

# JESUS CHRIST IN FICTION.

THE

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,  
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

## Views and Opinions.

### Jesus Christ in Fiction.

DURING the war—which, up to date, has furnished us with a Naval Conference that has shown the world that not one of the Allies is prepared to place any confidence in any of the others, and has concluded by an agreement to make the next war a little cheaper than was the last one—we heard a deal about making the world safe for Democracy. In the light of what has happened since 1918 the cry sounds very much like sarcasm. But we have often thought we should like to see a big book written on *Making the World Safe for Blasphemy*. If it were ever done, and if it were done properly, it would be one of the most enlightening and one of the most inspiring books ever written. It would contain a record of those little known men who in lecture halls and at street corners, by conversation and by means of cheap pamphlets made it possible for highly placed and “respectable” rebels to say something of what they believed to be true, and what the less respectable had said before them. A work of that kind would be, not so much a history of Men, as it would be a history of Man, of Man at his best and in his most fearless mood. It would be a history stretching back for many generations, and would depict the slow but irresistible growth of the revolt against mere authority; it would chronicle the work of the greatest rebels and the greatest builders in the history of the world. That work is still unfinished, but it is proceeding. To help in its finishing is to lend a hand to the noblest task to which one can set one's hand. It means making a world fit for honest men and women to live in.

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### Real Blasphemy.

Some such thoughts passed through our mind in reading a recently published novel, *A Certain Jesus*, by Iwan Naschiwin (Gollancz, 10s. 6d.). The novel is in substance a life of Jesus Christ. It was written

between the years 1902-28, and is now published for the first time, translated directly from the Russian. The author dedicates his work:—

In gratitude to all those who have sacrificed themselves to Freethought, the most sacred and at the same time the most tormenting possession of mankind; to all those who for its sake have died at the stake, on the scaffold, or, like Jeshua the Galilean have met their death on the most fearful golgotha of mankind—on the cross of loneliness and misunderstanding.

The novel is lengthy, nearly five hundred pages, and taking the translation to be a faithful one, is as a piece of writing, remarkably well done. We prefer the descriptive scenes to the dialogues, they are too often brought in to illustrate a thesis rather than developed from the situation.

Our chief interest in the book is, however, its arrant blasphemy and for an English publisher to issue such a work is to make plain how much Freethought work has done to make the country fit for “blasphemy.” It is true that the Blasphemy Laws are still with us, but books of this kind tend to make them look more ridiculous than ever. For from beginning to end the book is full of blasphemy. Jesus is pictured as an illegitimate son of Mary—which, of course, he was if the Gospel account be true, he is a moody, dreamy, rather ill-balanced young man, he is not averse to playing tricks on the credulity of the people, the idea that he is the Messiah is a “mad thought,” which comes on him in a moment of great excitement, there is nothing “divine” about his character, and except that the author writes under the impression that he ought to command our admiration, there is little to admire. But consider the blasphemy of the following. It deals with the miracle of turning water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. His mother whispered to him that the wine was running short and asked him if he could manage to get some.

With a smile he beckoned to his friend, the merry Isaac . . . “Listen? I hear you are not well supplied with wine . . . Just take this money, yes, you must take it . . . we can settle up later on, but now just do what I tell you. Do you want to see your people put to shame in front of your guests? Well, then take the money, buy the best wine you can get, and pour it into the water-pitcher out there without anyone seeing you. Then we will manage—you understand.”

“Well,” Jeshua's mother asked him anxiously, “Have you done anything?” “Do not worry. Everything is all right?” Jeshua answered . . . Then with a laugh called out to Isaac . . . Now then, don't be stingy! A brother doesn't get married every day. We shall have to see what is in the water-pitcher.” . . . They all crowded round the water-pitcher. The fat Josiah ben Shattach tasted

the wine suspiciously again and again. "No, there's something wrong here," he shouted, to Jeshua in his loud, harsh voice. "Good people usually set forth, at the beginning, good wine, and only when the guests have well drunk that which is worse; but you have kept the good wine till now."

Now I am quite sure that if Sir Charles Oman had seen this sort of thing in Paris, or had come across an illustration of it, he would have added it to his collection of "obscene" things from which the Blasphemy Laws happily protect us. Yet here it is, clear blasphemy on any count. It is clearly not the teaching of the New Testament, and I am quite sure that the picture of "Our Lord" playing this cheap trick on a number of half-drunken wedding guests is one that any good Christian such as Mr. Lovat Fraser, who took the only chance he ever had of being immortalized by calling Thomas Paine scurrilous and foul-mouthed, will feel that his feelings have been outraged. What is the use of having Blasphemy Laws if publishers are permitted to issue this kind of thing, or depict the Saviour having love-passages with certain women? What will Mr. Clynes do? We hope he will not shelter himself behind the ridiculous statement that where there is no intention of "shocking" there is no blasphemy. Of course, it is blasphemy to reproduce it, but then this is the *Freethinker*. The publisher may thank himself that Freethinkers have made this country, to some extent, fit for blasphemy.

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#### God or Man.

Mr. Naschiwin appears to have set himself the problem, "given the substantial truth of the New Testament story, how can it be told with a complete elimination of the supernatural?" The answer to that is that it cannot be done. The proof of this is that while many of Mr. Naschiwin's characters are well-drawn, the figure of Jesus is not that of a man at all. The nearest approach to his being a man is in the wedding scene where the trick is of the poorest and the shabbiest kind. Such a failure is inevitable. Let anyone attempt to write what one may call a natural biography of Jesus, presenting him as a baby, then as a child at school, quarrelling with his playmates, leading the life of his times as a young man, then becoming obsessed with his religious mission, as does many an ill-balanced mind to-day, and finally executed, say, for sedition, and the whole glamour of the character of Jesus disappears. It lies on the face of it that the only reason for dwelling on the character of Jesus is the supernatural element. There is about Jesus none of the strength of Socrates or the intellectual greatness of the Buddha, and certainly the mere mouthing of a handful of well-known moral maxims could not have given Jesus the place he has in Christian history. Moreover, the mere treating of the New Testament as substantially true, is itself a product of the feeling about Jesus created by belief in his supernaturalism. It was not Jesus the half-demented religious evangelist that Christians followed, but Christ the incarnate God, the miracle-worker, the deity with whom they were going to spend eternity in some future life. But as the belief in these incarnated deities become more and more impossible, some excuse must be found to retain the figurehead. Hence the many attempts at constructing a human Jesus. One might as well try to construct a human Santa Claus. Remove the supernatural from the New Testament and we have not left even a dummy, we have only the ghost of one.

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#### Supernaturalism or Nothing.

Inevitably *A Certain Jesus* suggests comparison

with George Moore's *The Brook Kerith*. This book, by the way, was made the subject of an application for a summons for blasphemy by that sturdy representative of British religion and morals, Lord Alfred Douglas. Now Mr. Moore is not, I believe, a Christian, but he is too much of an artist to attempt to deal with the life of Jesus and leave the supernatural out, and too much of a Freethinker to write as though he had any belief in it. Mr. Moore's thesis was, substantially, "given the Jesus Christ of Christian tradition, given also someone who may have lived who formed a peg on which that tradition was hung, how did that figure come into existence?" He answers the question by drawing a picture of a society saturated with superstition, and in which any wild and improbable story became credible. Mr. Naschiwin also deals with this, in a very fragmentary way, and there is a speech put into the mouth of Nicodemus detailing the names of a number of saviour-gods. But it does not appear to have any organic connexion with the general run of the book. The weakness of Mr. Naschiwin's book is the assumption that some Jesus actually existed, and that this Jesus was one who did have a remarkable influence on those around him. Mr. Moore's strength is that he practically says, "I do not care whether anyone existed or not. The main thing is that in certain stages of social life these stories of supernatural beings, or semi-supernatural beings, are natural products, and it is from this matrix that the figure of the Christian Jesus emerged." And that hits the essence of the problem. It is not of the slightest consequence to anyone or to anything, that some wandering preacher lived who went about teaching people to love one another. There have been thousands such in all parts of the world. And among similar preachers in the Judea of 2,000 years ago many such lived and have been forgotten. The Jesus Christ of the New Testament is the incarnate Saviour God. If that is not true, then the Jesus Christ of the New Testament never existed. That is why there can be no genuine biography of Jesus Christ. You cannot write the biography of a myth. You can only chronicle its prevalence and disappearance.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Civilizing the Christians.

"Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?"—*Shakespeare*.

"Hebrew mythology contains things which are both insulting and injurious."—*J. A. Froude*.

GREAT minds, it is said, jump together; and it is not surprising to find that two well-known writers for the newspaper press suggest that the bottom is falling out of religion, and the gods dropped through the hole. Of course, these writers do not express themselves quite so flippantly, but they both question whether this England of our is still a Christian country. Sir Max Pemberton, for example, writing in the *Evening News* (London) April 17, contrasts the present-day observance of the so-called "Holy Week" with that of five hundred years ago, when ninety per cent of all European peoples flocked to darkened churches, and priests thundered threats of hell-fire to congregations that trembled and "shelled-out." To-day, so far as this country is concerned, sixty per cent of the young people are a wheel, either cycling, motoring, or travelling by train; whilst so many of their elders are golfing or gardening, or engaged in some equally innocent amusement. Priests still fulminate, for the usual consideration, but they contemplate the faithful few in the front rows, and

the beggarly array of empty benches behind. To Pemberton these happy secularists outside all the churches are "merely epicene," but he should ponder the reply of the old charwoman, who had just been told the story of the crucifixion: "If this happened two thousand years ago, sir, and in a far country, it doesn't matter very much now."

Pemberton is disgruntled at these modern people revolving in the fettered orbit of their own puny affairs, the getting of money or of bread, the daily task. As a journalist, who should have his hand on the pulse of the world, he should have more humanity. In the Ages of Faith, which he tries so hard to admire, men were flung into dungeons for not uncovering their heads at the sight of a faked sacred relic on a pole; men had their tongues cut out for jibing at priests; men were broken on the wheel, or burnt alive, for contradicting their "pastors and masters." To murder the strong, and to bully the weak, were the priests' merciful methods of ensuring that their churches and their coffers were full. In those far-off days even Pemberton would not have stepped so jauntily in the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral. The young man of to-day knows that the bottom is knocked out of religion, but he is neither elated nor depressed in consequence. He does not desire particularly to see it put in again, and he knows that brass "gods" are still made in Birmingham, and other places, at so much per gross.

The Rev. J. C. Hardwicke, of Ripon Hall, Oxford, who writes also in the *Evening News*, is of the same mind as Pemberton in regarding religion as being in the melting-pot. He, too, sighs for the past, but not the remote past. The far more recent Victorian Period is quite good enough for him, and in this, I, for one, think that he displays a greater sobriety than the journalist who so loves the Middle and Brutal Ages. The Ages of Faith were extremely uncomfortable places for both believers and unbelievers, for matters of opinion were settled by the priest, not by argument, but by the more sinister methods of hanging, drawing, and quartering. After all, believers and unbelievers alike, are human beings, although this fact does not obtrude in theological works. George Foote was once introduced to a member of the Peculiar People who had undergone six months' imprisonment for relying upon prayer instead of a doctor. Foote shook hands and said: "You have got into trouble for believing the Bible, and I have got into trouble for disbelieving the Bible. It is well that we should become acquainted." A little more of this fine spirit would be very welcome in religious discussion.

Mr. Hardwicke looks through rosy-coloured spectacles at the Victorian Era. Those were "happy days," he declares, and even the disputants in the religious war were "happy warriors." The reference does credit to his heart, but not to his head, for even in Victorian England the wolf did not lie down with the lamb. That is only a fancy picture, like a highly-coloured poster of Southend-on-Sea displayed at railway stations; a view that puts Monte Carlo and Naples in the shade. Mr. Hardwicke insists that Freethinkers and priests then held the same fundamental beliefs. They might differ as to whether miracles had or had not happened, but as both agreed that miracles no longer happen it made very little difference. The question at issue, he adds, was "purely academic." And he instances the case of "Soapy Sam" Wilberforce and Professor Huxley and their memorable encounter at the British Association meeting. He even suggests that the disputants may have dined and wined together afterwards.

"This is magnificent, but it is not war," as the French officer said of the charge of the Light Brig-

ade at Balaclava. In the first place, the discussion at the British Association was concerning the Darwinian hypothesis, and not a question of miracles. It was also a mere incident in a debate on evolution. It was an affair of outposts, and not a battle on the large scale.

So, when Mr. Hardwicke suggests that these Victorians "all worshipped the same gods," he is very extensively mistaken. Bradlaugh worshipped no god, and he was the central figure in a big fight which lasted many years—nearly a generation. Bradlaugh's offence was that he was an Atheist, and Christians spent thousands of pounds, and years of trouble, in trying to ruin him and keep him out of Parliament and public life altogether. It was war all along the line, and Foote, Aveling, and others, who stepped into the breach, had to attack as well as defend in order to avoid the defeat of the then small Freethought Army for a generation. It was a time of excitement, and even passion. John Morley was spelling "god" with a small "g" in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review*, and Hutton, of the *Spectator*, was retaliating by spelling Morley's name with a small "m." Even the austere Gladstone was dragged into the fighting lines, and, with a plentiful lack of humour, was defending the Christian Bible under the delightful title: "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture,"

Mr. Hardwicke is a charming writer, and a pleasant man, but he lets his imagination run away with his pen. He says, pontifically, that "each man has his own stock of beliefs, good or bad, and is satisfied with them; or, if not, can easily change them." The reverend gentleman "doth protest too much." It may be true of a boy who attends three Sunday Schools in order to participate in three annual outings; it may be true of a London policeman who represents the "poor" at half-a-dozen City Churches for the sake of the coals and blankets; it may even be true of ecclesiastics of the "Soapy-Sam" brand, who will do anything for preferment; but it is not true of Freethinkers who grow grey in the service of Liberty, and find that intellectual honesty spells hardship. Labouring not for themselves, but for future generations, they eat the bitter bread of banishment. Most men would rather give up altogether than endure this, if they had to break stones for a living.

MIMNERMUS.

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#### THE AGE OF REASON.

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The eighteenth century claims the proud title of the Age of Reason, and reason is commonly supposed to be the enemy, or at any rate the rival, of religion. The dominant intellectual interest of the sixteenth century was the strife of Catholic and Protestant. The dominant preoccupation of the seventeenth was still religious controversy, not only between Rome and her critics, but within the precincts of the rival camps—between Jansenist and Jesuit, Arminian and Calvinist, Puritan and Anglican. By the opening of the eighteenth century the fires had almost burned themselves out and the *Aufklärung* derived its name from the frontispiece of a volume by Wolff which depicted the sun dispersing the mist. A new age with new interests and standards dawned with Bayle's *Dictionnaire critique*, of which two English translations appeared, and reached its fullest expression in Voltaire. . . . The secularization of thought, which began with the Renaissance and was interrupted by the Reformation and the Counter-reformation, was resumed and proceeded apace. Interest in the unseen world waned rapidly, and belief in man was substituted for belief in God. To some observers it was an age of superficiality and materialism, while Leslie Stephen on the other hand commends it as an age of sound common sense.—G. P. Gooch. (*From England and the World.*)

## La Poupee Metaphysique.

THE Doll or Puppet is no less a feature of the metaphysical realm than it is in the physical world. Every verbal entity, *i.e.*, an entity which has no shadow of a real existence save in the word given it as a name, is a puppet for the delectation of the adult childhood of the race. Such is the part played by such terms as angel, devil, ghost, spirit, soul, heaven, hell, and the like. The doll, teddy-bear, or golly-wog is a conglomerate of diverse articles having little or no relation to each other, such as rags, sawdust shavings, grass, hair, enamel, buttons, gutta-percha, leather, cotton, silk, etc., etc.; packed together and given a fanciful shape—animal or human. The different parts of this "make up" are treated as members of this imaginary existences. Now the girl that plays the rôle of mother breathes into this object the breath of life as Yahweh did to his clay model in the Garden of Eden, and the doll becomes a living being with a very real personality. It sleeps and wakes, talks and cries, is tired, hungry, or thirsty; it stands or sits down; it is good or naughty and is praised or scolded. The mother and baby hold long conversations together.

Now compare with this physical but fanciful reality the metaphysical puppet called soul or spirit, and note the similitude.

Its make up is as fictitious, and its powers and susceptibilities are as fantastic as in the child's doll. Indeed it is infinitely more so; for in the case of the adult-child it is a belief and is therefore absurd, grotesquely absurd; whereas with the child it is *not* a belief. The child is fully aware that it is not alive; it is only "tending" that it is so, to get out of it the keen enjoyment which the illusion imparts to the child mind.

The make-up of the metaphysical puppet consists of the senses possessed by living human beings without a single sense-organ to make it a possibility. It can see and hear, it can suffer and enjoy all the sensations that living flesh is heir to; it can burn and feel the agony of living flesh and yet remain unconsumed.

It can think and remember without brains. It is taken for granted that these spirits can recognize one another in heaven though invisible and intangible, and converse for ever without a pretence of a "transmitting or receiving" apparatus—a predicament that is beyond all possibility save to omnipotence, if there were such a thing. But this impossibility is duplicated when we consider that no conceivable subject can be imagined to talk about even for a day leave alone an eternity.

The extreme grotesqueness of this fantasy can be realized only by reflecting that every one of the capacities, powers, or attributes with the possession of which the soul or spirit is credited, is known to man *only* in relation to chemico-physical energy in a living material organism which has been obviously evolved solely for storing and utilizing it for operating the material-mental machine. To this universal law there is absolutely no exception; yet these verbal entities which have not even a pretence of a substance to serve as a store of energy let alone an organization for utilizing it, are credited with all the functioning results as if in possession of both.

Now at the bar of the unsophisticated human reason, this airy-nothing with the claims made on its behalf, would be pronounced a Bogus in excelsis.

How is it then that the folly of believing such a mass of fatuities, not only without a scintilla of evidence, but intrinsically impossible, is so seldom realized?

The answer is found in two correlated facts. (1) "A great number, perhaps a majority of human beings, seem hardly to think at all, except in the vaguest way, of anything outside individual concern." (Huxley & Wells, in *Science of Life*).

(2) That the object to which the attributes are imputed is a metaphysical chimera.

Metaphysical ideas are not susceptible of incongruity or impossibility. It may be a mass of self-contradiction, so conflicting that if it were converted into a physical object, it would be shell of explosive forces. The Christian dogma of the Trinity is a case in point. God is both three and one, and no believer is shocked at the notion. He would ridicule the idea that an apple could be both one apple and three apples at the same instant.

Though the experience of the whole human race gives the most emphatic lie to the contention that the spirit can see, hear, feel and talk, yet no one seems to think amiss of it. To metaphysics nothing is impossible!

A verbal entity serves the superstitious mind as a peg on which to hang some fanciful object, which it endows with an imaginary living body on the pattern of some animal or human form, or a mixture of both (fantastic incongruity is no defect or detraction). It is further clothed or equipped with human or animal powers, capacities, senses or wants.

As it is a verbal nothing there is no objective reality to check the airy flights of the imagination; so there is no limit to its fantasies.

As a notorious instance of this fact, take the term "angel." What an inexhaustible fount has this idea proved to the metaphysical pundits of the ages. They first multiplied them till their name was legion. Then they divided them into categories and gave to each of these classes a different rank, after the fashion of an Eastern Court, until a complete *angelic hierarchy* was verbally established, from Seraphim right down to a simple angel that served as a messenger or page-boy of the gods.

On the pattern of the triune godhead the Pseudo-Dionysius divided this celestial hierarchy into three triads:—

- (1) Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones.
- (2) Dominions, Virtues, and Powers.
- (3) Principalities, Arch-Angels and Angels.

Moreover, their functions were allotted with the precision of intimate knowledge:—

The "Angel of Yahweh" was a manifestation of God; the Cherubim were his throne-bearers; the Seraphim were his court; and the Angels were also the court and the army of God.

What transcendental knowledge! How easy it is to subdivide and metamorphose metaphysical clay! The reader will observe that the Trinity dogma is an integral part of this silly pedantry of gnostic lore.

Indeed, hardly anybody possessing the capacity of reflection can fail to see that the Trinity dogma itself was an inevitable evolution in that gnostic sea of learned ignorance, especially as the new cult was both the offspring and the rival of Judaism, its natural parent.

What small wonder is it then that the ancient tags, soul and spirit, are still pumped full with capacities, activities, and sensations of material living flesh. It is only a portion of the human mind, even in the case of cultured people, that is yet civilized.

The gnostics were equally as informative in respect to the form and equipment of these "airy nothings." They were given the size and shape of the human female, being more worthy of the heavenly court than the uncouth male form! They were equipped with wings attached to their shoulders, and in some cases

attached to their feet as well. Nor did they spurn material food, when they visited the earth, though they had no material alimentary tract to extract physical energy out of it.

What a hotch-potch of farcical incongruity and ignorance.

But the notion of a spirit existence harbours an absurdity deeper still. A spirit is supposed to be disembodied; it has therefore no extension, that is to say, it does not occupy space even to the extent done by a microbe or by a mathematical point. What then determines its position at any instant? It is supposed to be not a diffusion but to possess individuality. What determines it? It cannot be the delimitation of space as in the case of material things. Is it not a highly significant fact that metaphysics, with all its transcendent lore and esoteric knowledge, has failed to give us even a hint how this airy-nothing is an individual? Where is it at any given moment? And why is it there and not elsewhere? As it is assumed to change its position from time to time, it must be capable of moving. What does motion in the case of an extensionless entity mean or imply? What? Where is the Quidnunc who can give us rational intelligible answers to these questions? The very conception is an instance of what grotesque caricatures the human mind is capable of conceiving—there is no limit to its creative capacity.

It is language that is responsible for this persistent habit of eternally weltering in a chaos of the absurd. It is the dire penalty we have to pay for having acquired the gift of speech. Words, especially as names, easily become entities, and we seldom realize the fact that they may signify nothing. Gnostic times was noted for its fecundity and for the abundance of its verbal crop.

KERIDON.

## The Conception of Philosophy.

(Concluded from page 262.)

DR. A. E. TAYLOR, as Professor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University tells how he "searched," in taking up his study of philosophy, for "a view of things which would protect the realities of religion and ethics against all danger from naturalistic attacks." (*Contemporary British Philosophy*, 1925). In the same book he says, "scientific determinism is a purely this-world and secular doctrine. To include it in our ethics means that we confine ourselves at the outset of our practical philosophy to a this-world view of man's destiny and man's good." Every Secularist will agree with him, but from another viewpoint.

It was Dr. Taylor who, in 1916, published for our encouragement *Faith and the War*, in which he said there was a hell or something like it, adding, "If there were not, I could not respect my Maker." This is from a University Professor.

W. R. Sorley, as Professor of Moral Philosophy in Cambridge University, goes straight to ethics and to one God who is the source of reality and the guarantor of moral values. As to whether he is right in taking this view, the professor is frank enough to say, "It must be admitted at once that if the theory of Naturalism were valid the whole argument which I have worked out would fall to the ground" (*Contemporary British Philosophy*). Since he opposes Naturalism (which includes Materialism) in every book he writes on it, it would seem that the argument runs somewhat in this fashion:—

(1) See what a wonderful system of ethics I have erected.

(2) But if Naturalism were true it would fall to the ground.

(3) Therefore Naturalism is not true.

C. C. J. Webb, as Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion in Oxford University says (*ibid*) "With me it is certainly religion that has supplied me with my primary motive in philosophizing."

Webbs' latest is a small book called *Religion and the Thought of To-day* (1929), in which he submits that modern philosophy is indebted to Christianity for its conception of the immortal human spirit as an expression of the divine. Again, every Secularist will agree, and again from another viewpoint.

The late Jas. Ward has not been dead so long that his philosophy is of merely historical interest. He called his system Theistic Monadism, and the Theistic half came straight from the usual arbitrary assumption—without a God there could be no meaning to life, therefore we must place our faith in God (*see ibid.*)

A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, a Scottish University Professor told the world in *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, that the "purpose of philosophy" was the "vindication of a Divine Purpose in things," and that philosophy stood or fell with the possibility of a teleological explanation; and the possibility of finding a reasonable meaning to life. "Philosophy," he said, must be "unflinchingly anthropocentric."

Dean Inge needs no introduction. He says (in *Contemporary British Philosophy*), "I am unable to distinguish between philosophy and religion." They have the same goal, "perfect knowledge of the Perfect." The Dean has some mistrust of logic and says that the philosopher should "start with an exalted faith," and then "follow the gleam in the expectation of finding something better than a neat logical synthesis."

Wm. (now Archbishop) Temple's philosophy is just a pure and simple Theism, which he defines as "the adoption of the hypothesis that the ultimate ground of the universe is a will fulfilling a purpose which commends itself to us as good."

In addition to these we have the case of Balfour, who in his *Defence* evidently thought attack the best means of defence, and said that because "science is a system of belief which . . . is wholly without proof," it cannot claim to have ousted Theology.

But even Balfour, we see, has his prototype in history. Al Ghazzali (b. 1059) was sceptical in philosophy in an attempt to reinforce Theology.

In the cases which have been cited philosophical method has been applied to religious doctrines, and philosophy has been the conscious handmaid of theology and religion. But it would be difficult to say how often it has been unconsciously at the beck and call of religion. Some would-be philosophers have been (1) unconsciously affected, and some have been (2) influenced by threats of unpleasantness, to put it mildly. In the latter cases, philosophy may be called the unwilling handmaid of theology.

In the general case of (1) Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* might never have been written had it not been for the thought of old Lampe tottering through life without a hope, and the pragmatic "God" of Wm. James has no more justification.

But there are cases more glaring by far than these. Faced with the impossibility of proving God's existence, philosophers have attempted to bridge the gulf by a mere blind leap into faith. Montaigne, as is well known, was driven back on faith. And thus Jacobi (a post Kantian): "A God who could be proved would be no God."

So also Lotze, the popular German philosopher: "Let us say that where there is an irreconcilable

contradiction between the omnipotence and goodness of God, our finite wisdom has come to the end of its tether, and that we do not understand the solution which we yet believe in."

This is descending to the level of Calvin's "The procedure of divine justice is too high to be scanned by human measure and comprehended by the feebleness of the human intellect," and its logical outcome is "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

These men carry a riddle which they believe in, get much from, but cannot solve.

This unconscious postulating of religious notions is undoubtedly operative to-day, and seems apparent in the demand of Prof. Alexander and Lloyd Morgan, that we should accept scientific discovery with "natural piety." The latter has just written an interesting book entitled *Mind at the Crossways*, in which he regards as important the questions, Who Did It? and What For? Another writer, Rogers, conceives philosophy as the attempt to answer the question, What is the meaning of life? (*Modern Philosophy*.)

The reader, however, will perhaps have his own suspicions of writers who are allowing themselves to be influenced by religious presuppositions.

In the matter of coercion there was scarcely anyone in the Middle Ages who dared do other than make his opinions conform with orthodox theology. And this coercion did not pass with the Middle Ages. Galileo's famous recantation is the classic instance. Natural timidity on the part of Descartes, too, might have prevented him from pushing his Materialism to its logical consequences. Contemporaneous with his was the case of Pierre Gassendi, his countryman. Gassendi was a Roman Catholic priest, who restored and elaborated Epicureanism. Here was a thoroughgoing Atheist and Materialist who was persuaded by his professional brethren, on professional grounds, to burn some of his more dangerous works. Hence it is gratifying for Freethinkers to note that to-day philosophers like Russell can stand their ground.

\* \* \*

We have now completed our rapid survey of Philosophy as the handmaid of Theology. Can we have been so clumsy as to convey the impression that because it is not the business of philosophy to take orders from religion, therefore religious philosophy is untenable? We hope not. We are only concerned with philosophers who start with religious dogma and then conform to it at any price. Theists who reason up to their belief (*e.g.*, Rashdall) do not here come within the scope of our criticism; indeed, it is an entertaining diversion for us to see one of them (Alexander) starting with bare Space-Time, and then making his God evolve just like a toad or a dandelion. Our purpose is served if we have emphasized to Freethinkers the historical connexions of university men who are postulating unverifiable and arbitrary assumptions inherited from ancient theologies. To be quite consistent they should join the Roman Catholic Church.

Man's "discovery" of God did not come by philosophy, and a philosophy which starts by assuming arbitrary and dogmatic doctrines cannot hope to reach them by induction, and cannot prove their validity.

Before considering Philosophy as the handmaid of Science there is an intermediate stage which may correspond to the second of Comte's three, the metaphysical stage. This was in evidence in ancient Greece, and cropped up again in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and there are still remnants). The chief characteristic of this school is the exaltation of *a priori* reasoning at the

expense of empirical and scientific investigation. And so we get such conceptions of philosophy as these:

Plato: Philosophy is that which is concerned alone with the ideal.

Pythagoras: It is a knowledge of immaterial and eternal things.

Schelling: It is the science of the Absolute Identity of Subject and Object.

Hegel: It is the science of the Absolute, or of the Self-Comprehending Reason.

The result has been a gallery of ambitious failures, in Germany and elsewhere, and nature has not always been so kind as to end their days before the vogue of their systems.

This is not to assert that nothing useful has been inherited from such as Bradley or Schopenhauer. We are indebted to the former in his stimulating effect on the twentieth century discussion, and to the latter in his consolation for jilted lovers.

G. H. TAYLOR.

### Wiping Out a Religion.

MR. FRANK HIVES has several sly hits at religion in his *Ju-Ju and Justice in Nigeria*, published by the Bodley Head, at twelve shillings and sixpence.

Unfortunately, people in this country reading the book, will feel thankful that the natives of Nigeria have lost their old superstitions, but will not see the humour in the fact that in Europe we have not been so enlightened as to cast aside our traditional superstitions and ceremonies.

Mr. Hives was for some time District Commissioner on the upper reaches of the Cross River, and he found that the natives were kept in abject terror and slavery by the fetish of the priests.

One of the first exploits was the destroying of the Long Ju-Ju, a ju-ju being an oracle. Unfortunately, the head priests escaped and set up in business at other places, moving whenever they heard that Hives was on the track. One of the ju-jus was called the Kamalu Ju-ju, and the charges for consulting it were paid in slaves, some of whom were sacrificed, but most of whom were sold.

When the attack was made on the ju-ju, the first thing Hives noticed was a picture of Christ walking on the sea, and a picture of Lazarus being raised from the dead. These were framed in double rows of human skulls without the lower jaws.

The ju-ju itself was a sphere about six feet in circumference stuck together with some kind of wax, and composed of all sorts of rubbish, bones, rags, and feathers and so on.

All this was destroyed and burnt for Hives knew that if the slightest particle was left standing the natives would think that the ju-ju had been stronger than he, and that a certain element of magic would attach even to trees in the neighbourhood unless they were burnt down.

The chief priest was captured, and hauled away, screaming and threatening, to take his trial for murder.

On the way home a "savvy book man" met the party. He was dressed in clerical attire, "and was apparently one of those black parsons who start churches in the safe parts of the country solely for their own gain."

He explained to Hives that he was a man of God, and was looking for a site on which he could build a church. The District Commissioner saw through the rogue, and offered him as a site, the burnt ju-ju. The would-be parson saw the bound priest and two parboiled heads which rolled out of an iron pot, and without a word jumped on his bicycle and disappeared.

One story in the book is a masterpiece of ceciness. The author slept in a disused rest house, and at night he saw an old native with pock-marked face, old and mouldy leatherlike skin and "two staring dead eyes that did not move." The native climbed a post, and although bullets entered the thing, it continued to climb.

It was the ghost of a man who had hanged himself there some time previously. No explanation is given, the story is stated just as Hives remembers it.

The most horrible chapter in the book tells of a ju-ju which was really a brothel in the jungle. The chief priest was obviously a sexual maniac, but he flourished for a long time, until he fell foul of the law for other things besides his prostitutes' establishment.

There are other stories of superstition and savagery and cruelty under the name of religion—there are such stories as that of the snake curse, the power of imagination and the very amusing story of how Hives suggested the Solomonic way out when two women quarrelled over the identity of a child. Hives suggested that the child should be chopped in two and shared, and the suggestion was hailed with delight, and the poor youngster was nearly torn in two by the disputants.

It was amusing too, when the priests belonging to Omojakpa showed their magic. They could turn themselves into animals or make themselves invisible at will. But all they did was to perform a few simple conjuring tricks, and when asked to turn into leopards or to vanish, they replied that it was neither the time nor the place for the doing of such serious things. The modern Christian makes the same excuse when his God does not send rain on a parched land, or fails to heal a sick man for whom intercessions have been made.

NECHELLS.

### Simpkin.

THEY tell me Simpkin is a saint  
I've often wish'd he wasn't,  
If 'tis a note of that complaint  
To look so d—d unpleasant.

The world's no doubt a sorry place  
For Simpkin; and, by Jabez,  
The merest glimpsing of his face  
Will wring and writhe a baby's.

A lout he is, a kill-joy loon  
Where wit and mirth foregather;  
In company I'd just as soon  
Sit by an old bell-wether.

But Simpkin, I have heard men state,  
Is kindly and well-meaning;  
'Tis that his goodness is so great  
It takes so much o' screening.

I would the fiend, that made his skin  
So yellow dry and scurvy,  
Had turn'd the creature outside-in  
Or set him topsy-turvy.

Any yet since nothing 's made in vain,  
And we must judge our brother  
Unfitted for this world, 'tis plain  
He's fitted for another;

Where angels glorious to behold  
Shall come, as he supposes,  
To lead him through the streets o' gold  
And crown his head with roses.

And if to Simpkin it befall  
Just as he thinks, so be it!  
I would not grudge the man at all,  
But should not press to see it.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

### Acid Drops.

Naturally a Spiritualist medium has a communication concerning the murder for which Podmore was executed. Just before the execution, a message was received from Messiter to say that Podmore was not the man who killed him. Still the Home Secretary declined to reprieve Podmore. Perhaps he may have thought that the spirit might just as well have said who did kill him. But that is quite in line with all the other messages from the spirit world. Either they tell you things that everyone knows, or they tell you a lot of rubbish that no one ought to believe. Some people are silly here, but nearly all of them to be verging on idiocy there.

We should not be surprised to find that in some Russian paper there will appear an account of the persecution of Christians in Liverpool. It has for long been a custom in the South End of the City to burn effigies of Judas on Good Friday. But this year about 100 policemen seized about ninety of these effigies in an attempt to suppress the custom. We feel certain that the Russian equivalent of the *Morning Post*—if Russia has the misfortune to possess anything of the kind, will hold this up as an example of the way in which Christians are being persecuted in England. And as there was a burning, there is every likelihood that the account will read, "Ninety Christians burned for celebrating Easter."

But after all there does not appear any reason why Christians should dislike Judas. He was just as necessary to their salvation as was Jesus. Jesus had to be crucified, Judas had to betray him in order that Christians might be saved. It was all part of a prepared plan, a public performance of something that had been rehearsed beforehand. What would have happened if Judas had been late, or had been ill, or had thrown up the part? Why millions would have gone to their death without knowing there was a hell waiting for them. There should really be four in the Christian Trinity—God the father, God the son, the holy ghost and Judas. It is really mean for Christians to denounce Judas and then take without a word of recognition what he did for them.

On Good Friday, at a village near Rome, the part of Judas, in a play of the Resurrection, was taken by the village idiot, says the *Daily Sketch*. We feel certain that he was not the only idiot about the place.

Canon Alexander wants no more money for St. Paul's Cathedral. All he wants now to complete his happiness is a few hundred more fools willing to listen to the "old, old story." For such are of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The cross above the dome of St. Paul's has just been re-gilded with 3,000 leaves of pure gold. It would appear that there is plenty of money to make God's mansions on earth look pretty, but very little for building cheap houses for poor people. A sense of proportion is not a prominent characteristic of the truly pious. There is little in the Christian religion to engender it.

On the subject of Methodist Union, the Rev. J. G. Bowran, President of the P.M. Church, said that the movement had great ideals from the commencement. They were not seeking a big church, nor were they out for economy. So, too, the Rev. Dr. Softhouse declared a similar tale. Methodist Union, he said, is not prompted by the desire for numbers, or wealth. We think these gentlemen do "protest too much." Someone will suspect they are not telling the truth. Anyway, Mr. Bowran anticipates that future Methodism will exercise a great influence in civic, national and political, life. This may be interpreted as meaning that Methodism hopes that the future will find it with greater power to investi-

No man has imagination to paint the agonies, the horrors, the cruelties of war. Think of sending shot and shell crashing through the bodies of men! Think of the widows and orphans! Think of the maimed, the mutilated, the mangled! Every good man, every good woman should try to do away with war, to stop the appeal to savage force.—*Ingersoll*.

gate and enforce more Puritan restrictions and legislation. So liberal-minded people had better look out.

The *Methodist Times* thinks that one of the failures of the Free Churches is that they have not yet learned how to celebrate the festivals of their religion:—

If the imagination of the young is to be captured, Non-conformity must get rid of its Puritan traditions with regard to festival making. It must have a richer symbolism. It must not be afraid of beauty and colour . . . Let it cultivate a new sense of the beautiful, a new passion for an expression of religion that is not afraid of art.

Our contemporary's senuous suggestion is enough to make the drab old saints of Methodism turn in their graves. Still, what about making a cautious start with beauty and light and colour by means of a few bags of confetti and some pretty paper chains?

From the *Sydney Labour Daily*, we gather that Archbishop Kelly is a true son of the Church. Recently, in St. Mary's Cathedral, he said that if a Roman Catholic man married a Protestant woman "it were better that a millstone were hanged round his neck, that he cut off his right hand, or plucked out his right eye, or that he lose both hands and both eyes . . . It were better that you lose both hands and both eyes than be cast into hell fire." Quite a nice amiable, pleasant spoken gentleman! But what a beautiful example of the moralizing and elevating influence of Christianity!

A young member at a Wesley Guild Conference mentioned, or perhaps it should be said complained, that "thousands of decent folk apparently had no need of God, and thousands of others who depended on God got no further." In other words, we presume, people live quite as decent, useful, and happy lives without God as other folk live with God. Well, Freethinkers have been telling Christians that fact for many years now. Perhaps it was unwise of the young Guilders to blurt it out at a pious conference. Some young desperadoes may try the experiment of living without God.

The followers of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds believe that torturing an animal for the pleasure it gives them is a noble pastime. Criticism of these gallant ladies and gentlemen has been so widespread that they have been moved to publish a "defence" of their barbarity. In it is compressed more cant, hypocrisy and stupidity than one would have thought a human brain could be capable of.

New hats are declared to have a tonic effect on women. On the other hand, the sight of a woman without a hat in church has a shocking effect on a priest. Only persons who know something about primitive taboos understand why.

Miss M. Lloyd George says: "I know of a case where a backward landlord failed to demolish a row of insanitary houses, and the sea came in and did it for him." Obviously this "act of God" was divinely intended. We presume it would be expecting too much for a similar "act" to demolish the slum property of the Church of England?

Parsons do not speak the truth nor tell what they think, and congregations consist of people who do not think. We hardly like to believe this, but we have it from a parson. He says:—

Fearlessly and truthfully we must declare what is truth to us. It is useless speaking of upsetting the flock. The flock must get used to thinking, and hard thinking at that.

One ought not to expect the flock to acquire so strange a habit too suddenly. The old habit of imitating the shepherd in the matter of brain usage will be difficult to uproot. Besides, the flock may argue that Christ said nothing about Salvation being dependent on hard thinking. He said it depended on believing in him and in what he said.

A writer in a Free Church weekly quotes from an article in the *Christian World*:—

One disservice, I think, Joseph Parker rendered to Christianity—his bitter assaults upon the scientists of his time. He was exasperated beyond all endurance by the agnostic dogmatism of Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer. They drummed him into repeated philippics. The mocking tones and corrosive acidity with which he flayed the Darwinian evolutionists gave a pugilistic spirit to that conflict between science and theology which, as we now see in retrospect, did infinite injury to organized Christianity forty years ago.

It is decidedly humorous to note that, under the inspiration of the Lord, the gallant defenders of Christianity succeeded only in doing "infinite injury" to the religion they defended.

The following ideas are taken from an article by the Rev. W. B. Mattinson, of Plumstead: We must have no more "pantomime evangelism." The sense and the reverence of the people have starved it out. It did no good save to create a sensation. Then we must avoid "scare evangelism." This is not so dead as it would appear to be. For the sake of what are termed results men will still play on the emotion of fear. The scare-monger is wicked, the simple young and ignorant are his prey. Cowardice alone will be the reason for not withstanding him. "Soppy evangelism" ought to be discredited. Unhappily it is not. So long as hysteria survives so long will this type have vogue. Common, manly decency ought to restrain it, but it does not. The varieties of evangelism are almost legion. We must notice one or two more of the flagrant and pernicious type. The "cheap-jack" brand must receive its quietus, mainly on the ground that it is not honest. Offering worldly aggrandisement for souls is mean. To tell people that godliness is profitable is sheer bad salesmanship. In these days we ought to guard against the danger of "snobby" evangelism. The cry for an educated ministry is not altogether free from something akin to it. Mr. Mattinson seems so sensitive in regard to pernicious kinds of evangelism that we suspect he has been reading the *Freethinker* pretty regularly. What he seems not to have realized is that if the Churches discard all the pernicious methods, the chances of gaining new clients will indeed be few. Presumably, Mr. Mattinson, like other modern clergymen, has only discovered his objections to such methods now that they are seen to be ineffectual with the better educated people of today.

The process of adaptation to environment by religion still proceeds, and the gentle art of advertisement is not overlooked. In the *Morning Post*, Mr. Alfred Noyes has an article on the literary merit of the Bible. As the taboo on that book is now wearing thin, an effort is being made to make it palatable and keep it in the limelight, and Mr. Noyes lends a hand at the job. Writing of a chapter of Ecclesiastes he states "... its rhythm is dictated by something far higher than art, and seems to speak to us directly from the beating heart of this ordered and rhythmical universe." This is very high and mighty and poetical; earthquakes, floods, typhoons and famines are conveniently forgotten in the desire to help to keep the home fires of religion burning.

In *Everyman* there is an article, "Anti-God," by "Philemon." This writer enters a protest against hasty journalism—as if journalism could be anything else. This particular kind of journalism is directed against Stalin, and Philemon thinks that all the familiar clichés against Russia recoil on the writers themselves. There is no greater liar than an indignant man, and there is no person more irresponsible than a journalist on the popular side, in the matter of abuse. Philemon writes, that if he were God he would be rather glad of an anti-God movement from which it would appear that the subject is about on a level with the attitudinizing of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Philemon must pluck up a little courage; he must not, however, attempt to be on both sides in arguing his case.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. S. FRASER.—Thanks. We are publishing. The matter of the exchange has been rectified, but we should have been written direct and earlier.

E. LECHMERE.—We have never seen the magazine, but will try and get a copy. Thanks for calling our attention to it.

R. MITCHELL.—The Secular Education Leaflets have been sent. Their distribution at this juncture should do much good. Pleased you so greatly enjoy your *Freethinker*.

HOWELL S. ENGLAND.—Perhaps inability to make a hit in other directions may explain things. After all, religion always supplies easy material for exploitation. Look at the travelling evangelists!

T. STEVENS.—We don't wish to be impolite, but your criticism is sheer nonsense. Those who talk about the atomic theory being dead simply do not understand what they are saying. The atomic theory is one of the fundamental conceptions of modern science. Even the new Quantum hypothesis proceeds on the assumption of units of energy, and what is a unit of energy but the old conception of an irreducible quantity, that is, an atom, expressed in terms of energy instead of matter? As we have so often pointed out, a little scientific thinking is of far greater importance than a ton of scientific knowledge. The latter without the former is of no great value to anyone.

D. MATHEWS (Transvaal).—Obviously the aim of the Christians here with regard to Russia was to discredit Freethought in this country by their criticisms of Russia. As we are not concerned with gaining the goodwill of bigots, we thought it expedient to write as we did. Glad you appreciate our attitude. Your letters should do good. We have not seen the book of Professor Boas. Who is the publisher?

A. L. BRAINE.—No acknowledgment is necessary. We are glad to see so much space given to your defence.

G. LEWIS.—Modern Buddhism has a great many superstitions mixed up with it, but Buddha must not be held responsible for this. How far an Atheist supports Buddhism would depend upon how far he agreed with the Buddhist philosophy. His agreement with it as an Atheistic system, does not carry approval of everything in it.

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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.

As announced last week the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. will be held this year in London. We hope that there will be present a goodly muster of members, in addition to delegates from Branches. There will be a social gathering on the Saturday evening preceding the Conference, which the Executive hopes to make more than usually enjoyable. Fuller particulars will be given later. At present we beg to remind all branches and delegates that resolutions for the Agenda must be sent at once, otherwise they will be too late.

We think there will be a good attendance this year. It is to be hoped that every Branch will be represented, and members from all over the country will have a chance of meeting each other and exchanging views. Arrangements have been made for the week-end at a

very comfortable hotel, and at a very moderate rate. Those who require accommodation should write at once to Mr. Rosetti, stating exactly what their requirements are. The sooner this is done the better. London bids fair to be rather crowded this summer, and it is not always easy to provide accommodation at a moment's notice.

To-day (May 4) is the general opening of the London Open-air lecture season. In Victoria Park, Mr. Corrigan will open with a lecture at 3.15. The West Ham Branch is holding meetings at Wren Road, Camberwell Green, at 11.30, and at Stonehouse Street, Clapham Road, at 7. Meetings during the week will be also held by this Branch. The West London Branch will be holding meetings in Hyde Park on Sundays and during the week.

The Executive has engaged Mr. Whitehead for his usual summer campaign in the open-air, and he will lecture in Finsbury Park at 11.15. He will also speak in Regent's Park at 6.0. During the week Mr. Whitehead will speak, from Monday till Friday, in the Finsbury Park Road—near the Park Gates. We hope that London Freethinkers will do what they can to help by their presence at all these meetings.

The Secular Society, Limited will issue very shortly a booklet entitled *A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity*, by Upasaka. The work is written in a clear and simple style, and should prove very effective for propaganda. The work bears a striking pictorial cover by Mr. H. Cutner, and will be published at one shilling.

We are glad to record a distinctly upward move in the circulation of the *Freethinker*, and we hope to have the full assistance of all our friends during the summer months in making the paper better known. This can be done by handing a copy to a personal friend, or leaving one about when read. Many take an extra copy for this purpose. Or the name and address of a likely reader, with threepence in stamps, will secure a copy for six weeks.

We published recently a brief summary of an address broadcast in Berlin by the President of the Monist Society. We have received from the office of the *Freithinker*, Berlin, the following note on what is being done:—

In answer to your questions we can inform you that as a result of persistent effort we have succeeded in obtaining permission to speak from the Berlin broadcasting station. On January 19, this year, we celebrated our first Freethought morning with an address on the purpose and meaning of our movement. A few days later Gen. Max Sievers, who has been our business manager for many years, gave his lecture. On January 26, the President of the Monist Society in Stuttgart gave a similar talk, under the heading of "Man and the Universe." We have also succeeded in speaking before the microphone on a few occasions in Breslau, and as long ago as 1927, we were able to broadcast our initiation service for young persons who had been brought up in Freethought and had completed their school education.

It would be interesting to hear whether you have also succeeded in getting a Freethought speaker to broadcast for the B.B.C.

All we have to say in reply to the above question is, that this is England, and in this priest-ridden country, where Cabinets shake at the frowns of the Churches and newspapers cater for the more ignorant section of the Christian world, such a thing as happened in Berlin is not likely to happen. No straightforward Freethinking address is ever likely to be permitted for a very long time from any of our Broadcasting stations. You may be permitted to say you are not a Christian, and the fact of public men having done so has filled many with astonishment. This is not because it is not known that very many public men are Freethinkers, the astonishment was that they should have publicly said so. One day, when Freethinkers in this country are a little more assertive than they are at present, things may be different. Meanwhile we go on pegging away, knowing that we are helping towards the inevitable end.

## The Future of Religion.

(Concluded from page 267.)

In addition to the Church of England's evil record in persecution, there is also the equally evil record of its steadfast and determined opposition to all movements towards reform and progress. During the last century, says Mr. Joad, the Church of England has opposed:—

Every claim for justice, every appeal to reason, every movement for equality, every proposal to relieve the poverty, to mitigate the savagery, or to enlighten the ignorance of the masses was morally certain to encounter the opposition of the Church. From many similar instances, I cite a few at random. The clergy of the Established Church either actively opposed or were completely indifferent to the abolition of the slave trade. Even the pious Churchman, Wilberforce, writing in 1832, was compelled to admit that "the Church clergy have been shamefully lukewarm in the cause of slavery abolition." They opposed the movement for the abolition of the Rotten Boroughs, prophesying that, if the Reform Bill of 1832 was carried, it would lead to the destruction of the Establishment. They opposed, in 1806, Whitbread's Bill to establish parish schools in England out of rates, the Archbishops complaining that the proposal would take too much power from the clergy. State education was indeed persistently and at all times opposed by the Church, because "it would enable the labouring classes to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity." They opposed the efforts of Joseph Arch in the seventies, to secure better wages for the half-starved agricultural labourer.

All through the century, whenever and wherever there is a movement for change and betterment, the clergy are found opposing it. In this they were merely carrying on the tradition of their order. When one looks back over history, one realizes that there is scarcely any discovery which science has made for human advancement and happiness which churchmen and theologians have not violently opposed. (C. E. M. Joad: *The Present and Future of Religion*. pp. 149-150.)

But, bad as the Church's record in the past has been, says Mr. Joad, its opposition to social reform is still notorious. Take the case of Birth Control, as he truthfully remarks: "The case for birth control is one of the strongest in modern times. So strong is it, and so familiar are the arguments in its favour, that it is unnecessary to repeat them here. For the knowledge and facilities requisite for the control of birth there is an overwhelming demand." Yet the Conference of Bishops held at Lambeth Palace in 1920, condemned it in the following words:—

An emphatic warning is given against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers—physical, moral, and religious—thereby incurred, and against the evils with which the extension of such use threatens the race.

And this, in face of the fact, that the great majority of the clergy were actually practising birth control, and limiting their families! Could hypocrisy go further? Nine years afterwards, in fact, in the summer of last year, the Rev. Edward Lyttleton, late headmaster of Eton, published a book entitled, *The Christian and Birth Control*. It begins with an "Open letter to the Bishops," containing the following extract:—

If contraception is not wrong, in many cases it must be right. Will any pastor of a flock say this from his pulpit? Will any Bishop put his name to a document commending the practice, even to dwellers in the slums? God's Word and Sacraments avow in public that he is himself a contraceptionist? If not, why not?

And now the Church is beginning to realize that further opposition will not only be useless, but actually bring discredit on the Church, so a few weeks ago—April 4 to be exact—the new Primate, Dr. Lang, more astute than Dr. Davidson, his aged predecessor, removed the Church's ban upon the discussion of the subject. Not indeed out of any belated sense of pity for the underpaid labourer with a large family on the verge of starvation, but because, says the Archbishop: "I would rather have all the risks which come of free discussion than the greater risks which we run by a conspiracy of silence." It is simply a matter of self preservation.

But the help of the Church is not needed now. The knowledge the Church denied the suffering poor was supplied by others, mainly by the heroic action of the Atheist, Charles Bradlaugh. The fight for birth control has been practically won, and that in the face of the determined opposition of the Church. In a few more years, when the public have forgotten the Church's earlier opposition, we shall find the Church claiming to be the pioneers of the movement, and citing the testimony of Dr. Lyttleton, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, in proof of it. On the other hand, as Mr. Joad observes, the Church of Rome: "thunders in season and out against birth control, and threatens those who practise it with hell-fire."

We have noticed how tyrannical rulers have always found an ally in the teachings of the Christian Faith. Mr. Joad cites the testimony of Napoleon in proof of this, as follows:—

"What is it," he [Napoleon] asked his critics, "that makes the poor man think it quite natural that there are fires in my palace while he is dying of cold? That I have ten coats in my wardrobe while he goes naked? That at each of my meals, enough is served to feed his family for a week? It is simply religion, which tells him that in another life I shall be only his equal, and that he actually has more chance of being happy there than I. Yes, we must see to it that the floors of the churches are open to all, and that it does not cost the poor man much to have prayers said on his tomb."

So far, through more than two-thirds of his book, we are altogether with Mr. Joad. We heartily applaud his onslaught on the Christian faith, and the ruthlessness with which he exposes the wickedness and weakness of religion, and look forward to Mr. Joad's final summing up and judgment on these monstrous beliefs. It does not come; but, strange to relate, he suddenly turns completely round and asserts that religion has a great future before it! Men and women, he asserts, "have nevertheless a need of religion. This need is a fundamental fact of our natures; human beings have it because they are human beings, and they will continue to have it so long as they remain human beings." We do not believe it, and the first part of Mr. Joad's book, showing how the younger generation have discarded religion, disproves it.

It is true that Mr. Joad's new religion of the future will not be anything like the religion of the past, then why call it by the same name? We believe that when children are brought up without having religious ideas crammed into them, before they can reason on them, they will never feel the need of them. Even as it is multitudes do not feel the need now. If the religious sentiment is so fundamentally and indelibly imbedded in our nature, the Churches would not be fighting so strenuously to have it taught in the schools; if they believed what they say, they would not fear secular education.

W. MANN.

## Money for Mugs.

A MOST interesting document has just reached me. It is the 1929 Yearly Report of the Ordination Candidates Training Fund. For those not acquainted with this charity it may be stated that its purpose is to provide training for candidates for the ministry in the Church of England—that harmonious Christian sect whose dogmas we are expected to handle so gently in speech and writing under penalty of prosecution.

With the millions of pounds which this Church receives annually from various sources it might appear strange that the public should be invited to contribute still further to a fund of this nature. But, in view of the princely incomes enjoyed by its High Priests, it is perhaps not so surprising that little is left over for educating its neophytes. After all, those responsible for allocating the expenditure of Church funds are probably well aware that the more they spend in educating candidates, the less likely are these candidates to swallow wholesale the nonsensical dogmas which they are expected to believe and teach. Education is a mighty dangerous thing to give to prospective parsons. It is apt to breed common-sense or logic.

It is true that the monies collected by this particular charity are not specifically earmarked for education. The avowed object is "to provide training for Candidates of Evangelical views." In other words, unless the men who offer themselves already exhibit the necessary mental bias, they don't get a red cent for their training from *this* fund. What these Evangelical views may be, we are left to infer from various passages in the report. So let us read on.

"It is very sad to find," says the report, "that the Anglo-Catholics are pressing into the Ministry so many very extreme men. There is no doubt that such men are not acceptable to the great majority of the Nation." The Anglo-Catholics, it is to be noted, *press* their men into the ministry. The Evangelicals, we must assume, merely give their candidates a gentle shove. But to continue: "The terrible lack of knowledge of the Bible revealed by interviews (with men applying for grants) is a most serious sign of to-day; it makes it all the more imperative that a sound teaching of the Bible should be given to all candidates." "Are we content to let most of the few Theological Colleges that we have, drift into Modernism of a very dangerous type?" And lastly: "Many of the few Evangelicals who are being ordained are being sadly side-tracked . . . it is a lack of the devotional study of the Old Testament as well as the New, and of a careful reading of scholarly books on the Fundamental Doctrines, that has been the cause of the deflection."

These remarks leave us in no doubt of the direction in which that gentle shove, or "training," is given. It is definitely Fundamentalist and equally definitely sectarian. It will have nothing to do with the views of the two most important branches of its own Church, namely the Anglo-Catholic and the Modernist. Under the heading: "A Rescue from Anglo-Catholics," we read as follows: "Another of our students, who had little or no knowledge of the difference of doctrine between Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, had offered to a Society which professes not to belong to any party and was sent to an Anglo-Catholic College . . . God stepped in and worked a miracle . . . He has renounced their teaching and has joined us." It would be interesting to know whether the Chief Medicine-Man of the college referred to would attribute this miracle to the same Big Joss as is here mentioned!

So much for the Evangelical opinion of Anglo-Catholics. As for the Modernist views, we have already seen how "very dangerous" they are apt to become. The mere sound of the name, with its implication of up-to-dateness, must send a shudder down the spines of all true Evangelicals. Dear, dear! What a loving and united Christian brotherhood is this holy Church of England!

A few other interesting facts are to be gleaned from the financial statement of the report. We are told that over 10,000 letters were sent out during the year. "The item for stamps reveals the very hard work the secretary has had in collecting the money," we read. And the net result was about 650 donations. In other words, over 93 per cent of the persons appealed to did not contribute anything. Doubtless some of the letters went astray, while others may have been sent to persons who were sympathetic, but had not the cash to spare. But, allowing for these, the lack of response is a distinctly hopeful sign of the times.

It appears, nevertheless, that the amounts subscribed to the fund have increased by an average of £380 every year since 1922, totalling nearly £3,400 last year. But since no clue is given to the sources of the donations received, these figures do not mean very much. On the other hand, when we find that out of 650 donors only one hundred gave ten shillings or less, and that the average donation for the remaining 550 was over £6, we have a pretty good clue to the class of individual appealed to. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," said Christ. But what does that matter as long as Mammon serves those who serve God. "God does not drop money from the skies," says the Secretary ingenuously, "in His wisdom He sees fit to send it through His faithful stewards." How the poor fellow must regret the passing of the good old days round about 1 A.D., when God was in the habit of feeding thousands of people with a brace of herrings or of turning water into good red Burgundy.

However, despite the successful efforts of raking in the shekels for the purpose of gently shoving Evangelicals into the ministry, all is not well in the Established House of God. "The state of the Church of England to-day in its lack of clergy, is a cause of great anxiety." "There is little change from one year to another, except that the number of clergy is decreasing every year." A bird in the hand is, evidently, worth two in the bush; but the little beggars won't come to hand so tamely as they used to, despite the golden grain scattered for their enticement.

The number of clergy before the war, we are told, was normally rather more than 20,000. Just think of it! Over twenty thousand Anglican drones droning in this country before 1914, quite apart from the thousands of other religious drones. But happily the situation is improving. The number has steadily decreased each year, until to-day there are only a few more than 15,000. And alongside of this there is also recorded "a very serious decrease in Protestant Nonconformist bodies." With a little perseverance on the part of Freethinkers and Rationalists we may, in the not too distant future, be able to talk about "the late Church of England," or even possibly of "that extinct superstition known as Christianity."

If the present rate of increase in donations received by this fund is maintained, and if there is no change in the rate of decrease of the clergy, then the year 1974 will be a famous one for the then Secretary of the Ordination Candidates Training Fund. For in that year the last of the Evangelicals will be entering on his studies with the trifling sum of £30,000 to see him through! Oh, that I may live to see the day!

C. S. FRASER.

## Fundamentalist or Atheist.

THERE is nothing more contemptible than the superior air assumed by those minds who pose as liberal theologians, who are amused at, and affect to pity or sneer at the fundamentalist—who casuistically strain at gnats—in the effort to reconcile Science and Religion.

These learned camel-swallowers—some of them have the audacity to label themselves "Freethinker"—cannot realize that they are destined to fall between two stools. They do not seem to appreciate the fact that no sincere religionist was ever anything other than a fundamentalist. They try to run with the hare and to hunt with the hounds. In the performance of their intellectual acrobatics they employ several of the arguments of Atheists, whom they class as equally retrogressive with the Fundamentalists. They are obliged to accept some of the tenets of the latter; but choose to judge as to which are to be accepted literally, and which figuratively.

Every faithful and sincere Romanist, old Scotch Baptist, Plymouth Brother and Primitive Methodist is a Fundamentalist. When I was very young, I was arguing with a Roman Catholic friend of mine on Transubstantiation. I said that common sense and reason rebelled against the idea that actual bread and wine could be changed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. I shall never forget the glow in his eye as he retorted with emphasis, clinching his argument with a blow on the table: "Then the moment you say that, you deny the omnipotence of Almighty God!"

There was, of course, no answer to that. Doesn't it put in a nutshell the whole distinction between real and unreal religion?

"Our little life is rounded with a sleep." Even he who knows the most knows but very little of the universal mysteries. But whether we be Fundamentalist or Atheist, we can best secure our physical and intellectual health—we can best clear our vision by first learning and obeying the Great Laws of Nature.

The Apostle Paul was a Fundamentalist. How many of his professed successors subscribe to his main doctrines to-day? It is becoming the fashion among "liberal" thinkers to differ from Paul; even though his epistles form part of the Word of God. The religious pessimists have discarded his views about women, and the teetotalers refuse to allow Timothy his tot of wine even "for the stomach's sake." Paul said the natural man was enmity against God. Now the liberal religionists are offering a "natural religion"—a contradiction in terms—implying things mutually contradictory and mutually exclusive. No doubt there are scores of these "advanced thinkers" prepared to show that the word "natural" in Paul's mouth has a different signification from the word "natural," as employed by them. If necessary, they can prove black is white, and the moon is green cheese. "Simplicity as it is in Jesus," which is the sheet anchor of the Fundamentalists cannot in learned religious circles rival duplicity as it is in the "supernatural naturalists!"

Everything unnatural is wrong. The supernatural is unnatural. Therefore the supernatural is wrong. But if one be cradled in superstition and becomes the sincere follower of religious tradition, he must accept all or reject all. There is no half way house—such as our modern Protestantism, which hangs between Heaven and Earth like Mahomet's coffin. The liberal theologians of Protestantism admit a theocracy; but now it must evidently be, according to their view, on the basis of a limited monarchy. They shudder at the republican propaganda of the Atheists, however. If these vile and abandoned wretches ever gain the ear of the people, we shall hoist our Mahomet's coffin out of the sight of earth and retire to the fastnesses with our orthodox we shall hoist our Mahomet's coffin out of the sight of brethren—the Fundamentalists!

There is not very much principle or heroism about the new "liberal religious thinkers." But they are prolific producers of books of words—words—words. Spurgeon once said that many a D.D. was just fiddle-dee-dee. If you want to get into the upper ecclesiastical "suckles"

you write a book—previously making sure of brethren who will write favourable reviews about it. But would the higher critics not be better employed in revising or expurgating the Old Testament—a job long overdue? They are always on the outlook and ready to pounce upon the productions of real art (such as D. H. Lawrence's) which may offend their susceptible eyes, ears, or noses. What about censoring the crude and inartistic pornography of the Old Testament?

That wise and far-seeing man Charles Bradlaugh made the prediction that the final fight would be between Rome and Reason. And when we witness the close association of the representatives of so many religious faiths in their attitude to the situation in Russia, we appreciate the force of his prediction. The Uzzas who venture to even touch the Ark of the Covenant must be knocked down dead!

Yes, the highbrow theological review sits in olympian splendour far above the *Christian Herald* and the *War Cry*. But logic is all on the side of the latter. You cannot have your cake and eat it. And you cannot face both ways at the same time.

IGNOTUS.

## The Book Shop.

SOME industrious statistician has stated that fourteen thousand books were published last year. I wonder how many of them were read, and then, when the answer is supplied, there can still be asked the question, what good have they done? Not to exhaust the list of questions, one might even ask, presuming the authors knew what they meant, how many readers understood what they read? The accelerator has been used in the publication of books; famous authors praise new books, and the reader is bewildered with tonnage. As a man in the rain is only concerned with the number of rain drops on himself, this reviewer has taken refuge in re-reading old books, renewing courage in this way to face the battalions of the new. I have read most of the novels of Anatole France, and at some distant date I shall read them again, but, for the immediate present, I find much delight in opening again *On Life and Letters*, first and second series. Many gems in the pages that were overlooked come to light in a second reading. Like a true critic, the late author adopts the easy, conversational manner of the book lover, and is so intimate in his style as to almost equal Montaigne. In the first series there is a preface to Monsieur Adrien Hébard, Senator, Editor of the *Temps*, and the underlying pencil throws this up, "I seem to myself to be a philosophical monk. I belong to heart to the Abbey of Thelema, where the rule is pleasant and obedience easy." Of criticism, in the same place, he writes: "It replaces theology, and if we look for the universal doctor, the St. Thomas Aquinas of the nineteenth century, is it not of Sainte-Beuve that we must think?" Here, in a note on a performance of *Hamlet* are a few well chosen words that stick in the memory—"He (Hamlet) knows everything, and can do nothing." He also gently pricks a bubble in connexion with Madame Blavatsky in his chapter on "Hypnotism in Literature," Madame Blavatsky was in communication with a magus Kout-Houmi who was supposed to possess supernatural power. "Did he not," writes France, "take it into his head to copy, without acknowledgment, in one of his magic letters, a lecture given at Lake Pleasant, on August 15, 1880, by an American journalist called Kiddle?" Kiddle complained and Kout-Houmi replied by saying that a sage may easily forget to put in inverted commas. With this serene reply France states that it is no longer possible to believe in Kout-Houmi. Of Victor Hugo, the author states that he produced more words than ideas; the reader may test this by examining *William Shakespeare*, by Victor Hugo in The Universal Library (George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.). Of *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*, he writes: "A pure Deist or a peaceful Atheist can make it his bedside book." And now reader, go and make some underlinings of your own in these two series. To conclude this paragraph, here is a story I heard about Anatole France, and, in the

usual manner, I give it to you, for what it is worth. Dmitri Merezhkovsky, the Russian author paid a visit to Anatole France, and one of the first questions asked was, "Do you believe in God?" Which God? asked the French author. The meeting abruptly terminated by Merezhkovsky leaving the room.

My first introduction to Dostoevsky was made through a reading of one of his best novels, *The Idiot*. Some years ago, I read it a second time, and now, during the dubious noise made by the *Morning Post* and an Archbishop not sure of his facts, I remembered a passage in the book which shows the author as a prophet, epileptic, though he was, in that respect, akin to Mohamet. The passage is in Chapter VII, and the speaker is the Prince, whom Ernest Rhys states in the preface to be Dostoevsky himself. Your pardon for the length of it, but it will justify its reproduction at this moment. "Our Russian intensity," cries the Prince, "not only astonishes ourselves; all Europe wonders at our conduct in such cases! For, if one of us goes over to Roman Catholicism, he is sure to become a Jesuit at once, and a rabid one into the bargain. If one of us becomes an Atheist, he must needs begin to insist on the prohibition of faith in God by force, that is, by the sword. Why is this? Why then does he exceed all bounds at once? Because he has found land at last, the fatherland that he sought in vain before; and, because his soul is rejoiced to find it, throws himself upon it, and kisses it! Oh, it is not from vanity alone, it is not from feelings of vanity that Russians become Atheists and Jesuits! But from spiritual thirst, from an anguish of longing for higher things, for dry, firm land, for foothold on a fatherland: which they never believed in because they never knew it. It is easier for a Russian to become an Atheist, than for any other nationality in the world. And not only does a Russian 'become an Atheist,' but he actually believes in Atheism, just as though he had found a new faith, not perceiving that he has pinned his faith to a negation . . ." *The Idiot* was written, as near as I can gather in 1865; what I admire in the author is the fact that he was not one of Dante's cyphers, and he had not Tolstoy's smugness. We may disagree violently with him, for it seems that he sometimes tears himself to pieces over a hypothesis, but there are profound and noble passages in his works. Fierce rebellion, true blasphemy also, for only a believer can blaspheme, pathos, beauty, all these may be discovered in his writings. He was sixty years old when he died; it is just possible, had he lived to the biblical allotment of time, he would have found the truth of William Blake's aphorism, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom."

Mr. Bertrand Russell would not, as a public man, be very much concerned to pay homage to the chameleon-like profession of Christianity. I had the pleasure of listening, some time ago, to his lecture, "Why I am not a Christian," and, as age creeps on, my admiration for display of emotion, gradually recedes. His discourse was dry, he dealt with facts, and refused to sprawl in the land of verbiage, and fine words, which, I presume, still butter no parsnips. In *Everyman*, I was attracted by his ten commandments, not graven in stone from Sinai, but turned out in print from Fetter Lane. Here they are:

- 1.—Do not lie to yourself.
- 2.—Do not lie to other people unless they are exercising tyranny.
- 3.—When you think it your duty to inflict pain, scrutinize your reasons closely.
- 4.—When you desire power, examine yourself carefully as to why you desire it.
- 5.—When you have power, use it to build up people, not to constrict them.
- 6.—Do not attempt to live without vanity, since this is impossible, but choose the right audience from which to seek admiration.
- 7.—Do not think of yourself as a separate wholly self-contained unit.
- 8.—Be reliable.
- 9.—Be just.
- 10.—Be good-natured.

There is a stiffening in these ten commandments undreamt of in the easy-going acceptance of Christianity

by the timid, or the unfortunate, who were brought up in it. The Freethinker may look on them and conclude that they have always been a mental rosary—with a few blows in the teeth for daring to be different. The issue of *Everyman*, containing Mr. Russell's commonsense is dated April 3—this, in case any reader wishes to renew his acquaintance with the alphabet of intelligence in action.

C.-DE-B.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEAN SWIFT.

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Mann, I would point out that I did not, and do not, say that Swift ever claimed to be an idealist; the probability is that he was quite unaware of being anything of the kind. The opinions of Sir Leslie Stephen and Mr. A. Huxley regarding Swift as a "hater of mankind" are suppositions; and like all theories, need accepting with caution. For, a habit of literary critics is to jump to a certain conclusion and ignore other possibilities. The critics may be acute assessors of ideas and "style," but too often they lamentably lack insight into human nature. They invent a theory, and then air their wonder at the inconsistency of the life of the genius, who refuses to fit in with the theory. Hence, their opinions and judgments concerning men and matters so often need to be revised by later generations.

There are various types of idealists, and I think Swift can be claimed as one. Swift we know was an omnivorous reader. One gathers from the *Travels* that he was acquainted with the ideals of Plato and Socrates—he mentions both. I suggest that his reflection upon the noblest thoughts of the great thinkers to whom he had access had bred in him an intense disgust with the lack of ideals he saw in a large portion of human kind. In writing the *Travels*, he has those ideal standards as something with which he is weighing up the habits, customs, and ideas he saw current in the world around him. And his main object in writing is to make men aware of what is brutal, base, and stupid in order that they might appreciate what is better. Naturally, Swift falls into exaggeration. The emotion of disgust ran away with him, and led to his making statements that would appear to express his utter hatred of all mankind.

Unlike Mr. Mann, I do not find the story of the Voyage to the Houhynms "revolting." To me, it reveals Swift at his greatest power of observation, and shows Swift's mind at its acutest and most sensitive. The story tells us that Swift abhorred war, cruelty, lying, cheating, treachery, servility, corruption, avarice, drunkenness, greediness, injustice, personal uncleanness, physical degeneracy, useless ceremony, stupidity, and—above all—the misuse of Reason. But it also reveals that Swift admired straightforwardness, simplicity, friendship, kindness, decency, civility, industry, temperance, physical fitness, cleanliness, a sense of proportion, and the dependance in all matters upon Reason and intelligence. He also believed in a more rational social order, and in equal education for both sexes. The mere fact that he credits these virtues to the horses alone is not sufficient to warrant one's assuming that he thought mankind was incapable of possessing or exercising such virtues. On the contrary, he thought they were capable. Listen to him, in the last chapter of the book:—

"The traveller's chief aim should be to make men wiser and better, and improve their minds by the bad as well as the good example of what they deliver concerning foreign places."

" . . . my sole intention was the public good . . . For who can read of the virtues I have mentioned in the glorious Houhynms, without being ashamed of his own vices, when he considers himself as the reasoning, governing animal of his country?"

"I write for the noblest end, to inform and instruct mankind; over whom I may, without breach of modesty, pretend to some superiority, from the advantages I received by conversing so long among the most accomplished Houhynms." (Note.—The superior advantages he mentions refer to his wide reading, and his acquaintance with the noblest thoughts and ideals among mankind.)"

In these statements are revealed the real Swift—Swift the idealist declaring his motive and purpose. A critic may choose to regard them as subtly sarcastic. But Swift, I believe, meant here exactly what he said.

Finally, if Swift had been a "hater of mankind," he would merely have jeered at human folly. He did more than that. He eulogized certain human virtues. These, although for the purpose of the story they are credited to the horses, are human virtues alone. Only an idealist would have eulogized them as he did; the "hater of mankind," or the mere satirist would not.

D. P. STICKELLS.

#### THE RESURRECTION.

SIR,—Mr. Harvey's letter in the issue of April 20, on the "Resurrection" is very interesting and answers some of my points. I am not so sure about the "60 furlongs" tramp—his remarks on Roman Crucifixion are true generally, but the record (if taken as history) shows that Jesus was treated pretty severely, as his enemies desired his *speedy* death. They wanted him out of the way. Could Mr. Harvey enlighten me on the following points—it may be that Jesus was "resurrected" in some natural manner, but there are three remarkable circumstances about it (1) that he predicted it and his followers didn't understand him (2) his *enemies* not his disciples remembered the prediction and took special precautions against it. (3) that the soldiers watching the tomb were *bribed* by his enemies to say he was helped to escape in spite of vigilance, and *did so* though to *sleep on duty* was a very serious offence.

Also, if Jesus did escape, his subsequent selfish cowardice in allowing his followers to face death and torture for this while himself enjoying safety does not accord with his character as portrayed in the record. If this is true, what became of him afterwards—a hue and cry would have been raised by the empty tomb.

This theory is worth a lot to Freethought, it makes Jesus the most despicable of imposters—if you believe it, push it for all you are worth.

W. JAMESON.

#### RUSSIA AND PERSECUTION.

SIR,—My medical critic has given a serious endorsement to the principles that underlay the whole procedure of the Inquisition. If Freethinkers are justified in suppressing religious propaganda as soon as they gain the power to do so, how can they decently urge toleration when they are in the minority? The intolerance of the Christian Church has been one of our cardinal charges against Christianity. But it would appear from my critic's argument that the Church was fully justified in her policy of suppression.

"Humanity is a big baby!" Well, the rulers of a country are as human as the ruled, and are just as likely to be in the wrong. The Atheist knows he is right, and the Pope knows the Atheist is woefully mistaken. Such is the pretence. But all of us plunge into manifold errors, and only research and criticism will help us to get anywhere near the truth.

It is not hard to guess the politics of Mr. Turney. His attack on my good faith amuses me faintly like a weak joke. I am not in the habit of writing to the Press on political issues. So I have no intention of enlightening him as to my views on Poland, Italy, Egypt, etc., or on the soundness of Marxian economics as applied to Russia. If Mr. Turney thinks I am silent as to other forms of intolerance than the Bolshevik, I would invite him to read my article, "With What Measure Ye Mets," in the March issue of the *Literary Guide*.

What is metaphysical freedom? I think we may put it and "perfect freedom" into the same category as abracadabra. If Mr. Turney really believes that every State should "forcibly suppress" all opinions that do not happen to be popular, it seems to me Gilbertian to advocate Freethought when one has first destroyed the conditions of its success.

Does my critic mean by Freethought making a dogma out of Darwinism as his forbears made a dogma out of *Genesis*? I am afraid he does. But to me a Freethinker should be as critical of Darwinism as he is of *Genesis*; though I believe that Darwinism, in all essentials, will survive the operation.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

## Society News.

WILL Freethinkers and Rationalists please note that on Sunday, May 4, our meetings will begin again in Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith, at 3.15, every Sunday throughout the Summer, and we would like to see a good muster to give our lecturers a good send off. Our lecturers there will be Messrs. Charles Tuson and W. P. Campbell-Evedren.—B.A.I.E.M.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman—"Lunacy and Divorce."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Fifty Years of London."

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—A Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture on Sunday, at 11.15. On Monday till Friday evening, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture at Finsbury Park Road, at 7.45.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park): 6.0, Mr. G. Whitehead—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, 11.30, Wren Road, Camberwell Green, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; 7.0, Stonehouse Street, Clapham Road, Mr. L. Ebury; Wednesday, Rushcroft Road, Brixton, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Friday, Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Christianity and Christians in Russia."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.15, Lecturers—Messrs. Charles Tuson and W. P. Campbell-Everden.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Mr. James Hart; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt and B. A. Le Maine. Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and J. Hart; every Thursday, at 7.30, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and Charles Tuson; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* can be obtained after our meetings outside the Park, in Bayswater Road.

#### COUNTRY.

##### OUTDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-op Street, Chester-le-Street): Saturday, May 3, at 8.0, Messrs. T. Brown and J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Eaglesham Moor. Meet at Clarkston Terminus, 12 noon.

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