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## Views and Opinions.

### Gallows Ethics.

The other day a Durham Coroner, who was holding an inquest on the body of a man who had just been hanged, referred to the infliction of capital punishment as a barbarous method of carrying out the old Mosaic dispensation. It was barbarous, he said, to take, as a way of mending matters, the life of a fellow creature who had been wicked enough to kill another. It is not quite clear on what grounds exactly the Coroner condemned capital punishment; they appear to have been rather peculiar. Executions, he said, did not act as a deterrent to crime, "the greater punishment was penal servitude for life. With no remission on account of good behaviour, the man was consigned to a living tomb, and.....the longer he lived the greater the punishment. This would give ministers of religion a better opportunity of saving a man's soul." One's appreciation of the Coroner's remarks is diminished considerably by the reasons he gave for making them, since he seems to have been dominated by two ideas—the desire to inflict punishment, or to take revenge, and that of saving a man's soul. And both of these ideas are very strongly mixed up with religion, particularly in those primitive forms of religious beliefs which meet us in the Old and New Testaments. Blood revenge is a very old form of religious belief, and the death penalty for murder appears to have with primitive peoples very little conscious connection with social wrong. And, as is to be expected, whenever an enlightened social sense begins to speculate upon the advisability of accepted methods of punishment it is from religious quarters that the strongest opposition comes. So long as the thing fought for is stupid and primitive one may count on that with almost absolute certainty.

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### The Road to Heaven.

In proof of this I may cite as witnesses a Roman Catholic, Bishop J. S. Vaughan, and Dean Welldon, of Durham. These gentlemen contributed a letter each to the *Manchester Guardian*, and they are in cordial agreement in their support of the death penalty, as well as in the general stupidity of their arguments. Bishop Vaughan says that the Coroner is quite mistaken in thinking that a man will have more time for repentance if he is imprisoned for life. He says, "My

experience is that a man condemned to death in a few weeks' or a few days' time is far easier to make a good end than one who still has to face many long and tedious years of imprisonment and hardship." In proof of this he cites Dean McCarthy, who used to lament when the death sentence was commuted to a term of imprisonment, and who said that he had never attended a Catholic who had not repented his sins, and who had not made "a really good death." So impressed was this good priest with the advantages that committing a murder—provided the murderer was detected—offered to a man, that he would wring his hands when a man was reprieved and say, "Alas! they are saving his body at the expense of his soul! Had the death sentence only been carried out he would be in heaven by now." The picture of the good priest shedding tears because a man has missed his chance of getting to heaven because a wicked government will not hang him is very touching. At any rate, it quite confirms what we have often said, a sure way of getting to heaven is to kill someone. Knowing *when* you are going to die makes all the difference. If you are in doubt as to the date there is always an opportunity for procrastination. The golden rule for getting to heaven is to kill someone and be sentenced to death. Dean McCarthy and Bishop Vaughan have never known it to fail. We must, in fairness, add Bishop Vaughan's qualifying remark that the recipe of how to get saved refers "only to those who already profess the Catholic faith." All the rest can go to hell.

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### A Charitable Hanging.

Dean Welldon's argument is more elaborate and more variegated in its stupidity—they give more freedom in this direction in the Church of England than they do in the Roman Church. But in one point the Dean appears to agree with the Bishop—that of assuming that the great thing is to get the man properly saved. For he says that if the law "is charitably administered, as it is in Great Britain, where to every criminal between his sentence and his execution is given a full opportunity of penitence, it may be approved by the Christian conscience as the vindication of a moral principle which represents not only human justice but Divine." I like the epithet "charitable" when it is a question of hanging or guillotining or electrocuting a man. It might be done uncharitably, and although the outcome in either case would be the same to the man who was hanged, still one may as well hang him charitably as not. But, quite clearly, the important thing to the Dean, as to the Bishop, is that the man shall be given time for repentance, and so get to heaven. May I venture to suggest to Dean Welldon that if the man is so genuinely repentant that he becomes permanently a better man, and would not commit the offence again, the only sound justification for hanging him seems to have disappeared? And if his repentance is of such a kind that he can only be trusted not to commit murder again on condition that he is sent to a place where murder is not possible, his change of heart does not seem to be of a very valuable kind. Heaven as a place

of refuge for men who have repented committing one murder but cannot be trusted not to commit another, given the opportunity, does not seem a very desirable place for decent-minded men and women. Still, if you want to get to heaven, the Dean agrees with the Bishop that there is nothing like committing a murder. And in this contention they receive the fullest support from statistics.

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#### Vox Populi.

Dean Welldon supports the death penalty because Christian society has endorsed it. But I may venture to remind the Dean that Christian society has supported any and every brutality that the law has inflicted. Christian society, and the Church of which the Dean is a member, supported capital punishment for petty robbery. Christian society endorsed the rack, the thumbscrew, boiling oil, and molten lead, and innumerable other kinds of torture, many of which were of Christian invention. And when the Atheist Beccaria and the Freethinker Voltaire opened their campaign against the frightful brutalities of the criminal law in Europe, it was Christian society they had to fight. The Durham Coroner had said that in his opinion capital punishment did not prevent murder, and he is not alone in that opinion. Dean Welldon replies that this is a question, but he says that many murders are committed under the influence of passion or drink, and the murderers do not stay to think of the consequences. That is the one gleam of common-sense in Dean Welldon's letter, but is discounted by the immediately following remark that capital punishment creates an atmosphere in which the temptations to commit murder are likely to be conquered. But how on earth can a man be deterred by the calculation of consequences if he is acting in a situation where he does not stay to think of them? It is surprising that a man with the tremendous ability to master the subtleties of the Athanasian Creed cannot see the force of a simple proposition of this kind.

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#### Blood Revenge.

The real reason for Dean Welldon's support of capital punishment is found in his quotation of the biblical precept, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," although we may remind him that the death penalty is inflicted by the Bible for picking up sticks on the Sabbath, for witchcraft, for apostasy, and for other things that to-day we hardly conceive to be an offence at all. But the quotation does throw light upon the Dean's attitude, and explains why we can usually, and with so much certainty, look to religion as the source of a man's obscurantism and opposition to reform in almost any direction. Socially, of course, killing—except when done in the shape of warfare or religious ceremonial—cannot be encouraged, or society itself would die out. But the conscious sanctions for blood revenge are of a different kind. Blood revenge among primitive peoples is mainly a matter of a religious sacrifice. It is a very wide-spread belief that the ghost of a murdered man wanders about seeking revenge on those who did him an injury. This idea exists, as a matter of fact, with ourselves, and is seen in the belief in houses that are haunted by the ghosts of murdered people who cannot rest till the guilty person is punished. In these matters we are not nearly so far removed from savagery as many believe, and in any case our clergy will always serve as a link between ourselves and them. In Genesis the blood of Abel cries aloud from the ground for vengeance, and I might fill columns of this journal with illustrations to the same end from primitive peoples in all parts of the world. But the point is that to the general fear of the ghost there is added the fear of an angry spirit thirsting for revenge

and which will wreak vengeance on whom it may if the actual murderer is not punished. It is thus as a sacrifice offered to appease the ghost that blood revenge becomes established so firmly in human society, and it is only what one would expect, to find deans and bishops, representatives of an essentially savage creed, championing also the retention of forms of criminal punishment that are derived directly from the savage idea of things.

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#### Just in Time for Salvation.

The Coroner said that if men were imprisoned instead of being hung it would give ministers of religion a better chance of saving their souls. Bishop Vaughan welcomes capital punishment because it enables the murderer to make a "really good death" and go straight to heaven. Dean Welldon agrees with capital punishment so long as it gives a man time for repentance and he can go to heaven. The religious point of view is substantially the same with all three. The great thing is to save the man's soul. Not to make him a better man *here*, but to see that he is all right *there*. Neither Dean nor Bishop says a word as to the causes that have made the man a murderer, the social side is ignored, the humanitarian aspect unnoticed. And yet it is these men who stand forward as the moral guide of the nation! On some questions it is difficult to actually test the state of mind of these men because when the question is one which directly touches an acute social issue, and where they obviously stand to lose their hold on the people if they are not very careful, one is put off with some commonplace which may mean anything or nothing. But where the issue is one such as the treatment of criminals, or the reform of the laws of divorce, then we see the medicine man peeping forth. We see the clergy for what they are—the upholders of savage forms of thought, the champions of obsolete ideas, the defenders of what is against the creators of what ought to be. It is this that makes the clergy dangerous as well as ridiculous. They embody the threat of the savage to civilization.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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### "Religion and Law."

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SUCH is the title of a recent sermon by Dean Inge, published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of March 9. The Dean never speaks without saying something worthy of serious consideration; and one feels highly honoured when an opportunity arises to criticise some of his views. The present sermon contains several statements with which we totally disagree. It is founded on the following two texts: "We establish the law"—Romans iii., 31; "We have been discharged from the law"—Romans vii., 6. The first statement is that the supreme authority in religion is placed by St. Paul "in the teaching of Christ as interpreted by the enlightened reason through the operation of the Holy Spirit"; but that is surely a glaring mis-statement. It is a conspicuous characteristic of the Pauline epistles that they almost wholly ignore what is known as Christ's teaching, and put their supreme emphasis on his death and resurrection. As far as Paul's testimony is concerned, the Gospel Jesus might never have been a teacher at all. It is a certainty that Paul never brought an enlightened reason to bear upon Christ's teaching, to say nothing of "the operation of the Holy Spirit," which is inscrutable and past finding out. The Dean says a great deal about the promise of Divine guidance, which is made only to the pure in heart; but either the pure in heart represent an infinitesimally small number of people, or else the promise has been falsified by the event, the fact being that there is no trace whatever of Divine guidance in

the history of Christendom. And yet, despite all the selfishness, cruelty, persecution, injustice, oppression and bloodshed that have blackened and disgraced well nigh every Christian century, and despite the innumerable theological and ecclesiastical divisions of the present day, some of which are bitter enough in all conscience, the Dean of St. Paul's has the temerity to assert that "the Holy Spirit has been teaching the Church and mankind at large from the first." "Finally," he avers, "the teaching of the Holy Spirit is progressive"; but what exactly he means by such an assertion is not at all clear, and, face to face with the facts, cannot be made clear.

It is well known that Bishop Butler in his *Analogy* draws a sharp distinction between positive precepts and moral duties, and the Dean tells us that "there are hardly any of those positive precepts in the Gospels, and that Jesus Christ says very little about obedience and the religious motive." On this point, again, we venture to suggest that the Dean is entirely mistaken. As the late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, so powerfully shows in more than one of his published sermons, the Gospel Jesus elevated obedience to the highest position among the virtues. As he was his Father's bond-servant so were his disciples to be his bond-servants. To the question who is wise? Jesus answers in the Sermon on the Mount: "Everyone which heareth these words of mine and doeth them," whilst everyone who heareth them and doeth them not is likened unto a foolish man. To the rich young man who asked him how he could inherit eternal life, Jesus said: "If thou wouldest enter into life keep the commandments." To his disciples he said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." And in his estimation the only acceptable religious motive to obedience was, "For my sake."

This is one of the Dean's pre-eminently pious or devout discourses, in which his peculiar theology has no place. Though Jesus Christ says very little about obedience, yet there can be no true religion without "the feeling of absolute dependence on God, who claims from us unconditional and unhesitating obedience." This indicates a state of absolute slavery; but, the Dean argues, if we work ourselves up into a vivid realization of the truth that the only happiness possible for us consists in rendering this unconditional and unhesitating obedience we shall ultimately find that in this stern law lies perfect liberty. Such specious reasoning recalls to the present writer the saying of a South African Dutch reformed clergyman that the only conceivable happiness for coloured people lay in a state of docile subjection to the whites. "If my native servant is humble and obedient I give him good things; if otherwise I lash him with my whip; I treat him just as I treat my dog." So, likewise, the Gospel Jesus, who is said to be the eternally living Christ, says to all: "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you"; and, by implication and by direct teaching elsewhere, evidently those who do not observe his commandments are his enemies, who shall go away into everlasting punishment. Of course, there is a sense in which genuine freedom is attainable only under law; but that is not the Christian sense. Unconditional obedience is thoroughly unwholesome and demoralizing. Every true man wants to be himself, self-reliant and strong, not the vassal of another, whoever that other may be. Dr. Inge does not approve of the old poet who "in a clever diplomatic phrase speaks of 'liberty, whose shadow you may learn if you wish to do whatever you are ordered';" but in this case the poet is much nearer the truth than the clergyman. They who only wish to do whatever they are ordered are in reality pitiable slaves, who at best can see and realize but the shadow of freedom, never the substance. The spiritual man is a special product of religion, and the only state he can

ever be in is that of idealized but utterly degrading slavery. In many respects Dean Inge is a delightfully natural man, who speaks and writes with the most exquisite sanity; but in religion he is a non-natural, almost anti-natural man, whose ideal of human character is complete submission to the will of another, and that other a purely imaginary being. In other words, he is a mystic who can be satisfied with the following quotation from the fourteenth century writer, Tauler:—

If a man serveth God with fear, it is good. If a man serveth him with love, it is better. But he who in fear can love, serveth him best of all.

That was uttered in one of the last ages of faith when already the New Learning and Humanism were beginning to push supernatural belief into the background of life, where it now lies, and all efforts to force it into the forefront once more are made in vain. The people of to-day are quite sure of nothing but the natural, as the Dean well knows. One by one the traditional dogmas of the Church are being thrown overboard as useless and impeding tackle. Nature is the only existing reality of which we possess any knowledge, and for us her latest and on the whole best singer is George Meredith, who gives the following apt account of man's relations to her:—

Obedient to Nature, not her slave:  
Her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows;  
Her dust, if with his conscience he plays knave,  
And bids the Passions on the Pleasures browse.

Now, curiously enough, after affirming that "the Holy Spirit has been teaching the Church and mankind at large from the first" and that his teaching is progressive, the Dean is compelled by the facts in the case, which sooner or later he invariably faces, to make this confession:—

We see everywhere a growing contempt for all rule and tradition. Church-going is passing more and more out of fashion. Good Friday has been turned into a bank holiday. Sunday is sharing the same fate. Family prayer and Bible reading are much less general than they used to be. People do not see why they should do these things. They doubt if they really do them any good, and so one irksome restraint after another is abandoned, and it is difficult to point to any single thing which the average Englishman does or leaves undone of his free will because he is a Churchman.

After all said and done, the Dean of St. Paul's is a faithful Churchman, who believes and does certain things simply on that account, and who, though courageously facing the facts just narrated, for doing which he is nicknamed the Gloomy Dean, yet fails to realize that the facts so bravely confronted indicate beyond a doubt that Christianity is decaying. What, then, are the causes of the present neglect of religious observances? Very ingeniously the reverend gentleman evades the real issue. He enumerates several of the things which he regards as "respectable reasons," chief among which is national degeneracy, showing itself in the softening of the fibre of the national character, in self-indulgence and self-love, in dislike of all restraint, aversion from all discipline, and above all in "enjoying life by refusing restrictions and multiplying amusements and excitement." Assuming the reality of this national degeneracy, how does the Dean reconcile such an assumption with his previous assertion that "the Holy Spirit has been teaching the Church and mankind in general from the first"? Does it not logically follow that if the assumption is true the assertion must be false? If the assertion is false either of two inferences must be accepted: that as teacher the Holy Spirit has been a stupendous failure, or that no Holy Ghost exists. Which is Dr. Inge prepared to accept?

But we do not look upon the existing lack of interest in religion as a symptom of moral decadence, but

rather as a sign of intellectual enlightenment. As the emancipation comes after centuries of religious slavery, it would not be at all surprising if, in some instances, the highly welcomed freedom were to degenerate into moral licence, as in a very few cases it is known to have done. But to prefer football, golf, or tennis to sermons is not in itself an indication of a softening moral fibre; and in any case the remedy lies not in returning to slavery, or discipline as the Dean calls it, but in advancing towards rationalized morality and those forms of amusement and play which tend to tighten, not soften, the fibre of the national character.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Priests and the Poverty Line.

The tragedy of clerical poverty in London diocese cannot be exaggerated. —*The Bishop of Stepney.*

When are we to see an end of the scandal of starvation payments of overworked clergy? —*Daily Paper.*

THE ordinary clergyman follows his Saviour so meekly that it is with a distinct shock of astonishment that one learns that so many of the clergy are "starving." At least, that is how the truthful and scholarly Bishop of London puts the matter, and he is supported in his statement by a number of reverends and right-reverends. The Bishop has made our flesh creep with his story of the anonymous parson who fed a family on sixpence a meal, and the more horrid account of an unfortunate "man-of-God" (also anonymous) who lost whatever brains he possessed for lack of a respectable bank balance. It is very sad, but there is, as the poet tells us, always balm in Gilead. An Australian sheep farmer is coming to the rescue of the Lord's anointed, and he will attempt to raise £20,000 of other people's money before the end of the present year in order to protect the sacred persons of the clergy from the blessings of poverty.

Curiously, the Bishop of London's Diocesan Fund is the responsible agency for this money. The Bishop himself should be an authority on poverty. Oppressed by the woes of the rich, he is always painfully anxious to wear his financial heart upon his lawn sleeve. Some time ago he explained, in full-throated tones, to an astonished congregation on the verge of apoplexy, that, after drawing his episcopal salary of £10,000 for fifteen years, he was £2,000 on the wrong side of the ledger, and actually poorer than when he started the awful experience of following in the footsteps of the Carpenter of Nazareth. On such book-keeping it is abundantly clear that had his lordship's salary been equal to that of His Grace of Canterbury, he must have finished his squalid career in a Rowton House or a Church Army egg-box.

Whether the clergy are actually starving is a very open question. It is true the newspapers are full of woe and lamentation, paid for at the usual rates. One London editor, with tears in his pen, declares that "the vicars of London have a bad year to which to look forward." He does not add, however, that last year these unfortunate men had their stipends made up to a minimum of £400. Quite recently, the journalists have been using scare headlines concerning a London vicar who has been summoned for rates. The man's income is £6 10s. weekly, with a vicarage thrown in, so that he is not in danger of eating grass, like the king in the Bible.

The facts are that the Church of England is the wealthiest Church in the world, and that the cry of "starvation" is simply a stunt for raising money. The endowments of the Church of England are far more solid than the gold streets of the New Jerusalem, and they are not invested in the Bank of Faith. Lord Addington's return of 1891 showed that the annual value of these ancient Church endowments was

£5,469,171, exclusive of modern private benefactions which amount to £284,000 yearly.

Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see that the average reverend is far above the poverty line. The higher ecclesiastics evade the blessings of poverty even more skilfully. The Bench of Bishops, forty in number, share £182,000 yearly. The bachelor Bishop of London, who is so concerned for the penurious clergy, starves on a salary of £200 weekly, a sum sufficient to keep forty working-class families in comparative comfort. So poor are the bishops that the episcopal dress costs £200, and most of them live up to it. "The stair carpets at Farnham Castle are measured by miles," wrote old Bishop Thorold. "My episcopal income goes in geraniums," complained Bishop Stubbs. It is, indeed, a far cry from the stained-glass representation of the original disciples with their fishing-nets to Lambeth Palace with its guard-room, Fulham Palace with its pleasure grounds, Farnham Palace with its deer park, and old-world Wells with its moated garden.

The cry of the starvation of the clergy is all fustian. At the top of the Church of England there are prelates who starve on salaries ranging from £2,000 to £15,000 yearly, whilst at the bottom are a multitude of holders of benefices far better off than the ordinary man. Within the narrow confines of the City of London £50,000 is spent each year in ministering to a small resident population of caretakers, policemen, and Jews. The latter, who form a very large proportion of the total, never worry the pew-openers. The Anglican Church has also property in the City of London worth over £2,000,000. As an index of the work done in the City, one year's confirmations show that in the East City sixty-two candidates were confirmed, and in the West City ninety were received in the Church. Nor is this all, for recently the Church authorities decided to sell nineteen derelict City churches in order to use the money in other places.

We fear that the Bishop of London's plaint of clerical poverty is as unconvincing as his arithmetic, and the latter will never entitle him to an honorary membership of the Society of Incorporated Chartered Accountants. His lordship's engaging candour is sure to cause much heart-burning in the breasts of devoted and business-like Churchmen. He should have imitated the quiet and cautious reserve of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, two canny North Countrymen, who pocket larger salaries and say nothing of it.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Necessity for Blasphemy.

THE incentive behind blasphemy prosecutions is not really what God may think about being made a subject of ridicule, but the fear lest the loosening of the fetters of superstition from the minds of the masses may be subversive of social order.

In all ages religion has been the main buttress of caste and class domination and of vested interests. It is easy to determine before hand on which side organized religion and the bulk of its clergy will be in any social, economic, or political dispute. They will be found on the side of wealth, vested interests, and the class predominance which is based upon those interests.

In the days when the divine right of kings was accepted as an unquestioned fact, the kingdom of heaven was conceived as a replica, on a larger scale, of the kingdoms of earth. Kings were the vice-gerents of God, and their courts and hereditary nobility a copy of the heavenly hosts. Thus, we find, in the Middle Ages, Christ (as God) and his Apostles conceived as a king with his feudatory nobles. But, with the development of the democratic ideal, the divine right of kings

faded away. Nevertheless, God remained, and still remains, in the eyes of the religionists, as a despotic monarch by whose arbitrary will the existing order of things is ordained and determined. The idea of God as a constitutional monarch, or as president of a republic, is unthinkable. Hence democracy, and especially socialism, have always been associated with Atheism.

Apart from the sheer indifference of the vast numbers of people who know nothing, read nothing, and are incapable of five minutes of serious thinking upon anything whatever, religious superstition is still a strong restraining force. In so far as it exerts its influence upon the minds of the leaders of the democracy, so far is the class predominance of wealth and vested interests protected against the more extreme demands of democracy. Hence, the far-seeing plutocrat or capitalist will always be well advised to support those forms of religion which act as "dope" upon the minds of the masses.

The ineffectiveness of the Labour movement is mainly due to the influence of Nonconformist Christianity. There is nothing which can so effectually take the "guts" out of a man, and turn his spine into jelly, as Little Bethel, as was evidenced by the bulk of the conscientious objectors during the late war. We see this exemplified also, over and over again, in the careers of our leading Labour members and trades union officials. The Socialist movement has been eviscerated in the same way.

Whatever may be said of Marxism in general, there can be no doubt that "the materialist conception of history," or economic determinism, provides the only scientific explanation of social and political phenomena. It is that the economic conditions determine the social forms; they determine the kind of government, political movements, and the intellectual life generally, not even excepting the religion, of any given society. The economic conditions are to human society what the conditions of soil, light, and air are to plant life. The doctrine of economic determinism provides the only key which enables us to understand social evolution and the problems of history. It is, in short, the scientific and realistic, as opposed to the empirical and idealistic, point of view. It is rationalism as opposed to emotionalism.

An eminent Christian divine once denounced science as Atheism in that it takes no account of God. Economic determinism is looked at askance for just the same reason. "God" has nothing at all to do with it. In the early days of the Socialist movement in this country the principles of Socialism were firmly based upon a thorough understanding of the implications of "materialist conception of history." But the majority of the people were not, and are not, sufficiently educated to be able to appreciate any purely scientific explanation, especially when applied to social matters. They are incurably emotional, and are always on the look out for the God from the machine. Hence, we got rival "schools" whose principal exponents were, and are, mostly Nonconformist Christians who have succeeded in stultifying Socialism to such an extent that "Socialism" nowadays means anything one likes—or nothing at all.

Those of us who understand the real causes of economic crises, and all the resulting social troubles, know that there is one way out, and one way only. It is the reorganization of society on a co-operative basis. But if ever this is achieved it will not be in our time. The ideal co-operative commonwealth of Socialism demands a far higher average standard of education, intelligence and morals than obtains to-day. This cannot be attained so long as religious fakirism is a vested interest. It cannot be attained so long as the God-superstition dominates the minds of the masses consciously or subconsciously. After attending a

recent Labour demonstration I was led to reflect on the ideal of the co-operative commonwealth, and I came to the conclusion that a marble palace cannot be built with lumps of mud. Reading the Manifesto on the engineering crisis in the *Daily Herald* of March 15, signed by a large number of "gospel merchants," mostly Nonconformists, it became perfectly clear as to how and why the minds of the masses are as mud. So long as this turbid stupidity can be maintained there is no fear lest "Labour" shall be anything else but subservient. It may be restless in a dull, block-headed, uncomprehending way, but it can always be outwitted, and so controlled. Hence, vested interests are secure, and the ruling classes may rest safely in their beds. Dear old God will see to it that they are not disturbed.

Social, like biological, evolution is a slow process, for the reason that economic, like physical, conditions change slowly. But much can be done to clear the atmosphere from the poisonous fog of religious superstition. Scientific exposition and rational arguments are very largely thrown away on those whose minds are incapable of following them. But ridicule is a potent weapon even against stupidity. Hence, we must be prepared to blaspheme, since the ridicule of religion is blasphemy.

The savage witch-doctor rigged up in feathers and paint and rags and bones, gesticulating before his grotesque wooden god, is ridiculous in the eyes of the Christian. But the Christian bishop in fantastic robes, posturing and mumbling before a box which contains his God in the shape of a bit of bread, is no less so. It is said that one cannot eat his cake and have it. But the Catholic Christian apparently can eat his God and also have him, which is a miracle in itself. The Reverend Athanasius Verisopht who believes in transubstantiation, however, is no more ridiculous than the Reverend Boanerges Leatherlungs bellowing in Little Tophet chapel. Leatherlungs does not believe that a half quartern loaf of bread is God; but he does believe that by making "a hell of a noise" God can be made to sit up and take notice, and that the groanings and moanings, or better still, the violent hysteria, of his afflicted congregation are visible evidence of the presence of God. Having once witnessed a violent revival, I had no difficulty in imagining the miracle of the Gaderene swine, though, in this instance, "devils" provided the motive power.

This is the sort of imbecility which still persists as "religion" in this twentieth century. Until we get rid of it we cannot hope to establish society on a basis of sanity. How can we get rid of it? By ridicule—blasphemy.

E. J. LAMEL.

### Then and Now.

WE remember him. He enjoyed the war—in his imagination. There were the glorious advances—the thick black lines showed the ground taken, the dotted lines showed the original line—he rejoiced. We had got them on the run. When the requirements of men became acute he disappeared into a shipping office controlled by the Government and was safe. He was a jingo without the courage of his convictions. His imagination was dead; his instinct of self-preservation was very much alive.

A pet dog—a pretty little thing—had been run over in the street by a motor lorry. Bleeding and yelping, with its dying instinct it ran towards home leaving a trail of blood. A kindly police inspector beat out its brains with a hammer. The jingo heard about it. He saw the trail of blood. He talked about it—quite naturally. He could not bear the sight of blood; he could not bear to see animals in pain. It was shocking. It was terrible. He was genuinely sympathetic. Men are but children of a larger growth; may the gods send them more imagination, so that the last war shall not be the last before the next.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## The Religion of Jesus.

### IV.

(Continued from page 219.)

If one wants to see how a professor of Christian morals like Professor Peabody can get hopelessly entangled in a wave of apologies and ink-splashing for Jesus, let them read *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*. It is typical of reading into the religion of Jesus everything Professor Peabody himself stands for, but for which there is hardly a scrap of authority in the Gospels themselves. The learned writer devotes columns to prove, for instance, "the extraordinary emphasis repeatedly laid by Jesus on the institution of the family," and actually claims that "the character of the teaching of Jesus on this subject is one whose importance could not be adequately appreciated until the researches of the present generation had recalled attention to the problem of the family." I really had to read that passage twice. Talk about cheek! Why, all the talk and rant about the beautiful Christian home life instituted by Jesus can be simply and adequately disproved by reading the Gospels themselves. Nothing else is necessary.

What Professor Peabody ought to have done (and he took precious good care not to) was to have faithfully dealt with certain sayings and incidents which have ever been a stumbling block to the faithful. Take, as an example, that delightful piece of filial love which Jesus showed to his mother at the famous marriage feast at Cana. What a picture of beautiful home life it shows! Does any Christian mean to seriously assert that when Jesus said to his mother "Woman, what have you to do with me?" we have one of the most wonderful examples of the love of a son for his parent the world has ever seen, and one which will serve for all time as such? Why, Dr. Weymouth is so ashamed of it that in his *New Testament in Modern Speech* he refuses to give the correct translation (he calls it the literal translation), and actually says that Jesus meant, and therefore must have said (in the original Greek, I suppose), "Leave the matter in my hands."

It is marvellous how Christians love to make Jesus say or mean anything but what the Gospels say he said or meant if they don't agree with their Saviour. And yet, if the Gospels are to be believed, Jesus had very little love either for his mother or brethren. Poor Joseph is even more shabbily treated, as he drops out for good very early in the narratives and nobody ever knew what became of him—except through puerile legends which nobody believes. How Jesus can stand as an example as to the way in which we ought to treat our fathers (or our reputed fathers) passes my comprehension. When his father and mother "sought him sorrowing" he could only answer, "How is it that ye sought me?" For a child of twelve to speak like that to his parents who were, presumably, half mad with distraction at having lost him does not prove to me that Jesus is the greatest teacher of love that ever appeared in the universe; but if we add to this some of the other teachings, we shall be better able to test Professor Peabody's chapter on "The teaching of Jesus concerning the family." "If any man come to me," said Jesus, on the authority of that great "physician" Luke, "and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters.....he cannot be my disciple." Says Professor Peabody (and I am sure nearly all his readers will believe him), "His (Jesus's) teaching moves in an atmosphere of domestic interests, and his profoundest thoughts are coloured by respect for the family." And he quotes with gusto this delightful piece of truth from *Ecce Homo*: "Family affection in some form is the almost indispensable root of Chris-

tianity"—this, mark you, after Jesus says to his disciples, you must *hate* your parents. When somebody told Jesus that his mother and brethren wanted to speak to him he said, "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren?" which is proof positive of his tremendous love for them. When a would-be disciple pleaded, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Can anything be more beautifully filial? Even Dr. Weymouth kicks a little at that, as he has to excuse Jesus by saying, ".....our faith and obedience are tested, increased and perfected by our being bidden to do a harsh and—judged by ordinary standards of conduct—unreasonable thing." There is nothing more humorous than to see Christians outdoing each other in their anxiety to shield Jesus from any implication of "ordinary standards of conduct." When we are told that "From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided.....the father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother....." we have still further proof of the wonderful love of Jesus for the home. The ordinary standards of conduct would have us believe that a man should stick to his wife and children. Not so Jesus. "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now.....and in the world to come eternal life." Could any "blasphemer" say anything much worse than that? And yet Professor Peabody contends that "The teaching of Jesus, so slightly accepted in many ways of life, has actually taken firm root in the soil of the family." Wonderful!

There are plenty other similar things in the religion of Jesus concerning the family and marriage and divorce, but enough has been said to prove quite easily that if words mean anything the religion of Jesus as far as divorce and the home is concerned is utterly disregarded by sensible people. It would be interesting to know in which school and under what teacher children are taught to hate their parents to be good little Christians. Did Dr. Lyttelton at Eton, for instance?

The Sermon on the Mount is always quoted as being the highest moral code ever delivered on this earth. It would be too tedious to go through it in detail, but fresh from re-reading it, I can only marvel at those who can maintain such nonsense. Is "Blessed are the poor in spirit" a wonderful *slogan* to guide us through our daily life? Is "Blessed be the poor?" Are there people who really maintain that it would be a good thing for us all to be "poor in spirit," to be poverty stricken? Is not the whole of modern idealism against poverty—poverty of spirit or intelligence or wealth? What progress could there be in anything if there were no courageous pioneers—men *wealthy* in determination and intelligence? Is "Blessed are the meek" a heaven-sent example of the way in which we all should tread? It can be easily tested by going to Jesus himself. Was *he* meek? Is it the very acme of meekness to declare that "ALL that ever came before me are thieves and robbers....."? Is the scourging of the money changers in the courtyard of the temple an extraordinary example of wonderful meekness on the part of Jesus? "Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." Could any moral teaching be more perfect? But will any kind Christian tell me why I (or anyone else) should be threatened with hunger because I am "full"? My materialistic mind really does fail to fathom the tremendous depth of such beautiful moral teaching. And I must not laugh now! If I do, I shall actually "mourn and

weep" ! Well, if I have found nothing else in the religion of Jesus, I now know why in the whole of the New Testament and in most of the Old you cannot discover a single laugh. Not a sign of healthy human laughter ! Not a scrap of humour ! Nothing but the most miserable of people, shuddering with fear, half mad with fright at a revengeful deity and the flames of hell of a religion of love and mercy !

Is there anything more beautiful than the smile of a baby, the laughter of children ? Is not laughter nearly always the sign of happiness or the impulse towards obtaining happiness ? What could civilization be without a sense of humour ? Is there even the ghost of a smile in all the religion of Jesus ?

I never read the Sermon on the Mount without thinking of that dreadful fanatic Solomon Eagle, who roamed about with a burning brazier on his head, and his mouth full of "woes" during the Plague and Fire of London, or that other unfortunate Jesus, of whom Josephus speaks, during the Siege of Jerusalem, who also was full of "woes," and who, in my opinion, was probably the model for our Gospel Jesus. These are types we find in all ages, and that they should have any influence over a modern educated man or woman is something I cannot understand. Surely, we have got beyond those religions which offer us all sorts of things in this world or in the world to come if we only do as we are told, or threaten us with the most frightful punishments here and hereafter if we don't. And yet we find eminent Rationalists who all read their Gospels carefully, holding up the religion of Jesus as the last word in morality. I do not deny that here and there we find moral teaching we can agree with, but surely the knowledge that there were teeming populations in a high state of civilization thousands of years before Jesus must explain the fact that he repeated a few well-known aphorisms. Buckle, who was by no means an Atheist, says : "That the system of morals propounded in the New Testament contained no new maxim which had not been previously enunciated, and that some of the most beautiful passages in the apostolic writings are quotations from Pagan authors, is well-known to every scholar.....To assert that Christianity communicated to man moral truths previously unknown argues on the part of the assertor either gross ignorance or wilful fraud."

H. CUTNER.

(To be Concluded.)

## Acid Drops.

We have not read Mrs. Watts Dunton's book *The Home Life of Swinburne* partly because our purse does not run to paying 15s. for a book of gossip, and partly because we do not believe in encouraging publishers more than we can help in the buccaneering prices they charge for books. But glancing down a review of the book we see that the writer says "Mrs. Watts Dunton makes it clear that it was not her husband but Swinburne's family who were responsible for the poet being buried with the orthodox Church of England rites, a proceeding that Swinburne himself would certainly have resented." So far, good, but whoever was responsible the action was a blackguardly one, and it is to the discredit of Christianity that it makes this kind of blackguardism quite respectable and even moral. It robs men and women of ordinary self-respect, and leads them to believe that any kind of conduct is permissible so long as it is performed in the interests of religion.

And the explanatory note, whether it is due to the reviewer or to Mr. Watts Dunton, does not improve matters. For it singles out "Church of England rites," which may give the unwary reader the impression that Swinburne had an objection to the Church of England only. And that is not the case. Swinburne's objection

was to *Christianity*. He would have objected to any religious ceremony over his body, not merely to that of the established Church. But perhaps it was thought best to hide that fact in the interests of the "Great Lying Creed." If there is any other religion in the world that has ever led to so much intellectual dishonesty as Christianity we should be obliged to have it pointed out to us.

An attempt to hold Sunday concerts in cinemas has been refused at East Ham. The Salvation Army, however, is permitted to use its brass bands and to make collections on the same day. But anything may be done in the name of religion.

The Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, Ceylon, to which the Prince of Wales was admitted, may be described as the Holy of Holies of the Buddhists. It is said to contain a real tooth of Buddha; but, as it is a tusk nearly three inches long and one thick, the relic is open to suspicion. It is a pity that we have not the evidence of the gentle Buddha's dentist.

Now that Budget day is approaching the Chancellor is certain to receive a number of suggestions as to various ways of raising revenue, and the other day the Rev. R. F. Horton offered his contribution. He suggested that the Chancellor should revive the old law of compelling everyone to attend church on penalty of a fine. He calculates that this would bring the Government in about eighty millions a year. It would also be a public advertisement as to the small proportion of the population that actually attends church, and that is something the clergy would hardly care to welcome. May we suggest another way of making use of the churches ? For certain offences the sentence might be that the offender should listen to so many sermons from selected parsons. It is true that torture has been abolished, but its revival in this form might be winked at.

Mr. A. Ball, an evangelist, was killed at Shrivensham Station by being run over. Had he been a sparrow, Providence might have stopped the train or altered the time-table.

The church of All Saints, Petham, Canterbury, has been almost destroyed by fire. The vicar of St. James's Church, Hampstead, died in the pulpit while preaching. Omnipotence doeth all things well !

Paddington policemen will this year again cultivate allotments in the old graveyard of the Church of the Ascension, Bayswater. As church cemeteries are consecrated the vegetables should be consecrated also.

The Church of England is not the Government form of religion for nothing. Church baptisms last year totalled 608,799.

A correspondent of the *Rugby Advertiser*, a Mr. J. Brassington, writes complaining that some one has sent him a "musty back number of this journal, and he hopes that he won't do it again." We are sorry the copy was musty, Mr. Brassington evidently likes his papers fresh ; and we regret still more that he does not wish to receive more copies of the *Freethinker*. For never did we meet a man who needed them more. Mr. Brassington belongs to the gradually disappearing type of religionist who believes that if it were not for Christianity all morals would become extinct, and explains the existence of the *Freethinker* on the ground that Christianity is beyond his depth. It is a pity for his own welfare that Mr. Brassington does not wish for more copies of the *Freethinker*, musty or fresh.

We do agree with Mr. Brassington on one point, and that is when he says that "no good is done by sparring with unbelief"—he means, of course, no good is done to Christianity. And that is perfectly true. A Christian who

appreciates the relative strengths of Christianity and Free-thought will leave the latter severely alone. In combating it he only exposes the weakness of his own case. That is why one so seldom meets to-day an opponent of Free-thought who is worth meeting. Those who have the ability to put up a good case, have also the ability to realize that they have no case to put up. It sounds paradoxical, but it is profoundly true.

The *Record* (March 16), referring to the recent returns of the number of those confirmed in the Anglican Church, and comparing them with the figures for previous years, says that they "give cause for anxious consideration." The voluntary offerings, however, are "magnificent"—£10,493,716. This is a state of affairs which has a deep meaning for the student of religion. A large part of the spiritual consciousness of the well-to-do classes in England now consists in contributing to the churches' funds. Personal service, active interest in religious work, and even church attendance are diminishing factors in "the household of faith." It is the normal course of religious decay.

The *Islamic Review* for March quotes from the *Vedic Magazine* a strong protest against the way in which the Anglican Church in India draws the colour line. Both in regard to its schools and its priesthood this line is strictly maintained. The question of black and white is already supplying an abundant crop of problems throughout the world, and seems likely to supply more of them in the near future. Our concern is with the religious and missionary aspect of the matter, and here the record of the Christian nations is far from clean. Apologists for missions delight to point to their Careys and Livingstones; but there is a dark and tragic side to the picture. "Christ's service" in combination with the white man's commercial and imperialist expansion may have brought to many native tribes some interesting details about heaven; but for others it has been a veritable way of Golgotha, "the place of skulls."

The *Review* also quotes from the *Times* and the *Evening News* a long string of recent utterances by Modernists, showing clearly the attitude of many of the faithful at home to the "sacred record." These utterances bear upon the Resurrection, the imprecatory Psalms, the narratives of the Pentateuch, and the historical foundation of a large part of the New Testament. Apparently, what the white man's soul revolts against is quite good enough for the soul of the black man.

While on the subject we may mention that recent Australian files announce that the Federal Government is considering the reservation of a large area for the remaining Aborigines, "in order that the native race may not disappear altogether." In New Zealand the Methodists are celebrating the centenary of the landing of the first Methodist missionary in the Bay of Islands. From an article in the *Press* (January 21), of Christchurch, we learn that the Anglican Church sent the first missionaries to New Zealand in 1814, when "the Maoris heard the initial message of free grace and dying love." It required two sanguinary wars to teach them the beauty of this "love" and "freedom." Nor is it out of the way to remark, at a time when Christianity makes extravagant claims to be the final and universal faith, that the newcomers in both Australia and New Zealand rigorously exclude Asiatics from these dominions, where one hears a good deal of strong language about the "Yellow Peril."

The *Church Times* (March 24), reviewing *The Claims of Liberal Anglicanism*, by "Catholicus," says that the Liberal in religion looks for a reunion of Christendom to be brought about by the general decay of doctrinal belief and of ecclesiastical conviction. The reunion is probably intended to include the Liberal Jew and the sincere Mohammedan. "Certainly the Agnostic will be drawn in." At first we thought this was rough on the Agnostic. On second thoughts, however, we concluded that it was

not a bad thing to know authoritatively what his relationship is to the rest of Christendom.

In India, we see from the *Statesman* of March 12, the Government of the United Provinces has decided that in all State-aided educational institutions students shall not be compelled to attend any religious instruction as a condition of admission into these institutions. This regulation will not please the missionaries who control many of these schools, and use them as a method of proselytizing. Their interest is not in education, as such, but is valued as a method of getting hold of the natives. On the other hand, the natives don't want the religion, but they do want the education. And as a matter of fact, some of the bitterest opponents of Christianity in India come from those who have been educated in these sectarian schools. It is a pity the Government does not leave these sectarian schools severely alone.

We comment elsewhere in this issue on the policy of getting to heaven via the scaffold. In Washington, John McHenry, sentenced to death for murder, was granted a week's respite in order that he might prepare his soul for heaven. During that time he read the Bible, and his summary of the position as given in an American paper is, "They kill you if you're good and they kill you if you're bad. There's a lot of killing stuff in the Bible." But McHenry misses the point. The "killing stuff" in the Bible is by command of God, and so long as the right to kill is by the divine command, even to the women and the little ones, it is all right. Anyway, McHenry, because he has killed someone, has been given a special chance of getting ready to meet his God, while we poor devils who haven't yet killed anyone may be called at any moment for the same interview without the slightest preparation. What should we do without Christianity?

The clergy and the undertakers have come to logger-heads in Twickenham. Canon Prosser objects to receiving notes such as "we have arranged for you to take the funeral"; and the Rev. E. D. Merritt says that the parsons have been "treated like worms." It is a painful situation. The dear clergy so often prefer to tell other folk that they are "worms."

One of the writers in the *Friend*, a Bloomfontein paper, remarked recently that there was a conspiracy in the Churches to ignore evolution. Whereupon the Bishop of the local diocese lost his temper and said that it was a lie, and that if he were a layman he would put an adjective of six letters before the word "lie." Well, we do not believe there is a conspiracy in the sense of there being a verbal understanding to that effect, but the *Friend's* statement represents the truth. Evolution is mentioned in many churches, but in how many is it understood? And in how many is its bearing on religion alluded to? If evolution be true then there is nothing left for the Bishop to go upon so far as orthodoxy is concerned. If evolution be true human morality has no more to do with religion than has mathematics. It is an outcome of the gregarious instinct and an expression of natural selection. If evolution be true, all our religious ideas are born as the expression of primitive ignorance, and when that ignorance is dispelled the whole groundwork of religion goes. But how many churches ever allude to the science of anthropology and its bearing on religious ideas? Does the Bishop ever do so? We doubt it. Probably what he does is to say he believes in evolution, and then ignore all its implications in his teachings. And that is evidently what the writer in the *Friend* had in his mind. He was telling the Bishop a bit of the truth. And no bishop likes that.

A grim comment on the opening sentence of the "Lord's Prayer" may be found in the London County Council's census of homeless persons. One hundred and twelve men and women were found wandering in the streets. In the casual wards there were 276 men, 11 women, and two children. Over 5,000 were in Rowton houses, and 13,076 in common lodging houses. Although the clergy are said to be "starving," not one of these was a parson.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.  
April 9, Huddersfield.

### To Correspondents.

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

H. CAIRNEY (Vancouver).—We have readers in Vancouver, and you may come across them, as well as other Freethinkers, later. Pleased to hear that you are getting on well, and hope that you will realize your aim of being able to organize Freethinkers in your neighbourhood. The Salt-coats meeting was quite successful.

G. P.—We do not remember the passage, but it is more likely to be Kant than Spinoza. Still, the remark is not so foolish as it appears on the surface, since it was before the days of Spectrum Analysis. It illustrates, however, the danger of putting limits to the possibilities of human knowledge.

A. MILLAR.—The place of the N. S. S. Whit-Sunday Conference is, as you will see, Nottingham. It will be on Whit-Sunday. Shall be glad to see you there.

A. J. ALBERTS (Pretoria).—Sorry we cannot undertake a set reply to the arguments you name. We have dealt with them very frequently, and you will find the whole matter dealt with in Mr. Cohen's *Theism or Atheism?* The best thing would be to get the gentleman you name to read that work and to consider its arguments.

H. S. ENGLAND.—We are glad to have your appreciation of Mr. Mann's *Modern Materialism*, but we do not understand whether you wish us to send on the *Grammar of Freethought* or not. Perhaps you will advise.

C. BAKER.—It is inevitable that Freethought should make progress, but it is not likely that anywhere the majority of people will take with avidity to the mental discipline that a genuine Freethought involves. Still, as you say, we are making progress in all directions, and they are best fitted for the fight who understand how very strenuously every point of vantage must be fought for before it is finally conquered.

A. WARREN DOW.—We are not sending you the paper from this office, and do not know who is sending it. The suggestion contained in your letter that we are only preaching Freethought because of what we get out of it is what we should expect from one nourished on Christianity. Perhaps it will one day dawn on you that no one but a born fool would take up with Freethought in the hopes of gain. Christianity is a much better proposition.

G. BAILEY.—Thanks. Have not yet seen the article, but will look it up.

E. W. COX.—Glad to know you are still at it. Every little tells, and sometimes the results appear in the most unexpected quarters.

A. J. FINCKEN.—You seem to have got the man's measure to a nicety.

L. E. WILLIS.—We are pleased to learn that your member has promised to support the repeal of the Blasphemy laws, but you have omitted to give us the name of your member and his constituency.

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

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

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

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

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### Sugar Plums.

To-day (April 9) Mr. Cohen brings his present lecture season to a close with two meetings in the Victoria Hall, Huddersfield, at 3 and 6.30. His subjects will be "The Slump in Belief" in the afternoon, and in the evening "The World's Need of Freethought." It is expected that a number of friends from the surrounding district will be present, and to accommodate these tea will be provided in the Gordon Café, Manchester Road. Admission to both the afternoon and evening meetings will be free, and there is thus an excellent opportunity for the "saints" to bring their Christian friends along to the meetings. The last time Mr. Cohen was in Huddersfield some of the local clergy "replied" to him in his absence. There is now a chance for them to do so while he is present. This method is much more interesting to the audience—even if not for the parson.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will this year be held in Nottingham. The Corn Exchange has been taken for the three meetings, and it is hoped that the movement in Nottingham will receive impetus from the Conference proceedings. For some years past attendance at the Conference has been accompanied by various kinds of difficulties, but many of these are now disappearing and it is hoped that friends and delegates will take advantage of the altered circumstances. All resolutions for the Conference agenda should be sent in without delay, and any communications in connection with the Conference must be sent to the General Secretary. We beg members and friends to do what they can to see that the Conference is a complete success.

It has been the custom to deal with strictly business matters at both the morning and afternoon sittings, but this year there is to be a departure from the practice. The formal business will be disposed of at the morning session, and the afternoon session will be devoted to the consideration of two subjects—"Freethought and Religious Equality," and "Freethought in the Home." Short papers will be read on both these subjects, and will be followed by discussion. Those who wish to read papers—they must be limited to ten or twelve minutes—must send in their names, with an abstract of the paper they intend presenting to the Conference, without delay. Fuller particulars will be given later. The new departure is in the nature of an experiment, and if successful it will be repeated at future conferences—perhaps at greater length. There may be great good resulting from Freethinkers meeting in this way and discussing such subjects among themselves. It should serve to bring them into more direct touch with current events.

The Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Bill is now in print and can be ordered through any newsagent, price twopence. It marks the first stage of the agitation for the repeal of the Blasphemy laws, and if Freethinkers all over the country work as they ought to work they will keep the agitation going till the end we have in view is accomplished. We promised the bigots they should pay for their last gain, and we want all our friends to help us to make that promise good. The Rev. R. Sorrenson has now definitely taken up his duties as Secretary to the Blasphemy Abolition Society, and his official address is 5 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street. Mr. Cohen, Miss Vance, Miss Kough, and Mr. Clifton are members of the Executive, so that all our friends may rest assured there will be no slacking so far as our special side of the case is concerned. We must make the bigots pay.

We are asked to announce that the Glasgow Branch holds its annual business meeting to-day (April 9) at

11.30 a.m. in the Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street. We are glad to learn that the Branch has had a most successful season. The attendances at the special lectures have been larger than ever, and the recent lecture of Mr. Cohen's in the City Hall brought a larger audience than has ever before assembled at a Freethought meeting in Glasgow. Many new members have been enrolled. We hope that all members and their friends will do their best to attend this annual meeting. Their moral and financial support will encourage the Branch to make still more ambitious arrangements for next autumn.

## The Victory of Science over Genesis.

### II.

(Concluded from page 213.)

THE Bishop of London's story of the great religious revival in the Army at the front was purely imaginary. The Rev. Studdert Kennedy, the Army chaplain, known among the soldiers as "Woodbine Willie," testified: "The war has not led to any great religious revival. I am not surprised at that. I cannot see anything in war to produce a religious revival."<sup>1</sup>

Another Army chaplain, the Rev. W. Kingscote Greenland, tells us, and, incidentally, it bears out a statement which has often appeared in these columns: "In the Army it is notorious that the parade service is unpopular. Men will do anything to get out of Church parade—clean out stables or go on fatigue duty. And the average sermon at such enforced military services is the very acme of dreariness and conventionality."<sup>2</sup>

In the report of the Committee appointed by the Churches to investigate the religious status of the men composing the new armies, we read: "It would be a great misunderstanding of the situation to think of the mass of men as preoccupied with religion. This is what has made the highly-coloured pictures of a 'revival of religion at the Front' so untrue and so pernicious" (*The Army and Religion*, 1919; p. 74). We hope the Bishop of London has taken the reproof to heart, and will restrain his flamboyant imagination in the future.

The result of the investigations conducted by the Committee was: "The overwhelming conviction that the very large preponderance of the men in the armies have no really living touch with any Church. On this there is practical unanimity" (*The Army and Religion*, p. 180).

Nemesis has overtaken the Churches for their stubborn resistance to the discoveries of science, and their deliberate falsification of the facts as to their bearing upon the truth of the Bible. The Committee says: "A private in the R.A.M.C. sums up the burden of many papers. He says the men distrust the Churches because of their halting methods of teaching, e.g., about the Bible, 'Why should we be taught things as kids that we find are not true when we are grown up?'" (p. 201). And a chaplain speaks of, "difficulties about 'Jonah's whale' and Cain's wife which recur with curious persistency in hut discussions" (p. 270).

The Rev. Studdert Kennedy fully admits the charge of falsification brought against the Churches. Speaking of the harm done by the popular theology as taught in the schools and from the pulpit he says:—

There is no doubt that we clergy are enormously responsible for this. We may have preached the truth, but we have not preached the whole truth, and our mental reservations have often made the truth we preached a lie to those who listened. We have been afraid of upsetting people's convictions, and many a

golden-hearted parson has shrunk from saying what he really thought of Christ out of respect for dear old Mrs. Brown or Mr. Smith, both of whom clung with equal tenacity to the religion and theology that they learnt at their mother's knee, their mother having been born and partially educated before there was a person known as Charles Darwin, and when Bishop Usher was the highest authority on the antiquity of the human race. We have tried to brazen the matter out with the scientific revolution of thought, and assured people that it made no difference to our outlook upon the world, and did not necessitate any reinterpretation of the truth as it is in Jesus. As a matter of fact, it caused something like a real revolution in theology to which we have been trying hard, and expending extraordinary ingenuity in trying to blind our people's eyes. Our religion has not been strong enough to face the theological education which the providence of God has given us, and we have continually dressed up old lies in modern clothes in order that their ugliness might not shock the children of our generation. The real rulers of our theological seminaries have been Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith. This would be all very well if we were not really sacrificing hundreds of young souls on the altar of love for these two old ones. Education, poor and limited as it is, has now brought us to the time when we must speak the truth and the whole truth, and risk Mrs. Brown and Mr. Smith. We have got to take up the task of reinterpreting the world as we now see it, in the full blaze of our modern light, in terms of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The Church may alter and adjust its teaching to any extent it pleases, but it is too late now. The clergy, or some of them, are only letting out the truth now because they see that the people are learning it in spite of their utmost efforts to conceal it. The Church fought with the utmost vehemence against Darwinism and the Descent of Man. It insisted upon the truth of the Bible story of the Creation and the Deluge, and condemned the philosophy of Evolution, and only when that philosophy had become firmly established, and the clergy found that the facts could neither be refuted or sneered away, did they discover that we had all along misunderstood the Bible, which, if read properly, was quite in accordance with science. Now, when this last deceit is exposed, they say in effect: "Let by-gones be by-gones, we will tell the truth, the whole truth this time, we have been wrong all the while. Come to church and we will tell you all about Jesus." To which the average man replies: "No! your Church, which claims to be the very fount of righteousness, holiness, and truth, which teaches that there can be no truth, honour, or uprightness without religion, stands self-convicted of the blackest fraud and dishonesty. You say you will tell the whole truth this time if we return to the fold, but what guarantee have we that you will do so? 'The liar we can never trust, even when he speaks the thing that is true.' Your death-bed repentance, for such it is, will avail you nothing."

Since then several of the clergy have taken Mr. Kennedy's advice and publicly renounced the scientific truth of the Book of Genesis. Canon Barnes, of Westminster, preaching to the scientists of the British Association gathered at Cardiff in August, 1920, declared:—

Man was not specially created by God, as the Jews of old believed, and as it is stated in the Book of Genesis. Man is, on the contrary, the final product of a vast process by which all life has evolved from primitive organisms.

This sermon was preached on Sunday, August 29, and next day it received the almost universal blessing of the daily Press, who see the way the wind is blowing and veer accordingly. But all this will not bring back "the lapsed" masses, and will offend many of the old members.

W. MANN.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Studdert Kennedy, *Lies*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. W. Kingscote Greenland, *The Royal Magazine*, June, 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Studdert Kennedy, *Lies*, 1919; pp. 138-140.

## The Periodic Classification of the Elements.

MANY attempts have been made to classify the elements according to their properties. For example, they have been classified according to their valency,<sup>1</sup> into metals and non-metals, and into acidic and basic elements. But since the most constant thing about an element is its atomic weight, classifications based upon this property have been the most successful. The atomic weight of an element is, of course, a number which indicates how many times heavier than the oxygen atom its atom is. The value 16 is assigned to the oxygen atom, so that sulphur, which has an atomic weight of 32.06, is twice as heavy as oxygen.

The beginning of the classification of the elements on the basis of their atomic weights was made by Dobereiner. Between the years 1816 and 1829 he noticed a number of regularities in the atomic weights of related elements. He found that most of the chemically related elements either exhibited almost the same atomic weight or else exhibited a constant difference when arranged in sets of three. For example:—

Atomic Weight :	Calcium 40	Strontium 87	Barium 137
Difference	47	50	

Then in the 'sixties of the last century Newlands arranged the elements in ascending order of their atomic weights and noticed that every eighth element resembled the first. "Members of the same group of elements," said Newlands, "stand to each other in the same relation as the extremities of one or more octaves in music." But his *Law of Octaves* did not attract much attention; indeed, when he read a paper on the subject to the London Chemical Society in 1866, Professor G. C. Foster caustically remarked that any arrangement of the elements would present occasional coincidences, and asked whether Newlands had ever considered examining the elements according to their initial letters. Twenty-one years later the Royal Society awarded Newlands the Davy Medal for his discovery.

But about 1869 two other chemists, D. I. Mendeléeff and Lothar Meyer, independently, and in ignorance of Newlands' work, arrived at much the same discovery. Mendeléeff said, "When I arranged the elements according to the magnitude of their atomic weights, beginning with the smallest, it became evident that there exists a kind of periodicity in their properties." That is to say, the *properties of the elements are a periodic function of their atomic weights*. This means that if we take some specific property of the element—valency, specific gravity, atomic volume, melting point, hardness, coefficient of expansion, thermal conductivity, latent heat of fusion, etc.—and plot the numerical values of this property on squared paper, in order of increasing atomic weight, a curve is obtained broken up into periods, each of which has much the same shape as any other. (The specific heats of the elements alone furnish a non-periodic curve.)

Mendeléeff's original tables have been amended as our knowledge has increased, and to-day there are a number of different methods of arranging the elements in a periodic table. The following arrangement is a simple and convenient one, not differing greatly from Mendeléeff's table. The elements are written down, in horizontal lines, beginning with hydrogen, the lightest of all known elements. This element is given a horizontal line to itself. Then helium and the rest of the elements are written down in horizontal lines, in

<sup>1</sup> The valency of an element is a number which expresses how many atoms of hydrogen (or atoms equivalent chemically to hydrogen) can unite with one atom of the element.

order of increasing atomic weight, and the whole series is arranged so that there are twelve horizontal lines. The elements are then divided into nine groups by vertical lines. The nine vertical columns are termed groups, and the twelve horizontal lines series, or periods. Now all the elements in each group have much the same chemical properties, or else those properties which vary do so in steps of progressive increase or decrease as we pass down the groups.

When Mendeléeff first made his table he was obliged to leave gaps in it for undiscovered elements, since, otherwise, certain related elements could not have been kept in the same vertical column. He prophesied that these elements would be discovered, and in certain cases even predicted what their properties would be. So successful was he in these prophecies that attention was drawn to his generalization.

The *Periodic Law* has been of considerable value in (1) predicting the properties of hitherto undiscovered elements; (2) in the estimation of the atomic weights of the elements; (3) in the correction of the values of atomic weights. But it has its defects, and there have been chemists who have declared that it is no more than a "very interesting and highly ingenious table of the analogies and the dissimilarities of the simple bodies," and have been prepared to reject it. But the apparent defects are most probably due to our defective knowledge. A few of the defects are worth a little discussion.

In the first place hydrogen appears to be a "rogue" element quite out of place in the general scheme. Some, indeed, suppose that it is one of a series of elements not yet known. This, however, is merely speculation. Again, if the properties of an element are determined by its atomic weight the existence of two elements with different properties and approximately the same atomic weights would be impossible. Hence the difficulty in dealing with elements such as cobalt and nickel. Their peculiarities would never have been suspected from the periodic table. Furthermore, *some elements are allotted places in the table according to their atomic weights in opposition to their properties*, whilst *some elements which appear to be chemically similar are separated in the table*.

W. H. MORRIS.

### Writers and Readers.

#### ON THE VALUE OF INDISCRETION IN LITERARY CRITICISM.

I am afraid that I have never had that profound respect for popular wisdom which seems to be the unfortunate possession of some of the less intelligent of my acquaintances. A little while ago one of these (I suffer a number of them, but not gladly) was foolish enough to expatiate, in my presence, on the wisdom of that doddering old saying which assures us that discretion is the better part of valour. My friend, although a Freethinker and a supporter of the paper for which I have the honour to write, always finds my comments on books and writers unsuited to his tastes. I understand that his principal objection is that I sacrifice Freethought to truth. Anyhow, having no use for me, he was either not aware of my love of indiscretion or he had forgotten it. Accordingly, he gave me what I wanted, an opportunity to prove that a man is a fool if he takes on trust the wisdom of any popular saying. In the end he had to admit that the better or greater part of valour is, nine times out of ten, not a judicious caution, but a rash, headlong impulse born of instinct rather than of reason. Look for a moment at some heroic deed, the remembrance of which sends a rush of warm blood to the heart! More often than not, it will be found that it was done on the spur of the moment. It was, in fact, a generous and noble indiscretion.

Now I hope that no one will be silly enough to charge me with an inordinate love of paradox if I venture to say

that Freethought is pre-eminently a form of indiscretion. You use your brains and then find that you have something that needs saying. You say it with all the force and directness you can muster, and "milnerize" the consequences. This blunt expression of the truth as we know it, has been, and ever will be, regarded as injudicious by people who have the temporizing or qualifying temperament. Even those who boast of their intellectual emancipation are obviously unable to disassociate certain ideas. Let me give an example: among Freethinkers it has been for a long time the custom to associate the two ideas of Shelley's poetry and Atheism, or, let me say, his actions as a member of a social group and his terrifically moral sentiments. Now, it is precisely the business and the pleasure of the indiscreet critic to look closely into these associated ideas and to break them up. When he adds to the amalgam a drop of critical acid he finds that Atheism is by no means the distinctive philosophic note in the poetry of Shelley. Apart from *Queen Mab*, which the poet himself set aside as immature, the religio-philosophic doctrine of the poems is scarcely to be distinguished from pure Theism. The introduction of what has been called a "Christist" ode into Hellas is hard to square with a reputation for an Atheism based on *The System of Nature*. Again, in estimating the moral value of the man the indiscreet critic who has no aptitude for vague rhapsodies will not leave out of the count the poet's callous abandonment of his wife and children, and will weigh this against the melodramatic displays of charity, and the gifts of money easily come by, to a systematic cadger like the author of *Political Justice*.

My object here is not, as the tender-minded Freethinker may suppose, to poke fun at the average unintelligent person. That is a game out of which I could get a fair amount of pleasure if I were in the mood for it. What I want to do is to recommend those of my readers who take literature seriously to strengthen their healthy prejudice against all that is not fine letters by studying the literary judgments of a young and lively American critic named Mr. H. L. Mencken, whose *Prejudices* (first and second series) are published by Mr. Jonathan Cape at 7s. 6d. net each. Mr. Mencken, I am glad to say, has the bump of indiscretion abnormally developed. He has an intelligent disregard for other people's feelings, and blurts out the truth, or what he and some of us take to be the truth, with an ingenuous frankness that ought to knock the bottom out of academic arrogance, best-selling pish-posh, sentimental bunkum, and "huge gum-drops for fat women to snuffle over" like the novels of Henry Sydney Harrison. He does not waste his energy on those products of Transatlantic civilization. He dismisses them with witty contempt in a sentence, or at most a paragraph, and reserves his chapters for representative figures in modern literature, and occasionally for some shoddy but plausible sociologist.

One of the most amusing and instructive examples of the art of critical scarification is Mr. Mencken's chapter on Professor Dr. Thorstein Veblen. Some of my readers may be acquainted with Dr. Veblen's book called *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. I came across it some years ago, and found it not unintelligent in places. But to get at the tiny core of truth you had to remove the manifold swathings of polysyllabic pulp-words. An Ingersoll or a Foote would have put one of the Professor's chapters into a paragraph and the whole of his book into a short essay. Mr. Mencken was first introduced to the incomprehensible syllogisms of the Professor by having long quotations hurled at him by a high-browed Socialist. Some years after he was surprised to find that a revolution had been brewing and that Professor Dewey had been dethroned by the intellectual Bolsheviks and Veblen installed as the Great Thinker *redivivus*. A sense of duty forced him to get through the infernal job of reading the *Doctor obscurus* from start to finish. It was worth doing, for he could then pass on the good news. No one needs to debauch his literary taste by reading the whole of the Professor's experiments in scientific jargon; the first book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* is enough to give a fairly good acquaintance with the gifted philosopher's ideas. They are not many, and they are neither original nor

complex. But Mr. Mencken shall speak for himself. This is not a bad example of his critical indiscretion:—

There are tales of an actress of the last generation, probably Sarah Bernhardt, who could put pathos and terror into the multiplication table. The late Louis James did something of this sort; he introduced limericks into *Peer Gynt* and still held the yokelry agape. The same talent raised to a higher power is in this Professor Dr. Veblen. Tunnel under his great moraines and stalagmites of words, dig down into his vast kitchen-midden of discordant and raucous polysyllables, blow up the hard thick shell of his almost theological manner, and what you will find in his discourse is chiefly a mass of platitudes—the self-evident made horrifying, the obvious in terms of the staggering. Marx, I dare say, said a good deal of it, and what Marx overlooked has been said over and over again by his heirs and assigns. But Marx, at this business, laboured under a technical handicap: he wrote in German, a language he actually understood. Professor Dr. Veblen submits himself to no such disadvantage. Though born, I believe, in These States, and resident here all his life, he achieves the effect, perhaps without employing the means, of thinking in some unearthly foreign language—say Swahili, Sumerian or old Bulgarian—and then painfully clawing his thoughts into a copious but uncertain and book-learned English. The result is a style that effects the higher cerebral centres like a constant roll of subway expresses. The second result is a sort of bewildered numbness of the senses, as before some fabulous and unearthly marvel. And the third result, if I make no mistake, is the celebrity of the Professor as a Great Thinker. In brief, he states his hollow nothings in such high, astounding terms that they must inevitably arrest and blister the right-thinking mind. He makes them mysterious. He makes them shocking. He makes them portentous. And so, flinging them at naive and believing minds, he makes them stick and burn.

And then Mr. Mencken quotes two typical paragraphs for the benefit of the serious-minded reader who may think he exaggerates. In one of these the sweating Professor uses two hundred and forty-one words to tell us that "men sometimes vary serving God by serving other men, which means, of course, serving themselves." In the other he is not satisfied with fewer than three hundred words to enunciate the bald platitude that "many people go to church not because they are afraid of the devil but because they enjoy the music, and like to look at the stained glass, the potted lilies and the rev. pastor." But it is not only the Professor's prose-style that upsets Mr. Mencken. He falls foul of the ratiocination. He gives one or two examples of Veblenian logic. The most amusing one is on page 135 of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. The sociologist asks why Americans have lawns around their country-houses and why they do not employ cows to clip them, instead of importing Jugo-Slavs. His answer to the first riddle is that our dolicho-blond ancestors had flocks and thus took a keen professional interest in grass. But why don't we keep cows? For this reason, "to the average popular apprehension a herd of cattle so pointedly suggests thrift and usefulness that their presence would be intolerably cheap." "Plowing through a bad book," says Mr. Mencken,—

I can find nothing sillier than this. Here, indeed, the whole "theory of conspicuous waste" is exposed for precisely what it is: one per cent. platitude and ninety-nine per cent. nonsense. Has the genial Professor, pondering his great problems, ever taken a walk in the country? And has he, in the course of that walk, ever crossed a pasture inhabited by a cow? And has he, making that crossing ever passed astern of the cow herself? And has he, thus passing astern, ever stepped carelessly, and—But this is not a medical work and I had better haul up. The cow, to me, symbolizes the whole speculation of this laborious and humourless pedagogue.

We can imagine what the average American college professor is like (an indistinct herd of intellectual eunuchs Mr. Mencken calls them) when Veblen is far from being the worst. I wonder what the American critic would say about the English variety of the same breed.

The essay on Veblen gives us the "catalytic" critic as a reprover of academic incompetence. It is both negative and tonic. I have given more attention to it than I should have done if there had been little or no possibility of the student's wasting his time and energy on pompous futilities.



National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 30, 1922.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher and Miss Kough.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. New members were received for Birmingham, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Leeds, North London, Stockport, South London and the Parent Society.

Correspondence was read from Birmingham and Huddersfield Branches reporting upon propaganda, and requesting financial assistance. Grants were made proportionately in both cases.

Mr. Cohen, as representative of the N.S.S. on the Executive Committee of the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, reported the introduction to the House of Commons of the Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Bill on March 16.

A letter from Nottingham was reported stating that arrangements could be made in that town for the reception of the Annual Conference. It was agreed that the members who had written should be thanked for their communication, and the Secretary was instructed to make the necessary preliminary arrangements.

Instructions were also given to arrange for visits of Mr. George Whitehead to the provinces whenever possible on the same terms as last year.

Notices of motion for the Conference agenda were received.

Mr. Rosetti introduced the question of speakers on the Freethought platform, and after discussion the question was remitted to the Propaganda Committee.

The President's visit with Miss Kough as representatives of the Society to Mr. Gott at Wormwood Scrubbs was formally reported.

Other matters of routine business having been transacted, the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

N.B.—Branch Secretaries are reminded that all particulars concerning the papers to be read at the Afternoon meeting of the Conference should be forwarded to the N. S. S. office within the next ten days.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.—INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, General Meeting, Election of Officers; Social. Discussion Circle meets every Wednesday at 7.30, "Coronet" Hotel, Soho Street, W.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. J. H. Van Biene, "Free Will a Non-existent Myth."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Professor Adams (of California), "Theories of Human Nature."

COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Shop Assistants' Hall, 297 Argyle Street): 11.30, Annual Business Meeting, Election of Office-bearers, etc.

Huddersfield Branch N. S. S. (Victoria Hall, Huddersfield): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Slump in Belief"; 6.30, "The World's Need of Freethought."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Youngman's, 19 Lowerhead Road): 6.45, Mr. Wm. Moffatt, "The Struggle for Existence."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Operetta—"Cinderella." Performed by children of the Secular Sunday School. (Silver Collection.)

IN LOVING MEMORY.

On APRIL 6, 1921.

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