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Spiritualism and the After Life.

The essential thing aimed at by the Spiritualist is the establishment of a belief in a future life by providing proof of communication with the dead. Anything that does not do this is, so far as he is concerned, wide of the mark. Moving tables and levitating bodies he is not, as Spiritualist, at all interested in. He values them as proofs that there is "spirit agency" at work, and they serve this purpose with a great many because with the "vulgar" mind a thing that cannot be at once explained may be attributed to anything the operator wishes. Spirit agency has always been a favourite explanation of anything at all puzzling and unusual, and it has held the field until science has come along and reduced the strange phenomenon to a definite category of natural law, and so good-bye to spirit agency. In any case the only thing that will serve the purpose of the Spiritualist is plain and unmistakable communication with the dead. That is why the central fact of Spiritualism has always been the trance. With the exception of table-tilting messages, the alleged communications from the dead are chiefly delivered through a medium in the trance state, either orally or by means of automatic writing. It is mainly upon the authority of trance utterances that the material manifestations have been taken as products of spirit action, and as action and reaction are equal and opposite, here as elsewhere, the material manifestations have in turn been used to back up the genuineness of trance communications. And the genuineness of what is called the trance may be taken as beyond question—not, be it noted, the genuineness of the Spiritualistic interpretation of the trance state, but the actual occurrence of the state itself.

* * *

What is the "Trance"?

What, then, is the nature of the trance? The answer to that question opens up one of the more recent chapters in the history of psychology, but it is there for all to read who will. We may commence with the old and the new conception of consciousness. To the old psychology the personal consciousness of each was a single indecomposable thing. Just as the old physicist assumed that air and water were "elements," so the psychologist assumed that in dealing with consciousness we were concerned with a *thing*, something that admitted of no further analysis, and that all we had to do was to chronicle its qualities and movements. But just as in the physical sciences the "elements" have had a somewhat disastrous history, one after another being resolved into something else, so consciousness turns out to be not a single indecomposable entity, but, to use William James' admirable expression, "an affair of relations." The personal consciousness of each of us turns out to be a composite structure, a string of experiences which become integrated into a definite whole, is slowly built up, containing many unsuspected possibilities, and is capable of more or less rapid, and more or less complete and permanent disintegration. This is the deliberate conviction of a school of psychologists that is rapidly growing in number and authority; it is an endorsement of that for which the really scientific materialist has for long contended, and the researches of the psycho-analytic school serve to give it a very practical demonstration. "For twenty years past," said the late William James, "I have mistrusted 'consciousness' as an entity; for seven or eight years past I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded."[1] "Consciousness" is the expression of a relation, not the name of a thing.[2]

* * *

Conscious and Sub-Conscious.

If what has been said be accepted as even approximately true, we must conceive of the personality of each being built up in a manner analogous to that in which the nervous system itself has been built up. Just as we have the capacities of the separate cell being built up in nerves and nerve centres, each with its appropriate reflexes, the whole being organized to form that largest group of responses which we imply when we speak of an organism, so we have the different experiences, or awarenesses, built up and organized into the personality which we know as Smith, Jones, or Robinson. Our consciousness is thus the reflection of a unified whole, and so long as it functions as a whole we have expressed the normal personality with which we may happen to be acquainted. The "ego" of each person is thus a complex of experiences, or more correctly a group of complexes, each of which may have its own peculiar reactions to the environment. But a very little reflection will show that the theatre of consciousness displays at any one time but a very small proportion of the total experiences of which we have been conscious. Some of these are so near to consciousness that they

[1] *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 3.

[2] The use of the word "consciousness" helps to give the unwary reader the notion of a thing instead of a relation. That will be avoided if we bear in mind that consciousness is no more than "awareness." To be conscious of a thing is to be aware of it, and the general term "consciousness" covers the totality of things of which we are from moment to moment aware.

are continually appearing and disappearing, and are capable of being revived whenever we need them. But there are others which we find it much more difficult to revive, such as meet us in what we call lapses of "memory"—one of those phrases which help so conveniently to cover our ignorance of what actually occurs. And there are others which we cannot recall at all, which we have completely forgotten. But, and it is very important to remember this, there is probably nothing, certainly very little, that is ever completely lost. It is buried, but not beyond the possibility of resurrection. This has been proved in thousands of experiments, and comes out with peculiar force in experiments with hypnotic subjects. Their presence is shown, too, in such phenomena as automatic writing—foolishly taken as communications from the spirit world —and in crystal gazing. It is these buried experiences recalled from that world of the unconscious, or sub-conscious, which in the hands of the new psycho-analytic school have become so fruitful an instrument of psychological investigation, and have borne such excellent results in the treatment of nervous disorders. This "unconscious" is not merely there, it is always making its presence felt. In fact, as Wundt puts it: "Ultimate psychic processes show that the unconscious is the theatre of the most important mental phenomena. The conscious is always conditioned by the unconscious." Our conscious mental life bears about the same relation to the total mental life as the ripple on the surface of a stream does to its depth.

* * *

Dissociation.

The actions of the normal individual thus show a complete synthesis, a perfect association. Perhaps the word "ideal" would be more appropriate than "normal," for, as a matter of fact, even in what we call normal life the synthesis is very often broken. Of this Freud, in his *Psycho-pathology of Everyday Life*, gives numerous examples. None of these need detain us here, except to note that these breaks create what is known as dissociation. To make the idea of dissociation plain we may picture consciousness as constituting a smoothly flowing stream of "awareness," but accompanied by a deeper stream below consciousness. So long as what rises into consciousness is easily assimilated, there is no break, and the personality remains without noticeable change. But if the emergence of the stream below consciousness be of an abrupt character, or of a kind that refuses to be assimilated, the intruding group of complexes act, so to speak, on their own account, and we have a fresh personality showing itself. One can only present a rough and ready picture of the nature of dissociation, as in the present state of our knowledge the machinery of the process is not quite clear. It may be that it is due to the dropping of certain of the completely synthesised states, which leaves the others free to function, or it may leave them free to form new combinations. But the fact of dissociation is plain. Forgetting a name is what one may call a very normal case of dissociation. We try with all our might to recall it, but fail. And it is worthy of special note that the more we try to recover it, generally, the less we succeed. Normally, we get it better by a process of abstraction, which may be taken to represent an example of ordinary automatism. Substantially, cases of dissociation may be described as the carrying on of mental processes resulting in definite action, of which the normal personality is usually unconscious. At any rate, the fact remains that under certain conditions there may arise spontaneously, or there may be induced under hypnotism (suggestion) a manifestation of character which differs in a more or less decided manner from the one with which we are acquainted normally.

A Change in Personality.

A classical example of dissociation is that of the Rev. Ansel Bourne, as given by Professor James (*Principles of Psychology*, vol.i. pp. 391-3). Ansel Bourne was brought up as a carpenter, but at the age of thirty became an itinerant preacher. During a great part of his life he suffered from headaches, and had experienced a few fits of unconsciousness lasting an hour or less. He was known and respected for his high character. On January 17, 1887, he left home to draw some money from the bank for the purpose of paying off a mortgage. He then disappeared, and all attempts to find him failed. But about three months later a man at Norristown, Pennsylvania, who called himself A. J. Brown, and had rented a small shop for carrying on a fruit and confectionery trade, woke up in a fright and asked the people around to tell him where he was. He said that his name was Ansel Bourne, that he belonged to Providence, and the last he remembered was drawing some money from the bank. Enquiries established the truth of the story and Mr. Bourne returned home. There the matter, for a time, ended. The next thing was to discover what had become of the "Brown" personality. For a time all attempts in this direction failed. But some three years later Professor James induced Mr. Bourne to submit to hypnotism. The "Brown" memory soon manifested itself. In spiritualistic jargon, the "control" had returned. The second personality was ignorant of Mr. Bourne, but he told the experimenters all he did, and they were thus able to reconstruct the whole story from the time that Mr. Bourne drew the money from the bank to his coming to himself in the small shop in Norristown. The whole thing, says James, "was prosaic enough, and the Brown personality appears to be a rather shrunken, dejected, and amnesic extract of Mr. Bourne himself." It is clear that we have a quite naturalistic, even materialistic, explanation of this case, and also that in the hands of a confirmed Spiritualist we should have had a most circumstantial account of the way in which someone from "Summerland" had controlled Mr. Bourne.

(To be Continued) Chapman Cohen.

Has God Ever Cared?

There is really nothing peculiar about the world today. Some people speak of pre-war time as if it were essentially different from post-war time. The war has been the cause of many changes, such as the high cost of living and the emergence of some very poignant industrial unrest and struggle, but the problems involved are by no means new. For many generations Labour has been endeavouring to emancipate itself from the tyranny of Capital, and the cost of living has always been subject to more or less fluctuation. This war has been just like all other wars, only on a bigger scale. The world jogs along now in much the same way it has always done. The variations in the conditions of life have been neither great nor numerous. There were many predictions during the war that once it was over we would all find ourselves in paradise. Great Britain would immediately become a land fit for heroes to live in. But all that talk was nothing but cheap rhetoric, meaning nothing, or very little. The question now is, who and where are the heroes and the conditions worthy of them? "Oh," someone cries, "but we have won the war; we are the glorious victors"; but in winning the war, how much else have we lost? The pulpit indulged in brilliant prophecies, not one of which has been fulfilled; and, meantime, it is for the most part bitterly lamenting their non-fulfilment. Contemplating the existing situation clergymen are asking, "Does God Care?" Among these clergy-

men is the Rev. Dr. Stuart Holden, vicar of St. Paul's, Portman Square, who contributed a sermon on the subject to the *Christian World Pulpit* for July 20. He states the problem fairly in the following passage:—

> Does God care? Does God really care for the state of the world? Is he interested at all in the great mass of men who have no interest in him, at any rate, no conscious interest in him? Is he interested in the great movements, most of them not towards him but away from him? Is he interested, not only in the mass but in the man? Does his greatness condescend to our littleness? Do the things which trouble us move his heart? Is it true that in all our afflictions he is afflicted? Does God really care?

Such is the problem as stated by an ardent believer in and popular servant of God. We know beforehand what his solution will be, but as he occupies a very prominent position in the Christian world it may be worth our while to examine his solution in some detail.

In the first place his estimate of the happenings of the present is, indeed, a gross exaggeration. It is true that the old order changes, giving place to new, but it is false to assert that "probably in the whole history of the world there never was such rapid movement from the centre of things as there is to-day." Is it not possible that the movement, whether rapid or slow, is not away from but towards the centre of things? Is it not likely that a social revolution is not only desirable but absolutely inevitable? Is Dr. Holden himself satisfied with tha present social order, with its artificial class distinctions and antagonisms? Does he not think that the present trend, though away from God and religion, may yet be toward the centre of things? If the mass of men are not interested in God, may it not be true that that is the result of their becoming more interested in themselves and one another? With all these perilous movements afoot, and others even worse threatening, on what grounds does Dr. Holden return an unqualified affirmative to his inquiry? It is all very well to tell his congregation that "nothing is going to satisfy your instinct and mine except a God who does care"; but that proves nothing at all, for he has already admitted that "the mass of men are not interested in God." What about their instinct which is evidently fully satisfied without God's care? The reverend gentleman seems to revel in exaggerations. The following sentence touches the high water mark of unreason: "And if, on any hypothesis whatever, we are led to the conclusion that God does not care, then we know ourselves to be unrested, unsatisfied, pilgrims of the night from now on until we breathe our last." A man who can talk wildly like that is incapable of appreciating solid facts of experience. If he ever comes to the conclusion that God does not care, he knows now that thereafter he will never have a single day of happiness, although there are millions of his fellow-beings who do not believe there is a God to care, but who are much happier now than they ever were while cherishing that belief. It is unmitigated folly to assure a congregation of more or less languid believers that "if God does not care then the foundation of life is removed," for any man worth his salt who makes that discovery will certainly find another foundation which cannot be removed. The reverend gentleman is surely familiar with the fact that the Divine, supernatural foundation of life is at best precarious and insecure, and that the degree of its solidity varies from day to day with the variations in the strength and intensity of the belief in God. The present writer distinctly remembers a somewhat eccentric old Christian who for weeks at a time complained that he enjoyed no blissful visions, that his Heavenly Father never spoke to him, and that all the joy had gone out of his experience, and during such periods, which came rather frequently, he generally went morally astray. Even to the most ardent believers such periods come, when the fire of piety burns low and the light of faith is all but extinguished, and then, naturally, their foundation of life is unreliable and not seldom gives way. But with Secularists the case is fundamentally different. Though they have no God their grip upon life is firmer than that of their Christian neighbours, because it is a natural grip, and the foundation upon which their life's structure rests is the social instinct, the sense of human solidarity. The neighbour is always present, and each one's whole duty consists in cherishing and putting into daily practice the neighbourly, brotherly disposition. For Secularists the question "Does God Care?" does not exist; the only question that really matters to them being, "Do I care for, and am I prepared to serve my brother man?"

What is most amazing is the pulpit's total incapacity to realize that any other life than the Christian is worth living. Dr. Holden says:—

> Does God really care? Of course, if he does not, there is nothing for any of us but the blackness and darkness of despair. If he does not, not merely does the end of life come with death, but the end of hope and the end of existence too.

But that is obviously and egregiously false. The reverend gentleman is in the midst of countless myriads who not only are not in the least interested in God, but do not even believe in his existence, and yet most of them lead cheerful and useful lives. It is a horrible lie to represent them as dwelling in "the blackness and darkness of despair." The star of hope shines brightly in their firmament. As individuals they do not wish to survive death; but they live not for themselves alone, but for the race to which they belong. Their one aim is to make their lives humble contributions to the general welfare. Even the human race is not immortal. A time is coming which will make its existence literally impossible. As the late Joseph Cook, the once famous Boston Monday lecturer, used to say:—

> Long on earth will Man have place;
> Not much longer I.

But while the race lasts the individuals composing it should find their richest delight in being servants of one another. Dr. Holden is in possession of no evidence whatever that individuals survive death; but abundant proofs are within his reach that whatever progress society has ever made is due solely to the whole-hearted devotion of individuals to its interests. By no other means is social advancement possible.

All that Dr. Holden has to cling to is the belief that God cares. We frankly admit that the cherishing of that belief may be productive of considerable emotional enjoyment, just as getting moderately drunk induces a nervous state of pleasurable exaltation. Our only contention is that in individual, national, and international affairs there has never been anything to show that there is a God who lives and cares and guides. Dr. Holden, also, practically admits this in his sermon. He definitely acknowledges that appearances, or the facts of history as we see them, are hostile to his belief; but his point is that we must believe that God cares in spite of all appearances against it. We decline to ignore appearances, or to disbelieve the universal evidence of the facts, and insist upon the truth that the only possible way of making life worth living is by cultivating self-reliance and mutual service among ourselves.

J. T. Lloyd.

> That prophet ill sustains his holy call,
> Who forms not heaven to suit the tastes of all,
> Houries for boys, omnipotence for sages,
> And wings and glory for all ranks and ages.
>
> —*Moore.*

What Science Has Done for Humanity.

Fortunately, neither science nor philanthropy knows any frontiers. *Lord Curzon.*

A monument to Lord Lister, the founder of antiseptic surgery, is to be erected by the Royal Society in Portland Place. *—Daily Paper.*

It is a sign of the times in which we live that forty speeches, in which almost every modern civilized language was used, marked the opening session of the International Conference on Tuberculosis which was inaugurated at Westminster. Few gatherings have ever brought together so many diverse nationalities with but one object, and that, the conquest of a disease whose ravages are world-wide. Addressing the delegates, Lord Curzon, who represented the British Government, said: "You are here to help to relieve mankind of untold but preventable misery. Deaths from consumption in Great Britain and Ireland still amount to a thousand weekly, and in many other countries the figures are much worse."

These are serious words, and they serve to show that science is being used in the direct service of humanity. The dreadful plague of consumption is by no means the only evil being fought by medical men. The clergy are very fond of pointing the finger of scorn at scientists, and of venting feeble fun at the conclusions of science. Did the whole of the 50,000 clergy of this country ever do so much for humanity as Lord Lister? He fought all his life against the horrid shapes that follow the rider on the pale horse. The clergy of all denominations have made death more gruesome; but Lister and Simpson, and the rest of their glorious company, robbed death of half its terrors. As a result of their discoveries death comes as a nurse to a tired child, to patients who had otherwise died in the extremest pangs of woe and suffering. Lister and Simpson saved more lives than all the wars of the nineteenth century had wasted, and they took a black fear out of life.

During the past two generations scientists have revolutionized the study of the causes of diseases. Consider, for a moment, the life-work of Louis Pasteur. The untiring patience of this famous investigator is amazing. From the study of chemistry he went to the study of crystals; from crystals to ferments; from the study of the diseases of wines and beers to the study of the diseases of silkworms; from these to the diseases of poultry, swine, sheep, cattle, and, finally, man. He tracked, like a veritable Sherlock Holmes, the causes of things. He discovered the actual germs of diseases, and turned men's thoughts from the old metaphysical ideas about illnesses fostered by theologians. To his wondering colleagues Pasteur showed the diseases grown in test-tubes, apart from the living body, bottled and cultivated. Of Pasteur's work, it is sufficient here to speak of his discoveries concerning anthrax and rabies. The whole civilized world owes this great Frenchman an enormous debt of gratitude.

The discovery of diphtheria-antitoxin by Pierre Roux in 1894 has saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. This dreadful disease was responsible for the deaths of Princess Alice and her children in 1878. Thanks to scientists the poorest of poor children are better treated now than the old queen's daughter was then. Malta fever, which was responsible for many hundreds of cases yearly among sailors and soldiers, was stamped out by Sir David Bruce. This tedious fever used to necessitate the staying in hospital for one hundred and twenty days of strong men in the prime of life, and often caused permanent wreckage of health. Small pox, which was once a terror that devastated Europe like a huge prairie fire, has now been so restricted by science that it is rare to find a person whose face is pitted with the marks of the dread disease.

Away in far Panama science achieved another notable victory. The attempt of the famous engineer, De Lesseps, to construct the canal connecting the two oceans was frustrated by fever, the labourers dying in hundreds. Thanks to the skill, courage, and knowledge of the American army doctors the cause of the disease was tracked. To-day the canal is an accomplished fact, and the Panama zone is no longer a plague-spot, but a highway of the world's commerce.

The death rate from fevers is to-day the lowest in the records of the world. Typhus, typhoid, cholera, and scarlet-fever are now almost completely under control, and the first three are on the point of extinction. From diphtheria the death-rate used to be one in two, but has since fallen to four per cent.

Science is a real saviour. It keeps tubercle out of the nation's milk jug; it holds plague and cholera at arm's length. During the last great war it was science that safeguarded our soldiers and sailors against fevers, typhoid, lock-jaw, and other horrors. The clergy, who opposed the use of chloroform because they said it interfered with their deity's primal curse upon woman, are not equipped by education and training for passing judgment on scientists. Civilized men cannot accept the criticism of science by barbarians with much enthusiasm. For men may be ordained to the Christian ministry and yet have never been converted to civilization.

Mimnermus.

Theism or Atheism?

Mr. Cohen has been good enough to present me with a copy of his book quite willing that it should be criticized by an opponent, and having learnt what is, indeed, a useful truth; that criticism *ought* to be more profitable than the eulogiums of sympathizing friends. I will try to respond to this generous offer by showing where the arguments in the book seem to me to fail of their purpose. Mr. Cohen's readers expected to find in these chapters sincerity of purpose, wide reading, and lucidity of expression, and they will not be disappointed. Gain will be secured if we can search out together the point whence the divergencies of opinion begin to ramify.

Philosophically speaking, the broad view of human life which is here presented is, in a sense, scientific, that is, professedly at least, such as is based on the evidence of the senses. Whatever turns up is either explained off hand by the application of mechanical principles or relegated to the region of the unknown, which it is futile to explore. That is the general impression one gets from these pages, but before examining it a broad reflection occurs to the mind. The writer is labouring to construct a Universe from which two mental affections would have to be banished: Wonder and Humour, the former more obviously than the latter, but both, I think, definitely, if it is really supposed that the reasoning throughout is sound and the central position tenable. Let us see how this is.

By a mechanical idea of the Universe I mean one that finds a definable cause to account for every experience in life and allows nothing inexplicable to be left. That is, in so many words, to eliminate Wonder. Mr. Cohen won't allow there is anything to wonder at. Freedom of Will which most people find to be a real wonder he denies, and if anyone raises the time-honoured question as to the origin of consciousness he dismisses the problem with a formula, "mind is a function of matter."

That is paramount to saying that whatever causes us to wonder does so because we are ignorant, and as our

knowledge increases wonder must die away. It is, in short, the offspring of ignorance and superstition. Now contrast this with Aristotle's well-known saying that wonder is the parent of philosophy. Both statements cannot be true. Which are we to prefer? I am assuming that Mr. Cohen would allow Aristotle to be a respectable authority. In Lord Haldane's opinion, for example, his was the greatest brain that has ever been known. Notice, further, that the saying is larger than I have given it. "The love of wisdom is the child of wonder." That is to say, if you succeed in knocking all wonder out of a man's mind you deprive him of a very precious thing. I should be sorry to have to live for a single week without wonder; but for the life of me I cannot see how if Mr. Cohen is right it can be anything but the feeling of a fool or a child.

Would not my readers admit that all that a child learns it learns because it begins by wondering? and further, that we learn quicker and more soundly in childhood than when we are grown up? But if Mr. Cohen is right we shall soon have nothing more to learn. If I am misunderstanding the book on this head it would clear the ground if Mr. Cohen were to tell us whether he thinks as our knowledge grows there is less and less to wonder at, or more and more, and if the latter, how is it consistent with a mechanical or materialistic view of things? If the former, is there not something in the fact incompatible with evolution? If Wonder is what Aristotle said, and we are developing into a state of things from which it is banished, I am glad to think I shall not be here to see it. But evolution, I take it, means development into something richer, more glorious, not more impoverished than that in which we now live and move.

Mr. Cohen, I think, does not touch this question, and that is only one instance of what I mean by a sense of disappointment with which I put the book down. There are many huge questions involved which he refrains from. His aim has apparently been to show where his fellow-seekers after truth are illogical. But we are all illogical, else we should not be seekers. Nor should we be if we didn't wonder. There must be some things Mr. Cohen wonders at or he would not try to explain them by saying "there is no God." One of these things must be the state of mind of us poor Christians; it is a source of constant amazement to Mr. Cohen. But when Christianity has been satisfactorily disposed of, labelled, pigeon-holed, as an exploded superstition; when all Theists have been scared into the outer darkness of forgotten delusions, trooping off like the nether ghosts into Erebus, what will he do next? What will become of the *Freethinker* if there are no more gods to laugh at and hammer and expose?

But what about Humour? I am not sure if I have narrated already the following episode in my own experience which will explain the connexion of ideas. When I was an undergraduate at Cambridge there were many very able men about, several of whom were dabbling in Atheism of one sort or another, and we, the younger fry, thought the best thing we could do was to follow suit and penetrate into the same Arcadia, freed from Sunday restrictions which galled us not a little. I remember making a rather gallant attempt to become an Atheist. I admit it didn't last long, but that was because it gave me the impression of walking down into a vast gulf echoing with groans of disappointed seekers and scientific men, among whom I had been hoping to be numbered some day.

But of all the deterrents none was so efficacious as an article written by W. H. Mallock, whose ability I see Mr. Cohen recognizes, in which he pointed out the grim fact that if religion died all humour died with it. Now we were quite prepared in those gay days, about 1876, to find life would be stripped of all silly conventions, moralities, pruderies and the manifold trash in which respectability was habitually draped. But to do without humour was another "bag of tricks" altogether, and yet we could not resist the impression that Mr. Mallock had made out a very good case. For the best definition of Humour is "a sense of incongruous emotions." I believe that is what Dean Inge says of it, and though some of the *Freethinker's* writers batten on deriding the Dean, I doubt if they will define the delicious thing with which we English are richly gifted—up till now—more pertinently than the Dean. But notice, if everything is to be explained mechanically, how con there be anything incongruous? Incongruous with what? Surely there must be a higher and a lower in our estimates of things before there can be any incongruity. If a stout middle-aged man has to pursue his tall hat vainly down a street, with coat tails and hair blown forward, the street boys laugh, though they may help to stop the hat. If two sane visitors to a lunatic asylum were to converse in our presence, each thinking the other was a resident lunatic, Mr. Cohen and I would laugh, at least, I think so. But if we really believed that neither talker had free will and was merely a machine acting on the resultant of all possible influences, there would be nothing to laugh at. Humour, according to a great Christian thinker, is a gift from God to man, to save us from all going mad. In spite of it, madness is far from uncommon to-day, and if the *Freethinker* were to succeed in its crusade, I should look forward to a terrible increase of rates and taxes, for there would be an asylum in every street, and yet a swarm outside of unsuccessful applicants for admission, of very doubtful sanity.

In short, if Humour disappears various inconveniences will increase, and Mr. Cohen will not make converts as quickly as he wishes to, unless he deals seriously with this nightmare.

But there is one sentence in the Preface where Mr. Cohen lets a large cat out of his bag, where he speaks of brotherhood and love as the great hope of the future. I have long suspected that this quadruped was lurking in that bag, but till now we could catch no clear sight of her gay, dappled hide and "trustful grey eye." What difference her appearance on the scene makes I will try to show in another article. E. Lyttelton.

The Myth of Jesus.

VI.

(Continued from page 501.)

We may also understand, and without grave difficulty, just why it is that even the highly cultured and not uncritical *imagine* they find such a convincing character sketch in the Gospels. The faithful Mohammedan finds everywhere in the Koran the highest perfection of literary art. To the infidel Aryan the work makes no such appeal. Wading through its Surahs in quest of gems of thought or expression seems like hunting for pearls among the oyster beds of the Delta. The difference is subjective. Moslem and Christian bring entirely diverse forms of consciousness to face the fact of the Koran. Somewhat similar is the case with the reader of the Gospels. He brings to his perusal an immense weight of prepossession. He is enveloped and permeated by the atmosphere of ages, shaping and tinging the image he beholds in the Gospel, which is thus in large measure his own reflected consciousness. He accepts and rarely questions his first impression, and never suspects that it is mainly a subjective product. But had any such documents been suddenly brought to light in Central Africa he would most probably have formed an entirely other judgment, and scarcely have received them as historical.—*Professor Benjamin Smith, "Ecce Deus,"* 1912, pp. 164-5.

We now come to deal with the crucifixion story, the central myth of Christianity, the event to which all the other incidents recorded in the Gospels are merely a prelude.

Every Christian believes that Jesus died upon the Cross; he may give up the inspiration of the Gospels; he may ignore the Gospel teachings; he may give up

the supernatural and miraculous elements, but about the death on the Cross he has no doubts whatever. Some of the greatest painters have depicted the subject. The crucifix is the most prominent object in every Catholic church, and the high churches of the Established Church. The gruesome figure stares at you from every picture shop. Yet, even if there were an historical Jesus who suffered death at the hands of the Romans it is pretty certain that he was not crucified upon the cross as we see it in our representations.

In the first place the punishment of crucifixion was considered too shameful a punishment to be inflicted upon Roman citizens; it was reserved for slaves or criminals of the worst class. If it was inflicted upon captives it was as a mark of hatred and ignominy. It is not conceivable, therefore, that Pilate, who represented the might and power of Rome, before which all the world bowed down, would order a man in whom he could find no fault to undergo this degrading form of execution, with the added ignominy of being scourged as well. These are details thrown in to heighten the tragedy and arouse the emotions.

There are several learned works dealing with the Cross and Crucifixion, mostly in German and French, but for our purpose we shall find all we require in *The Non-Christian Cross,* by John Denham Parsons, published in 1896, who, for his own satisfaction made a systematic enquiry into the history of the Cross as a symbol, with the result that he produced a very painstaking and scholarly work. Moreover, Mr. Parsons writes "as a son of the Church, and one convinced of its immense potentialities for good." [1] An opinion in which we do not participate, but it is a guarantee that there will be no straining of the evidence to the side of Freethought or scepticism.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Parsons displays a truly scientific spirit and never attempts to get over, or round, the evidence. Mr. Parsons presents the evidence from all parts of the world that the Cross was venerated as a sacred symbol many thousands of years before Christianity, and observes:—

> It is disingenuous to label as Christian what was pre-Christian, and to claim as ours what has been common to the reasoning minds of suffering men and women of all eras. It is equally disingenuous on the part of us Christians to keep in the background the noteworthy fact that even in pre-Christian ages the symbol of that hope (the life-to-come) was—the Cross.[2]

However, there is no need to dwell upon this part of the subject, as we have already dealt with it in previous articles. But let us see what Mr. Parsons makes of the Christian Cross.

He first points out that when we are told that under the rule of Alexander, or Titus, or other ancient rulers, a certain person was crucified, or that so many were crucified at once, or during the reign, and that the instrument of execution was a "cross," we naturally imagine that all these people were executed by being "nailed to a cross-shaped instrument set in the ground, like that to be seen in our fanciful illustrations of the execution of Jesus." But this is by no means the case, for the Greek word *stauros,* which in Lation versions of the New Testament is translated *crux,* and in English versions is rendered as *cross,* "no more meant a cross than the English word stick means a crutch." It is true a stick may be in the shape of a crutch and a stauros may have been in the shape of a cross, but just as a stick is not necessarily a crutch, so a stauros was not necessarily a cross:—

> What the ancients used to signify when they used the word *stauros* can easily be seen by referring to either the Iliad or Odyssey. It will there be found to clearly signify an ordinary pole or stake without any cross-bar. And it is as thus signifying a single piece of wood that the word in question is used throughout the old Greek classics. The stauros used as an instrument of execution was (1) a small pointed pole or stake used for thrusting through the body, so as to pin the latter to the earth, or otherwise render death inevitable; (2) a similar pole or stake fixed in the ground point upwards, upon which the condemned one was forced down till incapable of escaping; (3) a much longer and stouter pole or stake fixed point upwards, upon which the victim, with his hands tied behind him, was lodged in such a way that the point should enter his breast and the weight of the body cause every movement to hasten the end; and (4) a stout unpointed pole or stake set upright in the earth, from which the victim was suspended by a rope round his wrists, which were first tied behind him so that the position might become an agonizing one; or to which the doomed one was bound, or, as in the case of Jesus, nailed. That this last named kind of stauros, which was admittedly that to which Jesus was affixed, had in every case a cross-bar attached, is untrue; that it had in most cases is unlikely; that it had in the case of Jesus is unproven. Even as late as the Middle Ages, the word stauros seems to have primarily signified a straight piece of wood without a cross-bar.[3]

As the same writer further observes, it is altogether unlikely that the ancients—

> in every instance in which they despatched a man by affixing him to a post set in the ground, have gone out of their way to provide the artistic but quite unnecessary cross-bar of our imaginations.[4]
>
> Moreover, there is not, even in the Greek text of the Gospels, a single intimation in the Bible to the effect that the instrument actually used in the case of Jesus was cross-shaped.[5]

As the author justly complains, it is quite misleading to translate the word stauros as "cross" in rendering the Greek documents of the Church into English, and in our lexicons "without carefully explaining that this was, at any rate, not the primary meaning of the word in the days of the Apostles." [6]

But what about the words "crucify" or "crucified" used in the Bible? Do not they mean "fix to a cross" or "fixed to a cross?" In answer to this Mr. Parson observes that,—

> no less than four different Greek words are translated in our Bibles as "crucify" or "crucified," and that not one of the four meant "crucify" or "crucified."
>
> The four words in question are the words *prospegnumi, anastauroo, sustauroo,* and *stauroo.*
>
> The word *prospegnumi,* though translated in our Bibles as "crucify" or "crucified," meant to "fix" to or upon, and meant that only.....
>
> The word *anastauroo* was never used by the old Greek writers as meaning other than to impale upon or with a single piece of timber.
>
> The word *sustauroo* does not occur in pre-Christian writings, and only five times in the Bible against the forty-four times of the word next to be dealt with. Being obviously derived in part from the word stauros, which primarily signified a stake or pale which was a single piece of wood and had no cross-bar, *sustauroo* evidently meant affixion to such a stake or pale.....
>
> The word *stauroo* occurs, as has been said, forty-four times, and of the four words in question by far the most frequently. The meaning of this word is, therefore, of special importance. It is consequently most significant to find, as we do upon due investigation, that wherever it occurs in pre-Christian classics it is used as meaning to impalisade, or stake, or affix to a pale or stake, and has reference, not to crosses, but to single pieces of wood.[7]

[1] Parsons, *Our Sun God,* p. 16; published a year previous to the *Non-Christian Cross.*
[2] Parsons, *The Non-Christian Cross,* p. 177.
[3] Parsons, *The Non-Christian Cross,* pp. 16—7.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 14.
[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 18-9.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 23.
[7] Parsons, *The Non-Christian Cross,* pp. 25-6.

The important fact follows that the early Christians did not venerate the sign of the Cross because it represented the instrument of execution upon which Jesus died, but because it was, and had been for uncounted past ages, a sacred and venerated symbol.

Among the early representations of Christian art there is no picture of Jesus hanging upon the Cross. There is no representation of a crucifix until the sixth century after Christ. W. Mann.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

"No Time for God." This was the title of an article by Mr. James Douglas in a recent number of the *Sunday Express*. It was a typical article—typical of English respectability and of Mr. James Douglas's predominantly moral tone. We know him of old. "Never in my lifetime has religion ebbed so low. Never has the spiritual pulse of the nation beat so feebly.....There are no great voices in the pulpit or on the platform....." It is a very old text, and should be particularly serviceable at a time when most of the Protestant churches are re-stating the fundamentals of their creed. Naturally, the acute perception of Mr. Douglas sees the "tidal wave of materialism" flowing shorewards, but it "has nearly reached its highest point." "There will be a panic in the pig markets of sensual cynicism, England must find time for God."

Anyone who has travelled much on the Continent knows that one of the vices regarded as characteristic of the English is religious cant. The very word is said to have no exact equivalent in any other language. The tendency to moralize, and to infuse large doses of religion into the moralizing, has so far become second nature with Englishmen (and Scotchmen?) that it is now part and parcel of our journalism, our literature, our drama, and the whole national life.

"Who brings a lot brings something for everyone." This might be the motto of our journalists who dabble in religion and materialism. We are not a nation of thinkers, much less a nation of dreamers; but we *are* a business people.

Among the interesting items of news in our contemporary, *Truth*, there is frequently a page of information about "church appointments" and the value of the various livings. From the issue of July 6 we learn that the living of Wheathampstead "is worth about £800 a year with house," and that Buscot, near Lechlade, is "worth about £600 a year with residence." The whole page often reminds one of a column of quotations and comments in a well-conducted commercial journal. We pride ourselves on being a practical people, and in that way England certainly does "find time for God."

Lord Ampthill, presenting the prizes at the speech day proceedings recently, at Bedford School, said he would like to see the words "Fear God" burnt into the heart of every British child. At the present time religion was being attacked and undermined by the powers of evil, not only in this country, but throughout the Empire. The defenders had not reinforced or organized their scattered forces, but the soldiers of Christ would have to arise, and upon those still young the brunt of the fighting would fall. England was not going to become Merrie England once more, or anything like a home for heroes, until religion, the foundation of the social order, had been rendered secure.

The support of religion in schools by our ruling caste is too easily appreciable to need elaboration here. It should never be forgotten, however, that the training in religion differs widely according to the stratum in society from which the boys and girls to be instructed happen to be drawn. For instance, the public school boy is educated largely on exclusively class lines that inevitably tend to make him a prig, and this applies to his attitude to religion quite as much as to anything else. Even at school he is, and feels that he is, a member of a privileged body, and it is no difficult task to instil into his mind respect for "good form" in the presence of religion. In the poorer type of school, on the other hand, religious instruction, if it has any serious effect at all, stunts the thinking faculties and tends to produce the "vulgar" enthusiast so heartily despised by the youthful chivalry of our Great Public Schools. In either case the spirit fostered is naturally commended by every member of the privileged class. The truth or falsehood of what is taught does not enter into the question.

The eighty-second annual report of Muller's Orphanage, Bristol, contains the usual intimation that the institution, founded by a German evangelist, was maintained by prayer without any publicity. The answer to that is that the report itself is circulated freely, numbers being sent to the newspapers for comment. In addition, every boy and girl leaving the Orphanage used to have a copy of George Muller's autobiography given them, and the book always sold freely. These, and other factors for publicity, have always been ignored by the credulous folk who still believe in answers to prayer.

There appears to be a shortage of curates in the Established Church, but the clergy are adding to the number of highly paid officials. Two new bishops, whose diocese will be St. Edmundsbury and Shantung, respectively, were consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The salaries are well above starvation point.

A humourous shop sign may be seen outside a coffee shop in the Commercial Road, East London. It says, "Good pull up for bishops." What adds to the joke is that even Christians are in a minority in that neighbourhood, let alone ecclesiastics.

London is a gloomy place on Sundays, and it is with pleasure that we note that the Guildhall Art Gallery has been open on that day from 3 till 6. The recent exhibition was of unusual interest, for it included the works of living British artists of repute for whose pictures room was not found at the Royal Academy Exhibition. A notable feature of the exhibition was a fine portrait of Sir E. Ray Lankester, and two paintings of outstanding merit from the brush of the Hon. John Collier, a son-in-law of the late Professor Huxley.

Principal Selbie, M.A., D.D., declares that there is no Christian England. "Our politics are not Christian, our education is not Christian, our industrial system is not Christian." The Bishop of St. Albans attributes all our social troubles to "the persistent refusal to accept" the Christian faith. The *Catholic Times* assures us that England is no longer Christian, except in name. What, then, are the 50,000 paid clerics in England doing in return for their stipend, and on what grounds of justice does the Christian religion, Anglican, Nonconformist, or Roman Catholic, enjoy a privileged position in the nation?

On one point, however, we are in complete agreement with Principal Selbie. He says: "We Nonconformists have played the fool exceedingly over the religious education in the day schools." They have. Professing antagonism to the principle of State interference in matters of religion, they have shown, with few exceptions, that as far as education is concerned they are not at all opposed to such interference in the interests of their own denominations.

The *Daily Mail*, London, reports the discovery of fairies of a silvery green in Vancouver and other parts of Canada. We wonder if the fairies are as green as the journalists who write such stuff.

Judge Muligan, speaking at Norwich, referred to the "miscalled education" of the present day. The satire is deserved. When children are taught that Bible legends are sober history it is high time that someone remembered that this is the twentieth century and not the sixteenth.

The *Church Times* (July 22) urges a revival of classical education, and protests vigorously against a system of education based mainly upon scientific and utilitarian principles. It advocates compulsory Greek at the older Universities, and declares that the neglect of classical culture "has brought in its train vulgarity and barbarism." The last two words are typical of the *Times'* vocabulary of depreciation. Even in the cause of religion enthusiasm is so very, very "vulgar." By a sort of natural instinct the *Church Times* shrinks from everything that moves on a lower level than the dwellers in the lofty mansions of Belgravia. Yet the very issue urging Greek contains a sermon by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Oxford, which is liberally besprinkled with Greek quotations that form one huge splash of eyesores in the matter of wrong accents and breathings.

Throughout the English speaking world Roman Catholics made as much capital as possible out of "Protestant Germany's" militarism and aggressiveness. Yet Catholics were one-third of Germany's population, and the ravaging of Belgium, the sinking of the *Lusitania* and hospital ships, and other acts of "frightfulness" they regarded as quite "according to plan." Hertling and Erzberger were both ardent papists and lost no opportunity of justifying those acts. Also, the loathsome Habsburgs, whose treatment of the Czechs and Croats and other subject races made the greater part of their empire a living tragedy for about a century, were pillars of religion and orthodoxy. But Rome can always sanctify the hand of the oppressor who bows the neck to the yoke of her discipline. Such a hand becomes not only perfectly clean but even beautiful.

Canon William Barry, D.D., writing in the *Catholic Times* (July 16), vigorously rebuts the slander, "carefully propagated" by Protestants, that "the Church feared the Bible." This is a "colossal falsehood." Another writer in the same issue exhausts his fund of satire on the resolution passed by the Convocation of Canterbury, opening the pulpits of the Established Church occasionally to Nonconformist ministers. It is interesting, now that the Roman Church and her prelates in England are so devotedly urging the popular reading of the Bible, to compare the conditions in this respect prevailing in Spain, the classic land of religious freedom and human progress. The *Record* (July 21) published a glowing account of the evangelical work carried on by the Spanish Religious Tract and Book Society. (George Borrow's *Bible in Spain* is well worth re-opening just now, though Roman Catholics naturally throw as much discredit upon it as possible.) The *Record* assures us that the Tract Society has brought the truth of the Gospel home to many "who otherwise would have remained in the awful darkness of the Church of Rome, infidelity and indifference." So much "sweet reasonableness" only requires a touch of energy to make it really attractive.

All the Churches and religious organizations, apparently, have been holding conferences and conventions this summer. Such a bewildering profusion of spiritual gatherings moves the *Challenge* to ask if they are worth the time and expense incurred. Unless the things said and heard at them are going to "strike terror" into the heart of a "materialist" society, our contemporary thinks that the conferences are not worth the railway fares spent on them. "Materialism," whose requiem has been sung so often, seems to be a lively corpse. A plethora of conferences, with no real message for the modern mind, is not a sign of health. The probabilities are that those who attend these meetings do not get much more out of them than they anticipate.

A Nonconformist chapel at Willesden has been acquired by a clothing firm, and the pulpit is now used as a cash desk. From collection plate to cash desk represents a distinct advance in the direction of common honesty.

A number of members of the Church of England made a pilgrimage to the rock at Burrington, Somerset, which inspired Toplady to write the popular hymn, "Rock of Ages." This hymn has been described as "a medley of confused imagery." Is that why it is so popular? The hymn has been translated in several languages. We remember reading a literal retranslation into English of the Hindustani version. It was a piece of "literature" well calculated to convey the true spiritual life to the benighted people of India.

From the *Daily Herald* (July 27) we learn that ex-Archdeacon Wakeford, speaking at Lowestoft, said "he would not go back to the Church if they offered him a bishopric." "He felt he was one of those who had shaken off the fettering bonds of conventional Christianity and had gone out to speak to a people, seventy per cent. of whom were outside the pale of the recognized Christian religion." Will Mr. Horatio Bottomley please note?

During the war pious people pretended that the Germans were all Atheists, but now this untruth no longer serves its purpose. The World Alliance for Promoting Friendship Among the Churches has petitioned the Government to allow German missionaries to resume work in the British Empire, and the Colonial Office has consented to permit some Teutonic Christians to resume their activities on conditions. The whole thing is a striking comment on the real value of Christian Brotherhood, and the real significance of soul-saving enterprise among the heathen.

In an article on feminine fashions worn in church, a Sunday newspaper editor declares: "Dress is a trivial and insignificant accident." Is it, indeed? We do not suppose that the editor's female relations would attend a place of worship attired in a blue blanket such as the twelve disciples favoured.

For theft, Douglas P. R. Nun, formerly rector of Hessett, Suffolk, has been sentenced at Bury St. Edmunds to three months' hard labour. He was detected stealing from an offertory box by a verger, who promptly ran him in. "This," as Shakespeare has it, "was the unkindest cut of all."

"The Holy Carpet" of the Mohammedans has been once again taken on pilgrimage to Mecca by the Faithful. It is interesting to note that during its long journey it has been escorted by British troops, and saluted by British warships. The Moslem priests will wink when they meet the Christian missionaries.

It is refreshing to find that some of the clergy are not starving. The Rev. C. C. Thicknesse, rector of Badsworth, has been appointed rector of Wigan, a living worth £1,500 a year.

The Archbishop of York spoke at a Wesleyan Conference at Middlesborough. When Wesley was alive any archbishop would have consigned that body to the place so often mentioned in pulpits.

Canon Barry, the Roman Catholic ecclesiastic, speaking at a conference at Cambridge, suggested the adoption by Catholics of the English authorized version of the Bible in place of the Douay version now in use. If the Roman Catholics adopt the suggestion, we are wondering how they intend to camouflage the "commandment" concerning the worshipping of graven images, and other Protestant "truths."

To Correspondents.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

A. C. Scott.—We are obliged to you for getting two new subscribers. If all our readers would make up their minds to get one new reader between now and the end of the year, 1922 would see us in a flourishing position. We note you are getting your paper from the local agent for the future. Can you induce him to display it?

Fred C. Holden (Los Angeles, U.S.A.).—Thanks for cuttings. See "Sugar Plums."

Howell S. England (Detroit, U.S.A.) and "Chemist" (Chicago). — Notes and newspaper cuttings received. Thanks.

J. Fothergill (Tyne Dock).—Thanks for particulars. "Freethought on Tyneside" in our next.

H. Williams (S. Wales).—Cuttings received with thanks.

D. Macconnell (Bakewell).—We wish every success to your efforts, but the pressure on our space at present necessitates some curtailment of correspondence.

E. C. Hooks (Dorset).—The only work of Voltaire's published by the Pioneer Press is the *Philosophic Dictionary* (abridged), 1s. 3d., postage 1½d.

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Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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Sugar Plums.

In no country is the theologian out for the facts. But, in addition to this negative qualification, English apologists for Christianity are the exclusive possessors of certain positive virtues. By a sure instinct they found that the war was the outcome, not of political conditions, but of German Atheism. The renewed activity of Freethought in Germany (and Europe) since the break-up of monarchy, of a military caste, and an official hierarchy, throws an interesting light not only on English cant but on the relationship of religion to despotic government generally. We have just received from Berlin several copies of *Der Weg* and some leaflets issued by the "Bund der Atheisten," which fully confirm the latter part of this statement. We shall deal with them at greater length next week.

The "Bund der Atheisten," Berlin, issues an occasional small publication, *Für Gottfreies Menschentum* (Humanity without God), which gives condensed reports of the association's meetings and of Freethought propaganda generally. *Der Weg*, edited by Dr. G. Zepler, has for eleven years been known all over Germany, and also abroad, as a vigorous champion of our cause. From these and similar publications recently received two facts stand out very prominently: (1) the necessity of driving so-called religious instruction out of the public schools, and freeing the child from the clutches of superstition, is regarded as an essential condition of Freethought progress; (2) considerable importance is also attached to what is known as the Kirchenaustritt movement. This represents an organized effort to urge those who reject religious dogmas and ideas to withdraw from the Church altogether. In Germany such severance requires a formal declaration of withdrawal.

"O heart of hearts, the chalice of love's fire." On the sixteenth day of this month it will be exactly ninety-nine years since Trelawny snatched that heart from the flames on the shore of the Gulf of Spezzia. In these years time has taken toll of many hearts, but has written nothing perishable upon this one. There is no bust or inscription to our poet's memory in Westminster Abbey or the British Museum, which are reserved for gods like Lord Tennyson and Lord Macaulay. A few more of them in the pantheon will not make much difference one way or another. But museums and abbeys cannot add to Shelley's greatness. The centuries alone can do that.

Next year the centenary of the poet's death will be the occasion for many eulogies and some elucidation of his real attitude to the accepted creeds. When the centenary of the poet's birth was celebrated at Horsham in 1892, Mr. Edmund Gosse "was chosen to officiate as high pontiff," as G. W. Foote said at the time. And high pontiffs and lyric poets of the Shelleyan type do not coalesce to form a particularly attractive figure. All the poet's best writings, declared Mr. Gosse on that occasion, "attest that, whatever name he might call himself, he, more than any other poet of the age, saw God in everything."

In the England that we know this was quite along right and proper lines, and the public conscience left G. B. Shaw and the late G. W. Foote to make what protest they liked. That conscience is as tender as ever, and should not be roughly handled. We shall, then, only point out now that from the day in 1811 when he was expelled from Oxford University for writing *The Necessity of Atheism*, from the publication of *Queen Mab* (1813), *Alastor* (1816), and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), to his latest letters, the key-note to Shelley's whole nature is to be found in his passionate detestation of the religion current throughout Europe, whether in the form of Continental priestcraft or the average Englishman's profession of faith. In one of his very last letters (to Horace Smith), the poet wrote: "If every man said what he thought, it (the existing religion) could not subsist a day." That is even truer now than when Shelley wrote it, but it is part of the Church's business to see that every man does not say what he thinks.

The *Salt Lake Telegram* (July 14) reports that Judge Burnell, of the superior court, has declared unconstitutional an ordinance of the city of Pomona, prohibiting Sunday amusements for which an admission fee was charged. The judge declared the draft was class legislation because, while prohibiting theatres and similar enterprises from operating on Sunday, it allowed churches to take up a collection, which, he said, was virtually an admission fee, at Sunday services. We invite our readers, and especially those who sympathize with the Labour movement, to compare this attitude with the renewed effort being made in Breat Britain to enforce Sabbath observance. From the *Daily Herald* (July 30) we learn that, by eighteen votes to eight, the members of the Cardiff City Council rejected a proposal for permitting Sunday boating on the Roath Park Lake, and that one Labour member voted with the majority.

Mr. George Whitehead began his second lecturing tour in Wales at Swansea last Monday, where he will remain until the 17th instant. From that date to the 28th he will work the Rhondda Valley. On August 25 he is to

debate the question, "Is Christianity an Enemy to Labour?" with Mr. J. Evans, M.A. In our next we hope to give some particulars of Mr. Whitehead's campaign.

We are amused to note that in a short review of Mr. G. B. Shaw's latest book an emancipated reviewer in the new monthly maliciously places him in the category of the old-fashioned. He is a sort of modern Paley, an old school theological philosopher. The *Labour Monthly* is the best thing in journalism yet produced by our Labour friends.

We again remind the public that subscriptions in aid of Mr. W. H. Hunt should be sent to Mr. D. Macconnell, New Street, Bakewell. The list will remain open till the end of this month.

Are there any Freethinkers in Bristol who are sufficiently interested in our cause to give at least their moral support to a little outdoor propaganda during the present summer? If so, they are asked to communicate with Miss E. M. Vance, Secretary, N. S. S., immediately.

The Relativity of Knowledge.

VI.

Summary and Lesson.

Let us now cast a retrospective glance over the ground we have traversed, with a view of bringing into higher relief the main facts noted, and of indicating the lesson taught by them.

Before we began inquiring into the meaning of knowledge we made a brief preliminary study of our sense organs. We did it first prospectively, seeking an answer to the question, "What is the meaning of our organic sensations and sense-impressions?" (if they have any). And we experienced no difficulty in finding the answer to it, for it is palpably obvious that, with no exception, they are all means to an end, and as that end is the same as that of the entire organism, there is no possibility of mistaking it, *viz.*, to maintain its own life and to perpetuate the species. One or other of these two ends is the definite aim of every sensation and sense-impression in the entire contents of mind.

We then considered them retrospectively or genetically, and observed that every sensation, both agreeable and painful, is due to some organic changes in the tissues of the body, and, likewise, that every sense-impression made on its peripheral "outposts and watch-towers"—the sense-organs—as the concomitant of some re-distribution of energy—an absorption, a release, or an expenditure—by or in the substance of the organ concerned, so that each sensation and sense-impression is a psychic symbol or hieroglyph representing in consciousness the physical changes which take place in the material body. They get both their meaning and explanation entirely in their physical or corporeal setting.

Subsequently, we turned to the mind itself, in further search of the prime elements of what we call "knowledge" or "knowing," and found it to be a "conglomerate" of four relations: the relation of a sense-impression to previous ones, whether it is like or different; the relative dispositions of objects and events; their relative order and sequence in time; and their physical descent or parentage, *i.e.*, out of what collocation of conditions and forces did they emerge, and to what changes can they in turn give birth? These are all the elements which enter into the composition of knowledge, and they may be called, respectively, its mental, spatial, temporal, and causal constituents. The first is mental pure and simple; the others are so only indirectly, the relations themselves being "outside" the mind.

If these four be known in respect to any object or event, knowledge of it is complete, since consciousness is aware of no other aspect under which to relate it. It is obvious that the sum-total of such "threads and lines" of relation constitutes the whole of one's knowledge. But genius consists rather in the possession of a superior capacity for detecting obscure and distorted relations than in the magnitude of this totality.

We observed that the animal mind is a compound of the very same four elements, the only difference being that in the sub-human creature they are merely tacitly known by being implied in structure or implanted in instinct, whereas in man they also exist in self consciousness as *ideas*. For this purpose he has evolved in language a fluid receptacle of sound in which they are held in a manner fancifully analogous to the device of the bee for storing its honey, the words of speech being the "cells" of ideas. And, as we said above, what is true of the simplest idea is likewise true of the most composite or complex. You may repeat your abstracting process until the original is lost to view, and you may combine, compound, and permute the results of your abstractions to your heart's content, but you do not uproot by the process a single idea from its physical soil. You may succeed to camouflage its source with verbiage—a favourite performance in metaphysics.

Let me now give two examples of how composite ideas are built up from their elements.

The first is from mixed mathematics. Starting with displacement or motion, which, as we saw, implies space, we combine it with the idea of time, and we get the idea of "rate of motion," *i.e.*, of speed or velocity. Now combine this idea of speed with that of mass and we get the idea of momentum, or "quantity of motion." Combine this momentum with time once more and we get the idea of "rate of change of momentum"—an equivalent of the idea of force. Combine this last again with space and we obtain the notion of energy or work. And, finally, if we again repeat this process by compounding the idea of force with that of time, once more we arrive at the conception of power in the technical sense of "rate of doing work," or what is now usually denoted by the termn "activity"—an idea of no less than six dimensions—mass once, space twice, and time thrice.

Next let us take an example from the other function of mind, the feelings, and consider the relation between human behaviour and sentiency. If you abstract the incentive feelings which produce or cause agreeable sensations or emotions, and idealize them under such terms as love, mercy, or righteousness and their opposites (as divine justice, righteous indignation, or holy wrath), the effect of the actions prompted by these feelings upon sentient beings will be precisely the same, whatever be the emotional associations of the terms by which the incentives are denoted.

It would be dishonest on my part to leave this subject without drawing attention to the important implied truth taught by the discussion. The obvious corollary from it is the essential absurdity of the practice of ascribing mind, or any of its elements, to imaginary incorporeal existences, such as spirits, ghosts, spooks, gods, and that whole ilk of the so-called disembodied beings.

Let the reader but reflect and he cannot fail to realize the palpable and suicidal inconsistency of endowing beings which by hypothesis are immaterial, and whose "life" is wholly independent of physical energy, that is, beings which have *no relation with matter, energy, time, or space,*—of endowing all these fanciful entities with mind whose sole function and meaning is to enable the organism to put itself into spatial and temporal harmony with an environment of matter and energy, so as to maintain its corporeal existence and to perpetuate the species. Is it possible

to conceive of an absurdity more grotesque, or an inconsistency more palpably conflicting?

Such an ascription would be normal in the case of a primitive savage, but in the case of a civilized person of the twentieth century it is wholly unnatural, and is made possible only through the warped state in which the intellect is left by the distorting influences of conventional education.

It is as absolutely anthropomorphic to endow the gods with emotions and intellect as it is to equip them with legs, arms, palate, and nostrils. When will people realize, or be allowed to realize, the truth of so obvious a fact?

I know of no sadder spectacle than that of the bereaved wishing to die, so as to join the departed in "the other world," and who often commit suicide in that belief. I say "sad," not on account of the cruel delusion involved, for delusions are often sweet and pleasant, but because the state of mind betrayed by it indicates how false a guide is our educational machinery for bringing man to a true knowledge of himself and his environment.

Some persons use the expression "creative mind," but until they can justify it by giving proof of its existence and magic potency, and by stating catagorically what it does create, not in a metaphorical sense (a Materialist might well do that), but literally, we are fully entitled to state that the phrase is absolutely without any significant meaning, and consequently to denounce the practice of using it as wholly disingenuous.

KERIDON.

The Voice of the Ages.

To attain any skill in the art of life one cannot afford to reject entirely the wisdom of the ancients, embodied in custom and tradition. No custom can persist through the ages unless it has served some useful purpose, and that which has received the sanction of antiquity cannot be hastily put on one side by the new-born consciousness of one generation. For behind all custom lies the vast instinctive unconscious, not only of the past, but of the reformers themselves. This is not meant for a plea to bolster up ancient abuses, but rather as a warning for careful discrimination in attacking long established usages. If they are not to do more harm than good, iconoclasts must possess the pure vision which proceeds "from the clear to the loftier clear," and has its roots in right living.

This reflection was suggested by a remarkable passage from *The Fijians*, by Basil Thomson, quoted recently by a writer in the *Nation*:—

> In Fijian villages a large house was formerly set apart for the use of the men; it was a club in the day-time, their sleeping place at night, and it was a grave breach of propriety for a woman to enter it. At puberty the lads left their parents' homes and slept in the men's house under the eyes of their elders. As soon as a child was born the father had to live entirely in the men's house for the suckling period, a matter of two or three years. The men's house, besides other social functions, served to prevent immorality before marriage by keeping the youths every night under the care of their elders, and enforced the separation of the parents during the period of nursing. Europeans, medical men and missionaries, treated this institution with contempt. The missionaries taught that the English mode of family life was the only perfect social system, and this produced surprising results. The men's house was gradually deserted by all but the old men; youths went to sleep in their parents' houses (which rarely have more than one compartment), and when once the novel idea of unmarried men sleeping in the same house with women had been digested, the other houses of the village were open to them. Association of the sexes and emancipation from parental control did the rest. The release from the rule of abstinence from the nursing mother, as the natives themselves admit, led to a large number of infant deaths which might have been prevented if the custom had remained in force—a custom which one missionary described as "an absurd and superstitious practice."

This illuminating passage is a melancholy justification of Nietzsche's description of modern man as the animal most thoroughly strayed from his instincts. The rule of conduct evolved from the unvitiated instincts of the Fijians is one which would commend itself to every breeder of valuable animals. What farmer would allow the female to be disturbed during the period of gestation and nursing? It is only in human societies that the privacy of the mother is so invaded. Its paramount importance in maintaining the source of life undefiled is recognized in primitive communities, who live nearest nature, and whose social machinery is so devised that each individual is thereby disciplined to submit himself to the needs of the race. But the missionaries, who boast of a higher civilization, forsooth, denounce these customs. They persuade the unhappy native to run counter to the wisdom of their ancients, embodied in their traditions, and the result is a licence which quickly entails deterioration and destruction. The depredations of these holy men on the human race are not confined to the Fijians. Wherever they tread, there is the same story. "We give birth to mice now, not men," deplores a Matabele woman:—

> They are born unclean and with the white man's plague. To incontinency during pregnancy the native women attribute the decreasing stature of their children and their increasing degeneracy. European missionaries have, moreover, been blind leaders of their converts in sanctioning a relaxation in the rigid rules governing continent gestation and lactation. The native women cannot understand this unnatural deflection from the primeval law of the mother.—(Frances Swiney.)

The monstrous evil is that the missionaries do but smugly repeat to their native hearers opinions current among Western civilizations, where the basic rights of the mother are ignored. Basil Thomson mentions that the medical men, as well as the missionaries, treated the institution of the Fijians' sleeping house with contempt. And those, to whom science has opened her store of know ledge, argue that they may avail themselves of this privilege to satisfy their desires and shake themselves free from the heavy restrictions of negative commands. Well, science has been prostituted to strange uses. Have not the fruits of our physical discoveries been devoted to various means of blowing up our own species in ever larger numbers? And if reason puts no veto on wholesale massacre of adults, why should it not sanction an attack on life at its source? Let men gratify their lust for war and pleasure. Science will be their complaisant assistant in both. Let European doctors and missionaries deride the primitive rules of race hygiene of the Fijians and hold up the English mode of family life as a model to follow. "Chastity is but a dead virtue, and marriage but legalized fornication," was a poet's lamentation over the past generation. Who dare affirm that it is not even more true of the present day? The sanctity enjoyed without question by the nursing mothers among the Fijians is so little practised in England that it has been necessary to found a League, of which one of the aims reads, "To preserve in the woman during the creative periods of gestation and lactation absolute continence." It seems incredible that the enlightened twentieth century should offer its daughters such fruit, and makes one question whether woman has not rather lost than gained by modern civilization.

"Life is but a means to enjoyment. It is impossible to see it otherwise the moment we shake off the

thraldom of systems and creeds." But enjoyment lies in full development of the faculties, and not in the subordination of vital issues to passing self-gratification. The aims of the individual and of the race are satisfied in the creation of a more perfect humanity. But in this lofty purpose, woman is destined to be chief artist. All man's activities should be subservient to this—the production of a fine humanity. And man must realize that he is the mere fertilizer to the plant of life, standing aside to create favourable conditions and allowing full freedom to the artistic creative work of the mother.

In scouting the hygienic precautions of the Fijians, the medical men and missionaries led them from life to death. Freedom from these restraints involved the subjection of the higher to the lower, the imposition of the desire of the individual man upon woman who represents the race, the preference for immediate instead of ultimate aims. For the common sleeping room of the men, absurd as it may seem to Western ideas, took its origin in an imperative need of womanhood and of nature. It was a practical method to attain an ideal, and the sequel showed that the men had not attained the self-discipline which would make this extraneous restraint unnecessary. But if subjective fitness alone can make true freedom possible, what of the white men, who have lost even the ideals of their primitive brethren? Are they not still less fit to practise liberty of action?

The infringement of this right of motherhood, so lightly advocated by our ghostly and bodily advisers, must indubitably have grave results not only on the physical but also on the psychic outfit of the child. The Greeks used to surround the expectant mother with objects of beauty, that she might transmit to her offspring the harmony and joy inspired by such contemplation. We, in our modern wisdom, reverse the process. Is it not more than probable that the sex obsession so strongly marked in the precocious youth and degenerate senility of our cities is largely due to the animality transmitted to the embryo by the lack of self-control on the part of the parents? The weak generosity of woman is here a crime against posterity, and the easy abdication of her primal right cannot be sufficiently denounced. For it is a question of protecting the unborn child, as well as vindicating her own womanhood. In the animal world the female will defend her young with audacious tenacity, even against the male of her own species. Will the human mother fail to do as much for her offspring?

Frances Prewett.

Christian Love; Or, A Dogfight in Doggerel.

(Freely after the Dutch.)

Such travellers' tales Jock had to tell
Of what in Poland him befell
'Twas at an Inn—and Jock you know
Was seated at the window,—so
There in a little country town
Just seated at the window—oh!
Can you imagine what he saw?
Two bulldogs fighting at the door
Lord! how they gulped each other down
Yes! literally so, Woff! woff!
At every snap a paw was off
Or else an ear. It almost reached
A fury such as Calvin preached
Some say indeed it rose above
Even the heights of Christian love.
He rushed to part 'em. Cruel fate
Decreed he got there just too late,—
Two gory tails was all he found,
Two tails scarce wagging on the ground.

W. W. Strickland.

The Problem of Evil, or the Impotence of Christianity.

That a field of grass shall ultimately find its way in the form of butter to our table is wonderful but not mysterious. That the mineral kingdom has an affinity with man, and that it might lead us to hope that in some distant day man has an affinity with the stars is not wonderful but probable. It is speculative as to whether a demonstration of this may make man happier, but present tendencies, following on the domestic convulsions in Europe, would incline us to think that a part of mankind is slowly moving towards truffle hunting. Whether progress consists of a series of movements in curves to finish always on the level of starting, whether light be subject to the law of gravitation, or whether our civilization is the finest you ever tasted, one is forced to admire the simplicity of the author of Proverbs. He states that there are three things, and then, as a glorious afterthought, he adds one more, which are too wonderful for him, and which he knew not. The eagle, the serpent, the ship, and the way of a man with a maid were the cause of a confession—a most humble confession. Or was it a confession wholly free from pride? Or was it a Socratic confession of ignorance, that would place the questioner in the position of Euthyphron? On the other side of the statue of life which all men see differently is the figure of Pico Della Mirondola coming to Rome and offering to defend nine hundred paradoxes drawn from all sources, against all comers. Here is humility of a slightly different order. We do not know if the subject of the born criminal was one of the famous nine hundred. It deserves to be. And little hope of light on the matter shall we get from the Christian world. The doctor's study seems to be a more hopeful source, for piety and crime have a good history of fellowship.

Darkness wars with light. Transpose this and it is equally true. What magnificent material here for a myth maker—a Homer, a Virgil, or a Shakespeare, or even a hymn writer to be fitted with his doggerel fingers and sung to wind through metal pipes. The war between Ahriman and Ormuzd extends backwards to the beginning of time; it is not necessary to be a prophet to assert that the conflict is one that will exist for eternity in spite of ethical movements and archaic faiths in an age of American drinks and Jazz bands. Tremble, my readers, and imagine a world without evil, and once again, imagine an ecclesiastical Labour Exchange besieged by our thousands of moral poulticers out of work. The evils that Christians fight are chimerical, and a chimera has neither length, breadth nor thickness. Let us take a few of the real evils that exist; we have war, the press, and scientific slavery known as the wage-system. We can easily dispose of Christianity's claim in fighting this trinity of evil. And when it comes to a consideration of other evils, such as phthisis, poverty, and crime, we can see the failure of one of the richest organizations for fitting mankind for heaven. Against real evils it is impotent, and the babble of original sin, accepted by many of our prominent writers, is a disgrace to any society having a claim to culture, and heirs to the noble literary tradition of England.

Evil is real, and the symbolism of the brow-sprinklers is only symbolism. The Christian view of evil is an acute angle, whereas, the view of evil by any whose minds are unfettered by religion is somewhat more generous. One half our circle is dark; the other half is light, and it is part of the healthy conditions of a citizen of the world that he makes an affirmation of the existence of evil, and that it cannot be wished away by libation to the gods, by the washing of hands, or by the burning of animal fat. Candle makers, look

to your jobs when the lion lies down with the lamb, and tradesmen, beware! when unfermented grape juice shall be no more. And the weak, the bungled, and the botched, the vessels leaning all awry, all these shall cease to curse their ancestors—if only a miracle could undo the past. A passing thought; which came first, a natural knowledge of consequences or the easy and pleasant manner of saying that the Lord visits the sins of the children unto the third and fourth generation? A God with attributes of jealousy appears to be as human as an ill-tempered man, and his god-head is dethroned by this comparison. And his vengeance is devilish. And it is only natural that his worshippers should believe that local religious revivals will extricate us from the ruins of Europe; Montaigne's parish priest who thought that God was angry with the world because his vine had the blight is a fair example of the squint-eyed philosophers who prayed us into the war, through the war, and would now try to pray us out of war's consequences.

Richard III was a born criminal. The Christian God being the maker of all things must take credit for the hump-backed deformity that once wore a crown. This royal monarch was not slow in seeing the force of the idea that the finest way to close a man's lips was to cut off the man's head. This may be called kingly perception—above and beyond the comprehension of labourers with faces lined and hands knotted and gnarled in the struggle for life. This born criminal gyrates round the throne, wading through blood, to accept at last the symbol of divinity. His reign is brief, and men rejoice to see the day when they can say of him, "The dog is dead."

There is a problem in this villainy, but there is no solution to be found in Christian dogma. One half the circle of death and darkness makes an onslaught on life and light; victory is fleeting, yet, in the law of action and reaction, this king pays the penalty of life by death. His victims are not our problems, as we do not postulate an author who doeth all things well; neither are we concerned with the ceremonial of thrones to impress the ignorant, for this too, is ancient history. What we *are* concerned with is the centralization of power and opportunity for evil. Against this Christians are helpless and hopeless. Our reading of history should prove to us that tremendous power in a few hands is an evil; or have we read in vain the little Corsican's life who sacrificed nearly two million lives for something or other on this pinch of dust called the earth, or have we forgotten the time when the children of the house of Europe were induced to kill each other for the delight and derision of the black and yellow races, the lower races? Mr. Edmund Holmes, who pleads for a re-presentation of Christianity, asserts that the presence of evil in the Universe is a mystery which is impenetrable by human thought. This is an eminently Christian attitude. The great mouth and ear closing word *mystery* goes up; it may silence Christians, who rise, kneel, or stand to order in a house according to book rule and music, but an assertion of this nature is better suited for the period of Moses and the hygiene of Leviticus. It is a confession of weakness and comes well from the Christian source that belittled Nietzsche's idea of the superman—that fought the cinema and being unable to vanquish it—incorporated it for propaganda purposes.

In William Blake we have a man who firmly grasps the nettle of evil; he states that from the contraries of Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate spring what the religious call Good and Evil. These are necessary for human existence; and Christian endeavours to reconcile them result in an attempt to destroy existence. As far as we can gather there is quite a number of rascals bound for heaven; that alone should make us pause to transvalue celestial ideas. Another reason not any less pressing is the question of whether class distinction exists in that place. Surveying the flunkeyism of England towards the lords of the earth this alone raises another objection to heaven being a desirable place—and there we might meet Richard III who had curious leanings toward religion.

To conclude; Christianity has been fortunate in having some of the best minds within its fold, but its attitude towards those manifestations of life that we term real evils has been cowardly or it has not comprehended them. The born criminal cancels a God of goodness. Christianity's attitude towards the war was consistent with its tradition; was the war the born criminal problem on a big scale? What is Christianity's attitude now towards oil fuel for the navy? This is our old friend evil again wearing a mask. We can assume that Christianity will once again rally to the side of press popular enthusiasm in some foreign alliance because it will be discovered that our ships cannot burn the coal we have in our own land. When Freethinkers temporise with that state of mind they deserve to answer to the charge of blasphemy in the high court which has no establishment in Europe at present. And, after all, it resolves itself into a conflict of states of mind—there can be no compromise between the Christian state of mind and the state of mind that includes all history and tradition and religions and uses it for life on this earth, for we are all as wise or as stupid about that undiscovered country,—

From whose bourn no traveller returns.

William Repton.

Correspondence.

"Fooling Round Shakespeare."

To the Editor of the "Freethinker."

Sir,—I suspect "Mimnermus," when he penned last week's article, "Fooling Round Shakespeare," was either "pulling our leg" or fishing for comment, and, if the latter was the objective, he certainly used most alluring bait. Take one sample: "It is, after all, best to fall back on our sense of humour when we hear the cry of the crank or the squeal of the faddist."

The humour comes in when we reflect that, after superficial thought and a glimpse of the history of reform, be it in the field of Ethics or any other source of human progress, including, of course, Freethought, these lapses have been much in evidence.

Surely, surely, "Mimnermus" must know the nature of the ground over which he so carelessly sprints? Either he is in fortunate possession of quite a lot of unpublished information bearing upon the Shakespeare controversy, or he is amazingly, almost miraculously, ignorant of the complexities of the problem, which bids fair to become a rival to even Biblical criticism. I hope "Mimnermus" will treat us to a further article, and if he could bring convincing proofs to show that the popular Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon, the "immortal" Will of Stratford was truly the gifted author, I, for one, shall be grateful, as I confess that my modest studies of works of divers and diverse critics (including those of the late Durning Lawrence, who made a life-time study of this problem, and whose final conclusions were very much opposed to those of "Mimnermus") have left me and many others, if not convinced, at least sceptical. R. Waldo Briggs.

Dr. Lyttelton's Challenge.

Sir,—May I, with great respect, call to the attention of your admired correspondent, Dr. E. Lyttelton, a fact that, by inference, he seems to greatly depreciate? In speaking, in his letter in your issue of June 19, of the doctrine of "Eternal Fires," he calls it "a ghastly, a monstrous perversion of the truth." Very good: but I desire to ask two important questions: *First*, Why does he lay emphasis, as he seems to, on the punishment of an eternal hell, because it is said to follow "directly after death?" *Second*, Why does he not say that Jesus Christ

talked of not only "hell," but "hell *fire*" (almost lovingly), instead of remarking that the powerful brained Calvin taught it?

I do not think that such an important authority as Dr. Lyttelton should be allowed to get away with his comment on hell fire without it being at least drawn to attention that not only Calvin but Jesus Christ almost revelled in that doctrine, whether immediately or remotely following after death being of insignificance in comparison with the fact that not only Calvin but a "much greater" teacher proclaimed it. Philip G. Peabody.

MORTAL OR IMMORTAL?

Sir,—I am reading with much interest your new articles in the *Freethinker* about Spiritualism. I contend there is nothing to prove absolutely that either man or beast survives after death in a so-called spirit form. I regard Spiritualism as a fraud. I don't believe any "medium" ever yet proved the truth of his assertions. It is all a matter of faith or belief. And we know that *some* mediums have been frauds.

It is interesting to see what the Bible says about these things. That book (a collection of books) contradicts itself about immortality the same as it contradicts itself about a lot of other things. Most of us are acquainted of course with those passages which teach the immortality of the soul. But on the other hand other passages teach just the opposite. For instance, the following: "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more" (Job vii. 9).

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go into one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecclesiastes iii. 19-20).

"For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun" (Ecclesiastes ix. 5-6).

These statements plainly teach "materialism," but as other Bible statements teach just the opposite, what dependence can be placed on a book which is so contradictory in its teachings? And yet this book is said to be the "Word of God." Many Christians do not know that these statements are to be found in the Bible at all.

M. Rogers.

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