

RINGING THE CHANGES.

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*Add Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
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Views and Opinions.

Ringing the Changes.

THERE is one feature of Christian apologetics that does not usually receive anything like the attention it deserves. It is concerned with what is called the reinterpretations of Christian doctrines, and in the desire to prove that the reinterpretations are not justifiable, critics are apt to allow the apologists to “get away” with the essential issue, or at least prevent the general reader finding out what is the essential issue, and how completely Christianity has been discredited. The discussion usually centres round what Jesus might have meant when he said certain things, or what the Bible might have meant in certain passages, or what a correct reading of certain passages in the Old Bible or the New Testament might mean if correctly—that is, differently interpreted. In this way the creation of the special universe out of nothing may mean an evolutionary process, miracles may mean only wonderful occurrences, healing in the name of Jesus may be no more than examples of modern psychotherapy, hell may mean the place of the dead, the resurrection a spiritual rebirth, and inspiration no more than the inspiration of a poet or a musician. In this way the sceptical critic, who so often follows obediently the line traced out by the Christian apologist, helps to play the game of the Christian by leaving the general public with the conviction that Christianity, if properly understood, is profoundly true and exceedingly useful. The dispute really begins on the question of whether the Christianity which the Churches taught, and in which the people believed was either true or useful. It proceeds on the question of whether it is possible so to understand Christianity that it may be one or the other or both. That, of course, is a different question altogether, and one with which the Freethinking critic is not immediately concerned.

By both parties it has been quietly ignored that Christianity is before all else an historical religion, and therefore the question at issue is not what Christianity ought to have meant, but what it has meant; not what people ought to have believed, but what they did believe. Historic Christianity taught the truth of the resurrection of Jesus as an actual physical fact, that miracles occurred as an actual suspension or alteration of natural law for a particular purpose, that the world was created out of nothing and that animal life was created by the special fiat of God, that the Bible was inspired by God as other writings were not inspired, that disease was actually the product of demonic agency, and that its cure could be effected by the miraculous use of the name of Jesus. These and other similar things are what the Church taught and what the people believed as Christianity; and it is quite beside the point to imagine that one can prove the truth of Christianity by making the same words mean something quite different. If these things are not true, then Christianity is not true. If a specific teaching is allowed to mean something different with every change in current knowledge then nothing can ever be false.

* * *

Christian Sadism.

What has been said is quite pertinent to a book written some few months ago by the Rev. Dr. Percy Dearmer, on *The Legend of Hell*. The title itself is significant, and in the body of the work Dr. Dearmer calls it “the most monstrous of all legends.” A legend! “The most monstrous of all legends!” The description is well deserved. The Christian doctrine of hell outdoes in downright brutality, anything that can be found in any other religion in the world. There are some very detailed descriptions of the hells awaiting man in certain of the Hindoo mythologies, but none of them surpass the descriptions to be found in Christian traditions. And certainly no other people in the world have ever so gloatingly dwelt upon the torments of the damned, piling horror upon horror, torment on torment, as have Christian preachers, or have shown such manifest enjoyment in the telling. Dr. Dearmer gives many illustrations of the consequences of the Christian cultivation of the spirit of cruelty as illustrated in its teaching of eternal damnation, but he only touches the fringe of the subject. The darker and more repulsive side of the subject is that the Christian Church gave for many centuries the greatest opportunities for sheer Sadism that the world has ever seen. I am waiting, and have been waiting for years for some psychologist of repute to explore thoroughly this side of Christian history. A very slight essay on this subject appeared some time ago by Brian de Shane, but the power of the Church is still too great for the average writer or publisher thoroughly to expose the manner in which that Church by its practice and its teaching provided an

opportunity for the cultivation of some of the ugliest aspects of human nature. Mr. de Shane gives some indication of what might be said in the following passage in his essay on *De Sade* :—

Human nature has, it seems, changed, emerged from the shackles of barbarism and purged itself of the savage taint. And yet that section of the daily Press which loudly vaunts its circulation, abounds with details of bloody crimes, accidents and murder; crowds throng to overflowing the courts where a man or woman is on trial on a capital charge, and the spectacular murderer in his brief career enjoys a fame and publicity that would rouse envy in the heart of musicians, film stars, or politicians. Every day the ministers of the Church at Communion give to their communicants "flesh" to eat and "blood" to drink? and annually organize the sadistic orgy of the Passion—a week of enthusiastic concentration on the theme of a murder committed nearly two thousand years ago, and of continual dilatation on the blood then shed. But such manifestations of sadistic transportation are termed "love of justice," and "mystic communion," and the congregations present at a murder trial . . . would doubtless avow the noblest motives for their presence.

* * *

A Process of Brutalization.

Now one has but to picture a people brought up with the reality of hell in all its medieval barbarity, and accepted as a matter of course, with an equivalent brutality being carried out in life and in criminal procedure to recognize not only its inevitably brutalizing character, but also the scope it gave under cover of religious earnestness to the expression of impulses noted by Mr. Shane. Dr. Dearmer is not indeed blind to this. He points out that cruelty—which he calls "the vilest form of human selfishness," is not among the deadly sins of the medieval standard, nor is it specified in the ten commandments. With all the attention the Church paid to its analysis of sin it paid little attention to cruelty. He also says :—

We are obliged to mention here—for psychology warns us of its importance—the intimate connexion of cruelty with sexual emotion, whether that motion be debauched or suppressed. Mr. Bertrand Russell has exaggerated in an unfair way when he involves religion itself in the perversion, as in the sentence, "The desire to see sin punished is merely a form of sadism, and one of the principal reasons why people cling to religion is that it affords justification to their sadistic impulses," but in repudiating the generalization as untrue and cruel, we have to admit the element of sadism is involved in the otherwise inexplicable gloating over hell.

I do not think that Mr. Russell has at all exaggerated the nature of the impulses that binds large numbers of men to religion, and medical annals show very plainly how undisguised in abnormal states is the connexion between religion and sexual brutality; and the abnormal, it must always be remembered is an extension of the normal. The influence of this doctrine, together with that of exclusive salvation, tainted all it touched. Dr. Dearmer himself offers evidence to the truth of this, as he says the belief in exclusive salvation "warps the moral sense," and he instances not merely the cruelty of the early and medieval church, but its unbounded lying. "There is nothing in the way of fraud that could not be covered by zeal for God's honour . . . History became a tissue of the wildest fables, apocryphal gospels were invented to cover the reticence of the genuine gospels about the mother of Jesus, other documents were forged to support every new departure from his religion." The doctrine of hell gave such power to those who preached it, that "the domination of the world by the clergy would have been complete and

irresistible if the laity had entirely believed in excommunication and hell; but the freedom of mankind was ultimately saved by a general under-current of lay scepticism which often expressed itself in jest and ridicule."

* * *

Christianity, True and False.

To come back to the point from which I set out. There is no question that the doctrine of eternal damnation was part of Christian teaching from the very earliest times. It was part of the teaching of established Christianity in all countries until very recent times. It is still held with all its old brutality by the largest of all the Christian Churches, as well as by many minor sects. Dr. Dearmer, following the lines of many other apologists, sets out to prove that the teaching has no scriptural warranty, that when the New Testament talks about eternal punishment it does not mean eternal; that the Greek might read one thing, or the Hebrew another, or that Jesus meant something entirely different from what he has been understood to mean. And to that I need only reply that unconsciously Dr. Dearmer is illustrating the truth of his own statement that orthodox teaching has warped the moral sense of man to such an extent that in defence of religion he will stoop to apologies and excuses the dishonesty of which would be at once perceived if they were used in connexion with any subject other than Christianity. For it does not matter what the language of the New Testament might be made to mean, it does not matter in the least what the alleged sayings of Jesus might be made to mean. So far as Christianity is concerned the important thing is what the Church has taught the world it meant, and what they who professed to believe in it have always understood it to mean. If that is not true then Christianity is not true. If that is brutalizing then Christianity is brutalizing. The Christianity of John Smith is what John Smith understands by Christianity, and if that is false then, so far as John Smith is concerned, Christianity is false. And what is true of one John Smith is true of a million John Smiths.

The mental obliquity induced by Christianity, and illustrated by Dr. Dearmer's apology may be seen in another way. Why is there this terrific anxiety to prove that the world had hitherto misunderstood Jesus and the New Testament, and that we must reinterpret it all? Why not be content to drop it altogether and work out a plan of social salvation that shall be based entirely on human experience, and which aims at satisfying human needs? The only possible reason is that even though Dr. Dearmer dwells upon the evil of the Christian doctrine of exclusive salvation, he aims at bringing it in again without giving it a name. He must have Jesus and he must have the New Testament. Hence the necessity for proving that our translation of certain key words are wrong, or that our understanding of the message of Jesus is in error. And to all I reply that the arguments are quite irrelevant to the question at issue. Christianity is an historic religion; the Church on behalf of which so much is claimed is an historic fact with a definite, an historic set of doctrines. If these teachings are now declared to be false, then Christianity is false. If the story of the old woman who lived in a shoe is to be read that she lived in a suburban villa, and was without children, then I say that the story of having to live in a shoe with a large family is false. If the Jesus in whom we are asked to believe was not born of a virgin, did not work miracles, did not rise from the dead, did not teach damnation for belief, and did not teach men to believe in devils, then I say that Christianity is not

true. You may call something else Christianity if you choose, just as you may call a counterfeit five pound bank note a genuine five pounds. In the latter case you will get into serious trouble if you try to pass it off as the genuine article. So far as Christianity is concerned no such deterrent to dishonesty exists.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Daring of Davidson.

"We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!"—*Whitman*.

"No coward soul is mine."—*Emily Bronte*.

"So far as a man thinks, he is free."—*Emerson*.

THE reproach has often been levelled against our insular art that it is Philistine. The French artistic sense lifts itself out of that ruck. It may go to the "demnition bow-wows," but it is not Philistine. As a fact, art in France, in all its divisions, is Bohemian. There is little risk that the bulk of our English writers and artists will ever be Bohemians. Mr. A. E. W. Mason and Mr. Warwick Deeping are eminently respectable, and Mr. Rudyard Kipling is as robust a Tory as any member of the Carlton Club. Nowadays, with us, James Thomsons are exceptional, but so is the genius of that gifted poet who sang of "The City of Dreadful Night." If any foreigner had thrown this up in our faces we may take refuge behind the broad backs of Algernon Swinburne and John Davidson.

Neither of these singers dwelt beside the still waters. To think of their literary careers is to think of alarms and excursions, of Mrs. Grundy in hysterics, of tabernacle calling unto conventicle, of all the joys of the literary battle. We may wish that these two poets had not been compelled so often to exchange their pens for their swords, but on their careers all will look with pride to whom the glory of English literature is dear. The bright flame of their enthusiasm has always burned for right issues and noble causes. Their eagerness for battle has been in the cause of Freedom against conventions and traditions. Swinburne is already a classic, beyond praise or blame, but John Davidson deserves our attention as he so worthily carried on the splendid iconoclastic tradition of his illustrious predecessor.

John Davidson won his separate place in the literature of our country by his "Fleet Street Eclogues," and "Ballads and Songs." The appearance of the latter volume raised a storm, for the "unco quid" could not endure the audacity of his "Ballad of a Nun," and "Thirty Bob a Week." Respectable folks were, indeed, startled. Admirers of the placid Lewis Morris were not accustomed to the freedom of Davidson's poems. It was a long way from the sugary "Epic of Hades," which was dubbed "The Hades of an Epic," to a real singer who arraigned both Commercialism and Christianity with all the verbal resources of a poet's vocabulary.

Like most pioneers, Davidson had to be contented with soldier's wages. In one of his latest books *The Triumph of Mammon*, published in 1907, he told his readers he was fifty years old, and that nine-tenths of his time, and that which is more precious, had been wasted in earning a bare livelihood. He also complained that the age was too commercial, too coarse in its pleasures, to care for poetry, which is, at its best, the highest in literature. So John Davidson cast his books on the waters, and appealed to a court of supremacy—"the dozen superior persons scattered throughout the universe," as it has been called wittily.

Small wonder that Davidson's later books made a noise in the literary world, but brought him neither prestige nor pence. In them he emphasized his belief that the Christian Religion was near its end, and it was upon the great change that this revolution involved that he based his poetic visions. For the Christian cosmogony he substituted that of humanity and science. He regarded the Christian superstition with abhorrence, and he hit Orthodoxy with all his strength. He described the Gospel "Jesus" as:—

"A sloppy word

Mainly a sponge to wipe the tiresome tears
Of foolish people."

And he also said that the god of Orthodoxy is:—

"The shutters of the mind,
A fire-proof curtain, ghastly cul-de-sac;
A last excuse, sublime taboo, a tip,
A patent medicine, an accepted lie."

Now listen to another passage of a world without Christianity:—

"Instead of temples I bring the universe
Instead of creeds I offer you yourselves
The greatness of the universe become self conscious
In flames and crimson seas we shall advance
Against the ancient immaterial reign
Of spirit, and our watchword shall be still
'Get thee behind me, God.'"

With all its thunder and earthquake, Davidson's poetry never fails in the sweeter and kindlier note. There are scores of passages which are glories of charm and imagination:—

"High hearts and youth are destiny enough."
"To little child

That lives a year and holds its parents' hearts
In dimpled hands for ever."

"And thunder of the thought shall seem to wait
Upon the nimbler lightning of the deed."

"As keen as dawn that with a crimson slash
Hews out the darkness and delivers day."

It is by means of passages such as these that the reader can see the genius of the poet who found eclogues in the rawness, hugeness, and noise of modern Babylon. As a dramatist, Davidson was very unlike ordinary playwrights. He wrote plays with the deliberate intention of converting people to his own opinions. When you read Davidson's *God and Mammon*, for example, you do not greatly care what befalls Prince Mammon or King Christian; what you care for is the beautiful language, oftentimes as resistless as the honeyed perfection of Kit Marlowe. When you think of a really great play you do not think of any single person or passage. The glory of that perfect tragedy, "Othello," is neither the Moor, nor Desdemona, nor Iago, but each and all. To recall Davidson's literary plays is mainly to think of isolated passages of great charm.

Davidson's own life was a tragedy, deeper and more poignant than any that he wrote. He possessed literary ability that would have enabled him to make plenty of money had he prostituted his talents. But his mind was set on something higher. He dedicated himself to the service of principles, and he was entitled, in his degree, to echo the words of Heine: "Lay a sword upon my coffin, for I was a loyal soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity."

When Richard Carlile was fighting the good fight for Freedom, he was unaware that his deeds of daring were watched by Keats and Shelley, two great poets who were both Freethinkers and Republicans. Nearly a hundred years later George Foote, fighting as bravely in the same good cause, was heartened by the encouragement of George Meredith, Gerald Massey, and John Davidson, who each recognized that Foote was a hero battling for the most precious possession of humanity. It was well and happily done. For the Freethought leaders are all pioneers, looking beyond the tumult and shouting of the day, and are inspired by what Shakespeare calls "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

The Last Scientists in Ancient Rome.

WHEN Rome at last assumed the position once occupied by Alexandria as the metropolis of the ancient world, it lacked the proud pre-eminence of the Egyptian city as a centre of science and culture. The Romans were an intensely practical race, justly celebrated for their achievements in the arts of statesmanship, jurisprudence, and the cultivation of the soil. But they never at any time approached the greatness of the Greeks in the sphere of philosophy or natural science.

Roman law still rules a large section of mankind, and it is in this department that the Latin peoples made their chief independent contribution to civilization. The numerous branches of knowledge so successfully prosecuted by the Greeks were adopted by the Romans for practical purposes only. Earlier advances in agriculture were utilized in Rome for the establishment of a practical science of husbandry. Cato composed a treatise on agriculture, and other authors, the most distinguished of whom is Columella, who was certainly one of the leading naturalists of antiquity, made noteworthy contributions to the farmer's science. Columella's work in twelve books deals with domesticated animals in detail, and his treatise is one of the earliest anticipations of the many volumes on economic biology which in our time constantly issue from the press.

Pliny the Elder again, was animated by a keen desire to strengthen the practical applications of science. His renowned *Natural History* has been for centuries ranked as a masterpiece, and will repay perusal even now. Admittedly, this classic contains a medley of myth and legend, but despite this blemish it performed an important part in the future development of the science of life.

The birthplace of Pliny was the ancient Comum, now known as Como in Northern Italy. A highly cultured member of the patrician order, he served both in the military and naval administrative departments. In later life he became a naval commander, and when Vesuvius was in violent eruption in A.D. 79, the year which witnessed the overwhelming of Pompeii and Herculaneum, Pliny's fleet was stationed in the Bay of Naples. So anxious was the philosopher to observe the then remarkable phenomenon, that he was conveyed in a vessel to the volcano's base, and there untimely perished.

A truly noble Roman, the elder Pliny's insatiable literary industry is paralleled by his remarkable erudition. His reputation as a writer on many different subjects was great. Unfortunately, of his various works, one only has survived the ravages of time. Yet this, his *Natural History* has sufficed to immortalize his name. For it is one of the most noteworthy productions of antiquity bequeathed to modern times.

The philosopher, Zeno, was the founder of the Stoics. Perhaps the most saintly disciple of Zeno was the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who is described by Gibbon as "the best of princes and of men." Pliny also appears to have embraced the teachings of the Stoics, perhaps with certain reservations. The austere philosophy of Stoicism attracted many of the more serious and solemn Romans. But its hard sense of duty concerning the common affairs of life tended to lessen men's interests in the profounder problems of science and philosophy.

Nevertheless, Pliny's great biological masterpiece, despite the many fabulous stories it contains, remains as a true picture of the biological beliefs then current

in Rome. The work may be said to preserve the outlook of the Pagan mind concerning animal life in general, and it certainly assisted in sustaining interest in natural history throughout the darkly ignorant and superstitious centuries when sacerdotalism stood supreme.

A man of even greater stride is met with in the famous anatomist Galen. Despite the marked decline of the spirit of inquiry that coincided with the genesis and development of the Christian creed, men of pronounced individuality sporadically appeared. In the second century of our era the last outstanding man of science of ancient times flourished in Rome. Descended from Greek stock, Galen was born in A.D. 131 at Pergamum in Asia Minor. His voluminous works were composed in Greek. Although he studied in his native city under the tutelage of Stoics, Epicurians, and Platonists, the teachings of Aristotle and Theophrastus mainly determined his scientific researches. After a six years' apprenticeship in various cities, he settled in Rome where he won golden opinions, but also aroused much envy and resentment in medical circles, which soon developed into hatred, as his practice increased.

Galen was a practitioner of proud and independent character, who openly showed his disdain towards his jealous rivals, and poured pitiless scorn on their professional ineptitude. So fierce became the controversy that Galen deemed it advisable to retreat for a time to his native land. His standing as a physician, however, was so secure that he was soon requested to return to Rome, where he was appointed to the important post of physician to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius himself. During the reign of Aurelius, and that of his successor Commodus, he remained free from molestation.

A man of many interests, in addition to his various treatises on medical themes, Galen was the author of works on mathematics, philosophy, grammar, and law. So many as eighty-three of his biological efforts survive. With his comprehensive outlook, Galen stressed the importance of a clear understanding and logical application of first principles in the successful treatment of the human body in health and disease. He extols Hippocrates as the peerless philosopher-physician whose words of wisdom were of priceless value. And, as already intimated, Galen was also deeply indebted to the Aristotelian school. Yet, while Aristotle sedulously pursued the comparative method in his biological researches, Galen approaches the problem of the adaptation of the different structures of the animal organism, so as to adequately fulfil their functions, from the standpoint of design.

To him, the marvellous machinery of the human body plainly pointed to the power and wisdom of a beneficent divinity. And he bitterly reviles all those who attempt to interpret the living world in terms of natural causation alone. Galen denies that vestigial organs, apparently functionless, are really so. His weakness as a reasoner is shown in his assertion that those who contend that organs strengthen with use, and lessen with disuse, are logically committed to the absurdity that active men would ultimately develop four arms and four legs while indolent people would possess only one of each. Various other illustrations, even more preposterous, were solemnly set forth by Galen to prove that living existences are the perfect products of the Creator's handiwork.

Nevertheless, Galen deservedly ranks as the foremost anatomist of antiquity. As an observer he was distinguished by his sobriety of judgment, and his patience and conscientiousness in his studies are beyond praise. His accuracy of statement and clearness

of exposition in his anatomical treatises have been greatly admired. He placed all the anatomical knowledge of the ancient world on such a solid foundation that, when in later ages his studies were resumed, men proceeded from the work of their great predecessor.

In his dissections Galen was handicapped by the revival of popular superstition concerning the study of the human corpse. As a result, Galen's elaborate anatomical inquiries were restricted to the lower animals. He was impressed by the striking resemblance that exists between the skeletons of apes and men, and the bodies of monkeys were extensively employed in his anatomical investigations. In this way he confirmed the discoveries of earlier students and added substantially to them.

Galen's researches into the brain and nervous system eclipse all the studies of his predecessors. He also exposed the time-honoured error that the arteries and left heart chamber are filled with *pneuma* or air. He proclaimed the truth that these vessels contain blood. Moreover, had the science of chemistry then existed, Galen's ingenious speculations might have led to the discovery of oxygen and the indispensable part it plays in respiration. The last of a long line of illustrious scientists, Galen's prestige persisted throughout the succeeding fifteen hundred years. But the intellectual twilight soon deepened into night. Superstition, most dire, soon superseded the science and culture of the classic world. But the dawn was destined to appear, and the intellectual light that lay hidden in Byzantium and Italy soon gathered strength in Moslem Spain, until, at the Renaissance, Christian Europe awoke from its prolonged dogmatic slumber, and the sunlight of truth slowly broadened into boundless day.

T. F. PALMER.

God in Contemporary Philosophy

(Continued from page 646.)

The late Prof. J. Ward rejects, with Kant, the classical arguments for Theism, and seeks to establish a God by faith alone. "The existence of this Creative Spirit," we are told in his *Realm of Ends*, "is a matter of faith, not of knowledge, to be sure, but may we not hold it to be a rational faith, since without it we are without assured hope in a world that is then without clear meaning." Belief in God thus becomes a necessity, and it is the business of philosophy, as conceived by Ward, to show this necessity of faith, by which alone life is made sufficient and purposive (cf. *Contemp. Brit. Phil.*)

God is variously described as "the living unity of all," and the "essentially perfect" (*Naturalism and Agnosticism*); a personal and creative activity (*Contemp. Brit. Phil.*); "the Absolute Genius, whose thoughts are not like our thoughts," and a Transcendental Being, in whom the monads "exist somehow" (*Realm of Ends*).

Prof. L. T. Hobhouse (d. 1929), the noted Liberal, worked out an empirical philosophy without reference to a God at all, but postulated a "spiritual order" (in contrast to the empirical), to which he assigned his God (cf. *Development and Purpose*.)

Prof. G. Gentile (Italy), the disciple of Croce, avowedly takes the term God in order to put his own construction on it. In accordance with his Neo-Hegelian Idealism, "Objective Mind" may be called God (cf. *Theory of Mind as Pure Act*).

The late Dean Rashdall based his philosophy on the Berkeleyan esse=percipi—matter does not exist out-

side mind—from which he proceeded to the Berkeleyan conclusion. Tables and chairs only exist in a mind. Therefore when I turn my back on them they are still accommodated in the mind of God.

From which one might further deduce that Rashdall's reading in philosophy had stopped short at about 1700.

Viscount Haldane (not J.B.) conceives that everything falls within an Ultimate Whole, and philosophy must try to apprehend it, "whether we call it the Infinite, or the Absolute, or God" (*Human Experience*). As to its nature, "less than an all-embracing mind God (or the Infinite, or the Absolute) cannot be," but "it is only with what we sometimes call the eye of faith, the realization of things unseen, that we can behold God" (*ibid*).

Dr. Schiller is a Pragmatist, so we have to allow him some freedom in making terms mean what he wants. Let us say, then, that God is a person with good intentions, who is handicapped by being finite. (cf. *Riddles of the Sphinx*).

Prof. W. E. Hocking has gained scant recognition outside his own university at Harvard, and this in spite of his professional standing. No surprise is occasioned when one comes to read his books. Nearly 600 pages came from his untiring pen in—we suspect—a futile effort to explain to us *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*. His statement (*Ibid*), "I shall always be more certain that God is than what he is," is yet another glaring example of assuming objective existence before comprehending God's nature. To Atheism he gives thanks as "an indispensable agency" in deepening our knowledge of God. That, of course, is a peculiar way of saying that the challenge of Atheism has forced Theists to go about hunting for more suitable Gods to replace the ones outworn. A Christian writer recently admitted this quite openly in *Christianity and Some Living Religions of the East*, "Any God is better than none" (Cave).

Hocking tells us God is first to be known by direct experience. This encourages, but Hocking's own experience apparently gives him a God such as the following:—

God is the Other-than-me, and also the Other-than my fellow-others. (*Meaning of God*.)

As an object in the world of objects, God is next to nothing.. (*Ibid*.)

God is the Eternal Substance . . . God is also the Eternal Order of things. (*Ibid*.)

God is that which does whatever Substance is found to do." (*Ibid*.)

But we are polluting the pages of the *Freethinker*. Hence only one more—it out—Douglases Douglas:—

God is person and no person; living and non-living; fighter and no fighter; just and yet alike to all; merciful and yet unbending.

Jimmy must look to his laurels!

Prof. H. Wildon Carr has just rounded off his not invaluable contributions to modern philosophy with a statement of his own position (*Cogitans Cogitata*, 1930). Never over-keen on the Theistic position, he yet disliked to be labelled an Atheist because "Atheism is as objectionable in its negation as the most authoritative religion." (*Unique Status of Man*.)

What, then, is the way out? The way out, he affirms in *Cogitans Cogitata*, is to find a meaning for God which we can reasonably uphold—one more illustration of starting with the "whether" and proceeding to the "what."

For Carr's philosophy (Monadism) God is "the idea of necessary existence": he is the ultimate ground, and the relation of the monads to him is adjectival; i.e., God is substance and we are his "modal appearances." (*Ibid*.) Again, God is "in-

finite individuality and transcendental personality." (*Ibid.*) It is here worthy of notice that Carr's book has very adverse criticism from Prof. Laird on account of its multitude of contradictions (see *Phil. Studies Journal*).

Prof. S. Alexander's God has created a mild sensation in philosophical circles. A most remarkable thing about this God is that he has probably not yet arrived. And when, and if, he does come, he will not necessarily be single. There is nothing to prevent a whole swarm of Gods from making their appearance. (cf. *Space, Time and Deity*.)

The professor starts with a fairly sound statement: "No one now is convinced of the traditional arguments for God's existence." (*Ibid.*) But God (or Gods) is (or are) on the way by the following route:—

Space-Time is the ultimate real of the Universe. It once existed alone, but broke up into complexes, and its first emergent was motion. Since then there has been a series of emergents, e.g., matter, and later, mind. The next emergent after mind will be deity, and the being, or beings, which come to possess it will be called God.

"That the world is pregnant with such a quality (deity) we are speculatively assured." (*Ibid.*) We cannot, of course, know what it will be; it is not mind, for it is past that stage, so that its possessor (God) will be mind, and something more in possessing Deity. Concerning him, the Professor says: "The individual so sketched is not asserted to exist—he is only a speculative possibility to which we give shape in anticipation." (*Ibid.*)

A deep thinker like Alexander cannot, of course, be expected to condescend to be consistent, and so we are told that God is always becoming deity, but never attains it. At the same time we must remember that "God's deity is lodged in a portion of his body." (*Ibid.*) And again, while "mind is finitely infinite, deity is infinitely infinite," (*Ibid.*) but we must not forget that "infinite deity does not exist." (*Ibid.*)

Tackled by his contemporaries for a fuller explanation of his God, Alexander replied, "What I say is, that God as actually possessing Deity does not exist, but God as the whole universe tending towards Deity does exist." (*Ibid., Preface to Second Edition.*)

G. H. TAYLOR.

(To be continued.)

The Mad Parson.

THE GOOD COMPANIONS.

IN the course of a life of continuous endeavour it will be readily understood that what little leisure I have managed to extract from my labours has not been frittered away in perusing works of fiction. Of course, when additions were being made from time to time to the treasures of the mind in the Sunday school library, I conceived it to be my duty to carefully and critically—yet in no carping spirit—read through the contents of the volumes donated lest something of a pernicious nature might creep in and exert a baleful influence upon the minds entrusted to my care. I have delightful memories of some of those works which have given me a peep into happy homes where the spirit of God pervaded the atmosphere while duty and piety were shown to lead to ultimate happiness. "Queechey," and "The Lamp-lighter," "Little women and good wives," are among the happy glimpses into the lives of others less sheltered from the coarseness of the work-a-day world, and facing bravely the vicissitudes which I humbly thank God have never assailed me or mine.

But I am digressing. My original intention was to sound a warning note lest another, in all innocence, would be ensnared as I was.

Last Friday, weary of the seemingly endless bickerings at the garden fete committee meeting, I gave rather a broad hint to the disputants who were arguing the allocation of spaces for the Tango Tea Tent and the Maypole Houp-la that their deliberations seemed unduly prolonged. I rose from my seat, yawned, and said playfully that another penny would be needed for the gas-meter soon. This jest, of course, evoked general merriment, it had gone home, as it were, and the committee members prepared to do the same thing. It was then, when they had gathered up their papers, statements, accounts and other impedimenta, that I observed lying on the table a book. A book that was not my property, a book that had evidently been brought by one of the helpers, a big book, with an outer covering of paper known to the public as a "jacket"; but it was not garish, there was no picture, no lurid big type. I glimpsed the title, and I must confess my whole being was suffused with pleasure—and a little of covetous longing—as I noted the beautiful words "The Good Companions."

How quick are the impulses of the brain, how speedily action is stimulated! Quite involuntarily, almost as if by design, *Life and Work* fell on top of the book as I turned to shake hands with the friends who were taking their departure. Mr. Green, the grocer, was the last to go, and as I stood with my back to the table, assisting him with his overcoat, I confided that I was completely on his side in maintaining that Clock Golf was a dangerous innovation—the thin end of the wedge, in fact—and so escorted him to the hall door in the best of humour.

"Besides," said Mr. Green, shaking hands, "on the same space, the girl guides could run a 'mile of pennies.' It brings in more dough."

A good heart, Mr. Green, an honest tradesman, but a trifle vulgar.

Yes, the book was still under the paper where I had left it. The Good Companions, Jesus and His Apostles, of course, and by a reverend author, I gathered. Priestley, what an appropriate name. I did not open its pages then for I was at a loss for my Sunday sermon, and this seemed the way out. *The Good Companions*, a Priestley book, the combination was a Godley one!

Saturday in the garden, the cushions nicely adjusted in the wicker settee, what could be more conducive to good thoughts? As Woolworth says, "We are nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth." And so, in a spirit of reverence, in the correct atmosphere, and with ease and content of body and mind, I opened *The Good Companions*.

Ah, my dear friends, ah, words fail me. As Shakespeare said so truly, "What a fall was there my countrymen!" Verily, things are not what they seem, for the beautiful title was but a snare, the clerical nomenclature of the author either a pernicious pseudonym or one of natures misfits, a wearer of the motley but not of the cloth.

I am not one of those prejudiced persons who, wilfully, and ostrich-like, as it were, close their eyes to the unsavoury facts of life; it is my duty, however painful, to take cognisance of what might not inaptly be termed the seamy side. However abhorrent and nauseous such revelations of the underworld are to a refined nature, it is incumbent upon me as the divinely appointed custodian of the morals of my flock to be aware of the laxity and Godlessness of this jazz-mad age. Therefore, steeling myself for what could only be described as an ordeal, I waded through this volume from cover to cover.

The opening pages led me to believe that something of an elevating nature might be found as the story unfolded itself, that the worthlessness of football matches, and the ephemeral nature of tinned salmon would be brought home to the misguided son of toil, who is the central figure of this drab story. But despite the vicissitudes of a nomad existence and the clear pointing of the finger of Providence, what is his spiritual state at the end of the story on page 640? Is he thinking with regret and contrition of his wasted life, resolving that in the evening of his days he will think of higher things? Alas, although in the beautiful Dominion of Canada, where a dutiful daughter has made a home for him far away from old associations of evil, we find him still in spirit on the muddy football ground of Bruddersford; his eyes see not the beauties of nature (as on emigration posters) in his

new home for, as he sits outside the cabin they are glued to a pink sporting paper, which has been sent to him from England, and whose sole topics are of leagues, cups, finals and goals. Alas, that the final goal of all should be so tragically lost sight of!

I could say much with regard to the other characters in this lurid chronicle of depravity, but I refrain. I will not drag you through market places, public houses, or behind the scenes of vulgar shows, nor will I introduce you to sellers of linoleum, pugilistic singers, or Susie the soubrette.

The most pitiable creature presented to us is a young man with all the cultural advantages of a Varsity education, who leaves the paths of rectitude and respectability and climbs to perilous prosperity by "slippin' round the corner." Ah, my friends, why should one slip round a corner? And is there not something essentially depraved about those who seem always to encounter corners on Life's Highway? We are told that the straight narrow path is the right one, yet to-day the word "cornering" has become commonplace, and skid and slip are methods of leaving the beaten track abruptly and at obtuse angles. But while the road may be rugged, and corners frequently unavoidable, the pilgrim who seeks the salvation of his soul will not slip round surreptitiously but with head erect, and the knowledge that in the eyes of God there are no corners.

Ah, my dear friends, let us set our faces sternly against the philosophy of "slippin'." Let us not encourage depravity when we hear a lost soul speak of "slippin' round the corner." Ah, friends, all bad things are just round the corner, and Satan is ever waiting for the erring one to slip. Let us not laugh when we hear those awful words spoken lightly by those who seem to see humour in iniquity. I shudder with horror at the memory of once hearing quite a well dressed man saying that he was "slippin' round the corner—just to have one"!

I have not yet made up my mind what it would be judicious to say to Mr. Green, assuming, of course, that the pestiferous literary production in his property. As I said, he has a heart of gold, and is always to be relied on for a crate of oranges or a tin of biscuits. Still, I do wish he didn't use slang; ah, most likely the obnoxious word "dough" has been taken from this book.

It has given me considerable pain to write as I have done with such severity, but the author himself has brought my crushing criticism on his work. Before again relegating this book to that obscurity which it so justly merits, I would earnestly hope that no words of mine will be quoted in the gutter press, and so garbled as to give *The Good Companions* a free advertisement.

If I might be so humbly bold as to offer a suggestion to this most un-priestly scribbler it would be to re-name his book, for I venture to say, without fear of contradiction that in the minds of all right thinking people, a more suitable title would have been *The Bad Companions*.

J. EFFEL.

Insomnia.

How tired the Lord must be
Sitting through all Eternity
And never sleeping;
Hearing without zest
The white-robed Blest
Cry "Holy! Holy! Holy!" everlastingly—
'Tis worse than Niobe forever weeping.
No wonder Lucifer was driven mad,
Revolted at the silly farce, and then went to the bad.

Never to sleep; to shut his eyes;
To close his ears;
To sit, and sit, and sit, through endless years;
Through centuries, dull centuries;
Never to know the soothing of forgetfulness:
God pity God in all his sore distress.

How tired Lord God must be;
No rest; no sleep; through all Eternity.
Oh, I'm glad that I am not as he!

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Acid Drops.

The Bishop of Gloucester says that every good Christian ought at the proper time and place to be ready to tell others what he really believes. Plenty of good Freethinkers are also ready to do the same, and actually do it, although the bishop's Church has tried its hardest to prevent them. Freethought affirms that both the religionist and the Freethinker have a right to voice their beliefs. On the other hand, Religion—in theory, at least—denies the right to the Freethinker. We leave the man-in-the-street to judge which of the two—Religion or Freethought—has the wider or fairer view.

Poor London! We thought she was too big to be shoved in a pawnshop. But she's there, right enough. For a gang of mixed Methodist parsons have been voicing their determination to "redeem" her at all costs, and drawing up "heroic and splendid" plans to achieve this desperate project. Meanwhile, the bigger task of redeeming two million people from unemployment can wait. The best brains of Methodism are too busy with higher matter to attend to it.

Speaking about the attitude of the Christian Church towards war, Dr. F. W. Norwood says:—

If ever the Church is to achieve moral leadership she will have to be much more simple than she is, and less subtle.

Now, the formulating of the Church's policy towards war and other things is almost entirely in the hands of her priests. These gentlemen will, therefore, probably fail to appreciate this advertisement of the fact that ecclesiastical mentality is notable not for honesty but subtlety, which is a polite name for cunning. Also, one need hardly expect that the disapproval by Dr. Norwood of this cunning will have any effect towards changing a mentality so firmly established for many centuries. In any case, when in the future we accuse priests of being cunning, let it be remembered that Dr. Norwood has also noted this priestly characteristic.

Apropos of the stupidity of war, Mr. John English suggests that "the spectacle of millions of human beings blowing each other to pieces must appear to the gods an extremely childish game." If that is the case, then there's no harm in mentioning that the spectacle of all the antagonists praying to the same God to help them murder one another and award a victory to one gang of combatants must be equally childish. Yet in the late war this was done on the advice of Christian priests in all countries. And since then priests lay claim to divine inspiration, the ordinary man can now estimate exactly the worth of priestly advice plus divine inspiration.

The "Sunday School Expert," who does not believe in the employment of texts that frighten young children, may be interested to hear about a school-girl in the nineties who met her death at the hands of her fellow pupils. The latter "for a lark" (!) printed in phosphorus in day time on the wall at the foot of the bed, the words, "Prepare to meet thy God." The occupant of the bed was found dead in the morning.

Religion cannot exist without the support of terrorism. The most cultured Christian (who is sincere) right down at the bottom of his consciousness is awed by the "fear of God." That fear of Hell—the hangman's whip—referred to by Robert Burns, is not so potent now; but God is a fellow of infinite resource in the matter of modes of torture as the Inquisition showed; and the only thing that restrains the Inquisitionists now is the arm of the Secular Law.

A correspondent of the *Star*, October 2, had better obtain a ladder if he really wishes to give a black eye to the famous author, Mr. George Moore. The "Passing of the Essenes," a play based on his novel *The Brook Kerith*, is commented on as follows: "There is nothing to prevent Mr. Moore from making as much money as

he pleases out of his own doubts and emotions when expressed in a book; but he cannot expect to be praised for his taste in staging them." This is neither fine nor large; one recalls *Quo Vadis*, *The Wandering Jew*, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, and many others, all unconscious advertisements for superstition, and correctly in line with orthodoxy. Mr. Moore's doxy is not that of others who scream about injustice if the other side of the case is presented. Perhaps, after all, the critic in the *Star* had better obtain a crane.

Lord Birkenhead has passed away, and in the many generous sentiments from his colleagues as a friend and companion, we do not remember any one mentioning his famous saying—"sharp swords and glittering prizes." This idea, so compressed and vivid, may make future historians open their eyes wide; it is a valuation of life in a truly Christian age. That history chose the late Lord Birkenhead to say it, is only incidental.

When a modern newspaper discourses on morality, it is a sign for grown-up men to unbutton their waistcoats and have a good laugh. Professor Huxley's Conway lecture provokes a leaderette, from the *Daily Mail*, and one can only presume that it was written when the office boy was taking his holiday. Listen to this, my hearties:—

Abolish the personal God and experience shows that you destroy the very basis of morality.

The office boy could have done better; the thinking dates somewhere about 1600.

The *Passing Show* for October 11 has a most irreverent illustration of a "Pole Vault" leaping over the gates at the entrance to heaven. Peter, with key, nimbus, wings and all, is looking up in astonishment. Perhaps our witty contemporary will one day publish an illustration of an inmate of heaven applying for a transfer to the other place owing to the strange mixture of citizens in that place who have reached it via the scaffold.

Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis, in the *Daily Mail*, is not doing his reputation any good by "guying" the works of Tolstoy, Tolstoy and Rimsky-Korsakov. In his *pot-pouri* of nonsense, he kicks about madly at the efforts of those who have tried to give a meaning to the world. If Mr. Lewis is short of subject matter he could profitably turn his attention to the bad reasoning of Spiritualists, the underground work of Catholics, the folly of retaining the ideas of savages in the twentieth century and a score or so of other matters that can be supplied on application to the *Freethinker*.

That dead horse, which has hardly begun to die at the hoofs, will be recollected by Freethinkers when they read of the "rough music" indulged in by the inhabitants of Woodley, a village near Reading. Three effigies were placed on a bonfire to the accompaniment of the incantations, the famous "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," and the recitation of "Ashes to ashes, Dust to dust." Here is good cheer in the twentieth century for any down-hearted priests or parsons; their efforts have not entirely been in vain. Woodley, in the professional language, is ripe for a revival of religion, and it richly deserves such a fate.

The barrier between the Churches and the outsider, affirms the Rev. Ensor Walters, is higher than ever it used to be. If our Christian brother is interested in cause and effect, he may care to know that the dissemination of Freethought is proceeding with greater activity than it has ever been, despite the retention on the Statute Book of the Church's moth-eaten Blasphemy Acts.

According to the Rev. Dr. Workman, the great failure of the present age is that the old conception of sin is almost a lost thing. This is hardly the correct way of summing up the present situation. More accurately it might be stated thus: The almost complete disappearance of the Christian notion of "sin" among the people of this age is a great disaster to the parsons.

An advertisement tells us that the support of 200 Wesleyan women missionaries abroad is costly. For this the nice round sum of £70,500 is estimated for 1930. To the low, earth-bound mind this amount could be more usefully spent in building homes for houseless Englishmen. But our spiritually-minded Wesleyans think otherwise. They appreciate that they stand to benefit more by pleasing God than their fellow countrymen. There's a Hell to be dodged, and a Heaven to be earned; and God also doles out material benefits in this world.

There is, says the Rev. A. D. Belden, a natural tendency of the child at the adolescent age to conversion. We should prefer to say that the emotional and mental stresses which the adolescent child experience make him peculiarly prone to exploitations by religion-mongers.

"What we have to do," says Lord Burnham, "is to reconcile the spirit of the age with the spirit of the ages." Seeing that the spirit of the age is largely a sceptical one, there seems little hope of reconciling it with the spirit of the ages, which was mainly credulous. We fancy some of our modern theologians will have noticed this snag. For their "reconciled" versions of the Christian religion appear to be no more acceptable than the original, pure and undefiled version. Still, they probably live in hope that some theologian will be inspired to invent a more effective white-wash.

Speaking about the "Sunday School of the Future," Mr. Ernest Hayes says:—

In order to meet the challenge of the modern Sunday, the Sunday school of the future will burst the bonds of tradition, discard cast-iron rules, abandon hard and fast customs, and adapt itself successfully to the modern Sunday. As the years pass, the English Sunday will become more and more a day of sport and recreation. The Sunday school, however, will not be smashed by these developments. . . . It will simply change its time-table and curriculum, and challenge the new conditions.

Our good friend has an excellent habit of seeing visions. But somehow we fancy things in the future will not coincide with the visions. Still, optimism is a cheap commodity.

Mr. G. H. Archibald (a Sunday School expert) recently spoke on "Sex and Sex-instruction," and according to a report said:—

He pleaded for a more open and wholesome approach to the question. He complained that the Churches had to far too great an extent followed the "hush-hush" method of dealing with it. We had manufactured artificial sins for our youth and had treated him as a naughty child, and had driven him to Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells to get his questions answered.

Reading between the lines, one may say that it is pretty evident that the child would not be getting wholesome knowledge about sex, if the Church could prevent it. The demand that such knowledge be given has come from outside the Church. And now some religionists are suddenly discovering that it really is better for the child than unwholesome ignorance.

"Forget it!" This post-war expression (whether American or not) is often applied to the whine of the person who is given to crying over spilt milk. It may also conveniently describe the attitude of religionists to any kind of criticism of their faith. It is recorded of the late Ian Maclaren (Rev. John Watson) that he was once chairman at a concert and a humorous song was sung which contained some "slighting" reference to religion. When the same singer's name was again reached on the programme the chairman simply passed it by and called the next item. That is the characteristic Christian policy. Ignore critics under all circumstances, when you cannot answer them, "Forget it," Cut it out!"

Sooner or later, declares a novelist, every man realizes that he needs a mate. Seeing that Jesus never married, our Christian Evidence friends should make a note of the foregoing as suggesting further proof that Jesus was more than man.

National Secular Society.

THE FUNDS of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—T. Griffiths, £2; H. Montague S. Butler, 1s.

G. KIMBER.—Next week.

B. THOMAS.—Ranke's *History of the Popes* is a standard work, quite good, but like most works of its kind, must be read with discernment. It is difficult to find a writer on that subject who can be said to be unbiassed.

A. B. MOSS AND W. R. JACQUES, AND OTHERS.—Thanks for congratulations.

C. A. SANDYS.—We shall look forward to seeing you one day. If you are in the neighbourhood of the office, please call.

A. ALLISON.—Yes, it is surprising the rubbish people will swallow in the name of religion, but you must remember with a people who for generations have been trained in a Christian environment, and temper your judgment with mercy.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4.

The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 19) Mr. Cohen will deliver the third of his course of lectures on "Man and God," in the Transport Hall, 41 Islington. The special subject will be "The Passing of the Gods," and while part of a course, the lecture will be, as were the preceding two, quite distinct. Admission will be free, but there are a limited number of reserved seats at one shilling. Judging from the large number that were unable to gain ad-

mission at the last meeting, it will be advisable for those who wish to hear the address to be there in good time.

A descriptive report of the debate at the Queen's Hall on Sunday last will be found in another column. Mr. Barbanell is a young man, a good speaker, but one who has some difficulty in perceiving an opponent's position, which leads to a failure to grasp thoroughly what is being argued against him. We fancy he has also very much to learn, as have nearly all advocates of Spiritualism, concerning the play of obscure mental states in the production of what is to uninitiated evidence of "spiritual" agency, but which may quite easily be explained in terms of current knowledge. The noticeable feature of the meeting was the small proportion of avowed Spiritualists who were present. Nowadays Spiritualism appears to have developed into an ordinary "mushy" religious sect, that induces its members to avoid hearing anything against their beliefs in a manner that would do credit to Roman Catholics, or Christian Scientists. Mr. E. Thurtle, M.P., made an ideal chairman, and his brief, witty address in opening set the audience in the right frame of mind for listening to the discussion. With the exception of two or three unimportant interruptions, the audience gave good attention to both speakers, and deserved the tribute paid by the chairman when complimenting them on the "discipline" which enabled both sides to listen to many things with which they were in profound disagreement.

The Conway Memorial Lecture on "Science, Religion, and Human Nature," was delivered by Professor Julian Huxley, and is now republished at the price of one shilling. The lecture is, of course, interesting and informative. The lecture may be noticed at greater length in a subsequent issue of this paper. It deserves more space than we can give it here.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. opens its winter session to-day (October 19) at the Bristol Street Council Schools. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be the speaker, and his subject "What is the Use of Science?" should arouse the curious.

The Watford Debating Society has arranged a debate between the Rev. F. J. Gould, and Mr. R. H. Rosetti for Friday evening, October 24, at the Public Library, Hempstead Road, Watford, at 7.30. The subject of debate will be, "Is Christianity Consistent with the Laws of Evolution?" The Rev. F. J. Gould will affirm, and Mr. Rosetti take the negative side.

The Manchester Branch commences winter operations with two lectures from Col. Arthur Lynch, in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester, to-day, Sunday, the 19th. The subject for the afternoon, at 3 p.m., will be, "Orthodoxy in Science." And for the evening, at 6.30, "Vitalism." Syllabus of lectures for the season may be obtained from Miss W. Black, 33 Southbank Road, Kingsway, Didsbury, Manchester.

We are pleased to hear that the Transport Hall, Liverpool was filled with an enthusiastic audience, to hear Dr. Carnichael speak on "God and Knowledge." The lecturer traced the growth, through the fear and ignorance of primitive man, of the priesthood, which he aptly described as the "middlemen," and referred to the churches in general as "Salvation, Ltd.," a precisely similar firm as other capitalist organizations, their wares being Heaven and Hell. In the second half of his address, the audience was shown that widespread knowledge is the only effective weapon against superstition. For once our friends with the economic "bee in the bonnet" were disarmed before question time came, and realized that their super capitalist enemy is the superstition that the non-political Secularist is always fighting. The meeting was a tremendous success.

"Is There a Life After Death?"

THE Queen's large hall is really large, and though the dearer seats were by no means filled, the cheaper ones were almost packed last Sunday, when Mr. Maurice Barbanell, with Mr. Ernest Thurtle, M.P., who was taking the chair, and Mr. Chapman Cohen, stepped on to the platform for the long-advertised debate. The majority of the meeting did not appear to be Spiritualists, though it was difficult to judge, but both speakers received much applause at the close of their respective speeches. The audience was, except for a few moments towards the end of the debate, extremely well behaved, and listened most earnestly to the two disputants. Mr. Barbanell is certainly an excellent platform speaker. He was, of course, familiar with his side of the case, though he seemed to think his opponent was not, and he had an air of retailing some of the well known cases of so-called spiritualistic phenomena as if, after having once so retailed them, there was no possible doubt whatever that they took place exactly as he gave them out. This seems to be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of almost all defenders of Spiritualism. Blatchford says so and so happened—well, of course it happened, and it must have been due to spirits, no doubt whatever; but if you do doubt it, then explain exactly how it was done. It never seemed to occur to Mr. Barbanell that the phenomena might *not* have taken place exactly as Mr. Blatchford described them, or as related by Mr. Bradley or Dr. Crandon, and yet he insisted it was all unimpeachable evidence, and had to be thoroughly explained before you could say the phenomena were not due to spirits.

One thing it was fairly obvious Mr. Barbanell did not like, and that was Mr. Cohen's witty treatment of anything he said. He himself was so deadly in earnest, and believed so thoroughly in everything he had read, that it was sheer blasphemy to joke about it, although he claimed to have once been a Free-thinker, and therefore must have known some of Mr. Cohen's ways on the platform. He seemed very hurt and indignant at what he called "cheap witticisms," by which he meant, of course, the kind of argument which Mr. Cohen uses in such a masterful way, when he wishes to show the inherent absurdity of his opponent's case.

Mr. Cohen had, of course, very little difficulty in disposing of the particular instances relied on by Mr. Barbanell, who seemed extremely indignant that anything he believed sacred should not be believed by anyone else; but one sensed a certain difficulty as the debate proceeded—the difficulty of what is meant by "evidence." Like Mr. Shaw Desmond or Mr. Hannen Swaffer, anything anybody wrote in defence of Spiritualism was believed to be evidence by Mr. Barbanell. If, however, the "evidence" was eventually exposed and turned out to be fraud, Mr. Barbanell would admit the fraud and turn round indignantly and say, but "what about the evidence which hasn't been found out?"

Mr. Thurtle made an excellent and imperturbable Chairman, who caused a roar of laughter when he pointed out that most M.P.'s were not so much concerned as to what would happen after they were dead as to what would happen to them after the next General Election.

Mr. Barbanell, in his first speech, insisted that the whole question, "Is there a life after death?" depended on evidence, and he had it all with him. After this statement, he pointed out that he was once a Freethinker himself, and he was quite sure Freethinkers and Rationalists had done—in the past—good service to the cause of truth. Nowadays he was not quite sure, as the evidence for survival after death

was constantly accumulating, and Freethinkers didn't seem to believe it. Mr. Barbanell then showed how Robert Blatchford, one of the "leaders" in Free-thought was converted after the death of his wife; how Mr. Dennis Bradley heard voices (though he was a Catholic) and was converted, and he challenged Mr. Cohen to say that Mr. Bradley was a fraud. If Mr. Cohen did, there was the law of libel which would be immediately put into operation. Somehow this caused a roar of laughter to resound through the hall. Finally there was the evidence of Margery Crandon and her spirit control Walter.

Great applause and laughter greeted Mr. Cohen when, with assumed terror, he protested against having to speak under the fear of an action for libel, but, as he later explained, it was not really Mr. Bradley's honesty that was in question, but his intelligence and his knowledge. Mr. Bradley's two books were an excellent study in an uninformed egotism that amounted almost to ego-mania. As exhibits in that direction they were admirable. After many other witty comments, which convulsed the audience, he pointed out how Mr. Barbanell had painted a picture—not given us a photograph, and how much he had unconsciously omitted, exaggerated and suppressed in doing so. Mr. Cohen then gave a general view of the subject before warming up to the particular cases he had to reply to, and he pointed out how many investigators, after many years of investigation, while admitting some of the phenomena, refused to admit they were caused by spirits. He instanced, in particular, how Mrs. Piper, one of the most honest of mediums, had managed to get messages not only from George Eliot but from Adam Bede as well. He presented this as a problem for Mr. Barbanell to deal with. To a psychologist there was an adequate explanation to hand, but it had nothing to do with spirits. Mr. Cohen then proceeded to analyse both Mr. Blatchford and Mr. Bradley, causing roars of laughter as he analysed their position and exhibited the latter's egotism and general weakness.

Mr. Barbanell was plainly annoyed at his opponent's insistence on being witty, and in seeing the ridiculous side of an absurd position. Apparently unable to realize the meaning of Mr. Cohen's remark that the picture of spiritualism presented was not a photograph but a painting, he said he would give a photograph and proceeded to rake up the old and often exposed trick of spirit photography. He also challenged Mr. Cohen to give the name of any scientist, who after years of study had not admitted the validity of phenomena. As for Mrs. Piper, why go back to her, when there was so much recent evidence? Facts would rule when Mr. Cohen's witticisms were forgotten.

In reply, Mr. Cohen said he was getting a little tired of his opponents one after another complaining of his witticisms. The best reply was that given by Bishop South to his brother clergy when they complained of his wit—"If God had given you wit wouldn't you have used it?" It was absurd to accuse him of relying upon scientists, as such. A scientist was only worth quoting when he spoke on a subject on which he legitimately exercised authority. He did not refer to Houdini as a scientist, but as a talented conjuror who was able to see through the tricks of "Margery," as he had seen through those of other mediums. Mr. Cohen then proceeded to give a devastating criticism of the "Margery" thumbprint, citing in his support the testimony of an expert whose name had been given him by Scotland Yard. There were also the report of two Committees who had investigated and had reported the existence of fraud, and "Margery" did not get the award which the "Scientific American" had offered.

Again Mr. Barbanell led off with a complaint

about wit, and said that his evidence had not been answered. Mr. Cohen had not shown how these things occurred. As for Mrs. Piper, admitting that Adam Bede was not a genuine spirit, what about the rest of the Piper phenomena? The debate had shown that Spiritualism had nothing to fear from Free-thought. Mr. Barbanell was loudly applauded when he resumed his seat.

In making the closing speech, Mr. Cohen said he had never over-stressed the existence of fraud. There was another side to Spiritualism, but that had nothing to do with spirits, and Mr. Barbanell did not appear to be acquainted with it. It was childish to argue that he must explain how a fraud was worked before it was proper to assume the existence of fraud. Past experience would supply grounds for the assertion. Casually mentioning Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Mr. Barbanell rose to a point of order, but was met with the retort that there was nothing out of order in referring to a public man whether alive or dead. Summing up, Mr. Cohen said that the history of Spiritualism was a history of delusion, misunderstanding, hallucination and fraud. It was not because Freethinkers thought less of life or death that they opposed this superstition. It was because it was not true, and because it was an exploitation of ignorance and superstition. Life was not less valuable because it ended in death, death was not less solemn because it was not the entrance to another life. Most of us knew what it was to have lost some one whom we loved, and knew the void it left, but for that very reason the memory of our dead was among our most sacred, our most sweetly-sad and most dearly prized possessions. The memories of our dead belong to us, and he for one objected to these becoming part of the pathologic exhibitions of a seance room, or part of the stock-in-trade of the profit-mongering Spiritualistic trickster. Mr. Cohen received a great ovation when he sat down.

One thing must have been clear to most listeners. Mr. Barbanell's idea of reasoning was of a most elementary character. Much of it consisted of the almost childish method of seizing a word and using it as the basis of an entirely different proposition. Thus, Mr. Cohen having pointed out that in telling a story one does not give a photograph, which is an actual presentation of facts, but paints a picture, which is a selection of certain features of the situation only, his opponent thought he had met the argument by introducing the case of someone who had secured a spirit photograph of his child. Replying to the series of exposures, stretching over many years, the answer was given that everything had not been exposed, as though the whole had not been vitiated by the exposures made; the statement that there were omissions and exaggerations in the reports of Spiritualistic seances, was met by saying there were omissions in *Freethinker* articles. Answering the criticism that after scientific men had testified to the genuineness of certain phenomena, their testimony was ruled out by someone coming along who had discovered how things were done, Mr. Barbanell thought he had met the point by asking how could one put the two or three month's experience of the man who had found out the trick at the side of the years of experience of the man who believed? Of course, Mr. Cohen had only to reply that following the wrong line for twenty years only showed a continuation in error, five minutes on the right line was much more important. We are afraid that Mr. Barbanell has not yet learned to appreciate the difference between delivering addresses to believers and conducting a discussion which may appeal to the independent reasoning of the outsider. It is a pity that some really able man cannot be induced to meet Mr. Cohen

on this subject, and under conditions that would secure something like an adequate discussion.

The proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman, which was moved by Mr. Barbanell, and seconded by Mr. Cohen, and a brief reply from Mr. Thurtle. H.C.

The Greatest Idler.

A RECENT edition of the *Evening Standard* contained a leading article dealing with the Dean of St. Paul's, in the course of which it was stated that the Dean "is not only one of the clearest thinkers now living but also a man with the courage to say in unmistakable terms precisely what he thinks." With regard to that the only comment one can make is "I wonder." It would be most interesting to get the Dean's truthful answer, as a result of clear thinking, to the deistical mystery.

We are constantly being told that the purpose of man upon Earth is to work out his salvation, and so qualify himself for the high life which follows upon his sojourn in the terrestrial sphere. We are also informed that man was made, and still, physically remains, in the image of the god who made him. As a last instruction we glean that by work alone, spiritual and manual, shall we reach that lasting peace which is the haven and the heaven of the religionist.

Now, a little dissection makes these three rules more confused than the worst confusion. Man was made in the image of his god and yet *must* work in order to attain all the god-like attributes which are his by the right of his creation. To do this work he must have an example, but—where is it?

It would seem that continuous and devoted work are both necessary, if one follows the teachings of the exponents of this doctrine. How often have we heard the old tag that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do?" Christians, above all others, are the first to condemn the brother of caprice, the human who lacks continuity. They stress the value of labour and the joy arising from it, and yet—their very creed is founded upon a capricious act performed by the greatest idler with which the Universe has ever been acquainted in fact or in legend.

Let me quote a divine upon whose written authority the Christian religion bases so large a portion of its belief, to wit, St. Augustine. He says, "That before God made heaven and earth, he did not make anything, for no creature could be made before any creature was made." This god, then, being immortal and without beginning or ending, did but lie and daydream or bite his finger-nails until, overcome at last with his ennui, he bethought himself of an occupation and then made Earth and man. Further, he did the last portion so badly that he had to connect himself with an innocent virgin in order that a son of his own begetting should visit Earth to make his own handiwork fit to meet him in that idling place in which he has rested and will rest for all time.

Surely this gives us the clearest picture of the Great Idler who, for want of anything worse to do, made a place and peopled it with warring inhabitants, the bent of each of which would seem to be to do the greatest harm to the remainder in an earnest endeavour to get back to the "Great Nothingness."

When our politicians do nothing for the country we kick them out of office—or try. What then should we do with this phantasm who—after æons of doing nothing—suddenly made us by a whim and since then has done nothing? The Dean, as a direct servant of his deity, may be able to supply us with a truthful answer.

A PLAIN MAN.

A Real War Book.

IN *War, Civilization and the Churches*, Mr. Chapman Cohen has made a wise selection of articles written during and after hostilities. Everyone chosen is terrific in its truth, and deadly against the Churches that trimmed, shuffled, wriggled, openly blessed, and with jesuitry suited scripture to wholesale murder. The Churches, which are supposed to be the repositories of spirituality, of divine light, of guidance to the human race, were the last institutions to come in for severe criticism during warfare, and when the war ceased, their representatives were showing their usual utter uselessness by mumbling at the opening of war memorials. Cruden's *Concordance* has some hundreds of references to the word "love," and its derivatives to be found in the Bible; how the professional expounders of the Bible squared these and their conduct in the war will never be known. Theological dialectics are capable of everything when once words have been allowed to take the place of sense.

I find it very difficult to write with restraint on this book. It brings back all the hideous times when, with a few rare exceptions, truth with bowed head retired from the world. In retrospect, it appears ironical that a journal such as the *Freethinker* should have to shoulder the responsibility of truth-telling at a period when one could see for all time what a little sense there was in the world. In secret I have wished for a republication of these articles that I read in barracks, in estaminets, and in dug-outs; these messages were welcomed; they were the intellectual fires at which one could warm ones hands whilst waiting for an individual end or an end of the war itself.

The introduction to *War, Civilization and the Churches* is a perfect example of masterly clarity, Mr. Cohen says precisely what he means with a minimum of words; I admire the stone to gnaw thrown to the wordy exponents of mush in the following; "Christendom gave splendid evidence that the one thing on which the people could unite was war." On the positive side, our author says, "There is only one way to kill war, and that is to kill the idea of war. It is not the business of the soldier to end war, it is his business to keep the idea of war alive."

An article, "The War—And After (August, 1914) is characterized by the usual foresight of one who specializes in cause and effect. When drums were beating—fit methods for standing little sense on its head—the writer had boldly stated that "It takes a Christian to talk of war, with its brutalities, and savageries, its creation and perpetuation of evil methods, as God's way of purifying civilization." In 1915, "The German God" is taken up and examined, and one will be grateful for the permanent extract from the hysterical *Daily Mail*, that wrote with its mouth full of adjectives. In another article, "Thank God for the Zeppelin," a statement made by the Bishop of London, the writer points out that a particular raid resulted in the death of fifty-six people and the wounding of 114. And the Bishop of London leading this peculiar outburst of gratitude to God was not amongst either the killed or the wounded. What in the name of common sense are the qualifications needed to be a Bishop? On the subject of food shortage, in April, 1917, "War As It Is," the miserable lying about the greatness of war receives a death thrust; war has come full circle. "To such a pass," writes our author, "has this business of 'glorious war' come. The course of events have stripped war of its last semblance of greatness, and shown it to be the barbarous, brutal, even cowardly thing it really is. The victory may be determined by the starvation of old men and infants, women and children." And the rest of the article hammers home the imbecility of appealing like a savage to God. Coming up to January, 1918, under the title of "War and the Churches," the Day of Intercession appeared to be a damp squib. The food shortage is again brought in by the following comment: "The nation looks more like standing in queues than of going on its knees," and Mr. Cohen is sufficiently generous to point out to the Churches their proper functions.

This book is one for Freethinkers to buy, read, and

keep. The bulk of it was written when public passion was at its height and depth; it was also written with one passion only by the author, and that was the passion for truth. It is a triumph and ratification of Freethought that the articles can be brought out into light at a time when war posters are now answered by nearly two million unemployed. It is also a triumph of putting into concrete form the record of all churches during the Black Mass known as the Great War. Christians hot and lukewarm should read it and reply to it; the columns of the *Freethinker* are open for the task of disproving it.

In these notes, I feel I have done scant justice to this work. One of the few helpful letters I cherish is from the author, received whilst in the army. This letter arrived for me near to the time when I had had a row in barracks. A young man used to say his prayers, and for his right of being free to do so an Atheist had to stand up as other occupants of the palatial establishment objected to this religious observance.

There is no hope for the human race from churches; they have had a long innings in the history of man. Unscrupulous, lying, treacherous, with their record of bloodshed and misery it is time that their valuation was universally known. Blind leaders of the blind, with their incantations, forms and ceremonies, the savage is inevitably perpetuated, and one can see without sorrow or regret the crumbling away of priestly authority. A speedy end to it, leaving man to face his destiny without bog lights and a thousand fears, and a clear understanding of the ideas underlying this splendid book *War, Civilization and the Churches*, will help to bring the day of enlightenment, the reign of reason and common sense.

ADAM BREDE.

An Invaluable History.

I THINK it not unfair to say that there can be but few Freethinkers living better qualified to write a History of the Roman Catholic Church than Mr. Joseph McCabe. He was born a Catholic and reared among Catholics, and later entered the active ministry of the Church, after twelve years in a monastery, as the Very Reverend Father Anthony. Catholics will tell you that only a born Catholic can really understand the Church, and therefore it is safe to assume that Mr. McCabe knows it inside out. He lived in an atmosphere of Catholic history and Catholic philosophy as few other Freethinkers have done, and when, before he was thirty, he left the Church once and for all and threw his lot in with Rationalism, no one could deny his authority to speak about Roman Catholicism, whether from the point of view of theology or dogma or history or indeed any of its activities. He has given us a number of fascinating volumes on the Popes and the Jesuits and the Church, he has exposed their errors and lies, has done them incalculable harm, but until the publication of this monumental history* he has not produced a complete account of the Church he knows so well. I doubt, in fact whether any such history as this has ever been done before, simply because it really required the unique combination of historian, Rationalist and ex-Catholic to do it. There are, I believe, 360,000 words in the complete work, and some idea of its extraordinary fascination can be gathered from some of the titles of each volume, *How the Roman Church Became Wealthy and Corrupt*, *How the Pope's Power was Made and Enforced*, *The Height of the Papal Regime of Vice and Crime*, *Roman Catholic Intrigues of the Nineteenth Century*, and so on. Mr. McCabe has not merely gone to recognized authorities for his data, he has put in original research work among medieval manuscripts which required a thorough knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin to decipher. The feeling one always has, born of a thousand instances in one's own reading, is never to trust a Catholic historian. Mr. McCabe has weighed the evidence of nearly every disputed point, and whether we

* *The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church*, by Joseph McCabe. Six double Volumes. Price 10s. 6d. Obtainable from The Little Blue Books, 82 Eridge Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

agree with him or not, we are bound to recognize his tremendous industry in attempting to unravel so many conflicting points of view as he gradually unfolds twenty centuries of Catholic rule and misrule.

I turned with great interest to his volume on *How the Roman Catholic Church Began*, because he will have very little to do with the "Myth Theory" of Christianity or the non-historicity of Jesus. Those who are interested in these problems will find them fully discussed in his "little Blue Books," or in that edition of a large number of them which make up the volume called *The Story of Religious Controversy*—a wonderful introduction to Freethought. Here, however, Mr. McCabe starts "About the middle of the first century of the Christian Era," with the Epistle to the Romans, "the authenticity of which few have ever disputed." That Paul went to Rome in 62 A.D., he looks upon as an undoubted fact, as also Paul's execution in the Neronian persecutions. On the other hand, he looks upon the story of Peter as the first Pope, and that Peter was ever at Rome as legends, and discusses these legends to show that from the start the story of the Roman Catholic Church was "based on a forgery, and it has thriven on forgery ever since."

To "the first great forgery," he devotes three pages of solid discussion, and those readers who ever come up against the text, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church," as delivered with monotonous regularity by Roman Catholics, should read and remember its masterly and merciless exposition by Mr. McCabe. As far as his materials will allow, the author gives an excellent picture of the growth of the early Church; though it should never be forgotten that a good deal of it is pure conjecture. We know very little of genuine Church history between the year of the fall of Jerusalem and 150 A.D., when Gospels, Epistles and other "holy" literature began to circulate among believers. But we do know of the clash between the Gnostics, the Jews and the Gentiles as soon as the Church began to have some sort of cohesion and authority in the second century, and the account of this controversy given by Mr. McCabe should be read by all interested in those early years which shaped the destiny of one of the greatest (and most fraudulent) organizations the world has ever seen. Nothing would please me more than to go through each volume and call attention to the damning facts and pictures of Roman Catholic history as recorded by Mr. McCabe. They are so little known. Not one modern Roman Catholic in a million suspects that the history of his church could possibly be foul and beastly. "Historians have always been the most dreaded enemies of the Catholic Church," says our author in his masterly introduction. The ignorance of the average Roman Catholic is appalling, and even men like Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton, who certainly do know the truth, will calmly make statements which a mere novice in history can pulverize.

Mr. McCabe goes most fully into the question of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome to rule over all the other Bishops, and he proves "beyond any question Cyprian, and the whole of the African bishops in the sixth decade of the third century scornfully rejected the claim of the Roman Pope to rule the Church."

In the same way he disposes of the wonderful stories of Christian martyrs "Androcles and the lion, like Cecilia and her organ, Laurence and his gridiron, Catherine and her learning, Agnes and her wonderful hair, and all the other wonderful stories of one's (Catholic) childhood pass into the realm of myth. Wherever we put a critical finger on the Roman legends they collapse . . . one martyr story was coolly multiplied by nine." There were in fact, says Mr. McCabe, "probably less than two thousand martyrs in the whole of the persecutions."

The real history of the Roman Catholic Church begins with the Emperor Constantine. There may still be conjecture about certain events, and the motives which inspired certain people to promulgate Christianity at whatever cost. But historians, contemporary and modern, have given us the details, and Mr. McCabe continues, through eleven volumes, to sift as far as possible, the gold from the dross and give us the facts. And a dreadful story it is. The first thousand years are rightly called the Dark Ages, for they are packed with bloodshed and

ignorance, with intolerance and hatred, obscenity and corruption. What a picture of the early Christian World! The cult of Mary borrowed from Paganism, the cult of martyrs and relics, the lies and forgeries regarding Papal claims, the moral impotence of the Roman Church, the violence and squabbles at the Councils, the collapse of civilization, the filth and ignorance of monks and priests, the duping of the uneducated poor, the trickery and ambition of the Popes, the duplicity of the religious rulers, the murders, rapes and adulteries of Christian bishops and their wives, the enormous sale of indulgences, the growth of infanticide in nunneries, and the "abominable cases of fornication in monasteries," the fights for and in the Papacy—these and dozens of other subjects are dealt with in profuse detail by Mr. McCabe. Dealing with the period 800-1000 A.D., he says:—

We shall find two of the highest ecclesiastics of Rome gouging out the eyes of the Pope with their knives on the floor of the Church, Rome repeatedly reddened with blood and sordid with bribery at the Papal elections, and most of the fifty Popes who succeeded each other during two centuries completely indifferent to the degradation of Europe. We shall find spread all over Europe, the barbaric practice of cutting out the eyes or cutting off the ears, tongues, hands or feet, of one's enemies. We shall find kings and nobles, bishops and abbots turning convents into brothels . . .

Beautiful story, is it not?

Then comes such delightful incidents as the massacre of the Albigensians and the founding of the Inquisition—both events beautifully whitewashed by our Bellocs and Chestertons. I think it is the last-named gentleman who claims that the Inquisition actually *protected* the heretic!

But my space has run out. I refer the reader to the volumes dealing with the regime of vice at Rome, with such moral gentlemen as Pope Alexander VI and his mistresses, with the Council of Trent and the Reformation, with the story of the Jesuits, their diplomacy, cupidity and crimes. Even as late as 1820, the crimes committed by Catholics in Spain are so horrible as to be almost indescribable, and in France, about the same time, things were quite as bad. Mr. McCabe points out how many facts glossed over by former historians are now admitted to be even worse than at first thought. Read his description of life in the Papal States during the middle of last century, and ask yourself whether you knew of this kind of thing before. The truth is only now coming out. The twelfth volume *The Roman Catholic Church as it is to-day* is a magnificent summary of the whole history and its implications. To those Freethinkers who are combatting Roman Catholic claims, I strongly recommend this volume. In common parlance "it is an eye-opener." I only wish I could quote dozens of pages here.

Mr. McCabe's *History of the Roman Catholic Church* is a book every Freethinker should possess. But I have one little quarrel to make with the format of this edition. It should be printed on better paper, it should have a more or less complete summary of the chapters, and it should be bound in one volume. But in particular it should have an Index—the bigger the better. It seems a pity that a work like this packed with learning, eager to present the truth about the most gigantic imposture history has any cognizance of, should be sent out in such a form. It would involve an increase in price, but the work is worth it.

H. CUTNER.

It is still unknown BY WHOM, OR WHERE, OR WHEN, the canon of the New Testament was settled. But in this absence of positive evidence we have abundant evidence of negative proof. We know when it was *not* settled. We know that it was *not* settled in the time of the Emperor Justinian, nor in the time of Cassiodorus, that is, not at any time before the middle of the sixth century.—Robert Taylor.

Against stupidity the very gods themselves contend in vain.—Schiller.

A Career for Exploiting Credulity.

As I chose that very career for myself at the age of eighteen, a comment thereon appealed to me. I did not see it in that light till I read in your article of October 5, the truthful observation that "every theological training college is a school for turning out practitioners in the art of exploiting Credulity, every Church and Chapel in the Kingdom is a theatre in which professionals give an exposition of their skill."

No one knows where he is in a thick black fog; that is as true mentally as it is physically. I had at that time not the remotest idea that I had adopted such a calling.

The article reminded me of Browning's remark which I quoted as a motto for my little brochure, *Man*—to wit, "that Civilization is a disease." I wonder how many careers and "no-careers" have not a like objective in view. The chiefest of all exploitations is that of human toil. But the meanest, is the exploitation of Credulity. It is essentially despicable. To exploit the labour of the slave with lash and whip is brutal enough in all conscience; but it has not the meanness of promising him an eternity of bliss by way of compensation for it. To goad one is cruel! but to gull him to boot is contemptible.

Religion, spiritualism, Christian Science, and theosophy stand out pre-eminently as movements for the exploitation of Credulity. And but for the truth so pithily expressed in your next remark—to wit, that "there was a fresh fool born every five minutes, and a possible parson every day," the supply of material and agents would soon come to an end!

I am glad to think that at the end of five years as a "professional" the fog, to some extent, cleared, and the basic dogmas of the Christian Creed—viz., the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the hell dogma and that of the Trinity, and the miracles and magic that pervade the whole collection, came to view in their true nature. And as I could not preach what I disbelieved in my sermons underwent a manifest change. After a while two deacons waited upon me and asked me quite fraternally, would I kindly preach again in the style I did when I came to them.

That I could not promise to do as my views had so changed that to preach them would be preaching untruths.

But that in another way I could oblige them, *i.e.*, by quitting my charge, and so I tendered them my resignation *there and then*. Thousands from time to time would have liked to do the same.

KERIDON.

Obituary.

MR. WILLIAM CHALLIS.

At Kingston-on-Thames Cemetery on Friday, October 10, the remains of Mr. William Challis were interred. A sufferer from heart disease for some time, the end came not unexpectedly. Joining the National Secular Society ten years ago, his record as a member is an unbroken one of keen interest and support in its welfare and activities. That he was well known and much respected was evident from the large number of relatives and friends who gathered at the graveside where a Secular Service was conducted by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, opposite Walham Green Church): Every Saturday at 7.30.—Various speakers.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Arlington Road, Park Street, Camden Town): Every Thursday evening, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Rushcroft Road, Brixton): Wednesday, October 22, at 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Friday, October 24, at Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Mr. C. E. Wood; every Friday, at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith, W.): 3.15, Messrs. C. Tuson, and A. Hearne.

INDOOR.

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (The Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): Wednesday, October 22, at 7.45, Mr. O. Baker—"Is Unemployment Curable?"

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. Hy. S. L. Polak—"The Indian Situation."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road): 7.15, Mr. R. B. Kerr (Editor *The New Generation*)—"How France Abolished Unemployment."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"The Standardization of Man."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. Bonar Thompson—"The Greatness of Bernard Shaw."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square): 7.30, Mr. Robert Arch, "Freethought Old and New."

WATFORD DEBATING SOCIETY (Public Library, Hempstead Road): Friday, October 24, at 7.30, Debate, "Is Christianity Consistent with the Laws of Evolution?" *Affir.*: Rev. F. J. Gould; *Neg.*: Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (National Union of Textile Workers Room, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. Geo. A. Langley—"A Suggested Cure for Unemployment."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"What is the Use of Science?"

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—This Branch have secured club rooms in Front Street, for the Winter Session of Lectures and Discussion. The first will be held on Sunday, October 19, Lecturer, Mr. J. T. Brighton; Chairman, T. Birtley. Commence at 7.0. Will all members and friends please note.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"The Imaginary Jesus." All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—Ramble from Hillfoot, meet at 11 a.m. At 6.30, Mr. Thos. Young—"Why I Left the Church of Rome."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. B. J. Boothroyd ("Yaffle" of the *New Leader*)—A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Passing of the Gods." (The Third Lecture of his series on Man and God.) Doors open 6.30. Reserved seats one shilling. Current *Freethinkers* will be on sale.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester): Col. Arthur Lynch will lecture at 3.0 on "Orthodoxy in Science," at 6.30, on "Vitalism."

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, Forbes Place): 7.0. A Lecture.

RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION—Glasgow District—Central Halls, 25 Bath Street, Professor F. A. E. Crew, M.A., D.Sc., Ph.D., F.R.S.E.—"The Origin and Nature of Life." Saturday, October 18, Social and Reception to Prof. Crew at Ca'doro Restaurant, at 6.15. Tickets 3s. each

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