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Views and Opinions.

Authority and Religion.

It takes so little to satisfy a Christian nowadays, and he has—religiously—so few opportunities for satisfaction, that it seems little short of cruelty to take from him what little comfort he has. His demands on the world become steadily fewer, and he is happy if he is permitted to follow where he once claimed to lead. Thus, there was a time when unless a man professed himself in full accord with the doctrines of Christianity he was damned in both this world and the next. Hardly more than a hundred years ago, Deists, Atheists, and Theists were lumped together in one comprehensive scheme of damnation. And at a still earlier date the teachings of scientific men were carefully scrutinized to see that they contained nothing in conflict with Christian teaching. Many a scientific man has known what it was to work with the shadow of ecclesiastical disapproval over his work, and the promise of prison as a reward for his labours. But times have changed since the aged Galileo was forced to recant his heresy of the earth's motion round the sun, or since Buffon was compelled by religious pressure to disown his teachings. The Christian defender has been driven back from one position after another, until the relations of the Church to science have been completely reversed. It is no longer a question of proving that a scientific deliverance is in accord with Christian teaching. The aim now appears to be to prove that Christian teaching is in accord with science. Nothing delights a clergyman more than to prove that what he says is supported by science, while it is considered a rare achievement to get some prominent professor to give God Almighty a testimonial as to the excellence of his works. We are not even told that we must go to the Church for our knowledge of God, but are invited to track him through the various stages of the evolutionary process, much as a stage detective traces the villain through the three or four acts of an old-fashioned drama. It is a gratifying situation, since it is a confession that if Christianity is not based on common-sense its champions feel it must not openly run counter to its dictates.

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The Value of Testimony.

So when one reads in a religious paper, apropos of the recent meetings of the British Association, that scientific men are no longer opposed to religious teach-

ings, one may be excused a smile. It is, of course, quite easy to get this opinion endorsed by some scientific men, provided the religion about which the opinion is given is sufficiently vague. And even as it is these men are very carefully selected. They are nearly always those who already believe in a religion of some sort. Before the question is put the jury is picked and packed, and after that nothing matters. And the scientist is not asked to say why he believes science supports religion, that would be too risky. His opinion is asked for the benefit of people who for the most part have neither the desire nor the capacity for estimating its value. And, once given, the opinion is advertised as the attitude of science towards religion. With Church and Chapel attendants the trick is easily successful. They read the opinion and then settle down with the comfortable feeling that the whole bag of Christian tricks, from the fall to the atonement, and from the first chapter in Genesis to the last in Revelation is fully endorsed by science. It never occurs to them that the opinion of anyone about science is just an opinion and nothing more. Whether an opinion is of value depends upon whether the man who gives it understands the subject on which he is speaking, and whether it is one on which it is possible for him to know more than anyone else. The opinion of a trained chemist on the interaction of different elements is interesting and deserves respectful attention. His opinion on the making of an apple dumpling may be of no value whatever. An authority is an authority only on a subject on which he is an authority. It seems almost unnecessary to say that, but experience shows it to be one of the most urgently needed lessons.

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The Bogey of Authority.

When hard pressed the Theist is fond of saying that the question of the existence of God is one that lies right outside the domain of science. And so it does, but the implications thereof are not those that suit the religionist. Science, it is true, knows nothing of the existence of God. As Laplace said, he is not a necessary hypothesis. And in taking up that attitude science is saying that it can afford to treat God as a negligible quantity. If he exists he does nothing, and from the point of view of a religious worshipper the difference between a God who does not exist and one who exists but does nothing is very slight. Science not only implies that God does nothing and does not matter, but it says so in all its calculations. The whole of scientific reasoning is based upon the assumption that whatever be the extent or variety of its permutations the substance of the universe is constant. It says that it has only to consider forces that are known, knowable, and constant in their effects. Nowhere does science make the least allowance for the existence of a God who does anything or who interferes in the slightest degree with the operation of natural forces. It says quite plainly, "I know nothing of a God, or if there is one there does not appear the least reason why we should bother about him. He does not interfere with things and we have no need to count on his acting either positively or negatively."

And a mere profession of belief in something that may exist somewhere or other is quite valueless at the side of this definite and uncompromising attitude. A profession of belief by a scientific worker may be an interesting piece of biography, it may afford material for the psychologist curious in his tracking of the movements of men's minds, but it is not of the least value as a contribution to scientific thought.

* * *

What is the Use of Religion?

It is also strange that few of these Christian advocates appear to realize that even though they were right in saying that science endorses all that Christianity teaches, they would only gain victory by achieving defeat. If religion is to justify its existence, if it is also to justify the immense amount of time and energy spent on it, it can only do so by proving that it has something to say that cannot be said elsewhere, or that it performs functions that cannot be performed by others. If, however, religion is only saying in another way all that science has already told us, there seems no reason why we should not scrap the whole machinery of religion. We can lose nothing by letting religion go. In terms of this defence of religion we already know all that religion can tell us. If, on the other hand, religion has an independent message of its own, then the plea that science endorses the teachings of religion will not hold. The religionist cannot have it both ways. He cannot claim one moment that religion and science are one, and the next that religion gives us something that science cannot give us. And in the latter event it is left for the religionist to tell us what it is that he has to teach which cannot be as well taught by non-religious methods. There cannot be independence and identity at the same time.

Faraday and Faith. * * *

When Faraday was asked how it was that he, possessing the scientific knowledge he did, could yet belong to an obscure and insignificant religious sect, teaching doctrines that were an affront to common-sense, he replied that he never reasoned about his religious beliefs; if he did he would not hold them. Faraday's case is really a typical one. If a scientific man applied to religion the same tests that he uses in his scientific work, and the same canons of judgment, there is not one of them that could claim to believe in religion. As it is, it is plain that their profession of belief is not the result of their scientific knowledge, but a survival from their earlier years. They are not scientists first and religionists afterwards, it is the other way about. They were taught religion in their youth, they held to it during their maturity, and their continuing to hold it is evidence only of the power of habit—when it is not a concession to convention, and a reluctance to fly in the face of established opinion. Their religious beliefs are in the nature of survivals. The truth of this statement is seen in the fact that they become steadily more attenuated. Powerless as scientific knowledge appears to be to wipe out religious beliefs altogether, it is yet strong enough to tone it down considerably. The God they profess is not the God they began with. It has become a mere abstraction, of no particular value to anyone, and only useful as a method of imposing upon the rest of the people.

* * *

The Shibboleth of Great Names.

To return to the point from which we set out. Many years ago a brilliant man, Kingdon Clifford, pointed out, in dealing with this question of authority in matters of opinion, that a man can only be an authority so long as he is sane, truthful, and dealing with a subject concerning which it is possible for him

to possess knowledge. But let a man be ever so sane, ever so truthful, and ever so profound, what knowledge can he have of a region that is inaccessible to human intelligence? Here his ability, if it is to do him real service, can only function to teach him that he has no ground for either belief or affirmation. The opinion of the wisest of men on the existence of God is equal to that of the fool—indeed, the wise man approximates to the fool in proportion to the certainty of his affirmations. That is one of the chief reasons why all that has been written on behalf of the existence of God has never enriched human knowledge nor advanced human happiness by one iota. Man's need is not to know God, or to worship God, but to know and to serve his fellows. And the invocation of great names in order to secure the silence of some and the assent of others is but one of the many ways in which religion is used in a civilized society in order to exploit the ignorance and the credulity of mankind.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Knowledge versus Faith.

THE Rev. N. Macleod Caie, B.D., is by profession a Christian apologist. One knows beforehand what an honest clergyman will say on almost any subject. His views are public property ere he expresses them. Mr. Caie contributed an article entitled "Christ and Socrates" to the *Christian World* for September 29, but we did not need to read it in order to ascertain the writer's estimate of the relative merits of the two characters. It is his one business in life to put and keep Christ in a category of his own, into which no other, however great and noble, can be admitted. Mr. Caie, like the scholar he is, recognizes the greatness of the Athenian dialectician, but the following conclusion was inevitable:—

As the morning dispenses with the star, and he who has beheld the Matterhorn thinks little of Ben Nevis, St. Paul's entire horizon is occupied, not with Socrates, but with Christ.

Christ! I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you;

Aye for me too he greatly hath sufficed.

Lo, with no winning words I would entice you;

Paul hath no honour and no friend but Christ!

No other judgment is even possible to a Christian minister. Yet such was the indisputable greatness of Socrates that he was held in high esteem by more than one Church Father. Justin Martyr, for example, states that he "knew Christ in part," "for," he adds, "Christ is the personal appearance of the Reason which dwells in every man." "Yet," he concludes, "Socrates has never given any man such faith that he would die for Socratic teaching. But for Christ, not only philosophers but artisans will go to death." Clement of Alexandria was another Father for whom Greek philosophy was a schoolmaster leading to Christ as the Law had been to the Jews. According to Mr. Caie, both the teaching and character of Socrates, as compared with those of Christ, "are inevitably defective."

Thus we are led to the fundamental distinction between Christ and Socrates. In Socratic teaching the supreme emphasis is upon knowledge, while in the Christian religion the all-important and vital word is faith. Mr. Caie's inference is that Christ is greater than Socrates, because faith is of infinitely superior value to knowledge. These are his words:—

The philosophy of Socrates is not so much a body of doctrines as a spirit of inquiry after truth. One of his disciples—he closely resembled Christ in his way of gathering disciples—consulted the Delphic Oracle and asked if anyone was wiser than Socrates. The reply was "None." Puzzled at first, since he knew he had no great wisdom, Socrates soon found that here lay the very secret of his wisdom. He knew his

own ignorance. Thenceforward, he believed he had been given a Divine mission to teach men their own ignorance and lead them to genuine knowledge. This knowledge, he held, was virtue, and for its attainment the most needful thing was that childlike spirit which, as Lord Bacon says, is the key both to the kingdom of science and the kingdom of heaven. It need not be said that Christ sought to redeem mankind not through knowledge of truth, but through personal faith in himself.

That is a thoroughly accurate statement of the radical contrast between Christ and Socrates, and it remains to this day the outstanding contrast between Christianity and science. In the estimation of the authorities at Athens Socrates was a most dangerous heresiarch. They brought a charge of Atheism against him simply because he waxed merry at the expense of the conventional religion of the day, and this charge involved another, namely, that of corrupting the morals of the people, especially the young. On these charges he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. He was a Rationalist who loved his fellow-men and wished to serve them; but the only way in which he could serve them was by endeavouring to convince them of their ignorance, and of the beauty and utility of knowledge. This was the only theme of his discourses, and his constant insistence upon it annoyed several of his friends. He once had a dialogue concerning justice with Hippias of Elis, who had just returned to Athens after a lengthened absence. He met Socrates as he was telling some people "how surprising it was that, if a man wished to have another taught to be a shoemaker, or a carpenter, or a worker in brass, or a rider, he was at no loss whither he should send him to effect his object, while as to justice, if anyone wished either to learn it himself, or to have his son or his slave taught it, he did not know whither he should go to obtain his desire." Hearing that remark, Hippias said, as if joking with him: "What! are you still saying the same things, Socrates, that I heard from you so long ago?" "Yes," answered Socrates, "and what is more wonderful, I am not only saying the same things, but am saying them on the same subjects; but you, perhaps, from being possessed of such variety of knowledge, never say the same things on the same subjects." "Certainly," said Hippias, "I do always try to say something new." Then Socrates tried to convince him that there was nothing new to be said about justice any more than about the alphabet. "If anyone were to ask you how many and what letters are in the word 'Socrates,' would you try to say sometimes one thing, and sometimes another; or to people who might ask you about numbers, as whether twice five are ten, would you not give the same answer at one time as at another?" Hippias was easily driven into a corner, and, as usual, the inimitable debater scored a magnificent triumph. He always talked of cobblers and carpenters because they understood their business; but how few people know what justice is. As Mr. A. D. Lindsay well says:—

In Plato we continually find Socrates asking: Who can teach virtue, as a carpenter can teach carpentering? Any one can say what medicine is, why can you not say in the same way what justice is? He is continually holding up as an example the businesslike and scientific procedure of the craftsman and asking why it is not followed in morals. He was always talking of carpenters and cobblers because the likeness between virtue and the crafts was the most important part of his teaching.

About virtue, therefore, there is no mystery whatever. It is a purely human quality to be acquired by purely natural means, like proficiency in any of the crafts by which men live. The Christian teaching, on the contrary, is that men may be made good by the power

of supernatural grace in their hearts, virtue being the fruit of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel message is this: "Surrender yourselves to God in Christ, and through reliance on him you shall be saved." Socrates would have pronounced that message unspeakably absurd as well as false. What he attempted was the complete rationalization of morality, or the literal identification of knowledge and virtue. By knowledge he meant practical wisdom, and by virtue practical wisdom in operation. To quote Mr. Lindsay again:—

The first essential in a skilled craft is to know what you want to produce. It is unthinkable that a craftsman should start out to make something he knows not what. He must first know what is wanted, the size of the shoe or the specifications of the ship, and then proceed to discover how the desired result comes about. Given knowledge of the end and of the means to effect it no more is needed. Without such knowledge nothing can be done. This working principle Socrates applied to life. All men seek the good. That is the end of life. Then they must first find what it is and what produces it. Such knowledge should differentiate the good man from the bad as it differentiates the good from the bad craftsman. Hence the double paradox of Socrates: Men only do wrong through ignorance, since obviously all men desire the good, and if they fail to obtain it, it is because they have not apprehended it clearly or have taken the wrong means to effect it; and, secondly, no one can be good without knowledge and skill, although when questioned nobody seemed to have that knowledge.

Such is Socratism in a nutshell. There are numerous objections often raised against it, and some of them are extremely formidable; but at the very worst Socrates is a much more reliable guide in matters of conduct than Christ. It remains for ever true that no man can be made good by magic or miracle. It is quite true that in every life there are and always will be irrational elements, such as certain rudimentary instincts, over which we have no control; but in all its higher aspects conduct must be governed by knowledge and inspired by an ever evolving social sense. Is it not perfectly clear, then, that the superstitious conception of life is completely discredited with its crude doctrines of atonement, forgiveness, and supernatural regeneration? There are no results, either national or international, to demonstrate the truth of such doctrines. To say that "the life and death of Jesus are those of a God" is to pronounce them unbelievable and unthinkable. As a moulding or transforming force in life God has never done himself credit, and those who trust in him are few and far between. We fail to see what Mr. Caie means by saying that "the Passion of our Lord, at all events, stands in a category by itself." The Gospel Jesus is a myth, pure and simple. He is an utterly impossible being, while Socrates, whether as depicted by Xenophon or by Plato, was merely a man of genius, of like faculties and passions with ourselves. Certainly, Mr. Caie has no ground whatever for the assertion that "Socrates himself would have aspired to no higher honour than that of being a forerunner of Christ among the Greeks," and that "to that honour he is justly entitled." The highest honour to which he aspired was to be a teacher of rationalized morality, and to that honour he is justly entitled. He is generally misunderstood and condemned; but as the writer of the short article on him in *Nelson's Encyclopaedia* well puts it:—

His famous doctrines that virtue is knowledge and that no man willingly chooses what is evil, are apt to seem strangely paradoxical to us. But this is due not so much to our truer views of morality as to our more superficial views of what constitutes knowledge.

Two Infidel Tombs.

With glooming robes purpleal, cypress crowned.
—Francis Thompson.

They dwell apart, a calm, heroic band,
Not tasting toil or pain. —William Morris.

AMONG the unnumbered wonders of the Eternal City the tree-clad burial ground outside the Porta San Paola holds a place apart in the affections of men. Pilgrims come from remote corners of the earth to linger in the quiet corner where the infidel John Keats lies beside his friend, Joseph Severn, his gravestone bearing the bitter words, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Not far away rises the slope where the generous heart of Percy Bysshe Shelley lies buried beside the body of his friend, Edward Trelawny. Time has since played havoc with this old Protestant Cemetery at Rome, but when Shelley visited it years before his own death, he described it as "the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld," and, in the preface to *Adonais*, he repeats the praise: "It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." There are other Shelleyan associations with this old-world cemetery. The poet's little son, William, was buried there. No stone marks the child's grave, for Shelley and Mary were unable to superintend the erection of a tombstone.

Shelley's death was untimely. He was drowned in the sea he loved so well, and whose praises he had so often sung. From his early years the sea ever had a fascination for him. Even as a boy he loved to watch the drifting of paper boats down a stream, and he thought that drowning would be the most beautiful of deaths. Three times he had narrow escapes from shipwrecks—once in the English Channel, once on the Lake of Geneva, and off the coast of Italy. Shelley was unfortunate with all his boats. His first wife, Harriet, sought the same mode of death which at last overtook the poet himself.

Though few have noticed it, Shelley often prophesied his own fate. In *Julian and Maddalo* he makes Byron ("Count Maddalo") address him as "a perilous infidel," and the warning concludes, "Beware, if you can't swim." The last lines of *Adonais* might be read as an anticipation of his own death by drowning. In *Alastor* we read:—

A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone death on the drear ocean's waste.

The glorious *Ode to Liberty* closes on the same fateful and pathetic note; whilst the *Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples* echo the same thought. In a dirge, written in 1817, he reverts to the idea.

What Shelley might have done had he lived longer, or whether he would have lived much longer if he had not been drowned, are mere speculations. His friend, Trelawny, was of opinion that the poet would have lived to a good age, as his father did. Shelley himself, shortly before his untimely end, said, "I am ninety," meaning that he had lived and felt so intensely that he felt older than his years. Nor was it an idle boast, for he was himself the Julian of his poem:—

Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth.

Shelley was the poet of the Revolution. On his birthday, August 4, 1792, it was decreed by the National Assembly that Louis was no longer king of France. On the same day the Emperor of Germany and the King of Prussia declared their opposition to the Revolution, and threatened Paris with "the most dreadful and terrible justice." Nor is this all, for Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Shelley's Mary, had just issued her famous manifesto, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*. This was the world in which

men were living on that quiet day when the great poet first saw the light in the little room looking on the peaceful Sussex pastures.

Talk of miracles! What marvel is like genius? In that room, in that quiet country dwelling, from a rough, country squire, and from a mother who was nothing remarkable, sprang *Adonais*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and some of the loveliest poems of a thousand years of British literature. If, instead of Shelley, an ordinary country boy had been produced on that August day, everyone would have thought it natural, but instead of a bucolic squire we have a master of poetical music, and a thinker centuries ahead of his own time. His own generation hated him, reviled him; but his deathless song made its way and will be hailed ultimately as the Gospel of Humanity.

John Keats's grave is the older in this Roman cemetery. Shelley sang his brother-poet's death-song in *Adonais*, and coupled Keats's name with his own for ever. When Keats was dying of consumption his friend Severn held him in his arms for seven hours. Is not this the true pathos and sublime of human life? Is there a diviner thing in the world than human affection shining through the mists of death?

Because of these "infidel" graves generations of visitors to Rome make pilgrimage to where they lie beside the Pauline Gate at the opening of the Ossian Way. It is a public confession that the two great Freethought poets confer glory upon the Eternal City, and that it is made more honourable and illustrious by their presence.

MIMNERMUS.

Let Us Clear Our Minds of Cant!

II.

(Concluded from page 630.)

THE theory of the supreme beauty of the life and character of Jesus of Nazareth can clearly be based alone upon the testimony to be found in the Gospels. Now, what do we find in the Gospels? Let us take as our text the Gospel of Mark, pronounced by the consensus of modern criticism to be the oldest, and hence, presumably, most authoritative statement of the biographical facts, if we assume any historical basis for the Gospel story at all. The slight variations or additions of the other two "synoptic" Gospels do not tend to invalidate any judgment founded on the narrative in Mark. Now, in reading the Gospel of Mark once more carefully through, pen in hand, what do I find indicating any marked superiority of character as against other propagandists in the world's history, or, indeed, over the good man in general? I confess I look in vain for any indication of special excellencies above the rest of mortals. That Lombroso should have regarded the protagonist of the Christian faith pathologically as a victim of megalomania is hardly surprising when one reads through the narrative impartially. But be this as it may, the traits of character discoverable are, I submit, by no means always such as in the ordinary human being would be calculated to inspire special admiration. The first thing that strikes one is the profusion of miracles recorded. But since this common characteristic of the religious and quasi-religious propagandist of the period is not that which, whether he believes in miracles or not, the modern up-to-date Christian regards as the fulcrum and *sine qua non* of his faith, we may pass this aspect over lightly. One feature of this side of the narrative is noteworthy however. We read repeatedly that Jesus Christ issued particular injunctions to the miraculously healed that they should "tell no man," which injunctions, we are further informed, they conspicuously disregarded. Yet this disregard never seemed to excite disapproval on the part of the

"master." On the contrary, the impression conveyed is that the repeated ignoring of the latter's repeated behest was not unexpected or disagreeable to the author of it.

Among the special utterances recorded, most of them, it must be noticed, are those indicating intolerance and hatred, *e.g.*, the non-forgiveness of the "sin against the Holy Ghost," the denunciation of those "ashamed of me and of my words," the threats to "unbelievers" of damnation and "the worm that dieth not," the curse upon those who refuse to receive his disciples into their houses and upon the cities who reject their teaching, that "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" than for them. In one case recorded, at least, this spiteful bitterness amounts to what, if attributed to anyone else would be deemed silly childishness. I refer to the cursing of the fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season.

On the other side what do we have in this same meagre and avowedly partisan narrative mainly of the acts and sayings of the "master" during three years? It is true we have the episode of the children. But is humane kindness to children such a very rare thing even in this wicked world? Would not so mundane a character as a modern parliamentary candidate, anxious to ingratiate himself with his female constituents, not say in effect, "Suffer little children" and "forbid them not"? Again, we have the preaching of certain admirable ethical precepts. But we must not forget that these precepts have every one of them been traced to earlier sources chiefly rabbinical, and that some at least of them have not been improved in their transmission as given in the Gospels. For example, the noble precept of forgiveness of injuries and kindness to enemies contained in the Talmud is travestied in the Gospels not merely into loving one's enemies (itself rather a large order), but into the positively grotesque form of "turning the other cheek to the smiter," etc.

It is certain that it is difficult to trace any intrinsic originality in any of the ethical principles enunciated in the Gospel discourses. And what was the special doctrine taught otherwise? The answer will be at once, I take it, the fatherhood of God. But, I ask, how can this dogma appeal to the modern mind whose reason indicates that the works and action of this imagined personal Creator and Providence of the world are sufficient condemnation of him? How would the millions of starving Russians feel about their father in heaven? How can it appeal in any practical and living fashion to those who see no angels take charge of even the believing Christian when about to "dash" his "foot against a stone," not to speak of the outside children of God? For the enormous majority of the civilized world in the present day the "fatherhood of God" is plainly nought but a cant phrase.

What, then, remains of the superlative excellencies of him who is referred to as "our Blessed Lord"? Is it his sinlessness? But in the first place what guarantee of this "sinlessness" have we? The meagre partisan narrative of the Gospels certainly does not offer any proof of it. Again, it is at least a moot point whether a sinless character is necessarily the best or the most desirable. What is meant by sinlessness? Originally in primitive society sin meant the breaking of a taboo. With the ethics of introspection which supervened in the dawn of civilization it acquired the vague meaning of purity of soul symbolized in certain religious rites. Nowadays sinlessness might be conceived as embodied in a prize Nonconformist, *i.e.*, a man who not only abstained from "vice," who abjured alcohol, sexuality, gambling, "cursing and swearing," etc., but whose heart and

desires were absolutely cold to all mundane pleasures; and I suppose it is in this sense that the modern Christian applies it to the reputed founder of Christianity. But after all we are told in one of the Gospels that he drank wine (think of it O ye of the United Kingdom Alliance!) while the amount of strong language attributed to him in all of them would certainly shock the Nonconformist conscience if uttered to-day.

But the question still remains an open one—whether the complete absence of conventional vice in a man is desirable? A man without the slightest tincture of what is commonly termed vice is seldom lovable. Calvin and Robespierre were apparently such men, but are they attractive personalities? A modicum of "sin" in a man, after all, generally makes him more human. Whether this be the case or not, it is enough for my purpose to point out that the Gospels certainly do not afford us any evidence of the "sinlessness" of their hero, or even lay any distinct and positive claim to it. The central figure is, indeed, represented as claiming that he is "meek and lowly of heart," but one would think a boast of this kind would indicate that, whatever else he might be, he who made it could, by this very fact, hardly be considered to have justified the particular claim in question.

The fact is we are apt to forget the important truth that there are more "blessed words" than "Mesopotamia." The word "Jesus," like "Mesopotamia," has a special psychological flavour of its own with minds brought up under certain influences. As we all know, "Jesus" is simply the Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua." But yet one cannot substitute one for the other without destroying this psychological, or, if you will, sentimental, flavour. For example, think of the old hymn beginning "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!" Surely it will be generally admitted that one could not effectively change this into "How sweet the name of Joshua sounds, etc." It wouldn't work. The glamour would be gone. In the case of the Gospel you have not a single word, but a whole narrative. Now I submit that the character described in this narrative produces a psychological effect of sentimental admiration precisely analogous to that of the name "Jesus" (as against "Joshua"), or the word "Mesopotamia," on minds dominated by Christian associations.

It may be said: Why not let people enjoy their God and their Christ? Why seek to disillusion them of their prejudices? I answer that every ideal object of devotion, when not founded on truth and reality, is baneful. To worship a Creator and Providence whose works are evil, or to look up to a faulty quasi-historical character as an ideal type of excellence, is indirectly, at least, demoralizing. Add to this that in a vast number of cases the adoration and the admiration are pure conventional lies, and hence that to favour such is simply encouraging hypocrisy. In the idealistic this-world outlook which most consistent Rationalists, whether Socialist, Positivist, Ethicist or what not, are agreed in regarding as the basis of the religion of the future, we need no postulated anthropomorphic personalities, be they creator-gods with a quasi-metaphysical or a cosmological background, or saviour-gods with a quasi-historical or a mythical background. Man has got beyond the phase where his ideals must necessarily be personified in one or another shape in order for them to be effective.

E. BELFORT BAX.

Wherever there is an ascendant class, a large portion of the morality of the country emanates from its class interests, and its feelings of class superiority.—J. S. Mill, "On Liberty."

Creeds and Sects.

THAT the Church is, and always has been, a bar to mental, moral and physical progress needs no fresh demonstration. That it tries to stop the development of the beings it professes to serve and pretends to save is apparent to every reader of history and observer of current facts. That it enslaves those whom it should set free, no enlightened man can honestly doubt. To prove these facts it is only necessary to recall the experiences of Bruno, Galileo, William Lloyd Garrison, Thomas Paine and Charles Darwin. Each of these men stood for useful discoveries or noble principles, and each was subjected to the repressive power of the Church. And these men are only a few of the best known of a great company of heretics who have suffered at the hands of the angry Church.

I do not mean that the Church is the only institution that has blocked the wheels of progress. Every organization for teaching particular doctrines is guilty of this serious crime. Orthodox schools of doctors are quite as intolerant toward men with new ideas as orthodox parsons are. Regular members of the bar are regular fossils. It is their rule of life to do things only because someone else did the same thing in precisely the same way ages ago. A rational and up-to-date method of dealing with cases would ruin the whole legal profession.

Even scientists, whose express business it is to hunt for facts, fought Darwin with rancour.

I mention these things to show the broad principle that whenever religion crystallizes into a Church, medicine into a school, or science into a royal society, there you find organizations that announce a creed and elect their members and paid officials; and there you will always find, too, a power that will be exerted against any change in thought or practice. Each Church, school or society, having found a grain of truth, forthwith puts it into a little sectarian bottle and corks it up, not to prevent any of it getting out, but to prevent any fresh truth getting in.

The Church has its little bottle of what it calls truth. It owns large property. It has its professional priests and ministers, and nobody can become one of them except by the consent of the fossils who hold the professorial chairs. It can, and does, reward the faithful and punish the refractory. It confers honours and inflicts disgraces. It is a crystallized institution. Men may live and men may die, but the Church goes on for ever.

Thus the Church is necessarily averse from change. Change would mean loss of power, and the Church loves power and grimly holds on to it. Change means friction, and when things are running just as the parsons and priests want them to run friction is irritating. Change means fresh thought, and it is a bother to think out of the old rut. It is so much easier to believe. The Church fears change more than the Devil is said to fear holy water. The motto of the Church is: "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen."

Such an institution necessarily bars progress. Once it had a very strong way of stifling new thought and preventing change. The "secular arm," with its hand of steel and fingers of fire, was at its disposal. The Czar of Russia horrified the world a few years ago by causing a woman to be flogged to death. But he was a turtle dove to what the Church once was, and might be now if she had the power. Now, however, the only "secular arm" the Church has is that of the tax collector who grants a most unfair exemption to all Church property.

But she still has her methods of oppression, and while they are powerless outside her membership they work well enough within her borders, and especially

when applied to the clergy. The policy of the Church is to crush every parson who is guilty of independent thinking. She punishes mental activity and rewards intellectual stagnation.

Moreover, she has not only abandoned the teaching of Jesus, but directly opposes it, by inciting to war and violence, by bowing to the rich and despising the poor. But even this might be forgiven her if she would take her pressure off the brains of the clergy.

It is true that if a parson does not like one sect he can go to another until he finds himself among the Unitarians, where a mild form of Theism will answer all theological requirements. But there is not one sect that says to its ministers: "We want you to think. We have a creed, but we care more for truth than for our creed. We have a Church, but we would rather see it fall to pieces than stand on error. The way for you to attain the highest pay and position in our Church is to show yourself a clear, honest, brave and vigorous thinker. There are our creed and prayer book. Pick them to pieces. Tell us what you think is true in them and what is false, and encourage us to think for ourselves." No sect in Christendom does this. They all encourage their ministers to believe what has hitherto been taught, and to submit to the decisions of the majority when they decide by vote what is true and what is not. A young parson knows that if he doubts, if he wavers from the mouldy doctrines of the past, his prospects will be ruined, with the necessary result that only a few exceptional men in the Church dare to think aloud. Many of them do think who keep their thoughts to themselves. They become time-servers, hypocrites, and they quiet their uneasy consciences by persuading themselves that it is wiser to go slow, that if they declare their doubts it will destroy their influence for good, and so on.

What is the result of all this sophistry? That parsons, as a rule, are about the most intellectually immoral men in the community. They have not the common honesty to preach hell or preach against it. They will not say whether they believe in a god with a beard or whether they do not. They hum and haw, and wriggle and twist when you ask them to say right out whether they believe in their creed or not, because if they preach their creed the world will laugh at them, and if they deny their creed the Church will turn them out to work or starve, and they are not accustomed to do either.

Consequently, parsons, as a class, never have the honour of helping the world along in its religious thinking or social doing. They have to be content with singing the praises of the brave and good after they are dead and gone. The orthodox parsons of to-day glorify Garrison, but those of his own day were ready to hang him.

Many of these cowardly, time-serving "men of God" will stand by and see one of their own number sacrificed for declaring opinions which they themselves hold; they will see thousands of honest workers condemned to pass their lives in filthy slums, or starving for lack of employment, through no fault of their own; they will look upon scenes of undeserved misery that would draw tears from a burglar, and never make an effort to solve the problem of such poverty.

In the midst of all the sin and shame arising from ignorance and superstition these chicken-hearted parish pets are content to waste their time in discussing what provision was made in the Atonement of Christ for dead Foo-foo Islanders and the like. And for all this pusillanimity the Church is to blame, because when one of these men is too good and true to keep silent about the creed, or about the folly and cruelty of our present social system, he is pitilessly crushed, in so far as the Church has power to crush him.

People tell me that I am uncharitable, that I over-

is of real importance, is to cram the child with Roman Catholic teachings and to bring it up in an atmosphere which shall not permit the "shocking" things mentioned by him. We quite appreciate the position of the bishop, and although his action may be a little more effective than the labours of Mrs. Partington in sweeping back the ocean, it will scarcely be more effective ultimately.

But what strikes us chiefly about the bishop's speech is the calm way in which he orders grown up men and women as to what they shall do with their children. Although, one wonders whether men and women who submit to that kind of order are really grown up, mentally. Personally, we should say they are not. Otherwise one would imagine that they would resent being ordered to do this or that as though they were mere children. At any rate it is this that makes the Roman Church so dangerous a force in any State. It breeds men and women who are mere tools of the priesthood, ready drilled to obey its orders whenever called upon. And it is a striking fact that sooner or later modern States have been often compelled to deal with the Roman Church in self-defence. The Roman Church is to-day what it always has been—a menace to the better life of the State and to the orderly progress of the race.

The *Guardian* (September 23) cannot express its sympathy with the German people in the heart-rendering calamity at Oppau without introducing a remark on Germany's "cynical disregard of the moral obligations of treaties and of twentieth century civilization." Christian charity long, long ago revealed its true nature, and it is "always the same."

Speaking to school teachers at Walsall recently the Bishop of Lichfield said that the biblical stories of Jonah and the whale, and the sun standing still at Gideon, were beautiful allegories, "but he could never understand how people could regard them as historical facts." Well, the Jonah story seems to have been "historical" enough for Jesus Christ.

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. xii. 40).

Perhaps the story narrated in the latter part of this passage is also a "beautiful allegory."

During the past week there has been going on in Newcastle-on-Tyne a missionary campaign conducted by about seventy university graduates—young men, many of whom are soon proceeding to China as missionaries. How the Chinese will receive them is a matter on which various opinions may be held. It is possible that with their usual courtesy and good nature they will listen to them, and in that case it is certain that these young missionaries will send home the usual reports as to the eagerness with which the Gospel is being received by the "heathen." The colossal impertinence of a number of young men entirely without experience of life, and with nothing to guide them but a misdirected university education setting out to *civilize* the Chinese, is truly pitiable. But that is the kind of egotism and impertinence that Christianity naturally breeds.

There is another aspect to this which we commend to those interested in social and labour questions and who are permitting themselves to be dosed and drugged by mouth-filling and brain-deadening phrases about the doctrine of brotherhood as taught by Jesus, "true Christianity," and the like. These seventy young men, one may assume, are possessed of an average intelligence—at present. What they will be like after a few years of missionary work is another question. But in the absence of this missionary stupidity, and a call to the study of Christianity it may safely be assumed that many of these young men might be taking a healthy and intelligent interest in social and scientific questions. And in that case it is also probable that a proportion of them would

be doing something towards securing some of those reforms that are so urgently needed. Thus, from the point of view of those interested in keeping things as they are, the concentrating of these young men on religion and on the evangelization of the world serves as so many developing minds withdrawn from the task of social reconstruction. It is like giving a boy who is full of energy something to do that will keep him from getting into mischief. And the labour leader and social worker who does not see this is intellectually hopeless. Many of them do not, we believe, realize the nature of the game that is being played, and in the playing of which they are assisting. Others are not quite so stupid as they appear. But in either case here is an aspect of affairs to which those who are genuinely interested in social affairs would do well to direct their attention.

G. J., who contributes to the *Manchester Guardian* (September 28) an article on "The Modern Churchmen's Conference," points out that Dean Church consistently urged patience and a calm facing the the situation when the *Essays and Reviews* and *The Origin of Species* appeared to threaten the essentials of the faith. The following is a perfect gem of broad-minded criticism:—

Now whether or not we agree with the answers given by the Conference speakers to these questions—and I for one find much in them with which to disagree—and I shall all allow that the questions are such as thinking men to-day are bound to ask and, as best they can, to get answered.

This momentous pronouncement must surely emanate from a believer in evolution, but we fear that "the faith once delivered to the saints" is evolving more rapidly than he thinks good for it.

The Rev. Canon Symonds, speaking at York on September 27, said that "probably the most insidious danger with which they were faced at the present moment was the serious attempt which was being made by modern scholars to bring the Catholic faith up-to-date." In view of the utterances at the Modern Churchmen's Conference, and the prominence given to them by the Press, the Rev. Canon can hardly use the word "insidious" of the methods of the modernists. Or does he mean that the common people are in danger of losing *their* religious convictions also? He thinks that modernist methods of dealing with the Christian faith "create widespread mistrust of all ministers of religion." They certainly do!

W. P. Fullagar (*Record*, September 22) says that the arguments used at the Modern Churchmen's Conference shake Christians' faith in the whole plan and story of the Redemption. They discount the value of all such stories as the Virgin Birth, the Incarnation, and the Divinity of Christ.

It is indeed a puzzle to the lay mind to understand how the holding of these Modernist views can be compatible with a profession of the beliefs which the recital of our creeds should necessarily require from honest thought. It is not at all a bad thing that the lay mind should be puzzled occasionally. The views of the Modernists evidently can no longer be described as "the harmless speculation of a few infidels." And the work of the Modernists still goes on. Where will it end?

The "living" known as St. Nicholas-in-the-Castle, Carisbrooke, is in the gift of the Princess Beatrice, who holds it by virtue of her office as Governor of the Isle of Wight. At the induction of the new vicar she attended personally and presented him to Bishop Macarthur. The church was built as a memorial to Charles I, and the occasion was not one that a bishop was likely to neglect in the presence of royalty. This memorial to the "martyred king" somewhat "mitigated the pain one felt with regard to one of the most lamentable incidents in our national history." What a hero-martyr! His own apologists admit his duplicity, his cowardly betrayal of Strafford, and his belief in the "divine right" of kings. The bishop's remarks, however, indicate the sort of church that latter-day Nonconformists are asked to unite with.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 9, Manchester; October 16, Glasgow; October 17, Saltcoats; October 23, South Place, London; October 30, Birmingham; November 6, Swansea; November 13, Leicester; November 20, Liverpool; November 27, Ton Pentre; December 4, Friars Hall, London; December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green.

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.

E. G. STAFFORD.—Will try to bear the matter in mind as the time approaches.

H. ANDERSON.—There is no Branch of the N. S. S. in Belfast at present. When things settle down, however, there is no reason why a Branch should not be started again. Meanwhile intending members could well join headquarters. We agree with you that Ireland badly needs Freethought.

C. E. GOUGH.—It is hardly a profitable exercise to set oneself the task of "explaining" every conundrum that anyone cares to put. Only a quack ever attempts it. Your friend's case appears to us to be quite pathological.

A. POMPE.—Mr. Noel Mathews, with his description of "that Atheist leader Tom Paine," must be a very ignorant person, and the readers of the *Brixton Free Press*, if they are impressed by him, are very ill-informed persons. Your letter is very much to the point.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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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.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen had a busy eight days on Tyneside, but the results repaid the exertions made. All the meetings were of a satisfactory character, and a very striking feature of them was the number of young men and women who were present. There is no doubt that Freethought is making good its hold on the rising generation, and so long as it does that its future is assured. There was also, we understand, a fair demand for literature, and the campaign should lead to the opening up of new ground. We hope so. Something on the lines of the old North-Eastern Federation might be very useful.

To-day (October 9) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Road, Rusholme, Manchester, over the Free Library. In the afternoon he will speak on

"Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the Law" at 3 o'clock, and in the evening at 6.30 on "Why the World Needs Freethought." This is a new hall as far as the Manchester Branch is concerned, and we hope that it will be crowded. It will be if all who are interested in the movement work well.

The *Times* claims to be "the leading paper." So do nearly all its contemporaries. But in the matter of platitude, unrelieved even by journalistic energy, the average column of homiletics "from a correspondent" is "rarely equalled and never excelled." According to the issue of September 24 a religious revival is in store for us.

Who could have dreamed that John Wesley, the earnest but blundering priest in Georgia, would be the man through whose ministry the entire Church of England would be quickened? If this was so in the past there is no reason to doubt that it will remain so. Still, the secret of the future rests in the mystery of human personality, exposed to the Divine Spirit, but hidden from all human eyes.

This is a good specimen of a large class of religious articles in the English Press. The reference to Wesley, too, is typical. The great evangelist found most of the Churches of his own day closed against him. About a week ago we passed his old church in the City Road. This church to-day, the monument in front of it, and the general state of the building and the ground, bear eloquent testimony to the gratitude of Anglicans and Nonconformists to those to whom they render lip-service. They also speak volumes for the difference between the England of to-day and a century ago in the attitude of the masses towards the salvation of their souls.

There was a fair attendance at Mr. Whitehead's lecture at South Place last Sunday afternoon. A clergyman, who declared himself a Christian Socialist, spoke vigorously in opposition to the lecturer's estimate of the Christ of the New Testament. The speaker this afternoon (October 9) will be Mr. J. T. Lloyd, whose subject is "Secularism Caricatured." The chair will be taken by Mr. A. B. Moss at 3.30, and we hope all Freethinkers who can attend will do so. If they can bring a Christian friend with them so much the better.

The *Challenge* (September 2), referring to the late Canon Sheppard, of the Chapels Royal, says:—

When we first arrived shivering with panic, to preach at Buckingham Palace, his kindness and tact put us at ease during what would otherwise have been a bad quarter of an hour.

We do not know who the writer of the paragraph is, but he can console himself with the thought that religion has always had the effect of making men shiver with fear. And when it is an established religion, in a country which is also blessed with an established monarchy, it adds to the element of natural fear that of professional servility, which is even more nauseating.

We are asked to announce that the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. will hold a meeting to-day (October 9) in the Trade Council Rooms, 12a Clayton Street, at 3 o'clock. All those who are interested in the propaganda of Freethought in Newcastle are invited to attend. We trust there will be a good attendance. There were many at Mr. Cohen's recent lectures who expressed a desire for a regular series of meetings, and there is now a chance for all of them to lend a hand.

Europe was Germany, and Germany was Europe, predominantly, until the Thirty Years' War. This war was perhaps the greatest catastrophe of all the ghastly crimes committed in the name of religion. It destroyed an entire generation, taking each year for thirty years the finest manhood of the nations. Two-thirds of the population of Germany were destroyed, in some states such as Bohemia three-fourths of the inhabitants were killed or exiled, while out of 500,000 inhabitants in Würtemberg there were only 48,000 left at the end of the war.—*Madison Grant, "The Passing of the Great Race."*

A Mixed Lot.

For the vagaries of the clouds the infidels propose to substitute the realities of earth; for superstition, the splendid demonstrations and achievements of science; and for theological tyranny, the chainless liberty of thought.....We do not pretend to have circumnavigated everything, and to have solved all difficulties, but we do believe that it is better to love men than to fear gods; that it is grander and nobler to think and investigate for yourself than to repeat a creed. We are satisfied that there can be but little liberty on earth while men worship a tyrant in heaven.....We are doing what little we can to hasten the coming of the day when society shall cease producing millionaires and mendicants—gorged indolence and famished industry—truth in rags, and superstition robed and crowned.—Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, "The Gods."

We have entitled our article "A Mixed Lot," and they are. There are four of them, and they have been airing their opinions, generally, at our expense. The first is a would-be funny man writing in the *Daily News*, who signs himself W. R. Titterton. We say "himself" at a venture, as there is no indication given of the sex of the writer; we only go upon the belief that no woman would write anything so glaringly and openly false and stupid. The second is a full-blown Bishop. The third a philosopher. The fourth a writer and social reformer.

We commence with Mr. Titterton, who contributed an article entitled "Faith and the Atom" to the *Daily News* of September 12, 1921. Mr. Titterton says he has been reading the reports of the British Association meetings recently held at Edinburgh and finds them most unsettling, not so much for himself, he says, but "for the millions of my fellow Englishmen and neighbouring Scotsmen who had arrived at the definite conclusion that there is no God." But we are assured from innumerable pulpits and by the religious Press that there are no Atheists now, that Atheism is old-fashioned and out of date, and here is Mr. Titterton declaring that they exist in our country in millions! Who is telling the truth? They cannot both be true.

Mr. Titterton goes on:—

Of course there was no God. The scientists had told us so.....There was no room for a God in this clear-cut scientific universe. You let loose an apple, and it fell to the ground. You put in a monkey at one end of the evolutionary machine, and it came out a man at the other. You dissected a man or a rabbit, and there was no trace of such a thing as a soul. Besides, there were men in Mars, which proved conclusively that there never was a Son of Man in Bethlehem.

We have never heard of scientists dissecting a rabbit to find its soul. Fancy Atheistic scientists searching for a soul which they do not believe exists! We have never met with a rabbit with a soul, but there are many pious writers with the intellect of rabbits. Neither do we know of any scientists who believe that there are men in Mars; we do not believe a single one could be produced. Mr. Titterton proceeds:—

Yet between you and me, we had been rather sorry to lose our God. He was—how shall I put it?—he was friendly. We should never have given him up if the scientists hadn't been so definite about it. But they were most definite, and after all, they could point to the miracle of the apple. A high priest would take it in his hand, let it go, and it would drop—always; and always, we were assured, at the same accelerating speed.

And now it's all gone wrong. They've betrayed us, the scientists have; to put it plainly, they have done us in the eye—the eye of faith we closed. For I read with astonishment, with alarm, with consternation, that the law of gravity is not immutable, that it varies from time to time, from place to place. Even a heavy tide may make a difference. So why not a

god? (I am not sure, I can never be sure of anything again), but perhaps if Newton had tried his celebrated experiment at Brighton the apple would have gone up instead of down.

Mr. Titterton is so ignorant of what he is writing about that he did not know, what any advanced school-boy of a County Council school could have told him, viz., that gravity varies in all parts of the earth. For instance, a given mass weighs less at the equator than at the poles because at the equator it is farther from the centre of the earth. So gravity would be less at the top of a high mountain than at the foot, for the same reason.

In his mind's eye Mr. Titterton sees—

millions of lonely men raising their voice against the scientist. "You have taken away our God. You have taken him away under false pretences. Why even your mighty atom, one and indivisible, is a fraud; its just a whirl of something or other filmy..... Man, man, you have blackened the universe for us. If there is justice in heaven....." and then the tirade stops, for the plaintiffs remember that the scientist took away their heaven when he took away their God.

It will be seen that Mr. Titterton possesses a lively and uncontrolled imagination. Uncontrolled, that is, by facts. He should turn his gift to the production of novelettes.

As a matter of fact, the millions of this country are very little influenced by the discoveries, or theories, of the scientists. The late war made more sceptics, and raised more doubts about God than all the discoveries of the scientists, of whom, to tell the truth, the British public knows little and cares less. But when the hideous slaughter and agony went on, year after year, people were compelled to face the question as to what this friendly God was doing about it, and many came to the conclusion that there was no friendly God at all, or if there was, he was so weak and limited that he was not worth troubling about.

It is conceivable that Mr. Titterton believes what he has written. There are still people who believe that the first man was fashioned out of the dust of the earth, and that the first woman was made from a rib taken from this man during the first surgical operation on record. There are even people who believe that the earth is flat; we should not be at all surprised to learn that Mr. Titterton is one of them. But surely the editor of a great daily paper like the *Daily News* knows better! Then why does he give a prominent place to this pitiable exhibition of ignorance, mendacity and malice?

Number two of our mixed lot is Bishop Welldon, who seems to be ambitious to fill the place formerly occupied by the once so garrulous Bishop of London, who has been singularly silent lately—to our great regret, as his deliverances were always a source of great hilarity to Freethinkers. Whether his withdrawal from the limelight is due to a guilty conscience, owing to the shameful part played by the Church in the late war, or for fear of reprisals from the women for placing an embargo upon their occupying the pulpit, we cannot say; probably his silence is a great relief to the friends of the Church, for he was always making himself ridiculous. However, Bishop Welldon makes a good understudy to his spiritual brother of London. In an interview he has been bemoaning the laxity of society as regards Sunday observance. He says:—

In country houses the Sunday is sadly often devoted to golf and lawn tennis, to the complete forgetfulness of God. Yet if men and women believe in God it is irrational to abandon the practice of worshipping Him. The oblivion of God in society is responsible in no slight measure for the spirit of unrest in the working classes. The rich are always few, the poor are many, but if it is made evident to

the poor that the rich have forfeited their belief in God and the future life, then it is as certain as any event can be that the poor will claim a predominant share in the good things of this life as compensation for the loss of the hope which once centred in the life after death.¹

Here is a plain and straightforward admission of what we have always contended, *viz.*, that the main function of the Church is to teach the masses to be content with the station to which God has called them, to direct the attention of the poor away from worldly and material interests, not to seek to better their condition upon earth, but to store up treasure in heaven.

The Bishop goes on to say that he would like to see some arrangement between the Church and the organizers of Sunday recreations which "would provide that recreation should not clash with the recognized hours of divine worship.....The problem which lies before the Church is how to try to get men out of the street into the Church." That is a problem the Church will find insoluble. It is too late in the day. The Church has been found out.

By the way, there is a pen portrait of the Bishop in a recently published book, the author of which met the Bishop at a public dinner. The Bishop, he says, arrived late,—

plumped himself on a chair next to me, and immediately began to dominate everything and everybody within a radius of twenty yards. He is one of those distressing people who *will* be jocular. And his jocularities is rather noisy. He laughed a great deal and rubbed his hands together. And he asked me a question and then asked me another before I had time to answer the first. And, really, he did talk so awfully loudly.....I had come across him before in trams and shops and places of that kind, and it was always the same; he invariably talked at you.....Even in the Manchester Cathedral, where Dr. Kendrick Pyne introduced me to him, he shouted at me and never allowed me to finish a sentence.²

It would be interesting to witness a meeting between Bishop Welldon and the Bishop of London; whose voice would prevail?

W. MANN.

(To be Concluded.)

Pages From Voltaire.

II.

(Concluded from page 636.)

THE A. B. C: OR CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN A. B. AND C.

Whether man is born wicked and a child of the devil.

B.—I should have scarcely imagined it.

A.—But you ought to have imagined it. You are well aware that before Hippocrates, and even after him, physicians knew nothing about diseases. For example, whence came epilepsy? From maleficent gods and evil spirits; it was also named the *morbis sacer*. It was the same with scrofula. These maladies were the effects of miracles; it needed a miracle to cure them; pilgrimages were made; the diseased were touched by the priests. This superstition has made a tour of the world and is still in vogue among the common people. When I was at Paris I saw epileptics in the Sainte Chapelle and at St. Maur who made great outcries and contortions the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday; and our deposed king, James II, as a sacred person, believed he could cure the evil caused by the devil. Every unknown malady was at one time supposed to be possession by

evil spirits. The melancholy Orestes was understood to be possessed by Megæra, and was sent to purloin a statue in order to get cured. The Greeks, who were quite a new people, had that superstition from the Egyptians. The priests and priestesses of Isis went through the world telling fortunes, and delivered, for money, the fools who were under the empire of Typhon. They made their exorcisms with tabors and castanets. The wretched Jewish people who had settled among the rocks between Phœnicia, Egypt and Syria, took over all the superstitions of their neighbours, and in the excess of their brutal ignorance, added new superstitions to them. When this petty horde was in slavery in Babylon they learned the names of the devil, Satan, Asmodeus, Mammon, Beelzebub, all servants of the evil principle Ahrimanes; and it was then that the Jews attributed sickness and sudden death to the operation of devils. Their sacred books, which they wrote at a later time, when they were acquainted with the Chaldean alphabet, sometimes speak of devils.

You see that when the angel Gabriel came down express from the blue vault of heaven to make sure that the Jew, Gabel, paid a sum of money to another Jew, Tobias, or Tobit, he led young Tobit to Raguel, whose daughter had already married seven husbands whose necks had been broken by the devil Asmodeus. The doctrine of the devil was in great vogue with the Jews. They admitted a prodigious number of devils into a hell, of which the laws of the pentateuch know absolutely nothing. Almost all their sick people were possessed by devils. Instead of physicians they had their official exorcists who cast out evil spirits with the help of the root called *barath*, accompanied by prayers and bodily contortions.

The wicked passed for possessed even more than the sick. The debauched and perverse are always called children of Belial in the books of the Jews.

The Christians who for a hundred years were but half Jews, adopted the idea of possession, and boasted of being able to cast out devils. That lunatic Tertullian even went so far in his madness as to say that, by the sign of the cross, any Christian could force Juno, Minerva, Ceres and Diana to confess that they were she-devils. There is a legend that an ass drove away the devils of Senlis by tracing a cross in the sand with its hoof at the command of St. Risule.

Little by little the opinion became established that all men are born possessed by the devil and damned; a strange idea undoubtedly, an execrable idea, a terrible outrage to deity, to imagine that he is continually creating sensible and rational beings for the sole purpose of tormenting them by other beings, themselves eternally plunged in torments. If the executioner, who at Carlisle, in one day tore out the hearts of eighteen partisans of the Stewart prince, Charles Edward, had been charged to establish a dogma, this is what he would have chosen; even then he would have had to be drunk, for even if he had possessed the mind of an executioner and a theologian he could never have invented in cold blood a system by which so many thousands of infants in arms are delivered to eternal tormentors.

B.—I fear the devil will reproach you for being one of those bad sons who deny their father. Your English arguments will seem to good Roman Catholics a proof that the devil possesses you, and that you are unwilling to admit it; but I am curious to know how this idea that an infinitely good being makes every day millions of men to damn them, could enter into anyone's brain.

A.—By a double meaning, in the same way that the papal power is based upon a play on words. "Thou art Peter (a rock) and on this rock will I build my Church" (Matthew xvi. 18).

Here you will note the double meaning which damns

¹ The *Sunday Times*, September 4, 1921.

² Gerald Cumberland, *Set Down in Malice*, p. 28.

all little children. God forbids Eve and her husband to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge which he has planted in his garden; he tells them (Genesis ii. 17) "the day in which thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." They ate thereof, and did not die. On the contrary Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years. We must, therefore, understand another kind of death, the death of the soul, damnation. But it is not said that Adam was damned; it must, then, be his children, and how so? Because God condemns the serpent who seduced Eve to go on his belly (for you know very well that he walked upon his feet before that time), and the seed of Adam is condemned to be bitten on the heel by the serpent. Now the serpent is visibly the devil, and the heel which he bites is our soul. Man shall bruise the serpent's head as often as he can; it is evident by this we must understand the Messiah triumphing over Satan.

But how has he bruised the head of the old serpent by delivering to him all unbaptized infants? Here is the mystery. And how are children damned because their first parents ate fruit from a tree planted in their garden? This, again, is a mystery.

B.—I must pull you up on that point. Are we not damned for Cain and not for Adam? If I am not mistaken we descended from Cain, since Abel died a bachelor, and it appears to me more reasonable to be damned for a fratricide than for an apple.

A.—It could not be for Cain, for it is said that the Lord set a mark on him, lest any finding him should kill him. It is even said that he built a city at a time when he was almost alone on the earth with his father and mother, his sister who was also his wife and a son named Enoch. I have even seen one of the most tiresome of books, *La Science du Gouvernement*, by a Seucechal of Forcalquier, named Real, who will have it that laws are derived from the town built by our father Cain.

But however that may be, there is no doubt at all that the Jews had never heard of original sin, or of the eternal damnation of little children who died without being circumcised. The Sadducees who did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and the Pharisees who believed in the transmigration of souls, could not admit eternal damnation, however inclined fanatics may be to admit contradictory notions.

Jesus was circumcised when he was eight days old, and baptized when an adult, according to the custom of many Jews, who look upon baptism as a purgation of the soul. It was an ancient usage of the people who lived near the Indus and the Ganges, whom the Brahmans had persuaded that water cleanses from sin as well as from other impurities. Indeed, the circumcised and baptized Jesus does not mention original sin in any of the gospels. No apostle says that little unbaptized infants shall burn for ever on account of the sin of Adam. No one of the early fathers advances this cruel chimera; besides, you know that Adam, Eve, Abel and Cain were known only to the insignificant Jewish horde.

B.—Who was it then that first gave a definite form to this doctrine?

A.—The African father, Augustine, quite a worthy man in other things, but who, in his letters to Irvodius and Jerome, does violence to certain expressions of St. Paul in order to infer therefrom that God snatches from the mother's breast and casts into hell those unhappy infants that die in the first days of life. Note particularly the second book of the analysis of his works, chapter xlv. "The Catholic faith teaches that all men are born so wicked that even infants are certainly damned when they die without having been born again in Jesus."

It is true that natural feeling, rising up in the heart of this rhetorician, made him shudder at the barbarous

sentence, yet he pronounced it, and even he who so often changed his opinion did not change this. The Church turned to account this terrible system in order to render her baptism more necessary. The reformed Churches detest it. Most theologians no longer dare admit it; yet they continue to believe that our children belong to the devil. This is so true that when the little creatures are baptized the priest asks them whether they renounce the devil, and the godfather is so good as to answer yes.

C.—I agree with everything you have said; I believe that the nature of man is not wholly devilish. But why is it said that man is ever prone to sin?

A.—He is so to his own gratification, which is not an evil except when it oppresses his fellow men. God has bestowed upon him self-love, which is useful to him; benevolence, which is useful to his neighbour; anger, which is dangerous; compassion, which disarms anger; sympathy with many of his fellows; antipathy to others; many wants and much industry, instinct, reason and passions. This is man; and when you are one of the gods just try to make one on a better model.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

"Songs of the Groves."

A REMARKABLE volume of poetry entitled *Songs of the Groves: Records of the Ancient World* has just been published by the Vine Press, Steyning, Sussex, the price of which is 7s. 6d. net. We describe it as remarkable because of its originality of conception and richness of diction. The author, if young, may rest assured that there certainly lies before him—or her—an exceedingly brilliant poetic career. Whilst the poems are by no means all of equal merit, yet each one is characterized by a note of distinction. As in all true poetry, a mystic vein runs through most of these songs. Take the Dedication as an apt illustration:—

The breathless night is dark and blue,
Sleeping without a stir or stain,
And underneath her dream peeps through
Dawn, like a silver vein.
The water at our feet is still,
The air is still; she reigns supreme,
A lyric rapture of the Will—
Night, the eternal Dream.
There is no barque upon the stream,
No single footfall goes or comes,
But all the world glides by, a dream
Of dimly muffled drums.
So, curtained in her lucent blue,
She sleeps without a stir or stain;
And underneath her dream peeps through
Dawn, like a silver vein.

In "A Song of Stars" the same idea occurs:—

Unveil the mystery of grass,
The wonder of dark woods, the call
Of noisy eagles as they pass—
O aery waterfall!
O little moons that are so young,
Is it not sung?
Who knows? The breeze reveals the dawn;
The little moons unveil the sea;
Wild clover-scent makes emerald lawn
No less a mystery.
Whoso hath heard hath truly heard
The secret Word.

What is this secret Word? Though secret it is yet well known:—

No word reveals it, and no eye
Beholds it, and no ear may know:
Yet in some sense the sentient sky
Is conscious of a glow
Beneath, beneath in wheeling earth,
Nor death nor birth.
For life is set 'twixt birth and death,
And Love lies throned 'twixt death and birth,
This is the word the dark sky saith
Unto revolving earth:
The incommunicable word,
Unsaid, but heard.

Reading such lines one is vividly reminded of Meredith's "Earth's Secret," "Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth," and "A Reading of the Earth"; and both poets are in essential agreement. They also remind us of Shelley's "Triumph of Life," and of several other songs by that super-genius, who had it in him to become, had he lived, as great as, if not greater than, Shakespeare.

These *Songs of the Groves* bring us close to Nature's heart. "Intermezzo" quivers from beginning to end with the love of Nature:—

She is seen
As a veil of desire—
As the fringe of a fire—
As the heart of a lyre.
She is mine
In serene
Lightness: the wine
From an old stone jar.

This is a poem that will amply repay careful perusal, but its chief significance lies in the fact that it is indeed an interlude, and opens the door to the ancient world. From page 23 to page 139 the poet lives and moves and has his being in close fellowship with the greatest thinkers and singers of ancient Greece and Rome. "Plato's Love Song" is extremely well done, and the "Lament for Adonis" is an excellent translation of Bion's famous poem. Of the latter poem it is said: "The immediate Tragedy of Love, and of the Doom of the year—Death ever pursuing Life—is here shown." The last poem is "Colophon," which literally means the top of the hill, or the summing up of what has gone before. Here we find the poet's philosophy of life:—

The tall flowers
Of the hollyhocks .
Are not yet won :
But we get
Wall-flowers,
And the silver locks
Of mignonette
Will come anon.

Perfection is not yet attained, and may not be attainable, but the trend of life is, on the whole, in that direction. Our poet is at once a scientific philosopher and a genuine seer. To him it seems delicious to forget "the strange dreams of psychology and of psycho-analysis for the kiss of a quiet April sun"; but while he seeks refuge in his Garden from the Disorders of the Time, yet, "meditating, he foretells a Return to Natural Things, and the Spring of the Spirit: and to a renewed worship of Youth and Love. The poem, as the Book, ends in the complete assurance of a New Age, and of a Rebirth of Beauty."

The book has its defects, but they are less than nothing beside its beauties, its aspirations, and its clear visions, and these pre-eminently delight our reason and warm our hearts. Let us have more of this fine stuff—and soon, please. CELTICUS.

Correspondence.

"THE MYTH OF JESUS."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should be grateful if Mr. Mann or some other upholder of the "myth" theory would deal with the following difficulties which seem to me to stand in the way of an entire rejection of the historicity of Jesus.

In all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt. xvi. 28, Mark ix. 1, Luke ix. 27) the saying occurs, with very little variation: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God."

Whether Jesus ever said this or not, the fact that it was attributed to him proves that the author of this passage believed that contemporaries of his had known Jesus, and

would live to see the "second advent." (By the author I do not mean the compilers of our Gospels, but the author of the source from which they took this passage.) It appears inconceivable that it should have been written of a person who had never lived at all.

Similarly, we read in Matt. xxiv. 34, Mark xiii. 30, and Luke xxi. 32: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished"—referring to the "second advent." The same observations apply here.

When we turn to Paul's epistles we find him writing: "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. ix. 5.) "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 19). Did these individuals pretend to have had a brother who was, in fact, a myth? Or how does the "myth" theory explain these references?

I am aware that it is possible to get over the Pauline passages by assuming the whole Pauline literature to be forged, or these particular verses to be interpolations. Either assumption seems to me gratuitous. Most of the Pauline epistles, and certainly Romans, Corinthians and Galatians, give the impression, not of a conventional forgery, but of a distinct personality—pugnacious, overbearing, and not particularly saintly!—pushing his peculiar spiritual "patent medicine." The two passages I have quoted are taken from two bits of very personal argumentation. In the former case Paul is challenging a comparison between the twelve apostles, who quartered themselves and their families on the alms of the faithful, and himself, who worked for his living and was single. In the second passage he is contending for the originality of his Gospel, by minimizing his acquaintance with the twelve. "Save James the Lord's brother" qualifies his argument. There is no reason why it should have been interpolated; it does not strengthen the case, but the reverse. That Jesus is, in the main, mythical, with obvious relations to Osiris, Krishna, and other Oriental saviour-gods, I do not question. We have thus a pretty historical conundrum to solve: how did the obscure Jewish Messianic pretender, to whom the Gospel texts above quoted refer, come to be identified with the dying and rising saviour-god of the "mysteries"?

The answer to this question would occupy an important chapter in the social history of antiquity, which has still to be written.

ROBERT ARCH.

SIR,—As Mr. Mann says "it would make no difference" if Golgotha was close at hand, I presume we may dismiss Dr. Carpenter's "long and painful journey" thereto as of no value. (Will Freethought lecturers please note, and act accordingly!) I should like to say, however, that there is a half-tone illustration in the work I quote from wherein "the place of a skull" (as Golgotha is interpreted by Mark to mean) is clearly seen, and I am wondering if the "rival sites" mentioned in Mr. Mann's last letter can present such evidence in support of their several claims.

Now let us see if the events related in the Gospels could not all have happened as recorded, but not as Mr. Mann, Renan, and Dr. Carpenter (I include the last two on the authority of Mr. Mann) seem to think.

First of all, Jesus was not brought to Pilate's house at night, but in the morning (Matt. xxvii. 1, Mark xvi. 1). The same applies to Herod. So Mr. Mann's charge against the Gospel writers as having "no knowledge of Jewish or Roman manners or customs" is "not proven," but falls completely flat.

What happened was this. Jesus was first led to the house of Annas (John xviii. 13), then to the palace of the high priest (Caiaphas, v. 24) where, after they had concocted their "evidence" against Jesus, and decided as they had previously intended, viz., that He was worthy of death (Mark xiv. 54-65), they led Him away to Pilate in the early morning. So it was not a midnight "trial," but a midnight "conspiracy" to put Jesus to death by the hand of Pilate, "for it was not lawful for them (the Jews) to put any man to death" (John xviii. 31).

An Eastern city may be "as silent as death" in the ordinary way, but would Mr. Mann, and other authorities he quotes, dare assert that there are no exceptions to the rule? The Gospels clearly show that these criminal

leaders of the people sought "to take Jesus by subtlety and put Him to death," and, "in the absence of the multitudes," and if *darkness* favoured their scheme (as we see it did) they were not going to stand on ceremony.

I think, Sir, if Mr. Mann's "other discrepancies" are no better founded than these, they are very easily answered. It seems to me to be a case of one "authority" leading other "authorities" astray; but who was the *first* is not for me to say. But I have no hesitation in saying that if Mr. Mann *correctly* quoted Dr. Carpenter in your issue of September 11, then Dr. Carpenter has made a statement therein of which he, as "an authority," ought to be heartily ashamed.

"UNORTHODOX."

A Clerical Die-Hard.

WHEN Spencer first, in 'fifty two,
Expounded evolution,
I quickly saw it must be true,
And dreaded revolution.
Yet, in despite of this, you see,
I in the Church remained, Sir,
And timid laymen soon, through me,
Their confidence regained, Sir.

Then Darwin next, showed that we all
From ape-like forms descend, Sir,
I thought, to stop the Church's fall,
Her doctrines we'd amend, Sir.
I taught my flock that Moses might
With science not agree, Sir,
But that it was a matter slight;
Of course, they trusted me, Sir!

When Joule with energy had dealt,
And proved its conservation,
Again the Church was, as I felt,
In need of preservation.
I boldly sail " 'Gainst proven fact
Or reason ne'er shall I kick,
But Grove and Joule both leave intact
The region we call psychic."

By higher critics myths were found
Throughout the Pentateuch, Sir,
I thought, as pastor, I was bound
Their candour to rebuke, Sir.
Though myth be ev'ry Patriarch
And swept away be Lot, Sir,
We find a refuge in our Ark—
The Gospel still we've got, Sir.

But Gubernatis and a Scot—
John Robertson his name, Sir—
Have struck the Church and spared her not:
They're men devoid of shame, Sir!
"The Wind" one calls the Holy Ghost!
"Christ is the sun" each says, Sir!
Yet, if they're right, I'll hold my post:
Ay, keep it all my days, Sir!

Though foes may come from ev'ry side,
The Church to rend asunder,
I all their efforts can deride;
They're harmless as the thunder.
For, whatsoever they may prove
I have not one misgiving:
None can me from my church remove—
I still keep my fat living.

HENRY S. MILLER.

In strict contradiction to this mystical dualism, which is generally connected with teleology and vitalism, Darwin always maintained the complete unity of human nature, and showed convincingly that the psychological side of man was developed, in the same way as the body, from the less advanced soul of the anthropoid ape, and, at a still more remote period, from the cerebral functions of the older vertebrates.—*Ernst Haeckel, "Charles Darwin as an Anthropologist."*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on post card.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, M. Deshumbert (in French), "Origine et Développement de la Vie."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Debate: "Did the Christ of the Four Gospels ever live?" Mr. Edwd. Saphin v. Father Vincent McNabb. (Silver Collection.)

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Joseph H. Van Biene, "Haeckel."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. F. Corrigan, "Can We Believe in God?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The Group-Mind."

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.): 3.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism Caricatured."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Mr. Chas. Garnett, "A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. F. J. Gould, "Were the Middle Ages Dark?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme Public Hall, Dickenson Road, Rusholme): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and the Law"; 6.30, "Why the World Needs Freethought."

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