the greed of men made war inevitable, it was not their business to preach it. Had they done otherwise, had the huge army of clergy in every country preached the inevitable iniquity of war, its unavoidable brutalisation and demoralisation, they might easily have created a passion against war that would by now have made it one of the rarest occurrences. For that is the only thing that will end war. War will never end by its being made dangerous or expensive. War

will only come to an end when it is made morally repulsive and intellectually ridiculous.

War and Education. * * *

While I write there are two items of news which show how far removed we are from that stage. The one is that Lord Rothermere, one of our yellow journalist magnates, backs up the Government, with its chapel-bred Premier, in the declaration that we must economise on education—not on armaments—because an education that was "good enough for the heroes of the Great War is good enough for the children of to-day." The fool! A more intelligent man would realise that if the people of the world had been better educated—genuinely educated—the "heroes" of the war might still be with us, performing the far more useful task of carrying on the constructive work of civilised social life. Our one hope of preventing war in the future is that by some means or other the youth of the world will have a better education than the peoples have yet enjoyed. The second item comes from the almost moribund League of Nations. Over a century ago Thomas Paine dreamed of a League of Nations that would prevent the recurrence of war. Now, with the lesson of the war before them, and with the devastation it has caused to emphasise the lesson, the representatives of France and Britain reply to a request that something may be done towards the reduction of armaments that they cannot be tied down. And the real meaning of that is that both countries wish to be in a position to attack if they fancy their interests demand it. It is quite useless saying that these bloated armaments are merely for defence. As Paine said, if protection against attack is all that is required, that is secured more effectually by disarmament than by running a competition as to which can get the largest army or navy. But they will not guarantee their own protection by suggesting to the world that they shall all disarm, for if they did so the world might take them at their word. And then the power of attack would be gone. Paine went to the root of the matter when he said that the talk of defence was so much humbug. And so, having got rid of one war, this Christian country, with the full support of the clergy, is busy making preparations for another. What would Paine say if he were alive to-day?

* * *

Our Greatest Need.

What would the world be like without Christianity? is a question often asked of the *Freethinker*. May we not retort, what is the world like with it? Can we not think, on the basis of the civilisations of Greece and Rome, that in all these centuries we might easily have been better off than we are? The Christian Church has for centuries had the dominating voice in education and in social life, and the result is the world as we see it. Could it easily have been worse? On the most favourable judgment the influence of the Christian Church has not been able to prevent the evil, and on a less favourable one it has been instrumental in producing it. For it has stood as the bulwark of every sinister interest that has made for the demoralisation of the people. It has taught them to look forward to a future life and so dulled the real significance of this one. To the poor it has taught patience, and to the wealthy it has taught charity, with the Church as almoner. It taught the divine right of kings, and to the people

the duty of obedience. It taught that poverty was a divine institution, even while it fawned upon the rich for its gifts and endowments. And we to-day are reaping the results of the centuries of this religious domination. For man cannot altogether escape the consequences of an evil heredity. We think in the forms that our ancestors have bequeathed to us; we inherit their institutions, and it is the function of religion to see that these are modified as little as possible. That is why Freethought is the world's most urgent need to-day. We can neither pray, nor legislate our way into a better social state. We can only *think* our way into it. The man who does not think is of necessity a slave, and his slavery is never so complete as when he prides himself on the possession of freedom.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sin.

AN angel informed Joseph in a dream, that his wife would give birth to a son, conceived in her of the Holy Ghost, saying to him: "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Such is the Scriptural account of the Incarnation. The Son of God came down to earth and was born a second time of the Virgin Mary, thereby becoming God-man, and Saviour of the world. As a Divine Being pure and simple, he was incapable of accomplishing the world's redemption; the task could be undertaken only by a Divine "human" person. That dogma will be repeated innumerable times throughout Christendom this Christmastide. The belief in it, however, is steadily decaying, for the simple reason that thoughtful people no longer possess the sense of their innate sinfulness or utter lostness through Adam's fall. As Sir Oliver Lodge says, the modern man does not trouble about his sins; and Dean Inge is responsible for the statement that among theologians, "the tendency to ignore sin and fear, which is the shadow of sin, is very apparent in sermons and religious literature." The very reverend gentleman is reported to have added:—

We have ceased to fear punishment, not because we possess that perfect love which casteth out fear, but because we do not think we deserve it. Common sense and morality have revolted against the dualism which divides the human race into two classes; the lost and the saved. In the old days people whispered that some were over bad for blessing, and over good for banning. Nowadays we say that about everybody.

Of course the Dean himself is a firm believer in the existence of sin, but not in the orthodoxy doctrine of sin. Addressing the Kingsway Fellowship at the Kingsway Hall the other Sunday, he expressed himself thus:—

A being or species is capable of sin when it is capable of rising above its present condition, or of falling below it. Herein lies, it seems to me, the true meaning of the doctrine of original sin. The self is, after all, one, not two, and the enemy against whom we have to contend is part of ourselves. We must identify ourselves either with that which would draw us up, or that which would drag us down.

That is not the usual theological conception of sin. Even an Athiest might adopt that language, with the sole exception, perhaps, of the word sin. Dr. Jowett in an article in the *Christian World* for Dec. 16, represents the Gospel Jesus, as declaring that "Sin perverts the relationship between man and God." We have looked in vain for anything like such a declaration in the Four Gospels. It would be far more reasonable to attribute the idea to Paul than Jesus.

In any case, Dr. Jowett supplies us with the orthodoxy doctrine of sin. "Sin" he says, "dims and dulls all our discernments and the Divine Fatherhood appears remote." "Your sins have separated between you and your God." They have made God our enemy and if we reject the promised redemption, his wrath will abide on us for ever. Dr. Jowett's orthodoxy glitters in every sentence. "Sin," he exclaims, "holds the powers of the soul in the destructive waste of moral disease." "Sin is spiritual paralysis, and it is usually a creeping paralysis, the deadly disease extending its fatal influence over all our moral and spiritual powers." The reverend gentleman waxes pathetically solemn as he piles sentence on sentence of the most morbid and depressing character. With amazing dexterity he plays upon the feelings of credulous readers. He is a past master in that superstitious art. To unbelievers his descriptions and appeals are extremely absurd. The sin he so glowingly depicts is, in their estimation, a creation of the theological imagination, and they are merely amused by what he says about it.

Now, the forgiveness of sin is, of course, quite as unreal as the sin. It is perfectly true that many Christians enjoy what they call peace with God through faith in the blood of Christ; and we have no desire to cast the least doubt on the reality of their enjoyment; but we are bound to point out that the degree of their enjoyment is determined by the strength and intensity of their faith. Whenever their faith weakens and their devotions are neglected, their joy dies down. "When a man is forgiven and knows it," says Dr. Jowett, "there is a wonderful sense of rightness, and lightness, and openness, and freedom.....One cannot say what it is like, for there is no analogy at hand; there is nothing else which is like it." But the point to be borne in mind is that the wonderful sense just described varies with the belief in the forgiveness. Christian experience is the outcome of the Christian faith, and it comes to an end the moment faith departs. Dr. Jowett will not face the fact that God does not exist except as an object of belief, and that Atheists have no sense of sin at all. God is solely a theologically constructed being, which accounts for the many different and conflicting conceptions of him held both in Christendom and Heathendom; and religious experience is different in different religions. As a man of faith Dr. Jowett gives an exceedingly eloquent account of what is accomplished by the Divine forgiveness:—

It restores the sin-perverted relationship between man and God. It repairs the moral and spiritual tissues which have been wasted by sin. It sets a man in vital friendly consort with the universal order. It gives him comradeship with the mystic power which lights up the stars, and builds the templed hills, and breaths the fragrance of the flowers of the field.

What is wrong with that fine passage is that it is not true, that it does not deal with the facts, and that its assertions are purely metaphysical. The existence of God and man's relationship with him are metaphysical assumptions insusceptible of practical verification. Moral and spiritual tissues are likewise existent only to the fancy, while the universal order is the evolutionary process which is subject to and guided by physical and chemical laws to which we must conform our conduct, or be crushed by them. We have absolutely no knowledge of any "mystic power" apart from and above the universal order. Why did the reverend gentleman use such a vague phrase, when in reality all he meant was comradeship with God?

Our conclusion is that sin in the theological sense is a myth, like God separation between whom and ourselves it is said to have caused. If that is true it is not necessary to characterize the Divine forgiveness as an empty dream. Religious experience is the result of regarding myth as truth and fable as fact, and

endures only as long as that delusion prevails. If, however, by sins we understand the evils and wrongs so rampant in the world, we are obliged to affirm that Jesus was born in vain. From those evils and wrongs the God-man has not saved the people. He has not lived up to the character ascribed to him in the New Testament and by the Church in all ages. Looked at in the light of history the following verse is unutterably absurd:—

Hark! the herald-angels sing
Glory to the new born King,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Is it any wonder that students of history and existing social conditions are turning their backs upon the virgin born Redeemer and his Church, and concentrating their thoughts upon the resources of humanity itself, in the cultivation and exercise of which alone lies the hope of social salvation? The truth is that Christmas, as a Christian festival, is the most colossal farce conceivable. For two thousand years the moral progress of the world has been practically nil. The truth is that belief in, and reliance on the God-man have been obstacles to genuine social regeneration. Expecting God in Christ to do everything for them, mankind have been loath to attempt to do anything for themselves. Realizing that the Babe of Bethlehem is of no avail they are at last facing the problems of social life in the confident hope of satisfactorily solving them. On Christmas Day we celebrate, not the birth of a new Saviour God, but the return of the sun with spring and summer, with all their treasures, in its train.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Old, Old Story.

Foul superstition! howsoe'er disguised—
Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,
For whatsoever symbol thou art prized—
Thou sacerdotal gain, but general loss,
Who from true worship's gold can separate thy dross?
—Byron.

LARGE numbers of little children are firm believers in the personality of Father Christmas and all his belongings, including those long, flowing whiskers, that comfortable corpulence, and that capacious bag of presents. Still larger numbers of children of a larger growth pretend to believe that Yuletide is a festival which commemorates "God's" birthday. Why "God," who is described as eternal and omnipresent, should have a birthday at all is a question that these innocent folk never ask themselves. Perhaps they regard life as being too short for wasting time in such pleasant speculation.

Yet "God's" career upon earth is worth a little attention. Fifty thousand straight-faced clergymen in this country alone vouch for its accuracy, and hundreds of thousands of their followers support their pastors and masters in their allegation. The question presses for solution, and it is as well to recount the chief events of so astounding a career.

In nought B.C., or nought A.D., "God" is alleged to have been born in a stable at Bethlehem. He is also said to have had but one parent, and scientific prejudice is in favour of two. The importance of his birth was such that a massacre of children was carried out in the hope of getting rid of the prodigy. His after-life is one long string of marvels, quite as extraordinary as the stories in the *Arabian Nights*. Dead people squeaked and gibbered in the Judæan streets; blind folk were restored to sight. Thousands were fed with a few loaves and fishes. Water was miraculously turned

into wine. At "God's" death a three days' darkness overspread the earth. After death he came to life again, and he finally ascended into the sky like an aeroplane, and has never been seen since. There has never been so astonishing a career. Yet, outside of the four Gospels, written no one knows where, no one knows by whom, there is no corroboration of this "old, old story." So far as sober historians are concerned, "the rest is silence."

Nor is this all. "God's" birthday was not kept regularly until many generations after the supposed date of its happening. In the earlier stages of the custom it was held on varying dates. It was not, however, in December, even according to the legends. For shepherds do not watch their flocks by night in that unromantic time of the year. Why, then, do Christians keep "God's" birthday on December 25? The answer plucks the heart out of the Christian superstition.

It was in competition with the feast of Saturnalia, one of the chief Roman festivals, that "God's" birthday was fixed in December. It was to counteract the attractions of these holidays that the leaders of the Christian Churches sanctioned and incorporated these feasts. The struggle for existence also incorporated other features. In the far-off centuries white-robed Druids cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, chanting their Pagan hymns to the frosty air. These features were absorbed, and the mistletoe and the carol-singing still play their minor, if amusing, part in the celebration of "God's" birthday.

Custom makes cowards of most men and women, and the early Christians were no more courageous in this respect than others. Hence they incorporated the old Paganism under the mask of the new Christianity. This struggle for survival is still going on. In the past the Christian Churches sought for adherents by increasing their festivals, and crushed opposition by bribing the weak and killing the strong. Indeed, in some Roman Catholic countries, saints' days are as numerous as plums in a pudding; and religious festivals almost threaten the devout Churchman with the alluring prospect of an entire life made up of continuous "Bank Holidays." In the twentieth century the bagmen of Orthodoxy are cajoling apostates all over the non-Christian world by means of medical missions, and at home by advertising Pleasant Sunday Afternoons in the place of painful Sabbaths; and by hypocritically identifying Christ and the twelve disciples with the Trade Union movement.

"God's" birthday, with its pharisaical profession of goodwill to men, is priestly pretence and make-believe. There are no "herald angels" bringing news of glad tidings of great joy. It is the great illusion. Remembering the millions whose lives were cut short in the great war, and the awful aftermath of the wounded and other sufferers, even a sincere believer might echo the biting words of Buchanan:—

The angels Thou hast sent to haunt the street
Are hunger and distortion and decay.
Lord! that mad'st man, and send'st him foes so fleet,
Who shall judge Thee upon Thy judgment day?

MIMNERMUS.

GOVERNMENT.

Some writers have so confounded society with government as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness *positively*, by uniting our affections; the latter *negatively*, by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.—Thomas Paine, "*Common Sense*" (1776).

The Religion of Abraham Lincoln.

ALTHOUGH Lincoln in the early part of his career wrote a book attacking the Bible; although we have the testimony of his law partner, Herndon, that he lived and died a disbeliever in Christianity; and although the American writer Remsburg has in his book, *Six Historic Americans*, quoted the testimony of his widow and a large number of intimate friends to the same effect, continual attempts are made to prove that he was a pious Christian.

monitor in his Cabinet, Salmon B. Chase, who put 'the gracious favour of Almighty God' into his Emancipation Proclamation," and generally made it his business to protect the reputation of the President and the Republican party against charges of infidelity.

This fact has to be taken into account when his Gettysburg speech is considered. Some paragraphs drafted by me appeared in the *Freethinker* of August 8 and December 5, which have been disputed by numerous correspondents both here and in America, and the dispute has overflowed into the *Nation*, where, also, letters have been received. As there seemed to be a

Executive Mansion,

Washington, _____, 186

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that "all men are created equal"

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow, this ground—the brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here.

Most of these are based on pious expressions found amongst his official utterances. Lincoln stood for the Presidency at a great crisis in his country's history. So soon as it became known that he was Republican candidate for the Presidency he was assailed with charges of Atheism by his opponents. This charge caused the greatest alarm amongst his friends, and Lincoln was implored to deny it. He said he would rather die.

During his Presidency, as Mr. Macdonald, of the *New York Truthseeker*, points out, "he had a pious

serious conflict of evidence, I referred the matter to Mr. Macdonald, of the *Truthseeker*, who has sent me a facsimile of the original draft in Lincoln's own handwriting, which is here reproduced. It will be noticed that the words "under God" do not appear. This would be fairly conclusive if, as Mr. Macdonald supposes, the draft was made *after* Lincoln had uttered the speech. There is, however, another copy, also in Lincoln's handwriting, made *after* the delivery of the speech and intended by him for the authorized version of it as actually delivered. In this the words "under

God " do occur, and we may accept them as actually uttered.

Both versions were published in the February number of the *Century*, 1894. From the *Century* article we learn that the speech was taken down by a shorthand writer, and his version, which was telegraphed to the press and reproduced in all the newspapers the next day, was, four days after Lincoln's return to Washington, compared by him with his original draft and his memory of what he uttered, and found to be extremely

promptings of his secretary, or on the spur of the moment, he rectified when delivering the speech, which he did not read.

He would be the last to think that he had improved it. The authorized version in his handwriting runs as follows:—

It is rather for us, the living, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus for us so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before

*It is rather for us, the living, ^{we here be dedicated} to stand here, ded-
icated to the great task remaining before us—
that, from these honored dead we take in-
creased devotion to that cause for which
they here, gave the last full measure of de-
votion—that we here highly resolve that
these dead shall not have died in vain; that
the nation, shall have a new birth of free-
dom, and that government of the people by
the people for the people, shall not per-
ish from the earth.*

accurate. Lincoln wrote out this second copy with these other two versions before him.

It is to be observed that no one claims that Lincoln was an Atheist. He was an utter disbeliever in Christianity, but had some shreds of a belief in a God or Providence of some kind which appears to have survived from his early training, but pious cant was utterly contrary to his nature, and in his original draft he forgot to pump up the piety expected of a President of the United States. This omission, either owing to the

us.....that the nation, under God, shall have a new birth of Freedom.

The reader will see from the facsimile of the original draft, which is here reproduced, that the words " under God " nowhere occur in it. Had the phrase been the natural expression of a pious mind it would have occurred in the original draft. Lincoln's use of the words later cannot alter that fact. They have all the appearance of an afterthought, as was at first suggested.

JOHN LATHAM.

Weighty Corroboration.

THE hall-mark of the true Freethinker is the acceptance of the doctrine of determinism. This acid test of the freewill controversy divides the natural from the supernatural theories of the universe more infallibly even than the question of Theism. For the Theist can attenuate his God, and limit the sphere of his God's activities to such an extent that the reign of natural law remains for him in effect, is not in theory, absolute; whereas every introduction of " freewill " is a rejection of natural law, a breaking of the chain of cause and effect, and, in short, a miracle. The belief in freewill is also much more obstinate and difficult to undermine than the belief in God, as anyone who has assisted in

the liberating of a bright, sincere intelligence will have found. It is like the last mountain stronghold of an inferior people which has yielded before the advance of a higher type; and not until that position is carried is the reign of law and intelligence complete.

Those of us who have read Mr. Chapman Cohen's clear, and indeed irresistible, statement of the Determinist case (*Determinism or Freewill?*) will doubtless long since have come to regard causation as an axiom in all things. To such, it comes at times as a painful surprise to find how few ordinary intelligent people have gone into the matter, or questioned for a moment the validity of basing the theory of freedom on the mere sensation of choice. It is, therefore, distinctly a matter for congratulation when we find a scientific

authority publicly adopting the Determinist theory as a logical necessity. I refer to an address delivered to the Sub-Section of Psychology, at the Cardiff meeting of the British Association, by Dr. Charles S. Myers, M.D., Sc.D., F.R.S., Director of the Psychological Laboratory at Cambridge University. The address is published in the November number of *Discovery*, under the title of *The Independence of Psychology*. Dr. Myers' main theme is the need for a separation between the physiological and the purely psychological subject-matter at present treated as one science. He, of course, acknowledges that all thought has its physiological side, but holds that the processes of thought, logic, association, etc., can, and indeed must, be regarded separately from the accompanying like separating the quality of a man's piano-playing from the physical action of nerves and muscles which produces it.

After stating his case for this separation, or, rather, the division of the labour of study, Dr. Myers proceeds:

In the world's history, philosophical speculation has always preceded scientific experiment and analysis. Natural science, which demands greater patience, self-control, and impartiality, has only made real progress during the last two or three centuries, whereas philosophical thought and speculation have been able to flourish from remote antiquity. The subject-matter of psychology formed but a fraction of the wide sphere of interests of the metaphysician, who considered himself qualified and in duty bound to philosophize on every branch of knowledge. It is little wonder, then, that the framers of such world-wide hypotheses overlooked psychological facts that did not easily fit into them, and neglected to observe those which were not of immediate interest. They laid little stress on instinct and suggestion; their consideration of the unconscious was practically limited to the recognition of habit and the mental "dispositions" left behind from previous experiences. Somewhere the "will" had to find a place between cognition and action; in a vague way they supposed willed action to have been developed out of impulsive and ideo-motor action through self-activity, but their reflections (often prejudiced, doubtless, by conceptions of freewill, moral responsibility, immortality, etc.) carried them hardly further than this.

But he proceeds:—

The importance of the unconscious becomes as great for psychology as that of the conscious. At first sight, the critical psychologist may hesitate to regard the unconscious as "mental," preferring to consider it in terms of "physiological" traces, or dispositions, left behind in central nervous tissue, which can only be termed "mental" in the presence of consciousness. But the results of investigations by psycho-analysis and under hypnosis, of studies of disordered, alternating, and multiple personality, automatic writing, etc., must finally force the impartial psychologist to endow the unconscious, like the conscious, with a mental aspect. They convince him of the necessity for displacing consciousness from the pinnacle it has hitherto occupied in psychology. Unconsciousness is no longer a mere "fringe" around the field of consciousness. It becomes the basis, the foundation on which consciousness depends—the nourishment from which it draws its very existence. We begin to see the "superficiality" of consciousness, and to recognize that almost any mental event may happen with or without the accompaniment of personal consciousness. Such consciousness has been evolved to facilitate choice between alternative reactions—to bring the entire unity or personality of the organism into more complete relation with its environment. Where only one reaction is possible, the action remains a reflex, and no sensation or impulse need be felt. Where the reaction is to some extent modifiable, the action becomes instinctive—emotional activity, impulsive tendencies, and crude blurred sensations being experienced. When alternative responses are desirable, discrimination becomes acute, and a larger and more dominating self-develops—a dominating apical system which endeavours to permit of action only after it has

given its consent or sanction: thus arise the beginnings of will.

We now recognize that the consent and sanction of the self to a volitional act are but the reaction of an apical mental system to the sum total of conflicting and favourable tendencies to action; that every seemingly unaccountable thought and action are traceable to a "cause," and that the "reasons" offered by the self for a course of thought or action are often mere illusory explanations, unconsciously later coined as excuses for actions and beliefs which in reality are dictated by the lower and more fundamental conative tendencies of instinct, emotion, unconscious suggestion, and very early experience, working themselves out by their own perseverating, "determining tendencies." These change of outlook mark an enormous advance in the progress of psychology.....

So far, Dr. Myers. Now, it must be evident to anyone that decisions arrived at in the "unconscious" are not the decisions of a free will; and it is equally evident that the decisions consciously arrived at are wholly dependent on the relative force of the "conflicting tendencies" which emerge from the unconscious. In other words, the apparent choice is only a Hobson's choice, a mere sensation accompanying the perception that the motive A is stronger than the motive B. That such a view should be recognized in such quarters, and put before the public with the influence of a British Association address, is no small gain in our fight for a consistent and naturalistic view of life and the world. Only, how many of the public will ever read it? And of those, how many will see its logical application? There is plenty of work for the *Freethinker* yet!

H. TRUCKELL.

Acid Drops.

Mr. George Barker is the miners' candidate for the Abertillery division—we ought to say was the candidate—as by the time these lines are in print, the election will have been decided. Against him is Mr. Hay Morgan, and he and others have accused Mr. Barker of being an Atheist. This Mr. Barker denies, although why he should have taken the trouble to do so is only explainable on the ground that many think more of placating religious bigotry than of affirming a principle. If Mr. Barker had been putting up for an office in a Chapel we could appreciate his discussing whether his religious beliefs were sound or not. But he is putting up for Parliament, and the proper attitude would be to decline to discuss religious opinions at all. They ought not to arise. But they will continue to arise, and candidates for public office will continue to truckle to Church and Chapel until public men have the moral courage to decline to answer irrelevant and impertinent charges or questions.

There is more here than a sectarian question as between Atheists and Christians. It is really a question of whether we are to attract the higher or the lower type of mind into the political world. If we select for Parliament men who see nothing undignified in acknowledging an inquisition concerning their opinions on matters which have no relevance to the office they are seeking, we must expect to get into politics a type of mind that will be ready to bow or to sell itself to other interests as they make themselves felt. And it is useless, when we have encouraged this kind of thing, to complain that the political world is so filled with intellectual mediocrities and self-seeking carpet baggers. We have done what we could to see that a better type is kept out, and we ought not to complain at the result. And if the Labour movement cannot see this, it argues little for its influence in bringing a better state of affairs about. It means that we shall have the old conditions perpetuated under new names. It will drive the better class of men and women out of politics, and so leave the field clear to those of small mental capacity or more or less venial character.

Dr. Randall, former Suffragan Bishop of Reading, says that "many of the clergy slit about the country too much." Perhaps his brother Bishop of London will explain how the "starving" clergy find the necessary threepenny bits for so much travelling.

Walworth, South London, ought to attract the notice of the Home Mission authorities. Beresford Chapel has been turned into a cinema show, and another Chapel in the main Walworth Road has already shared the same awful fate. A conversion from Christ to Charlie Chaplin is enough to set the Surrey Canal alight.

Providence was too busy watching the fall of the sparrows to prevent the death of Gerald Newman, a three years' old Reading child, who was burnt to death whilst playing with a newspaper before the fire.

Springing from a desire to see a civilised frame of mind in Manchester, Councillor George Hall is proposing that arrangements shall be made for Sunday games. So Mr. Royle, of the Salford Street Mission, hopes that nothing of the kind will come to pass, because if it does it will mean "a great upheaval of the moral forces and of the Sunday Schools." Well, from all we know of Manchester we fancy that a moral upheaval would do it no great harm. It might even do away with the need, or at least the occasion, for the Salford Street Mission and things of that kind. All the slums of Manchester, and all its vice and misery have grown up with both missions and Sunday Schools, and it might be just as well to see how the people would get on without them. One day, perhaps, it will be realised that the institutions which live on slums and their outcome are very largely responsible for their existence. But we cannot expect a Mission leader to see this.

A Missionary Society advertisement declares that the organisation has carried to heathen countries "not only the knowledge of the Christian faith, but education and healing and the beginnings of industry." This is a touching association of the joint claims of God and Mammon.

The Chapter House of St. Paul's has been let to Lloyd's Bank, and a branch of their banking business will be carried on there. We fancy there is a story of Jesus driving the money changers out of the Temple, but we daresay they were not such respectable practitioners as Lloyd's. And a very good defence might be set up by the Dean and Chapter in the form of a plea that this is as useful a purpose as any to which the place has yet been put. And we should be the last to contradict that. The Wesleyan Methodists set the example to St. Paul's by letting a portion of their Central Hall, Westminster, for commercial purposes. And both bodies invested very heavily in War Bonds, and are now among those who are drawing large sums in yearly interest. One way and another, the interests of these large religious bodies in reforming our commercial and financial systems cannot be questioned. And one can quite realise why the Churches and Chapels like to see some of their members as speakers and writers in the Labour movement. There is nothing like having a few friends in the enemy's camp.

An amusing incident took place at Tottenham Police Court, when the clerk asked a boy, taking the oath: "What do you learn at school from the Bible?" The young hopeful replied, "Don't learn anything; we just read it."

Dr. G. T. Salter is one of the leading Labour advocates in South London, but he has a lot to learn in the correct use of words, or a lot to avoid in the shape of playing to the religious gallery. For example, in the *Labour Leader*, of December 16th, he asks, "Are we letting our pagan politicians run us into another Imperialist war," and later on he refers to the "moral Atheism" of John Bull. Now we venture to remind Dr. Salter that our politicians are, for the most part, very Christian. Mr. Lloyd George is very pious, and recently informed an audience that when he can get away from his Cabinet demands he delights to find comfort and inspiration in singing hymns. His Christianity is quite beyond question. And we have never heard the piety of Mr. Churchill questioned. And as for Mr. Bottomley, Dr. Salter ought to remember that soon after the war commenced he publicly announced that he had found God. And whether one cares to believe him or not, there is at least his confession of piety to go on. We do not think there is any doubt of the religious nature of most of our political leaders, and even though they may be accused of being humbugs, that only invites the retort that if one takes the humbuggery away from modern religion there is very little left.

Dr. Salter's language is an illustration of this. What does he mean by moral atheism? Does he mean that one cannot be moral without being religious, or without being a Christian? If he means us to imply that, it is difficult to believe that he is not humbugging his readers, for one cannot hardly fancy him saying that in so many words. It would be too absurd, and too much even for the pietists of the *Labour Leader*. All it means is, we fancy, that Dr. Salter like so many others in the Labour movement, is afraid to say outright what is the truth concerning religion in this country, and so uses words in a quite misleading sense. And we are quite certain that until the Labour leaders face the truth concerning religion, and speak it, that movement will not be what it might otherwise become. That better social state, about which so many of them are eloquent, will never be created by fools, or by leaders who are shaking in their shoes for fear they shall offend the Church on the one side or the Chapel on the other. Reformers should be made of sterner stuff.

Mr. Lloyd George has been giving great offence to some of his Welsh friends. He has been playing golf on Sunday. That is the unforgivable sin, and has raised some of the Chapels to warm condemnation. Now if he had been sleeping on Sunday, or over-eating on Sunday, or arranging for another little war on Sunday, that would have been quite all right. But to play golf! That is a very different affair. For other people may imitate him, and where will the Chapels be then? And how can we expect the poor character of the Chapel attendant to stand out against the demoralising effects of Sunday games! True nothing happens to the non-Christian who plays games on Sunday, but he is, if we are to believe the Churches, doing with impunity what a Christian is quite unable to stand up against.

At Rochford, Essex, the Guardians are asking for permission to pay two Nonconformist parsons, in addition to the Church of England one, for preaching to the inmates of the workhouse. One of the Guardians wanted to know why it was necessary to pay three clergymen to preach the same gospel. For our part we should like to know why it is necessary to pay any of them at all. One would think that any clergyman should take that in connection with his ordinary duties. And we feel pretty certain that if that money was spent on getting the inmates some little extra comforts they would much rather the money went in that direction. But the parson must have his finger in every pie, if it is at all possible. It helps to keep him in the public eye, which is making it easier for him to get his finger in the public purse.

Holy Trinity Church, Kingsway, London, has a captured German trench mortar ornamenting the forecourt. A truly striking example of the truth that the meek do inherit the earth.

An advertisement of the Young Men's Christian Association states that it has given a "warm welcome" to large numbers of outsiders. Formerly, Christians used to threaten worldly folk with a very "warm welcome" in the "next world."

President Harding is a religious man, professedly, and would like to see the United States a religious country. That, too, is natural—in a President of a country which still prides itself on being uncivilised in its religious beliefs. But his religion is also of an accommodating character. Thus, he says, "My early training was in the Methodist Church, later my mother became a Seventh Day Adventist. In mature life I became a Baptist. . . . I love to go to a ritualistic service. I like to go to the Episcopal Church. . . . I have greatly enjoyed going to Roman Catholic services." Now that is a most accommodating believer. He seems ready to attend anywhere—where there are enough worshippers to make their vote of substantial value. All that is needed is for him to express his high admiration for the teachings of Ingersoll, to say that he has had thoughts of adopting Judaism, that he sometimes longs for Christian Science, that his father-in-law is a Mormon, and that he has a passion for negro religious melodies. Then everybody would have had a show. President Harding is certainly an accommodating official.

The late Rev. L. W. V. Goodenough, of Sittingbourne, forgot his Master's injunction, and left treasure to the value of £12,454. This will be good enough to exclude him from the golden streets he used to preach of.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.

Some of our Subscribers will receive this week's copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN Wrapper. As the postal regulations forbid our inserting a printed slip inside the paper, we are adopting this device of reminding Subscribers when their renewals are due. We should be greatly obliged if Subscribers will remit as promptly as possible, or will send us a card in cases where they have made other arrangements for securing their weekly supply.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

THE purpose of this Fund is to meet the deficit incurred owing to the excessive cost of printing and paper, and to provide a balance to meet fresh deficits until such time as prices approach a normal level. The sum of £1,000 is being asked for.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £647 11s. 5d. F. Collins (third subscription), 10s.; Dr. A. W. Laing (second subscription), £5; H. Russell Welby, £1; "Bashem" (second subscription), £2; A. Cayford, 10s.; J. Deacon, 11s. 3d.; J. Neate, 10s.; Mrs. Neate, 10s.; R. L. Martland, £3; Schoolmaster, 10s.; Miss M. R. Needham, 3s.; J. C. Kirkman, £3; J. Latham, 5s.; T. E. Gilfach Goch, 2s. 6d. T. C. Clegg, 12s.

Per Secretary, Manchester Branch—J. Thornley, 10s.; Mrs. A. Ballard, 10s.

Total, £666 5s. 2d.

PROMISED, provided the total sum raised reaches £1,000, including the amounts promised:—"Medical," £25; "In Memory of the late Sir Hiram Maxim," £50; Mr. J. B. Middleton, £10; "A Friend," £100; "Working Journalist," £3; X. Y. Z., £10; J. Morton, 10s.; R. Proctor, £1; National Secular Society, £25; F. Collins, 10s.; H. Black, £1 1s.; T. Sharpe, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. S. Clowes, £1 1s.; J. Breese, £3; A. Davis, £2 2s.; J. W. Hudson, £1; "Anno Domini," £5; Collette Jones, £5; T. C. Kirkman, £2.

Total £246 5s.

To Correspondents.

J. DEACON.—Thanks for good wishes, which we greatly appreciated from so old a supporter of the cause. There is no fear of the *Freethinker* going under, however difficult the struggle may be. And we must get to easier times sooner or later.

D. STICKELLS.—We greatly sympathize with your view that the great thing is to offer an explanation of the psychological experiences of the Christian. As our readers know, we have usually aimed at that. It was one of our chief objects in writing *Religion and Sex*. But it is well to be on one's guard against the jargon of the psychological quack.

A. R. CLARK.—Will bear in mind the suggestion of reprinting. It is mainly a question of expense. Printing is such an expensive job nowadays that one has, with but a microscopic capital, to be very cautious on the expenditure side. We are sometimes surprised that we have been able to issue so many new things during the past few years.

S. HART.—We quite agree with you that there is no other religion that is quite like Christianity. That is about the best thing we find in connection with the other religions.

T. REILLY.—Sorry we are unable to use the verses you are good enough to send.

MR. GEORGE BEDBOROUGH writes, "May I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of *Religion and Sex*, a genuinely valuable contribution to the science and literature of a much misunderstood subject." We are pleased to have Mr. Bedborough's appreciation, and he will,

we think, be gratified to learn that the work has settled down to the position of a "steady seller."

CHEMIST (Chicago).—We would have written you, but you omitted address. Very pleased to hear of the success of Mr. Percy Ward's lectures in Chicago. We have no doubt but that the city can do with all the Freethought he can inject into its pious veins.

OWING to the Christmas holidays we are obliged to prepare two copies of the *Freethinker*, and in consequence some letters, as well as two or three contributions to the Sustentation Fund, are held over till our next number.

E. E. STAFFORD.—Next week.

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:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen opens the new course of lectures at the Friars Hall, Blackfriars Bridge Road, on Sunday evening next, with an address on "The Old Freethought in the New Year." The hall is very easy of access, and we hope to have the co-operation of our readers in making these meetings well known. There is no reason that we can see why there should not be regular meetings going on so long as the hall is available, but it is imperative that those who would like the experiment to continue should help the Executive to the extent of advertising the meetings as much as they can. And the best way of advertising is to look out a friend or acquaintance who is not in the habit of attending Freethought lectures and bring him along. The lecturer will see to the rest.

Mr. Cohen's new work, "Theism or Atheism: the Great Alternative," will be published on January 1st. It is a volume that aims at making a thorough examination of the subject, and is divided into two parts. The first part deals exhaustively with the arguments put forward on behalf of the belief in God, and the second part deals no less thoroughly with such subjects as Agnosticism, Spencer's "Unknowable," and with the nature of Atheism. We can safely say that no more complete covering of the ground has ever been attempted, and we shall be surprised if Freethinkers do not find it a very useful armoury of argument against their religious acquaintances. The work will be strongly bound in cloth, gilt lettered, and will be issued at 5s. Those who would like to start the new year well by presenting the work to a likely reader may have seven copies sent for the price of six. The postage on a single copy will be 5d. extra.

We have not succeeded in raising the £1,000 for the Sustentation Fund by the end of the year, as at one time seemed likely, but there is less than £100 wanted to complete that amount. Meanwhile we may note that there was a little confusion in reporting the offer of a friend in last week's issue. This really was that if 184 readers would subscribe 10s. each, making £92, he would give one hundred times 10s., which would make the £142 that was then required. We have received 10s. from Mr. F.

Collins, and 10s. each from Mr. and Mrs. J. Neate in response to this offer. A glance at the subscription list and the list of promises will tell how much is yet required.

Mr. J. Breese writes us that during 1921 he intends taking two copies of the *Freethinker*, and either giving or posting one to a likely reader. He suggests this as a good plan for others to follow as a method of getting regular readers. We hand on the suggestion for the benefit of others. Some of our readers have already adopted this practice, and the result has always been beneficial. And we are quite sure that if the policy were followed by a thousand or two of our readers, we should see a substantial increase in our present circulation.

The death of Olive Schreiner will come to many of her admirers with a sense of personal loss. And as is to be expected from a newspaper press such as ours, no mention whatever was made of her heretical opinions. It has become so much of a rule to act in this way that we have no doubt but that most newspaper writers have ceased to regard it as being dishonest. And yet a more detestable form of moral cowardice and mental crookedness it would be hard to imagine. It is with a view to correct this that we have asked Mr. Lloyd, who was a personal friend of Olive Schreiner, to write something concerning her. We hope that he will write more than one article, and the first will appear in the next number of the *Freethinker*. This will be the beginning of a new volume, and will so serve as an additional inducement to some of our friends to act on the excellent suggestion of Mr. Breese.

We are pleased to see that "The Freethinkers' Society of New York" is busy conducting an agitation to counteract the stupid and iniquitous attempt to turn the clock backward by the introduction and enforcement of the Puritan Sunday. A more radically immoral institution never existed, and it has been a more insidious creator of evil than anything else connected with religion. It is the quintessence of tyranny, hypocrisy, and humbug. There is one thing on which the American Freethinkers may congratulate themselves, and that is that they have a press which is far more ready to report the progress of heresy than our own. An opinion that commands public support does seem to get a "show" in the press. In good old hypocritical England the policy is to pretend that no such opinion exists. Everyone is aware that the contrary is the case, but still the solemn game of humbug is kept up. And there is small wonder that the humbug and hypocrisy bred in the field of religion spreads and contaminates the whole of our social and political life.

Richard Jefferies, says the *Inverness Courier*, in noting Mr. Thorn's recent work, "could have found no abler or more sympathetic interpreter than Mr. Thorn, whose constructive treatise will be warmly received by all those who realise that modern life is not life, and by those who have studied the work of the great writer for themselves." We are glad to see the quality of Mr. Thorn's work as widely recognised as has been the case. We should be only too pleased to see the work reach a second edition during the next few months.

The Glasgow Branch reports a greatly improved audience at its meeting on Sunday last. To-day (December 26) the lecturer is Mr. Harry McLeod, who will take for his subject "Four Years in a Caravan." There will be lantern illustrations, so that one may expect a sprinkling of the younger people. The meeting is held in the Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street, and commences at 12 noon.

Mr. Cohen is visiting Barnsley on Sunday, January 16, 1921. He will lecture twice in the Miners' Hall at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Visitors wishing to have preparations made for tea should communicate with the Secretary, H. Irving, 48 Sheffield Road, Barnsley. Everything possible will be done for their comfort. We believe there are convenient trains to and from Sheffield, Leeds, Wakefield and Huddersfield.

Error is continually at contradiction with itself: the truth never.—*Helvetius*.

Pages From Voltaire.

IV.

(Concluded from p. 805.)

THE QUESTIONS OF ZAPATA.

1767.

[Zapata, a master of arts, elected professor of theology at the University of Salamanca, presented the following questions to the Academic Council in the year 1629. They were suppressed. The Spanish original is in the Library of Brunswick.]

L. I shall have still greater need of your instructions with regard to the *New Testament*; I am afraid that I shall not know what to say when I have to reconcile the two genealogies of Jesus. I shall be told that Matthew² gives Jacob as the father of Joseph, while Luke³ makes him the son of Heli, which is impossible unless we can change *He* into *Ja*, and *li* into *cob*. I shall be asked why the one counts fifty-six generations and the other forty-two, and why they are all different; and, again, why out of the forty-two promised only forty-one are given. Finally, why the genealogical tree should be that of Joseph, who was not the father of Jesus? I am very much afraid of giving a foolish answer, as others have done before me. I trust you will be able to get me out of this difficulty. May I ask if you are of the same opinion as St. Ambrose, who says that *Maria per aurem imprægnata est*; or are you more inclined to that of the reverend Father Sanchez, who says that the virgin birth was a case of auto-fertilization? The subject is a curious one, and Sanchez, I can imagine, was better versed in theology than in human physiology, which, of course, is natural enough, since the art of begetting children is not precisely a Jesuit one.

L.I. If I declare, with Luke, that Augustus had ordered a world-census at the time when Mary was pregnant, that Cyrenius, or Quirinus, published this decree, and that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be numbered; but if people laugh in my face, and antiquarians assure me there never was a census of the Roman Empire, that it was Quintilius Varus, and not Cyrenius, who was governor of Syria at that time, and that Cyrenius governed Syria ten years after the birth of Jesus, I shall be very much embarrassed; no doubt you will be able to get me out of this little difficulty. For is it possible that a sacred book should contain a single falsehood, and yet be sacred?

L.II. When I teach, with Matthew, that the family went into Egypt, I shall be told that it is not true, and that, according to the other evangelists, they stayed in Judæa; and, if I then admit that they stayed in Judæa, I shall be told that they went into Egypt. Is it not simpler to say that a man can be in two places at once, for we know this happened to St. Francis Xavier and to other saints?

L.III. It is not unlikely that astronomers may smile at the star which led the three kings to a stable; but you, who are great astrologers, will be able to explain that phenomenon. Please tell me, especially, how much gold these kings presented; for it is your custom to extract much of it from kings and peoples? And with regard to the fourth king, who was Herod, why did he fear that Jesus, who was born in a stable, should become king of the Jews? Herod was king only by sanction of the Romans; his was an appointment made by Augustus. The massacre of the innocents is somewhat fantastical. I am sorry to find that no Roman historian has reported these things. An ancient and most veracious (as they all are) martyrology reckons fourteen thousand victims. If you want me to add to that number a few more thousands, you have only to say so.

² Matthew i. 16.

³ Luke iii. 23.

LIV. Please let me know how the Devil bore away our God, and perched him on a hill in Galilee, and pointed out to him all the kingdoms of the earth? The Devil's promising to give all these kingdoms to God, if he would fall down and worship him, will come as a shock to many honest folk, and I must ask you to help me remove their doubt.

LV. I beg of you, when you are guests at a marriage feast, to tell me how God, who also went to a marriage feast, came to change the water into wine, especially when the guests were already drunk?

LVI. When you are eating figs for your breakfast towards the end of July, I want you to tell me, if you will, why God, when he was hungry, looked for figs early in March, when it was not the time of figs?

LVII. After I have received your instructions with regard to these marvellous things, I shall have to say that God was condemned to be hanged for original sin. But if someone replies that neither in the *Old Testament*, nor in the *New*, is there any mention of original sin; that we are merely told that Adam was condemned to die in the day when he should eat of the tree of knowledge, although as a matter of fact he did not die; and that Augustine, bishop of Hippo, sometime a Manichean, was the first to give shape to the doctrine of original sin, I put it to you that, as my hearers are not the good folk of Hippo, I am likely to make myself look a fool by talking much, and saying nothing. For when certain disputatious meddlers have pointed out to me that it is impossible that God should suffer because an apple was eaten four thousand years before his birth; and equally impossible that in redeeming the human race he should have left it in the hands of Satan, except for a very few who were elected, I am able to answer only with words, and I hide my head in shame.

LVIII. Will you let me know how your interpret the prophecy which our Lord makes in *Luke* (chap. xxi. 27)? Jesus says explicitly that he will come in a cloud with power and great glory before the generation to which he is speaking shall pass away. He did nothing of this; he did not come in clouds; if he came in a mist or a fog, we know nothing about it. Please tell me what you know about his coming? The apostle Paul, moreover, writes to the 'Thessalonians' that they shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord. Why did they not make this excursion? Does it cost more to go up into the clouds than up to the third heaven?² I crave pardon, but I really prefer *The Clouds* of Aristophanes to those of Paul.

LIX. Must I say with Luke that Jesus went up to heaven from the little town of Bethany? Or am I to say with Matthew that it was from Galilee, where the disciples saw him for the last time? Am I to accept the opinion of a learned doctor who holds that Jesus had one foot in Galilee and the other in Bethany? This seems to me more probable, but I shall await your decision.

LX. I am sure to be asked if Peter was ever at Rome; and I shall, of course, reply that there is no doubt that his pontificate lasted for twenty-five years. The chief reason I shall give is that we have an epistle by the good man, who, by the way, could neither read nor write, and that this epistle is dated from Babylon; this is really no sort of answer to the argument, and I should prefer to have something weightier.

LXI. Will you be good enough to inform me why the *Creed* known as *The Symbol of the Apostles* was drawn up only in the time of Jerome and Rufinus, four hundred years after the age of the apostles? Will you let me know why the first Fathers of the Church never quote any gospels but those that are called apocryphal? Does this not go to prove that the canonical gospels were not yet written?

LXII. Are you not as sorry as I am that the first Christians should have forged so much bad poetry, which they passed off as Sybilline verses, that they should have fabricated the letter of Paul to Seneca, letters of Jesus, letters of Mary, letters of Pilate,³ and that they should have established their sects by hundreds of criminal forgeries punishable in every court of justice in the world? To-day these frauds are recognized by every scholar. We are reduced to calling them pious. It is a serious matter (is it not?) that our truth should be based on falsehood.

LXIII. Will you be good enough to tell me why we have seven sacraments, when Jesus instituted none at all? Why, when Jesus says that he is *trinus*, that he has two natures with two wills, and one person, we make him *trinus* with one person and two natures? Why, when he has two wills, he does not make use of one of them to instruct us in the dogmas of the Christian religion; and why, when he tells us that with his disciples there shall be no first and last, an Archbishop of Toledo has an income of a million ducats, while I have only just enough to live on?

LXIV. I know quite well that the Church is infallible; but is it the Greek Church, the Latin Church, the Church of England, or Denmark, or Sweden, or that of the fine town of Neuchâtel, or that of the primitive Christians known as Quakers, or the Anabaptists, or the Moravians? The Turkish Church has its good points; but it is said that the Chinese Church is much older.

LXV. Am I to understand that His Holiness the Pope is infallible when he has intercourse with his mistress or with his own daughter, or when, at supper, he has a flask of poisoned wine set before Cardinal Adriano di Corneto?⁴ When two Councils anathematize each other, as has often happened, which one of them is infallible?

LXVI. In fine, is it not better not to lose ourselves in this maze of dogma; but to walk in the way of virtue? When, at last, we come before the judgment seat, I hardly imagine that God will ask us whether grace is variable or concurrent, whether marriage is the visible sign of an invisible thing, whether we believe there are ten or nine choirs of angels, whether the Council is above the Pope, or the Pope above the Council. Am I to understand that it is a crime to offer prayers to God in Spanish when we know no word of Latin? Shall we be the objects of his everlasting anger because we have eaten a pennyworth of indifferent meat on a certain day, and shall we enjoy everlasting bliss, my wisest of masters, if we eat with you a costly meal of turbot, sole, and sturgeon? I am certain that at the bottom of your hearts you do not believe these things; you really think that God will judge us according to our works, and not according to the fantastic notions of an Aquinas or a Bonaventure.

Shall I not be doing a good service to humanity by preaching a morality without dogma? This natural morality is so pure and holy, so universal and clear and well established that it appears to come from God himself, resembling light, which, we are told, was his first creation. Has he not endowed us with self-regarding feelings in order to safeguard our existence; benevolence, kindness, and virtue to curb our pride; mutual needs for the creation of social groups; pleasure in the enjoyment of social life; pain, which prompts us to moderate our pleasures; passion, which impels us towards action; and wisdom, which serves as a curb to passion?

³ A French version of the apocryphal *Gospels, Acts, and Epistles* was published by Voltaire. An excellent English translation was issued by William Hone in 1820, and went through a number of editions.

⁴ The allusion is to that model of Christian virtue, Alessandro Borgia, who as Alexander VI. occupied the Papal chair from 1492 to 1503.

¹ I. *Thess.* iv. 17.

² II. *Corinthians* xii. 2.

Has he not inspired in all men who are bound together by social ties an idea of a supreme being, which idea becomes the strongest binding force of the social group? Savages wandering in dense forests have no need of this idea; social duties of which they are ignorant do not touch them in any way; but the moment men group themselves together, God becomes manifest to their reason, they feel the need of justice and adore the deity in the principle of justice. God, who does not require men's worship, receives it, not for his own, but for their sakes; while at the same time he gives them the genius of the arts, without which social life would perish, he gives them the spirit of religion, the first and most natural of the sciences, a divine science whose principle is ever fixed, although we continue to draw it from wrong conclusions.⁵ Will you permit me to proclaim this truth to the noble people of Spain?

LXVII. If you would rather that I should conceal these truths; if you command me to proclaim the miracles of St. James in Galicia, of Our Lady of Atocha, and of Maria of Agreda (who, in her ecstasies, uncovered her posterior parts for the amusement of little boys), you must tell me how I must deal with the stiff-necked people who refuse to believe. Must I put to them the ordinary and extraordinary question for their edification?⁶ When I come across Jewish women of a certain character is it necessary for me to take my pleasure with them before I send them to the stake, and have I the right to carry off a thigh or a rump for my supper with Catholic women of a similar profession?

I await the honour of your reply,

DOMENICO ZAPATA,

Y verdadero, y honrado, y caricativo.

As he had no reply to his question, Zapata began to preach the simple religion of one God, the father of all men, who rewards, punishes, and pardons. He separated truth from falsehood, religion from fanaticism; he taught, and, what is more, practised, virtue; he was kind, generous, and modest; and was burnt at Valladolid, in the year of grace 1631. Pray to God for the soul of brother Zapata.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

POLITICAL, "NECESSITY."

The two great empires Lilliput and Blefuscu have been engaged in a most obstinate war for six and thirty moons past. It began on the following occasion:—It is allowed on all hands that the primitive way of breaking eggs before we eat them, was upon the larger end; but his present majesty's grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers; whereupon, the emperor, his father, published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon severe penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law, that historians tell us there have been six rebellions on that account; wherein one emperor lost his life, and another his crown. It is computed that eleven thousand persons have, at several times, suffered death rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Now, Big-Endian exiles have found so much credit in the Emperor of Blefuscu's court, that a bloody war hath been carried on between the two empires, for thirty-six moons, with various success; during which time we have lost forty capital ships, and a much greater number of smaller vessels, together with thirty thousand of our best seamen and soldiers; and the damage received by the enemy is reckoned to be somewhat greater than ours.—Swift.

⁵ We have here Voltaire's religious beliefs put quite clearly and briefly. Although his conviction of a divinely ordered universe was shaken by the Lisbon earthquake, it was not extirpated. In fact, he never succeeded in reaching Atheism, as did his friends Diderot and Holbach.

⁶ Interrogation by the rack to force a confession of guilt and betrayal of accomplices.

Why Uncle Cecil Went Away.

EXPLAINED BY MARTHA.

UNCLE CECIL said he wanted prayers—family prayers; that was Uncle Cecil's idea, but Uncle Cecil is a back number these days, leastways, in our house.

It's been a puzzle to me how the family's stood him for so long. You see, he happens to be mother's eldest brother, the bad egg of the family, so Ma says. I don't wonder, neither! Real old dog in the manger—so he is.

Disgustin' I calls it, a man who sits at home all day long, sponging on hard-working people, that's what he's been doin' ever since he came back from Canada in nineteen four. There he sits, week in, week out, in the same corner by the fire, readin' his beastly old *Methodist Sentinels*, that serious like as nobody in the house dare so much as say "boo" to a bluebottle.

Cruel, I calls it, to let a man of fifty sit in the best arm-chair by the fire, smoking other people's tobacco: eatin' other people's grub, an' running up a bill at the stationer's for his horrible "religious readin'," as he calls it.

Uncle Cecil hasn't spoken to father for over seven years. You see, mother takes Uncle Cecil's side in everything; leastways, up to about three months ago; that was when he first started this family prayer stunt.

You see, we're not what you might call a religious family: never have been. Father hates parsons and cusses church bells every Sunday.

Mother says as God never made no little apples, let alone Adam and Eve. Then, as for us children, we never wasted two seconds in a Sunday school in our lives. So you see, none of us ain't likely to swell the heavenly choir!

Uncle Cecil's idea was to reform the family: he wanted to "make us fit for the presence of God," them's the very words he used: but he very soon realized he was up against it! He sits there in the corner smoking a stinking old pipe what someone gave him in Ontario about twenty years ago. He smokes all days long and reads his *Methodist Sentinels*; there's a whole pile of them on the floor beside his arm-chair; he keeps on looking through them backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards, mumbling and muttering to himself; closing his eyes an' catchin' his breath; it fair gives you the creeps at times.

If you've never seen Uncle Cecil, you can't imagine what he looks like! Revolting, I calls him; and when he starts lying about the wicked lives we girls are leadin', just because we go to a respectable dance, well, it's a wonder he's got any of his ratty little moustache left. There isn't much now, and, what there is, don't cover up his ugly old mouth.

None of us girls don't like Uncle Cecil. In the first place, he's been a drag on the family for about fourteen years: eatin' us out of house and home. I've never seen a man eat like Uncle Cecil. If *that's* what religion does for your appetite, it isn't respectable; the man eats like a starving pig: anyoldhow, he eats as much as we three girls, mother and father put together: so if ever he gets inside them pearly gates what he's always talkin' about, they'll have to ration him down a bit.

During the war he addressed envelopes for the Religious Tract Association: they never give him a penny for it. There he was, usin' up all our Stephens' Blue Black, and spoilin' all Ma's best tablecloths, to say nothin' of ruining the oilcloth. There's great blobs and splotches of ink on the lino to this very day. He called it a work of God. Silly old chump. We never had no use for religious stuff in our family before Uncle Cecil came back from Canada, and now he's very near gone and upset the happy home.

Still, I shouldn't be worryin' you with all this because the end came sudden. It came about like this

here. Sissie, that's my youngest sister, got chummy with a bloke from Conklins, the Engineers. Nice young feller: sensible, cool-headed, argumentative, and won the Military Cross. Father said he had no serious objection to Sissie bringin' the young man home. So, one night, he came.

This is the excitin' bit. When he got into the sittin' room I introduced him to Mother and Uncle Cecil, and I noticed as Uncle Cecil give him a special sharp look over his cracked eye-glasses. At the same time, young Herbert, that's his name, looks down at the pile of *Methodist Sentinels*, and he smiles, funny like! This was enough for Uncle Cecil, who's a bit sensitive like.

"Don't you laugh at me, young man," says Uncle Cecil, shakin' his *Methodist Sentinel*: real angry he was, too. "I suppose," he says, "you're one of those modern young Atheists who don't believe in God and all that."

"Oo's God?" asks Herbert, with a grin, as he tips a wink to Father. "Oo's God? Never 'eard of the old boy. What is 'ee—a blinkin' Methodist?"

Then we all laughs, Mother an' all. You never see such a scene in all your life. Uncle Cecil gets up out of our best arm-chair, an' waves his arms about like a balmy windmill. There was *Methodist Sentinels* flying about all over the room; one went in the fire and nearly set light to the new plush overmantel.

"Sit down, Cecil," says Ma. "The young man means no 'arm."

But Uncle Cecil went as white as a sheet an' closed his eyes, mumbling an' muttering to isself somethin' awful. "An Atheist," he says, "in my sister's 'house," he says. "A Freethinker—a demon of outer darkness, where there is weepin' an' wailin' an' nashin' o' teeth—engaged to my sister's dear chee-ild!" Then he rolled 'is eyes somethin' dreadful.

Young Herbert only smiled. Said he'd heard worse language in a Y.M.C.A. Uncle Cecil was properly wild: he danced round the room like a maniac.

"Sit down, Cecil," shouts Father. "Don't go insultin' my daughter's intended. I'm glad as she's fixed up with such a sensible young man."

You see, Herbert was recley a way out for Father: a way out he'd been waitin' for ever since Uncle Cecil came back from Canada. Herbert seemed to understand the situation, an' played up fine.

"Wants to interdooce family prayers, does 'ee; the miserable ole 'eathen. 'Onest work is what 'ee wants." Uncle went whiter than ever.

Father smiled affably: it was a great moment for Father.

Well, it all ended in Uncle Cecil packin' up all his *Methodist Sentinels*, an' settin' off for Aunt Annie's down in Islington. Said he wouldn't sleep another night in the Devil's house—that's what he called our little home—the Devil's house. Said we was all eternally damned—children of old Nick and deserving of hell fire. He didn't half carry on!

Anyoldhow, we got rid of him at last. Father sits in the best arm-chair, and warms his toes comfortable like by the fire. Ma looks a lot happier, and Sissie was married last week to young Herbert at the registry office.

I often puzzles me brains thinkin' it over to myself whether it wasn't a put-up job between him an' the old man. I shouldn't wonder! ARTHUR F. THORN.

The idea of justice appears to me so much a truth of the first order, to which the whole universe has given its assent, that the greatest crimes which afflict society are all committed under the false pretence of justice. The greatest of all crimes, at least that which is the most destructive and consequently the most opposite to the design of nature, is war; but there never was an aggressor who did not gloss over his guilt with the pretext of justice.—*Voltaire*.

Christmas Wants.

If I had the power to produce exactly what I want for next Christmas, I would have all the kings and emperors resign, and the people govern themselves.

I would have all the nobility drop their titles and give their lands back to the people. I would have the pope throw away his tiara, take off his sacred vestments, and admit that he is not acting for God—is not infallible—but is just an ordinary man. I would have all the Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and clergymen admit that they know nothing about theology, nothing about hell or heaven, nothing about the destiny of the human race, nothing about devils or ghosts, gods or angels. I would have them tell their "flocks" to think for themselves, to be manly men and womanly women, and to do all in their power to increase the sum of human happiness.

I would have all the professors of colleges, all the teachers in schools of every kind, including those in the Sunday-schools, agree that they would teach only what they know, that they would not palm off guesses as demonstrated truths.

I would like to see all the politicians changed to statesmen—to men who long to make their country great and free—to men who care more for the public good than private gain—men who long to be of use.

I would like to see all the editors of papers and magazines agree to print the truth and nothing but the truth, to avoid misrepresentation, and to let the private affairs of the people alone.

I would like to see drunkenness and prohibition abolished.

I would like to see corporal punishment done away with in every home, in every school, in every asylum, reformatory and prison. Cruelty hardens and degrades, kindness reforms and ennobles.

I would like to see the millionaires unite and form a trust for the public good.

I would like to see an international court established, in which to settle disputes between nations, so that armies could be disbanded and the great navies allowed to rust and rot in perfect peace.

I would like to see the whole of the world free—free from injustice—free from superstition.

This will do for next Christmas. The following Christmas I may want more. R. G. INGERSOLL.

Correspondence.

PHONOGRAPHY AND SPEED.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was interested to see Mr. W. H. Morris's reply to my criticisms in your issue of December 12, and note the sources from which he obtained his information as to Mr. Natham Behrin having written shorthand at the rate of 278 words a minute, and the Hon. Mr. Blake having spoken for $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours at 225-230 words a minute.

I am rather surprised that a gentleman connected with the Press should consider that these statements are "too well established to be impugned merely on the grounds of improbability."

The fact is that these alleged feats are made by interested parties; but where is the *independent evidence* that they were actually accomplished? I have heard a phonograph reproduce a speech at 250 words a minute, the result being an unintelligible gabble, causing much amusement amongst those who heard it. To repeat these exaggerated claims, from whatever source they are obtained, is not evidence.

Many speakers *think* they can speak very fast. For instance Mr. Will Thorne has publicly stated (vide *Pitman's Journal* 7th Feb., 1914) that he speaks at 300 words a minute! Let anyone try to *read* 300 words in one minute so that it can be understood by others. Yet we are told that it is a well established fact for a man to have

written 278 words in a minute for five minutes—nearly five words a second.

Referring again to the Hon. Mr. Blake's speech at 225-230 words a minute, let me give a few facts, as published in the *Phonetic Journal*, 11th August, 1894, as to the rates of prominent orators:—

Mr. Chamberlain	...	148 words per minute
(This was considered exceptional.)		
Mr. Balfour, Sir W. Harcourt, and Sir H. James,		122 words per minute
Mr. Gladstone	...	112 words per minute
Mr. Morley	...	96 words per minute
Mr. Gladstone (Home Rule Speech)		100 words per minute

I may also say that I have Mr. Lloyd George's speech on the Insurance Act, which works out on an average speed of 88 words a minute.

If Mr. Morris would like to go further into this matter with a view of arriving at the truth, I invite him to see Mr. Malone, the Author of Script Phonography at his office—The International Script Shorthand Co., Ltd., 61-62 Chancery Lane, W.C.2. This gentleman has for over thirty years, through the pages of the Script Phonographic Journal, never failed to expose exaggerated and baseless statements which have been foisted upon the credulous public as facts, regarding the speed at which it is possible to articulate language and to write it in shorthand.

W. T. NEWMAN.

[We cannot spare more space to the discussion of this point.—E.D.]

Thomas Paine.

IMMORTAL Paine, triumphant still in death,
In spite of pious slander's poisoned breath,
Thy name shall live, throughout succeeding years,
When reason conquers superstitious fears,
Posterity shall own thee as a friend,
And vindicate thy labour and its end,
From all the libels that religious hate
And cruel falsehood forge and propagate,
Eternal truth shall ultimately rise,
Dispel the host of consecrated lies,
Break thro' the clouds that intercept the light,
And shed conviction on the inquiring sight.
O! Paine, my heart compassionates thy fate,
Unhappy portion of the truly great,
Self-sacrificing souls, who nobly dare,
Where meaner spirits tremble and despair,
Thy voice proclaimed the Age of Reason nigh,
Marshall'd the facts, raised the battle-cry,
Engaged in conflict, heaven's anointed host,
Led on by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Thy triumph great and dread, though incomplete,
Succeeding years, the dire assault repeat.

Consummate leader of a distant van,
Of troops embattled for the good of man,
Thy glorious name illuminates the past,
And grateful hearts shall bless thee to the last,
Due recognition crowns thy active life,
Of self-devoted, and persistent strife,
To further rising truth's all-radiant cause,
And hurl confusion on her shameless foes,
Ranked with the best and noblest of mankind,
A generous heart and rarely gifted mind,
The truth and learning that adorn thy page,
These are thy passports to the farthest age.

LEWIS MCHUGH.

Revolt is a scandal to any government; for the endurance of a people is so notorious, as to be one of the causes why they are made to endure so much; and it is as great a disgrace to the wisdom and humanity of rulers to suffer provocation to exhaust it, as it would be to fathers of families to have their children rise up against them for the sake of the house. If government cannot prevent revolt, it has not right to govern the revolted; for it has not succeeded in attaining the only just end of government, namely, the comfort of the governed.—*Leigh Hunt*.

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