

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR 1881-1915 · G.W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLIII.—No. 8

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1923

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
God and the G.W.R.—The Editor	- 113
"If We Got Rid of Christianity."—J. T. Lloyd	- 114
A Soldier of Liberty.—Mimnermus	- 116
"Bubbles."—John H. Warren	- 116
The Protestant Reformation.—W. Mann	- 117
Is the Soul Superior to the Body?—Albert Palin	- 118
Fetichism and Idciatry.—(The late) J. M. Wheeler	- 122
Should We Play Politics?—R. Atkinson	- 124
"God's Methods"—A Reply.—(Rev.) B. N. Switzer	- 124
The Task of Freethought.—William Repton	- 125
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions.

God and the G. W. R.

On the authority of the Bible we are assured that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the "living God." The comment does not seem to reflect much credit upon the character of the said God, but that is a matter with which the religionist is rather more concerned than we are. It is his business to defend the character of God—whatever it is; it is ours to discover what his character is—if there is anything to discover. Meanwhile we would suggest that it appears to be an equally bad thing for God to fall into the hands of the living man. We had better emphasize the word living, for all men are not alive, save in a purely technical sense; and when the gods fall into the hands of men who are alive only in a technical sense they get on very well. They are fêted, praised, worshipped, and flattered with all the enthusiasm that a Christian populace showers on a successful general returning from war. But if the gods fall into the hands of men who are *alive* the tale is a very different one. They are critically examined, their pedigree gone into, their record questioned; and no god has yet been able to withstand that ordeal. It is said that the Devil once appeared to Cuvier, and annoyed at the slight notice taken of him by the great naturalist, threatened to devour him. On which Cuvier quietly looked up, glanced over the build of his visitor, and calmly assured him that it was impossible—his whole structure proclaimed him to be a vegetable feeder. Then the Devil disappeared. The Devil had fallen into the hands of a living man, and there was an end to him and his threats; and whether it be a god or a devil, so long as a living man is present the result is the same.

* * *

An Act of God.

In the Court of King's Bench last week "God" was charged by the Great Western Railway with being responsible for serious injuries to a Mr. Ernest Upton, a passenger on one of their boats to the Channel Isles. Mr. Upton was on board the steamer "Reindeer" during a very severe storm, and a marble slab was dislodged from the saloon. It struck Mr. Upton behind the ear with the result of permanently injuring his hearing. Mr. Upton claimed damages from the

Company, but the Company decided that it was an act of God, and therefore they were not responsible. Mr. Upton claimed that God had nothing to do with it, that the falling of the marble slab was due to negligence on the part of the company, and claimed damages. Shorn of all legal verbiage, that was the plain issue upon which Mr. Justice Coleridge had to give his decisive opinion. Did God cause Mr. Upton's deafness, or was it due to the Great Western Railway Company? It was an interesting point, and one would have thought that while an ordinary Counsel was suitable to represent the G.W.R. or Mr. Upton, the proper person to represent God would have been the Archbishop of Canterbury. He is God's principal representative in this country—at any rate he is the one who receives the largest salary, and he should have been given the brief for the party implicated. In the end Mr. Justice Coleridge decided that it was not God but the G.W.R. that was responsible for the accident. We remember a famous case before the House of Lords in which it was said that Hell was dismissed with costs. It might be said with equal justice that in Mr. Justice Coleridge's Court "God" was dismissed without a stain on his character.

God and the Gale. * * *

So far the situation may be quite satisfactory to the champions of God. It is judicially decreed that he did not cause Mr. Upton's deafness. But there are some points of the case that are not quite clear. Mr. Justice Coleridge said he did not think it was an act of God because at the time of the accident there was nothing abnormal about the gale (to which the Company had attributed the breaking away of the marble slab), it was not until two hours later that it became "phenomenal." At this point begins the puzzle. It appears that in Lord Coleridge's opinion God cannot be held responsible for the damage caused by a gale of moderate strength. With that he has nothing to do. But if the gale becomes "phenomenal," that is, if it reaches a point at which it seriously threatens human life, then God is responsible, and the ensuing damage may be put to his credit. That also gives rise to two considerations. For it may mean that God is responsible because while a moderate gale is brought about by the normal operations of Nature, an immoderate one is caused by God "chipping" in and intensifying the gale's strength to the point of disaster. Or it may mean that the law will not hold God responsible so long as he arranges things on a moderate scale, but if he loses all sense of proportion and lets loose a "phenomenal" gale, then the law will hold him responsible for the injury caused. In that case it is clear that in the eyes of the law one can have too much of a good thing—even of "God."

* * *

The Friends of God.

This point we may leave to a committee of combined theological and legal experts. But there are other considerations that arise. If there is a God he must have looked on Mr. Upton with considerable approval. It was not an orthodox position for him to take up;

rather it was that which the wicked Atheist has always occupied. The religiously orthodox position was that of the Great Western Railway. For it is the sober fact that whenever anything more than usually disastrous or unpleasant occurs pious people always see in it the finger of God. When there is an earthquake, or a great disaster at sea, or war on a colossal scale, there are always plenty of folk who will see in these things the direct action of God admonishing or punishing the people. Meet a man in the street and say, "delightful weather we are having. Over eight hours sunshine yesterday," and he will nod his head in pleased approval. Tell him that a fire has just destroyed a whole family, and he will cry "Good God!"—with an unconscious emphasis on the "good." Most of the pleasant things of life appear to wander along without God, it is the unpleasant ones that seem to call for notice of his activities. The Great Western Railway advertises the advantage of certain places in the West of England as pleasure resorts, but says nothing about God being connected with them. But the moment there is a "phenomenal" gale which threatens to wreck a ship and does damage a passenger, it asserts that this was an act of God; and no less a personage than Lord Coleridge solemnly proclaims from the judicial bench that if the gale had been on a shattering, a destructive, a "phenomenal" scale, he would have agreed that the damage was caused by God, and that the Railway Company ought not to be called upon to pay damages. And the inferentially guilty party does not reside "within the jurisdiction of the Court."

* * *

Defending the Deity.

Now we think we have good ground for saying that if there is a God he will look upon us Atheists as some of his best friends and as his principal defenders. In the first place we give him no trouble. We do not bore him with praise, neither do we worry him with petitions. We are never asking him to step aside from the colossal task of governing a universe such as ours in order to attend to little Johnny's sore throat, or see that farmer Brown's turnips are properly watered. The Atheist leaves God alone; and when one has a special job to do that is the better plan to follow. More than that, the Atheist actually defends God against the attacks of his followers. When a clergyman visits a sick person and reads to him, as he should read if he did faithfully the work he is paid to do, "Whatsoever your sickness is, know certainly that it is God's visitation," the Atheist says "rubbish!" The sickness is not God's visitation. It probably has far more to do with drains than with a deity, and he protests against charging God—and he not present—with things that may not be of his doing. And when the believer gives God the credit for plagues and pestilences, and earthquakes, and all sorts of disasters, the Atheist again stands as the defender of deity against his traducers. Dean Inge says that God has a sense of humour, and if that is the case he may appreciate the humour of a situation in which his friends spend their time in blaming him for all the ugly things of life, while his alleged enemies spend theirs defending him from the attacks of his admirers. Nor does it take much imagination to assume at the day of judgment the Lord holding out a hand of welcome to the Atheist who has defended him, and condemning his followers to eternal damnation.

* * *

God and Progress.

George Jacob Holyoake once described Secularism as a religion which gave God no trouble. I do not care for so good a thing as Secularism being associated, even verbally, with so doubtful a thing as religion, but with that qualification the same description applies to Atheism. It gives God no trouble—and it saves

man a lot of it. Nothing that was ever born of human imagination has ever given man so much trouble as his gods. At the very beginning of human history we find them demanding the sacrifice of himself and of those belonging to him. He was called upon to offer up his children to appease their anger or to gain their good-will. He made war to avenge fancied insults to the gods, and subjected himself to unspeakable discomforts for fear of offending them. In addition the gods have been the great "blockers" of the ages. Wherever a man, a trifle more daring than his fellows, ventured off the beaten track, he found himself in opposition to the Gods. "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther" has been their constant injunction. Wherever man has pursued his investigations, in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, that injunction in the name of his God has faced him; and it is facing him to-day. Every reformer finds himself up against it. "God" is a name that fences round all injustice and sanctifies all cruelty. It is a name that has stood perpetually in the way of man's efforts at improvement, and it is certainly time that our courts of law should cease to use it as the basis of unintelligible decisions.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"If We Got Rid of Christianity."

SUCH was the subject of a recent sermon by Dr. Orchard, of which there is a brief report in the *Christian World* of February 15. Dr. Orchard is an exceptionally clever man, and was not so many years ago a prominent New Theologian, with strong leanings towards Freethought. Well do we remember his contributions to the Correspondence Column in the now defunct *Christian Commonwealth*. To-day he is an entirely changed man. He has become orthodox, a high ritualist, and a Free Catholic, a transformation closely similar to that which his friend, Dr. R. J. Campbell, has undergone. He is as ready as ever to sit in judgment upon those who differ from him. In the short report just mentioned he is represented as severely criticizing a well-known Rationalist who had had the temerity to declare quite openly that he wished to get rid of all religion. The preacher exclaimed:—

Well he has got his work cut out. But if that means getting rid of religion in the past as well as in the present—which would be very necessary, for people will read history—then it means destroying about three-fourths of the books in the British Museum, and so changing our vocabulary as to lose half our mother tongue.

We are astonished to find Dr. Orchard falling to such a depth of puerility. No Rationalist or Secularist has ever been so silly as to express a desire to get rid of religion in the past, and the reverend gentleman is talking sheer nonsense when he suggests such a thing. Is he not aware that there are millions of men and women in Christendom who have got rid of all religion for themselves, and that the sole mission of many of them is to help others to achieve the same happy emancipation? But no Freethinker is fool enough to imagine that three-fourths of the books in the British Museum ought to be destroyed, or that we would be better off if half our present vocabulary were lost. As a matter of fact no people are or can be more profoundly interested in the history of the evolution of religion than unbelievers are, because the more they know about it the firmer becomes their unbelief. We are ardent students of history, for the more familiar with it we are the more numerous and cogent grow our arguments against the supreme superstition. It is Christians, not Rationalists, who have reasons for being afraid of the disclosures of history, for nothing

in the world is more disgraceful than the past of the Church during many centuries.

Curiously enough Dr. Orchard dwelt on the alleged indebtedness of science to religion. We were under the impression that science owed religion nothing but hatred and obstruction, amounting often to the violent persecution of scientists. Now listen to what this preacher is reported to have said on this point:—

If it were not for religion, science would become the mere handmaid of commercialism and militarism, devoting itself to explosives which would blow everybody up, and to birth restrictions which would prevent anybody from being born. Artists, too, although they said some hot things sometimes, would be hard put to it for inspiration if they got rid of Christianity.

Assuming the accuracy of the report we must again express our surprise that Dr. Orchard had the audacity to misrepresent the facts and seek to mislead his hearers on such an egregious scale. He knows perfectly well that it has never been the aim of science to produce explosives which would blow everybody up. Its exclusive object has been and is to discover, by observation and experiment, all possible facts about Nature, so that man may learn how to adapt himself more completely to his environment; and already innumerable are the benefits mankind has derived from the discoveries and inventions of modern science. And taking our scientific men as a whole even Dr. Orchard must admit that they are thoroughly honourable and conscientious, serving neither commercialism nor militarism, but the higher interests of their fellow-beings. Dr. Orchard evidently forgets that during the world-war explosives were made in the name of religion, and that at first he himself eulogized that war in the *Christian Commonwealth* as "an operation of God," though afterwards he turned pacifist and denounced it. It was religion that was directly responsible for the prostitution during the war of some valuable discoveries to base uses. It is really too absurd for words to represent religion as safeguarding science. Dr. Orchard cannot be ignorant of the fact that many of his brother ministers are just now renouncing science as a mortal enemy of religion, which it really is, though few realize the fact.

Dr. Orchard accuses science of devoting itself "to birth restrictions which would prevent anybody from being born"; but this charge is wholly libellous. Science has never devoted itself to such an end. The first to advocate birth control was the Rev. Thomas Malthus, an Anglican clergyman, in a book entitled *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1797). The object of that book was to discredit Godwin's theory of human perfectibility by showing that if it ever came to realization the population would most likely increase in excess of the means of subsistence, to prevent which disaster it would be necessary by some method to limit the number of births. At the present day the population of Great Britain has increased almost beyond the means of subsistence, and there are clergymen, not a few, who boldly advocate birth restriction. At a recent Church congress a distinguished physician, Lord Dawson, read a paper on the subject, in which he most eloquently urged the Church to bring home to her members the obvious duty to do their part in substantially limiting the growth of the population. We understand that Dean Inge is in full agreement and active sympathy with Lord Dawson's views. Therefore we conclude that Dr. Orchard's position, if correctly reported, is utterly incomprehensible. He may not believe in birth restrictions, but he cannot honestly ignore the fact that they are recommended by Christian divines as well as by men of science.

This popular London preacher is equally mistaken in his reference to artists. As a matter of fact a great

number of artists have got rid of Christianity, but they do not lack inspiration in consequence. Ruskin, in his *Lectures on Art*, assures us that it was his "fixed conviction that few of the greatest men ever painted religious subjects by choice, but only because they were either compelled by ecclesiastical authority, supported by its patronage, or invited by popular applause; that by all three influences their powers were at once wasted, and restrained; that their invention was dulled by the monotony of motive and perverted by its incredibility." Ruskin knew much more about art than does the minister of the King's Weigh House Church. It is well known that many of the so-called Christian artists drew their inspiration, not from Christianity, but from the Pagan world, chiefly from Greece. One of the finest pictures ever painted is the *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci. Christians never tire of expressing their intense admiration; but are they aware that the artist's inspiration had not a Christian source? Leonardo was anything but a religious man. He may have been a Deist, though one critic calls him an Atheist. Most certainly he was not a Christian. The same thing is true of his celebrated contemporary and rival, Michel Angelo, who painted many religious subjects at the bidding of the Church; but his heart was in ancient Greece. Lecky tells us (*Rationalism in Europe*, Vol. I, p. 252) that "after the death of Savonarola the secularization of art was portentously rapid," and that Michel Angelo represented this process "to the highest degree." One of his greatest pictures is the *Last Judgment*, of which Lecky says:—

By making the last Judgment a study of naked figures, by the introduction of Charon and his boat, and by the essentially Pagan character of his Christ, he most effectually destroyed all sense of the reality of the scene, and reduced it to the province of artistic criticism.

For further information on this subject we recommend our readers to consult a pamphlet called *Heresy in Art: The Religious Opinions of Artists and Musicians* by our highly artistic friend, Henry George Farmer, published by the Pioneer Press.

Towards the end of his discourse Dr. Orchard said that he "thought it was time to question that favourite doctrine that there were better people outside the Church than inside," and he had the candour to admit that "there might be more righteous people outside than inside, more ethically self-sufficient people." But if this is true, what is the use of supporting the Church at such an enormous expense? In this country alone there are nearly fifty thousand ordained ministers, whose sole business it is to prevent the Church from dying out, which, in spite of all their assiduous labours, it is constantly inclining to do. Of what conceivable benefit is the Church to society if there are more righteous and more ethically self-sufficient people outside than inside it? "But," the preacher asked, "are they the people who create movements around themselves which go echoing down the ages and never die?" The report before us does not say whether that question was answered or not; but we are inclined to ask, are there many people who create such never dying movements around themselves? Speaking generally, is it not a fact that the Church has been guilty of discouraging, obstructing, and violently denouncing many movements aiming at the welfare of society created around a few individuals, sometimes inside and sometimes outside itself? What assistance did the Church give Wilberforce in his attempts to pass a Bill through Parliament for the abolition of slavery? Did the Bishops act as his allies in the House of Lords? Who agitated for the repeal of the wicked combination laws? Not the Churches, but a few Freethinkers. Even Wilberforce, who had won fame as a philanthropist, was silent on this sub-

ject. In the United States of America, during the first half of the nineteenth century the Churches passed numerous resolutions in which slavery was defended as a divine institution and the abolitionists condemned as enemies of God and Christianity. Some of the agitators were cruelly put to death, and the lives of the leaders were frequently threatened; and when at last emancipation came the declaration of it was made by a President who was known by his wife and intimate friends as a whole-hearted Freethinker.

"If we got rid of Christianity," what would really happen? What would take its place? Nothing can succeed disease but health. The passing of other superstitions invariably proved a gain to the world, and we are firmly convinced that the passing of Christianity will be a tremendous boon to mankind.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Soldier of Liberty.

The spirit of the world
Beholding th: absurdity of men—
Their vaunts, their feats—let a sardonic smile
For one short moment wander o'er his lips,
That smile was Heine. —Matthew Arnold.

IN Dusseldorf, where French and Germans are once again at loggerheads, there is a poor shop. On it is an inscription which says that Heinrich Heine was born there. The tablet should be an inspiration. For Heine was a cosmopolitan of exceptional import. In one vivid personality he gathered all those influences of his time which are the live forces of to-day.

So exceptional a man was he that he appeared a bundle of contradictions. A Jew who despised money; a convert without zeal; a model of resignation, yet no Christian; a poet living amid the sternest conditions of prose; a comedian whose life was a tragedy. One of the greatest of the German poets, his love of liberty was so fierce that the last of the Kaisers decreed that no statue in his honour should be erected in Germany. If we would seek a comparison, we may find it in Voltaire. Both men championed Liberty, and produced a deep effect on their generations, and left immortal legacies to posterity. The writings of both ring with a defiant note against "the lie at the lips of the priest."

Heine was born at a crisis in European history. Before his tenth year little Heine had lived through, and seen, great events. It was the day of Napoleon, and, as Heine puts it, "all boundaries were dislocated." As a boy he found it hard to learn Latin declensions, which he was sure the Romans never did, "for if they had first to learn Latin, they would never have had time to conquer the world." Young Heine was so troubled that he broke into heterodox prayer: "O thou, poor, once persecuted God, help me, if possible, to keep the irregular verbs in my head."

One memorable day the impressionable boy saw Napoleon ride through Dusseldorf on his white horse, and he never lost the glamour cast over him by the great soldier. Republican as he afterwards became, Heine always thought generously of Napoleon. Nor is this surprising, for the Code Napoleon, to the Jewish race especially, was a veritable charter of freedom from the ghastly ghettos of the Middle Ages to the rights and duties of citizenship under conditions approaching civilization.

A precocious child, Heine loved reading. His favourite authors were Cervantes and Swift, and he revelled in *Don Quixote* and *Gulliver's Travels*. At the age of seventeen a rich uncle at Hamburg tried in vain to induce him to enter business. The young poet, full of lofty ideals, regarded money-grubbing as a thing accursed. Later he studied law, and fell under the influence of Hegel, a period he afterwards referred

to as that in which he "herded swine with Hegelians."

With the appearance of his first volume of poetry he began to take his true place. He still talked of a legal career, but his mind was full of far other things. For instance, he wrote:—

Red life boils in my veins. Every woman is to me
the gift of a world. I hear a thousand nightingales.
I could eat all the elephants of Hindustan, and pick
my teeth with the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Life
is the greatest of blessings.

His energies were devoted to writing, and not to pleading. Instead of cultivating his clients he wrote his *Travel Pictures*, a book so full of word-magic that it showed the heavy German language as light and beautiful as the French. Its irony was so disrespectful that it was at once placed on the Index Expurgatorius. As a writer, Heine never elected to dwell beside the still waters. To think of his career is to think of alarms and excursions, of Church calling unto to conventicle, of pamphlets and libel actions, and all the joys of the literary battlefield. With all his love of fighting, his enthusiasm burnt for noble ends. Let a man love Liberty and live long enough, and there is no doubt with whom his place must be in the end.

In *The Romantic School* he poured vitriol over the literary chiefs of reaction in their tenderest spot. He compared their reversion to mediævalism to the hallucinations of Charenton, the Bedlam of Paris. But it was not to be roses all the way. For seven long years prior to his death he lay bent and solitary on a mattress-grave, his back bent, his legs paralysed, his hands powerless, his sight failing. His ungrudging nature found excuses for his friends' desertion of his sick-chamber in the reflection, like Charles the Second, that he was "unconsciously long a-dying." As Matthew Arnold sings in his fine dirge on his brother-poet:—

Oh! not little, when pain
Is most quelling, and man
Easily quelled, and the fine
Temper of genius so soon
Thrills at each smart, is the praise
Not to have yielded to pain.

The untameable humorist kept his most wonderful jest for the last. "God will forgive me," he said, "it is his trade." Heine himself said he knew not if he were worthy of a laurel-wreath; but, he added proudly, "lay on my coffin a sword, for I was a brave soldier in the War of the Liberation of Humanity." No one will deny the laurel-wreath, and assuredly to Heinrich Heine belongs the sword of a soldier of Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

"Bubbles."

[Prometheus, still defiant, addresses Jove, A.D. 1922, the year of famine and strife, after hearing two theologians discuss the latest concept of "a striving god."]

I WEEP and wonder, Jove, to see how slow
Those animalculæ who people earth
Still are, to think aught ill of thee; their worth
And innocence, that thing alone might shew.
Not yet the lofty carelessness they know
That let their teeming millions come to birth
In fine-blown bubble-skin's spectacular dearth,
Where each perforce must be the other's foe.
But still, where once they said "Jove did the best,"
"Jove did his best," is all they'll swear to now;
And that, still pard'ning thee, spells less self-
So if for savours sweet you still have zest, [blame.
You'll soon see fit to touch your bubble I trow,
And try to blow a better one, next game.

JOHN H. WARREN.

The Protestant Reformation.

IV.

(Continued from page 102.)

In 1522 Luther tells Henry VIII that "against all the sayings of the Fathers, against all the arts and words of the angels, men, and devils, I set up the Scriptures and the Gospel."....."Here Harry of England must hold his tongue." The King would now see how Luther "stood upon his rock," and surveyed Henry VIII "twaddling" like "a silly fool.".....Troubles arose when others appealed to this tribunal and refused to accept his decision. In a sermon of August 2, 1528, he (Luther) admits that there is no heretic who does not appeal to the Scriptures; hence it came about that people called the Bible a heresy-book. As Glapion put it, the Bible was a book like soft wax which every man could twist and stretch according to his own pleasure.—R. H. Murray, "Erasmus and Luther" (1920), p. 153.

To appreciate the actions of Luther, and his break with the Church, we must understand the beliefs by which he was influenced. As we have said, Luther's parents were very harsh and stern; they were also very pious and "eagerly sought," says D'Aubigné, "to inspire him with that holy fear which is the beginning of wisdom."¹ Fear is certainly the beginning of superstition, and it became the driving force at the back of all Luther's actions, the fear of a stern and angry God. His parents seem to have been completely successful in their efforts, for the same historian tells us that when Luther began school life:—

The single religious feeling then discoverable in his disposition was that of fear. Every time he heard the name of Jesus Christ mentioned he grew pale with alarm, because Christ had only been represented to his mind as an angry judge (p. 89).

Melanchthon says:—

As he himself related and as many are aware, when considering attentively examples of God's anger, or any notable accounts of His punishments, such terror possessed him (*tanti terrores conculibant*) as almost to cause him to give up the ghost.

He describes how, as a full-grown man, when such fears overcame him, he would actually writhe on his bed.²

It was this over-mastering terror of the judgment of God and the fear of Hell that drove Luther to throw up his brilliant career and seek refuge from "the world, the flesh and the Devil," in the monastery, where he thought by the urgency of his prayers, combined with penance and fasting, to obtain that forgiveness of sin and assurance of salvation, which would bring peace and security to his troubled mind. But the study of the mediæval schoolmen and the lives of Saints and Fathers of the Church, which he now embarked on, did nothing to allay; rather, by their insistence upon the terrors of the judgment day, and the fate of the condemned—the great majority—tended to increase the fears and terrors he brought to their study.

Hallam has remarked that the doctrines of Luther are not more rational than those of the Church of Rome. That is true, but if you admit the truth of the premises from which Luther started they were quite logical. The beginning of all the trouble, according to this, began in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, by eating of the forbidden fruit, brought sin and death into the world, and fell from the state of innocence and purity in which God had created them. The first intimation Adam and Eve received of this change was the fact that they were now ashamed of their nakedness and felt the necessity of clothing. Before the Fall there had been no consciousness of sex; none of those lascivious sensual desires which

have since then been one of the strongest forces, for weal and woe, in the history of mankind. That this sin was transmitted in full force to all the descendants of Adam and Eve, Luther held was proved by the testimony of the Bible, no less than the facts of Nature.

In the Old Testament, the Psalmist declares:—

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps. li, 5).

And in the New Testament we read:—

As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned (Rom. v, 12).

It was upon these carnal desires that Christianity declared war from the commencement. It exalted and glorified the state of virginity at the expense of the marriage state, with the result that multitudes fled to the desert and lived the life of the hermit; others took refuge in monasteries. The melancholy results of this war against Nature may be read in Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*.

Now Luther was a man of strong passions—we have his own words for it. Writing from the Wartburg in July, 1521, to his friend Melanchthon, he says:—

I burn with the flames of my untamed flesh; in short, I ought to be glowing in spirit, and instead I glow in the flesh, in lust, laziness, idleness and drowsiness.....For a whole week I have neither written, prayed nor studied, plagued partly by temptations of the flesh, partly by the other trouble.³

In vain did Luther mortify the flesh during his life in the monastery by fasting, prayer and penance; he gained no relief from these, in his opinion, wicked and sinful thoughts. In his *Sermon on Conjugal Life*, Luther declared: "He who does not marry must lead an immoral life, for how can it be otherwise? Without a special grace it is utterly impossible." And again: "He who desires to live single undertakes an impossible struggle"; such people become:—

full of harlotry and all impurity of the flesh, and at last drown themselves therein and fall into despair; therefore such a vow is invalid, being contrary to the word and work of God.⁴

Luther is here speaking from his own painful experience in the monastery. It was from a consideration of the helplessness of man to control his sinful desires that Luther arrived at the conclusion of the uselessness of good works, and his condemnation of fasts and penances as a means of salvation. Owing to the sin of Adam and Eve being transmitted to all mankind, and that we are born as the result of an act of sin, our nature is corrupt and sinful from the very beginning:—

Even when we "do good we sin" (*bene operando peccamus*), so runs his paradoxical thesis; "but Christ covers over what is wanting and does not impute it." And why do we always sin in doing good? "Because owing to concupiscence and sensuality we do not perform the good with the intensity and purity of intention which the law demands, i.e., not with all our might (*ex omnibus viribus*, Luke x, 27), the desires of the flesh being too strong."⁵

According to Luther there is no difference, in the eyes of God, between small sins and great sins. It is just as great a sin to harbour a sensual thought, or steal a pin, as to commit a murder:—

All sins, in his opinion, are mortal because even the smallest contains the deadly poison of concupiscence. With regard to merit, according to him, even "the saints have no merit of their own, but only Christ's merits."⁶

¹ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 82.

² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, p. 118.

³ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 101.

⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 102.

¹ D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, p. 88.

² Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 17.

He declares that the philosophers and sages—

of olden time had to be damned, although they may have been virtuous from their very inmost soul..... Not long after, *i.e.*, as early as 1517, he declares in his M. S. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, their virtues to be merely vices (*revera sunt vitia*).⁷

Lest it be thought that we are misrepresenting Luther's beliefs, we give the following summary from the Rev. Baring Gould's lately published work, *The Evangelical Revival* (p. 46):—

Luther had felt, and had suffered from, the consciousness that all his best efforts to serve God were defective. Perfection in the service of God was not possible. Thereupon, in his impatience, he exclaimed, "I cannot do it, for my nature is sinful. As I cannot do it, there can be no necessity for my trying to please God. I give it up as an unprofitable attempt." Then he discovered, or fancied he had discovered, a short cut to Holiness, and that was Justification by Faith, the imputation of his sins to Christ, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to himself.....Both Luther himself and some of his disciples were uneasy at feeling that, although they were justified and invested in Christ's righteousness, there remained in them bad propensities, breaking out into evil acts. Luther bade his hearers not concern themselves thereat....."Thou sayest, I do not perceive that I have righteousness; thou must not perceive but *believe* that thou hast righteousness." This according to the Reformer is the great "truth" on which the Christian has to live. The believer has to think himself to be perfectly righteous, though he sees himself to be perfectly wicked. In a word conscience is a false guide. Man is to esteem himself a saint whatever his morals may be. According to Luther, one who is conscious of being justified cannot fall away. He wrote in *De Captivate*, "A Christian cannot, even if he will, lose his salvation by any multitude of sins, unless he ceases to believe. For no sin can damn him, but unbelief alone."

Writing to Melancthon on August 1, 1521, Luther advises him:—

If you are a preacher of grace, then preach a real, not a fictitious grace; if your grace is real, then let your sin also be real and not fictitious. God does not save those who merely fancy themselves sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe more boldly still, and rejoice in Christ who is the conqueror of sin, death and the world; we must sin as long as we are what we are.⁸

Protestants deprecate the use of this letter on the ground of it being a hasty and incautious statement in a private letter. But, as the Rev. Baring Gould points out, a similar letter, to Jerome Weller, is not so well known. It runs:—

Poor Jerome Weller, you have temptations; you must get the better of them. When the Devil comes to tempt you—drink, my friend, drink deeply; make yourself merry, play the fool, and sin, in hatred of the Evil One, and to play him a trick. If the Devil says to you, "You surely will not drink," answer him thus: "I will drink bumpers because you forbid me. I will enjoy copious potations in honour of Jesus Christ." Follow my example. I should neither eat, drink, nor enjoy myself at table so much were it not to vex Satan. *I wish I could discover some new sin that he might learn to his cost that I laugh at all that is sin, and that I do not consider my conscience as charged with it. Away with the Decalogue when the Devil comes to torment us! When he whispers in our ear, "You will be damned in the next world"; that is false. I know that there is One who suffered and satisfied for me.....and where He is, there shall I be also.*⁹

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 101.

⁸ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. III, p. 196.

⁹ Cited by the Rev. Baring Gould in *The Evangelical Revival*, pp. 48-49.

For those who would be saved by fasting, prayer, penance, or good works, Luther expressed the utmost contempt. In fact he roundly declares: "There is no greater unrighteousness than excessive righteousness."¹⁰

"Away," cries Luther, "away with 'the lousy works'; and so he preached to his very end in 1546."¹¹

As the Rev. Baring Gould observes:—

His doctrine is, "Disregard conscience. Commit any sin you like. It does not hurt you if you trust in Christ.".....Can one not see that such doctrine as this conduced to a hideous outburst of wickedness in all Germany where his teaching was accepted.¹²

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

Is the Soul Superior to the Body?

NOT only in our own time but in times now vague to history has it been the custom, in certain quarters, to over-rate the soul to the detriment of the body. Many utterances in the language of contempt have been made concerning the body. They have emanated from the pulpit, from the professional chair and from the mouths of people who are associated, in some way or other, with that society whose mission is to teach that the soul is everything. Even Shakespeare with all his genius was no less a transgressor in this matter than the unthinking fool. He too often spoke of the body as if it were a cistern of lust—unfit and unworthy as an habitat for the aspiring soul divine. Witness him, especially in the seventy-eighth sonnet, where he dubs the body as "sinful earth" and questions the soul as to why she impoverishes herself in order to attend to the requirements of the body:—

Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay.

He seems to be under the false impression that the soul, in starving the body, can enrich itself:—

Then soul live thou upon thy servant's loss
And let that pine to aggravate thy store.

The whole sonnet shows the soul in an attitude of contempt towards the body. Of course Shakespeare has accepted the orthodox view that the soul is immortal. He has built a fine poem but the materials he used are not of his own manufacture. The architectural beauty may be splendid but the whole structure is created out of the moss-covered beliefs of traditional story.

Without in any way disrespecting the claims of the soul we must not lose sight of the fact that the body has qualities to be reckoned with when we make comparisons.

So far as we know the body and soul have no separate existence. They react on each other in much the same fashion as magnetism and electricity. Where one is the other is also. They have a dual existence. Together they complete the phenomenon—so why despise one and consecrate the other?

If one of the two elements that compose a human being is superior to the other I say it is the body. A house without a good foundation, though all the skill of the artist has been expended in the decorating of it, is practically useless. As the flower is an embellishment of the plant, so is the soul an embellishment of the body. We give nourishment to the brier for the sake of its bloom and we minister to the body for the sake of the soul. The condition of the body is responsible for the state of the soul. The sickly brier is bad

¹⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 70.

¹¹ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 120.

¹² Baring Gould, *The Evangelical Revival*, p. 49.

for the rose, and the dyspeptic body is unhealthy for the soul.

I think Mr. Eustace Miles does as much useful work in the way of saving souls as the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the former, as we know, advises us for the good of our bodies and, to state a true maxim, "What is good for the body is good for the soul."

If we in the twentieth century wish to make any real progress, we must not hesitate to engage in the unpleasant task of searching, with the light of science, into the things that long have pleased us, in the fabulous tales that had their beginnings in the dark ages.

ALBERT PALIN.

Acid Drops.

Among the genuinely philosophical public, as distinguished from those who imagine that philosophy consists in a number of unscientific mystical generalisations, we do not think that Lord Balfour will have added to his reputation by his recent course of Gifford lectures. We have only newspaper reports to go on, and it may be that the lectures, when published in book form, will appear to better advantage. But judging from the summaries published they furnish nothing but some very out-of-date opinions expressed with the usual show of recognizing the full implications of current scientific thought. To ask "How was it that the blind collision of atoms, molecules, and sub-atoms in the remote past had issued as a mere question of cause and effect in the production of knowledge of science?" is only to repeat one of the commonest and oldest questions of the crudest theistic belief. And it is only the classical form of the appeal to ignorance. The belief—Lord Balfour's belief—in Theism rests on no other basis than the assumed ignorance of those who oppose it. The true form of the argument is, "Because we do not know how certain things have come to pass, therefore we must believe they have come in this or that manner." And of this the Theist offers not the slightest shadow of proof, not even the recommendation of conceivability. Of course, if we cannot conceive how a certain result has transpired we are justified in not believing anything about it, save that the result is before us. But to make ignorance the ground of a positive belief is in the highest degree ridiculous; and if Lord Balfour does not realize this he has far less intelligence than we credit him with.

Another expression of Lord Balfour offers itself for criticism. He says, "Those who take the naturalistic view of knowledge must explain how unreason has produced reason." This indicates an almost hopelessly confused mind on the question of causation and of what naturalism actually implies. It is the kind of thing that the ordinary raw curate, or green university graduate might perpetuate. There is assumed in the question the truth of the proposition that an effect can only arise from a cause that is similar to itself, which is never the case. Effects always differ from their causes. If they did not they would be identical—which, as is said, is absurd. If one were to say that wetness can only arise from things that themselves possess wetness, we should be saying exactly what Lord Balfour says, and its absurdity is patent. In addition, Lord Balfour evidently thinks of reason as a *thing*—something in itself. And that is certainly not the case—at least not with the reason we know and can talk about. It is time that Lord Balfour either gave up talking on these matters or brought his thinking on to something like a scientific level.

Finally, we cannot avoid saying a word on the continued misuse of the Gifford bequest. This bequest was intended to be used in getting lectures delivered on religion by all sorts of people—including those of no religion at all. The will specifically provides, but the trustees have deliberately seen to it that no avowed op-

ponent of Theism be invited to speak. There has been no legal abuse of the trust, but there has been a great moral abuse; and the moral of the whole question is that no matter how the Trust must be drawn, or how any Society may be constructed, in the last resort the proper carrying out of its terms will depend upon those who administer it. It is the man, or the men, at the helm that is the important thing. Nothing else matters.

"The Christian tradition of England in matters of belief and conduct is growing weaker every day," says Cardinal Bourne. This is a curious commentary on the *Catholic Year Book* which grows larger every year, and is ever increasing the number of half-empty churches.

"Seventy-five per cent. of the population never enter a place of worship," says Father Degan. Yet the clergy will have it that this is a Christian country.

A wireless aerial has been fixed over the Welsh Presbyterian Church, Bath Road, Wolverhampton, and a receiving set installed in the church itself. Perhaps it is hoped that some celestial message may be obtained by these means.

The *London Star* states that a litigant at Southend County Court bore the name of Faith Hope Charity, Buckett. A relic of the Age of Belief!

Mr. G. K. Chesterton told a *Daily Herald* representative the other day that he remembers dining with a number of Atheists and each one of them took out a mascot before he started to eat. Perhaps this is one of Mr. Chesterton's attempts at humour. If it is the quality is very poor, if it is not we should like to know a little more of these remarkable Atheists. For our own part, the use of mascots, from the Royal family downward, is only an evidence of how near the savage we are; and from the point of view of thoughtful sociology it is a sign of the vast mass of superstition, and that given the chance may play the same part in the break-up of our civilization that the Christian superstition did in the break-up of the civilization of antiquity.

A piece of the "true cross" has been discovered among some curios sent from Austria to America for sale. It will be given to some Roman Catholic Church. What makes it certain that it is a piece of the true cross is that it is accompanied by a paper signed by Cardinal Sigismund, dated 1753, saying that it is. There can be no reasonable doubt about it after that.

At Willesden, Tom Newman, the well-known billiard player, was granted a billiard licence for a former Congregational Chapel which he has purchased. A striking instance of the boasted revival of religion.

Finchley Ratepayers' League is asking for a local by-law forbidding street-cries on Sundays. The street-cries uttered by local roadside preachers are not included in this protest.

Whilst actually preaching a sermon, the Rev. E. Trons, rector of North Luffenham, Rutland, fell headlong and died. Had he been giving a Freethought lecture, the newspapers would have made a "boom" of the occurrence.

Mr. W. J. Bryan is still carrying on his warfare against evolution on behalf of Christianity. He now asks whether 40,000,000 Christians are to be dominated by 11,000 scientists? That is a very illuminating way of putting it. He evidently thinks that the way to arrive

at the truth is to take a vote. He has not yet realized that the fools are always in the majority, and the wise in a very small minority. It would not matter if there were only one scientist against the rest of the world's inhabitants. The question is not how many believe, but is anyone right? Truth always commences with a minority of one. It begins as an individual possession, and only so long as it is an individual possession—held firmly and intelligently by individuals—is it of real driving value.

All the same we have considerable respect for Mr. Bryan's position. It is honest, and it is Christian. It may be stupid, he may be living in the mental atmosphere of several centuries ago, but it is Christian. Evolution and belief in Christianity are quite irreconcilable with Christianity, if not with all religion. When we get beyond the primitive forms of religion, creation and interposition are vital factors in religious belief. The attempts made by modern apologists to reconcile evolution with Christian beliefs are so many excuses on behalf of their creed. Logically, it cannot be done. Earlier generations of believers knew and said it could not be done—and they were right. Mr. Bryan is right. It is the believer with intelligence enough to realize that the old forms or religious beliefs are discredited, but without the wit to see that evolution is equally against all religious beliefs that is wrong. We have reached a stage in the history of religion when all the logic of the religious attitude is on the side of the fools.

That the Press is a cowardly association of interests following public opinion whilst pretending to lead it is understood by an increasing body of thinking people. We are not surprised, therefore, to find the *Daily Mail* reporting the very sensible remarks of Lord Buckmaster on the subject of Divorce, and woman's status under ecclesiasticism. What his lordship stated on these matters is perfectly well known to Freethinkers, and forms part of elementary Freethought. The point we wish to emphasize, however, is the fact that obscure Freethinkers must, by some means, rise to the rank of a Peer in order to kick our daily papers into reporting matters that are of more importance to the nation's thought than the last hours of murderers.

Places of worship at Berriew, Montgomery, have suspended services because of a serious outbreak of scarlet fever. Though the Gospel shops are closed, the ministers still draw their salaries.

A youth named Jasper was fined five shillings for playing darts outside a church at West Ham. The crime was intensified by being committed on a Sunday. Had this dreadful crime been committed a few generations ago, the criminal would have had a really severe sentence.

A workman and a charwoman were seriously injured in a gas explosion in St. Thomas's Church, Colnbrook, Bucks. The chancel was torn up, and two stained-glass windows blown out. Providence is getting quite careless and should be retired on account of extreme age.

The late Rev. A. T. Waugh, formerly Archdeacon of Ripon, who left £18,568, made a handsome bequest to "Jesus, Cambridge." This is not the founder of the Christian religion, but a college at Cambridge University.

Someone, who wisely declines to give his name, writes in the *Weston Mercury* gravely enquiring as to where the money is coming from to defray the cost of the "expensive lecturing tours of the National Secular Society," and solemnly suggests that this is a matter for enquiry by the Home Secretary. In order to set "Sursum Corda's" mind at rest we beg to inform him that every lecturer engaged by the National Secular Society is paid

a standing retaining fee of £500 per year, with a set fee per lecture, with the exception of the President of the Society, about whom "Sursum Corda" is chiefly concerned, and he receives an annual salary of £1,000, with all expenses paid. As to where the money comes from, we may as well be quite frank and say that the Society's income is chiefly derived from smuggling cocaine and saccharine. But this traffic is conducted in a way that no Home Secretary can hope to discover.

Rev. the Hon. J. Adderly says "The movement for Sunday games must be kept going honestly as a part of the general movement for education. It will be so kept, if fanatics, whether Christian or Secularist, do not try to gain their own ends by exploiting the Sunday either for religious or for Atheistic purposes." We do not see how it is being exploited for Atheistic purposes, but it is plainly so for religious ones. For it is quite clear that the only object of opposition to Sunday games is to do away with anything that tends to keep people away from Church. On the other hand the only way in which Sunday games can be said to make for Atheism is as life itself makes for Atheism; and the Atheist cannot be blamed for that. It is just part of his case that let alone the normal forces of civilized life are enough to destroy religious belief; and in the attempt to bolster up religion with all kinds of artificial supports the Christian admits the Atheist to be in the right.

We may take in connection with what has just been said the complaint of Bishop Reid, in the course of an address delivered in St. Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow. The Bishop, after lamenting the decline of religion, said that the real difficulty facing them "was the utter indifference towards the claims of religion which existed in every class of society, and was to be found in young and old alike." That is quite true; and it is equally true that if religion corresponded with any genuine need of the people, if its teachings bore an organic relation to the life of to-day, it would be an impossibility for such an indifference to exist. Life itself would enforce religion. In the earlier centuries of European history, while there may have been doubts about specific doctrines taught by this or that Church, there was no great indifference to religion itself; and that was because religion did then bear some living relation to the life of the time. But gradually, as knowledge expanded, first in one direction, then in another, the support that current religion drew from the general conception of life ceased to exist. Religion then became an artificial thing, to be kept alive by artificial methods—so long as the conservatism of the people permitted it to be done.

We see it noted in one of the papers recently that the Salvation Army had supplied food at Oxford to the unemployed marchers. From the paper *Out of Work* we see that a charge was made of £2 1s. 3d. These are the little details which the Salvation Army usually overlooks when reporting to the Press its philanthropic work. Some years ago when we went into the matter we were able to show that most, if not all, of these food places were run at a profit. We should be greatly surprised if this were not still the case.

The *Belfast Daily Telegraph*, discussing—without mentioning by name—one of our recent "Views and Opinions," denies that there is at present a marked decay of religious belief. In that respect it is up against a great many leaders of religion, who obviously have no interest to cry stinking fish, and indeed the facts are so obvious that we do not think it necessary to repeat the evidence. But one proof the editor offers that religion is not declining is quite wonderful in its way. He discovers the state of morals is better now than in previous generations. On the whole we should be inclined to endorse this, but that is just part of the Freethought case. For morals have improved precisely as the influence of religion and the Churches has declined.

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.

W. MAINWARING.—Sorry to hear of Mr. Evan's illness. Hope he will soon be better.

J. BARTRAM.—We can only put in the names of newsagents as they are sent to us. The list now published represents only a small proportion of the newsagents who sell the *Freethinker*, and we have no means of compiling a list save with the help of our readers.

H. BLACK.—Received. Thanks. The fact of the *Manchester Guardian* writer pointing out that Mr. Wells is "castigated" by both the *Freethinker* and "Artifex" is only an example of the fate that so often meets those who practise the policy of sitting on the fence. It requires little courage to-day to attack what is called ecclesiasticism, but we are waiting for some of these valiant fighters to attack the superstitions which give ecclesiasticism the reason for its existence.

D. DUNCAN.—Your lecture notice was again too late. It did not reach us until Wednesday morning.

H. BAYFORD.—We are glad to hear your Branch had good meetings last Sunday. Hope your new meeting place will prove a success. It is more central and ought to be so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press" and crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

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.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen will lecture to-day (February 25) in the Town Hall, Birmingham, at 7, on "Why Christianity Has Failed." Admission is free, but there are a limited number of reserved seats at 1s. each. We hope to be able to report a record audience. Meanwhile we are pleased to note that at last the Branch has secured permission to sell literature at these Town Hall meetings. As we have said above, the circulation of literature is a very important part of our propaganda, and there is no better time to sell than when meetings are being held. So we have to congratulate our Birmingham friends on having at length got over this difficulty.

Mr. Cohen's new volume, *Essays in Freethinking*, is now ready, after being delayed owing to a dispute in the bookbinding trade. The volume consists of selected articles that have appeared in the *Freethinker*. These have all been care-

fully revised, and they will doubtless be acceptable to our readers in their permanent form. Only those articles that dealt with the more permanent topics have been selected. The book is well printed and is being sold, bound in cloth gilt, at 2s. 6d., postage 2½d. This is publishing at pre-war price, and it will need a large sale to justify the venture. Other selections will follow from time to time.

The question of new publications is of great importance to all propagandist movements, and to none more than the Freethought movement. We have had this steadily in view during the past six years, and during that time have issued between forty and fifty books and pamphlets. This is a much better record than the Party has been able to show during any similar period with which we have been associated, and the results have been shown in the increased interest taken in our work. Now we have a number of new publications in view, particulars of which will appear in due time, and we are quite sure that some of these will be welcomed as of more than usual importance.

One thing we should dearly like to do. We have for long had in view the issue of a series of what we may call Freethought classics. It is deplorable that while the religious world does all it can to see that the work of Freethinkers is buried and forgotten, so little—hardly anything—is done to keep their work alive. To the present generation the works of Carlyle, Hetherington, Southwell, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, and many others is little more than a name, and not always even that. We hope to alter this one day, and we are quite certain that if they were only within reach of the present generation concrete evidence of what the world owes to the Freethinkers of the past, more attention would be paid to the Freethought message of the present. The religious-world makes no such grave mistake. It takes care that each new generation is made acquainted with what others have done, and so build up a tradition that inspires to renewed effort. Of course the plan we have in mind would need money. No publishing scheme could be carried on without that. But we think that difficulty could be overcome, and when conditions ease a little we may have a business-like proposal to make to *Freethinker* readers.

We have received another large consignment of Bishop Brown's book, *Communism and Christianity*, from America, and we note that over 100,000 copies have been published. It has been translated into several languages, which—as it is neither published for nor makes profit—must be very gratifying to the author. A single copy will be sent from this office post free for 1s. 1½d., or six copies for 6s.

We have received an account of an interesting debate on the Blasphemy Laws which took place on February 13 before the Broadstairs Literary Debating Society. Our old friend Mr. H. Latimer-Voight moved a resolution that the Blasphemy Laws should be repealed, and in support sketched the history of the Law of Blasphemy in this country, and gave reasons in support of his resolution. The formal opposer of the resolution, Mr. F. Weigall, said the Freethought Party was small, the Blasphemy Laws were "more or less" obsolete, and they were useful to prevent the ridiculing of religion. These do not seem very powerful arguments for the maintenance of the Laws, although we must confess they are as good as any we have listened to. At any rate we fail to see that an injustice ceases to exist because those who are treated unjustly are few in number, and what is meant by a law being more or less obsolete we quite fail to understand. A law is or it is not obsolete. There is nothing in between; and as for the law protecting religion against ridicule, we should like Mr. Weigall seriously to set himself to answer the question, "Why does religion require a special measure of police protection to guard it against ridicule?" In the end Mr. Latimer-Voight's resolution was carried. We trust that is an omen of what will happen when the Bill for the repeal of the Laws comes before the House of Commons.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti lectures to-day (February 25) at the St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., at 7.30, on "Christianity's Harmony With Science—Anthropology." We hope our North London readers will note the time, the place, and the subject.

We are glad to learn that Mr. Lloyd had good meetings at Plymouth on Sunday last. The President of the Branch took the chair on both occasions, and the evening meeting was quite a "live" one. This was Mr. Lloyd's first visit to Plymouth, and we are pleased that everything went off so well.

Fetishism and Idolatry.

The idiot holds his bauble for a god.

—*Titus Andronicus*, v. 1.

In place of the old material idolatry we erect a new idolatry of words and phrases. Our duty is no longer to be true and honest, and brave and self-denying and pure, but to be exact in our formulas; to hold accurately some nice and curious proposition; to place damnation in straying a hair's breadth from some symbol which exults in being unintelligible, and salvation in the skill with which the mind can balance itself on some intellectual tight-rope.

—*J. A. Froude*.

"FETISHISM," derived from the Portuguese *feitiço*, magic or sorcery, by which term the first Europeans who traded on the West Coast of Africa, expressed their idea of the religion of the natives. Purchas in his *Pilgrimage* (1612), says: "When the king will sacrifice to a *fetisso*, he commands the *fetissero* to inquire of a tree, whereto he ascribeth Divinity, what he will demand." The name passed into French (chiefly through the able work of President de Bosses, who brought it into connection with the Egyptian cult) and largely through the medium of Comte it has received European recognition as expressing an early phase of religion. Sir John Lubbock defines fetishism as "the stage of religious thought in which man supposes he can force the deities to comply with his desires." It is traced, however, in savages who have no conception of a deity beyond that of an evil spirit. They will, nevertheless, regard particular objects as lucky or unlucky, and will carry about with them a stone, claw, twig, berry, fruit, grain, shell, bone, tooth, feather, or other object as a charm for bringing luck or averting disaster. Such men are surrounded with perils, real and imaginary. Sometimes the object is dreamt of as lucky, but more usually it is such as the devotee has seen used by others. If its presence brings good fortune, it is cherished and revered; if not, it may be cast away. Where the object is very peculiar, and like the loadstone, shows power in itself, faith usually overcomes all difficulties. Fetish brings victory in war, success in hunting, thieving or trading. It cures all ailments, protects against evil spirits and preserves life or destroys it, according to the wish of the votary. Surrounded by dangers and enemies he needs a solace, and fetish becomes a precious comfort and joy, like that blessed word Mesopotamia.

Barbot says:—

Blacks generally set apart some small quantity of such victuals as they eat, for their fetishes, or, as some will have it, for the devil, whom they call *gune*, to oblige him to be kind to them; for, if we believe their own assertions, he often beats them. I remember a black, from whose neck I once pulled away a *grigri*, or spell, made a hideous noise about it, telling us that *gune* had beaten him most unmercifully the next night; and that unless I would, in compassion, give him a bottle of brandy to treat *gune*, and be reconciled to him, for having suffered me to take away his *grigri*, he was confident he should be infallibly killed by him. The fellow was so confident in his conceit, and roared in such a

horrible manner for it, that I was forced to humour him for peace and quietness.

We are reminded of Byron's phrase: "There's nothing so consoles the mind as rum and true religion."

Rowley (*Religion of the Africans*, 165) says:—

Diseases of the body being almost invariably attributed to witchcraft, men and women are sometimes literally encumbered with fetishes; some of which are for the head, others for the neck, others for the heart, the arms, the stomach, the back, the loins, and the legs; indeed, every part of the human body has its appropriate fetish or charm against the ills which are thought to beset it.

In early phases of fetishism, the material objects themselves have potency. The strange shaped rock suggests a giant, man or beast; in bones of primeval monsters they found the relics of giants, and in their fossil imprints their footmarks. The tree lives, grows and renews its life, or the life buried near it. The animal seen near the dead is supposed to have taken its spirit. The bone or feather lives on while its former owner is dead. The shell "remembers its august abodes, and murmurs as the ocean murmurs there."

The beginnings of intellectual life lie in the association of ideas. But the suggestions of analogy are often wrong. Early man advances by reading signs. His only language is signs, and he sees signs in everything. Hence ancient religion is full of signs and divination, charms and incantation, spells and conjuration. The flight of birds, the cries of animals, everything startling and strange is an omen of fortune or misfortune. Weapons are among the first fetishes, sticks and stones, the first missiles, first instruments of all kinds. He tries on storms, thunder, ocean and river the charms he thinks avails with others. The rod is ever magical, the symbol of power; the walking-stick is sometimes a fetish. On beginning an expedition the negro of Guinea chooses the first striking object that presents itself, and vows to worship it if the event succeeds. The connection between the object and the result is a mystery proper for exercise of faith, like the efficacy of the blood of Jesus in saving sinners. If the result does not turn out as desired the fetish is beaten, dragged through the mud, or thrown away. A modern king of Cochin China, when one of his ships sailed badly, used to put it in the criminal pillory. We may compare the classical stories of Xerxes flogging the Hellespont, and Cyrus draining the Gyndes. Grote (ii, 451) tells that at Athens inanimate objects, such as an axe or a piece of wood or stone, which caused death without proved human agency, were tried, and if condemned solemnly cast beyond the border. The spirit of this procedure remained till 1846 in English law, whereby not only a beast that kills a man but a cartwheel that runs over him, or a tree that falls upon him, was deodand, or forfeited to God. In France, in 1094, a pig was hung for devouring a babe (see Ex. xxi, 28), and there are many instances of the solemn excommunication of insects. Portuguese and Spanish sailors do not scruple to pitch their saints into the sea if they do not heed their prayers. During cholera epidemics in Naples and Spain one saint was often rejected for another deemed to be of more efficacy, and at the liquefaction of the blood of San Genario his "cousins," Neapolitan fisherwomen, supposed to have his blood in their veins, work themselves up into frenzy and call out "You yellow-faced rascal, we will pray to you no more if you do not let your blood melt!" Bodin tells that at Toulouse the children dragged, in open day, the holy images, and even the crucifix, to the river to oblige them to send rain. In India Brahmins will put their idols in chains, and say they shall not be released until their debts are paid. The alarmed populace think it very pious to contribute to the deliverance of

their Gods. Brahmins, be it noted, deny the charge of idolatry as stoutly as any Catholics. They declare their many-armed images but symbolize the one great being who manifests in many forms, and whose power extends in every direction. Romanists deny idolatry, yet Cardinal Bellarmino, in his *De Imaginibus Sanctorum*, teaches that images of Christ and the saints may be worshipped in the proper sense of the word, so that the devotion does not stretch beyond the image it represents, but remains at rest in the image itself.

Under the influence of dreams the fetish becomes the embodiment of a guardian spirit. Dr. Tylor defines fetishism as "the doctrine of spirits embodied in or attached to, or conveying influence through certain material objects." Ghost belief develops into god belief. The earliest gods, indeed, are ghosts, and even the latest ones come under that category. Trees growing near the dead are everywhere magical. The life is supposed to have passed into them; they become its sign, and sacrifices are offered to them. Every tree and plant has had its worship and ritual: that of the mistletoe, the golden bough, still survives. The former usually commemorating the dead, the latter, from which the art of medicine has developed, other potent spirits, only to be evoked at particular times, as sunrise, or by particular persons, as a priest or virgin. Catholicism even had formulas for blessing herbs and ointment, as may be seen in the Harleian MS. 585. The mistletoe with its seminal berries carrying on life from year to year, became the talisman which Virgil's hero takes to Hades (*Æn.* vi, 206) that he may rise again from the underworld. In the East the palm branch is the sign of renewal. In organized fetishism, where the amulet or medicine of the individual has become the symbol and god of the tribe, it has an abode. Instead of being carried in a bag, it has a box, with priests to carry it. There is a fetish hut, ghost lodge, tent, or tabernacle, which develops into a temple with priests. The sacred tree at the tomb has an enclosure; offerings are made to it, or at the cairn, post, or other memorial of the dead. The fetish priest may play the fetish ghost, believing its spirit inspires him. When the symbol of the father and his worship is phallic the temptation is strong. Fetishism develops into Shamanism, sorcery, and witch-finding. The fetishman, or the one pretending or believing he has potent charms, becomes an important personage. He has charge of the shrine and can dispense its virtues.

Bastian states that the natives of Bamba say their great Fetish dwells in the bush where he cannot be seen by anyone. When he dies the priest carefully collects all his bones, so that he may preserve and nourish them that they may revive again when they acquire new flesh and blood. These things were done that the saying might be fulfilled: a bone of him shall not be broken. Early Christians preserved bones as seeds of the resurrection. In the Mangaian myth Tangoroa is a god who dies and rises again in three days. When he dies Maui carefully collects his bones, puts them inside a coconut and, gives them a terrible shaking, and, like the shaken dry bones in Ezekiel xxxvii, they revive, and on opening the coconut and shell the dead god is found to be alive (Gill). Rainmakers in Southern Polynesia employ human bones to compel the clouds. A bonfire is a bonfire, in which a bone was put as a symbol of sacrifice. A terrible curse of Jeremiah is that their bones shall not be gathered or buried (viii, 1-2). The dry bones of Elisha when touched by the corpse of the Moabite soldier, were so replete with his miraculous individuality that the corpse "revived and stood upon his feet" (2 Kings, xiii, 21). The writers of the Talmud recognized the bones as the casket of the soul, and Rabbi Joshua ben Chanania told the Emperor Adrian that the body would be reconstructed from the

little bone Luz in the backbone, which could not be broken. When laid on an anvil the hammer broke and the anvil split in pieces. Breaking the wishing bone in chickens shows a relic of bone fetishism. Divination by fowl-bones is a widespread superstition.

D. G. Brinton (*Nagualism*, 47-48) points out that "sacred trees were familiar to the Old Mexican cult" and were called by the same name as was applied to the fire, "*Tota Our Father*." They are said to have represented the gods of woods and water. In the ancient mythology we often hear of the tree of life, represented to have four branches, each sacred to one of the four cardinal points and the divinities associated therewith. The conventionalized form of this tree in the Mexican figurative paintings strongly resembles a cross. Examples of it are numerous and unmistakable, as for instance, the cruciform tree of life rising from the head with a protruding tongue, in the Vienna Codex.

Thus the sign of the cross—either the form with equal arms known as the Cross of St. Andrew, which is the oldest Christian form, or the Latin Cross with its arms of unequal length—came to be the ideogram for "life" in the Mexican hieroglyphic writing; and as such, with more or less variants, was employed to signify the *tonalli* or *nagual*—the sign of nativity, the natal day, the personal spirit.

Trees and fire alike representing the renewing spirit, the bush burning but unconsumed becomes a symbol of deity—and a device of undertakers.

Whether derived from ancestral antipathy of apes to serpents or not, ophiolatry or serpent-worship has been one of the widest spread of superstitions. The brazen serpent said to have been made by Moses was an evident fetish. Merely looking at it was a potent charm, as was touching the ark. According to 2 Kings xviii, 4, the children of Israel burnt incense to it down to the days of Hezekiah, seven hundred years after Moses.

The sudden appearance and disappearance of serpents, their silent gliding motion and power of fascination and death, struck the imagination of early man and made them the emblems of subtlety and mystery. Often seen near the dead, they were held to be the spirits of the cunning dead, often malignant authors of evil, sometimes wise and beneficent protectors. Their sloughing of their skins made them types of new life and eventually of eternity. Traces of their worship are found in every continent. One even of the early Christian sects, the Ophites, are said to have worshipped the serpent. The Hindus still reverence them and thousands die yearly through this superstition. From Naga tribes and towns named after them it is plain that they were once totemic. Mr. Ferguson thinks the Naga, or serpent, was the god of the aborigines, whom the conquering Hindus adopted as their own deity, pretending it was for them he reserved his patronage and support. Serpent worship is generally connected with tree and with sun worship, all three being symbols of renewed life, and thus brought in connection with phallicism and man's early solutions of the problem of generation and regeneration. Traces of marriage to trees and tree-spirits can be found even in the Greek festival of the Daedala, and are probably connected with totemism. Marriage to serpent-gods was also common in Africa and India, the priest doubtless officiating as the god.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be Continued.)

Strange it is that men should admit the validity of the arguments for free discussion, but object to their being "pushed to an extreme"; not seeing that, unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case.—John Stuart Mill.

Should We Play Politics?

MOST Freethinkers are familiar with the type of man who, in his political fervour, meets the case of the Secularist worker with:—

Your case is sound in point of principle, friend, but there are thousands of things of greater urgency needing attention before these atheistical conceptions of yours can be applied. The people need immediate concrete reforms, not far-reaching principles extended over a vast period, however all-embracing and truthful they may be. Fling yourself into politics and secure immediate reforms, and allow all these other things to follow on automatically. Leave Christianity alone—it will die a natural death as the people get wiser. Through politics and no other channel will come our salvation.

These are the whole arguments of his repertoire: politics, politics, politics! Little does he understand the exact nature of our work. First, he mistakenly thinks our whole activity is embodied in the act of killing Christianity. He forgets that, in our philosophy of life, we are not at all primarily concerned with Christianity. Our work is to kill the "Prevailing Superstition" wherever or at whatever period of time we may find it. Under this rule we cannot but help expending a lot of time on killing Christianity, for Christianity is, in all its many varied forms, most certainly "The Prevailing Superstition"; and we should further impress upon our political friend that we consider our battle with organized Christianity as such, as of small moment compared with the "type of mind" it tends to breed and perpetuate. Even if, by his political methods, our friend did manage to usher in, say, his Socialist Commonwealth, our work as Secularists will probably be as great as ever. Superstition may take any form, and may be most rampant in those very schools of thought which consider themselves in the forefront of social progress. Without trying to single out any special party, can any impartial observer view the propaganda methods employed during the recent General Election and not come to the conclusion that the Labour Party is in serious danger of becoming Nonconformist minister ridden? If this "peaceful permeation" is allowed to go on, if our political friend, and such as he, believe that the Christian type of mind will "die naturally," one can easily picture what the New Secularist State will be like. You cannot change a type of mind by merely changing the social position. Those superstitious forces would still be as active almost as they are at present. You cannot change the inbred nature of a fox simply by taking it from the wild woods and putting it in a respectable hen-roost, or expect a beetle to turn white by the simple operation of taking it from the kitchen and placing it in the drawing-room. Superstitions never "die naturally," if ever they die at all—they must be "killed"; and our political friend ought to be told that he cannot (and dare not), from the very inherent nature of his calling or activity, definitely and stressfully attempt to kill the "Prevailing Superstition." His election to power, under the present system, depends upon his pleasing the mass of the voters, and he certainly cannot please them by attacking vigorously their especial little pet belief. He must give them what they "want," not what they "need." He admits this point when he says the masses want immediate concrete reforms and not far-reaching principles which may take years to materialize. The daring bravery of the corner-end speaker may be plucky enough in its way, but it usually stops at a discreet point. For instance, it is a common occurrence to stand at a street corner and hear one of these political gentlemen loudly and bravely proclaiming the fact that capitalism is a

"wash-out," and all kings and lords and dukes ought to be sent to the red-hot poker department; but what a surprise one would get if he intimated that Christianity was a "wash-out" and that the same department would welcome the Pope and Archbishop! But that is exactly where our friend draws his breath; and yet there are just as many arguments (if not more!) in favour of one as the other. Dukes and lords can be quite harmless creatures (from the point of view of the creation of a desirable type of mind), whereas an archbishop or pope is usually a highly dangerous person. The kindly village priest, with his simple winning way, may be ten times more harmful than the owner of the local factory with all his pomp and power. It is simply a question of values. Of course, most Secularists agree there is a need for a science which will treat of principles upon which depend the happiness and prosperity of peoples grouped into states and nations, but that is a vastly different thing from "flinging oneself into politics" as played by politicians. No thoughtful man or woman, whose love of devotion to principle and uprightness is still inviolate would dream for a moment of entering into all the crafty intrigue and duplicity which must of necessity accompany politics as a game. One often turns in disgust from the many things that are said and written for the sole purpose of catching the votes of sentimentally pious people. Tons of religious gush are often shoved forward without the slightest attempt to strike a really intellectual note; and yet such persons as our political friend would have us "fling" ourselves into politics! If he, and similar minded men as he, wish to give exhibitions of real bravery, if they wish to be brought face to face with the most potential forces of life, if they wish to be brought in touch with a movement where only merit counts, then we might easily reverse the invitation by appealing for a fling in our direction.

R. ATKINSON.

"God's Methods"—A Reply.

I MUST thank the Editor for courteously permitting me to reply to certain statements made by Mr. J. T. Lloyd in his review of my book, *The Mystery of the Ages*, in the *Freethinker* of January 28 and February 4, 1923. I shall simply comment on each detail to which I demur. On page 51, lines 27-28, the reviewer says that to me the Bible is "verbally inerrant." That is *his* expression; I never used it. In the first place the Bible exists in more than 500 languages. What an extraordinary person he would be who spoke of "verbal inerrancy." I have heard of a man who was well acquainted with sixty languages, but 500!

Now what I do hold is this, that *God's Truth as revealed* in the Bible is inerrant. The words of the Bible are merely the imperfect human vehicle which by the infinite skill and wisdom of God is adapted to convey His Truth to mankind. If a vehicle be used to convey a friend to our house, we receive our friend with joy, and we are thankful for the vehicle, but we do not embrace it and take it into our home, for it has merely done the work of conveying our friend to us. Yet we may become very much interested in the vehicle, especially if it conveys our friend to us over and over again.

On page 51, line 35, I am told that I accept the "theory of evolution." This is wholly incorrect; indeed the reviewer admits as much in the next line (thereby contradicting himself) where he says that on this point "I have a theory of my own." Surely he does not think that I invented "the theory of evolution." This "theory," popularly so-called, I abhor,

and if the reviewer had patiently read and quoted the whole of pages 12 and 13 of the preface (instead of omitting two long paragraphs) he and his readers would at once see that I do not accept the so-called "theory of evolution," whether it be described popularly or scientifically. Again, as regards the statement on page 51, line 65, I must remark that I repudiate the term "Bibliolatry" as applied to my mental attitude towards the Bible. Here again the reviewer does not seem quite sure of his own ground, for in line 71 lower down, he admits that at best I am "an inconsistent 'Bibliolater!'"

It is very amusing to compare this with his praise of me (on page 67, column 2, line 8) for my "amazing consistency!"

Once more on page 51, Column 2, line 6 (after what I have now explained), the reviewer's ascription of "credit" to me falls very flat, when he speaks of "the verbal inspiration" of the Bible as being my creed. I think I have dealt sufficiently with this matter above. Then he asks the seemingly irrelevant question as to why I should bother my head about geology! Please, Mr. reviewer, why should I not, seeing that geology is one of the most interesting studies in Nature. To me, the two most wonderful books in existence are "The Book of God's Revelation," *i.e.*, the Bible, and what is called "The Book of Nature," *i.e.*, the visible works of God. The former book declares that "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God," and the latter "book" even the ignorant Heathen can read and gather from it that there are millions of "gods," only alas! to decide that there is not one good god amongst them all.

Regarding page 51, column 2, lines 15-16, it would be more agreeable with the fact, and be far nearer the truth if the reviewer were to describe me as one who interprets literally *the truth contained in the Bible* rather than one who explains literally the *ipsissima verba* of its 500 or more languages (for the Truth speaks all languages, whereas I cannot claim more than a working knowledge of six). Finally the joy of the Christian is described in these words by his Master: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

On page 51, column 2, lines 66-68, after the word "failure" I would add as the reason the same reason as is given on page 52, lines 2-3.

I think what I have now written is sufficient to point out the reviewer's misinterpretations of the text of my book, and to show his incorrect statements relative to me and it. The rest of the reviewer's matter, although voluminous, is taken up with merely anti-Christian arguments, which, of course, this is not the place to discuss.

(Rev.) B. N. SWITZER.

THE FINAL LONELINESS.

If God be dead, and Man be left alone,
 And no immortal golden towers be fair,
 And nothing sweeter than earth's summer air
 Can ever by our yearning hearts be known;
 If every altar now be overthrown,
 And the last mistiest hill-tops searched and bare
 Of Deity—if Man's most urgent prayer
 Is just a seed-tuft tossed about and blown—
 If this be so, yet let the lonely deep
 Of awful blue interminable sky
 Thrill to Man's kingly unbefriended cry;
 Let Man the secret of his own heart keep
 Sacred as ever—let his lone soul be
 Strong like the lone winds and the lonelier sea.

—George Barlow.

The Task of Freethought.

Why stay we on earth unless to grow?

—Cleon. Browning.

IN his lectures on Shakespeare, Ingersoll stated that an attempt to fully comprehend the great master's mind was like trying to grasp the world with one hand. Our studies of the Aphorisms and Sutras of Patanjali have led us to almost a similar conclusion. If we have rightly understood in a degree these translations from the Sanskrit our conclusions in relation to Freethought may possibly explain a little that is at present obscure, and also sublimate the difference between Eastern and Western thought. Realizing at the outset that a reader honours us by reading what we write—or we have misread Schopenhauer, we state emphatically that the writings of Patanjali are irreconcilable with Christianity—and they supply a dynamic to Freethought. For those who have time and consider it worth while to contrast the grandeur of Pantanjali with the somewhat pathetic conception of life as defined by Christianity there is an unexplored gold mine in that direction. Until Christianity is knocked into decency, cudgelling is necessary, and here both young readers and writers may draw from this Eastern source enough material to prove that this paragon of religions, this yelping and caterwauling after the soul, this thing called Christianity, starting with fishermen should rightly finish by being told to the marines. Contrast, if you will, Plato and Paul, or Lucretius and Peter, in the *quality* of the intellect that underlies their respective beliefs, and there is the difference between the aristocrat and the slave—the appeal to the few and the appeal to the many. In neither of the pairs is there an appeal to all. The only difference of immediate importance is the most significant one that Paul and Peter revel in the Lyceum Walter Melville quarter of the emotions of mankind, whilst Plato and Lucretius approach the tribune of intellect with their heads like ice and their hearts on fire. It is the difference between a star and a comet; it is the difference between a Professor Soddy and a drunkard turned Salvationist.

Nearly all the actions of mankind are based on habit or imitation. Church-going is both; and with a mighty smash Freethinkers challenge that. Hence their general poverty and their failure to obtain acceptance of the views they hold. For the moment we shall not attempt to deal with habits of thought, with actions performed at the bidding of the imagination, or those dictated solely by the human desires which find no satisfaction in their satisfaction. We shall not deal with those actions commanded by fear of consequences, nor defined by the instinct of self-preservation. Merely on the surface of life there exists enough phenomena to prove our case—that opposing Christianity is not enough even for a Freethinker.

If we may impose our experience on the reader for a moment perhaps we shall better illustrate our point. Our hostess in the country house was poking the fire. Looking up she asked in a somewhat agitated manner if we were an Atheist. To this we answered that we were, and at the same time asked her whether she would be prepared from that moment onwards to forever sacrifice any hope of personal gain from her future actions. She would not, and it was left to us to point out that that was one of the ideals to which we had been led by a rejection of Christianity. It is one of the elementary rules in the Aphorisms of Patanjali, and Christianity trying to assimilate it is like a cat with the backbone of a haddock fast in its throat. "Lay up treasure in heaven" they say—a celestial system of war-saving certificates—old age must come. The wisdom of the East has its foot on the neck of the ego. Freethinkers have rejected this

heaven—this is their challenge to the standard of reward held out by the good, bad, and indifferent teachers of Christianity. This is their challenge to a habit of thinking; it is also their challenge to an illusion claiming many victims, and the record of persecution by religious bodies makes it a thing unclean and ruled out for ever from the minds of those who do not mistake feeling for thought.

To conclude, the task of Freethought is opposition to two of the strongest weapons in the hands of the enemy. They are habit and imitation. In the words of Pascal, "The world is in possession of every good principle; it fails only in their application." There is not the least doubt that the library of Freethought contains everything that the world wants; the technique of applying it is faulty; and we have to get from the forces of habit and imitation one of the rarest and most precious of virtues known by no other name than that of "effort." WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

A CORRECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your impression of February 11 you quote me as saying "that a man can be quite a good Christian without belonging to any of them [the societies called Churches] or associating himself with any of their corporate activities." Will you kindly permit me to state that these words were not mine, but were introduced as expressing a view which I proceeded to criticise?

H. RASHDALL.

FREETHOUGHT IN JAPAN.

SIR,—I was interested to read Mr. Underwood's article on this subject in your issue of February 18. Some time ago, while walking along a country lane, I happened to pick up a copy of *The Church Abroad*, dated March, 1921, published by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. It contains a paragraph headed, "Japanese Christians in Parliament." As a supplement to the letter from Mr. Underwood's Japanese friend, it might be interesting to quote it. It runs as follows:—

The Rev. Charles Foxley, of Himeji, writes: "Another encouraging thing is the number of Christian representatives in Parliament. I am told that 30 out of 400 are Christians. Now, the total population of Japan is, I believe, over 50,000,000, and the total number of Christians is estimated at 300,000. This would be an interesting proportion sum for supporters of foreign missions at home to work out. I think they might thank God and take courage, especially as my Japanese fellow-worker tells me that these thirty are men whose influence in Parliament is out of proportion to their numbers."

The figures given here as to the proportion of Christians to the population of Japan work out, I think, at a fraction over one-half per cent., or roughly one Christian to every 200 of the population! If it has taken nearly 2,000 years to obtain this result, how long, I wonder, will it take to Christianize the remaining 99½ per cent? If the missionaries don't get a hustle on, the Christian religion will be dead and buried in history long before that is accomplished. But God does not seem in any hurry to advertise or push the sale of his patent blood-mixture as a universal salve and cure-all, or to obtain customers for it. The Rev. Charles Foxley must be a great optimist when he enjoins the supporters of foreign missions to thank God and take courage, even for so small a return on their subscriptions as one-half per cent of Christians in Japan. A. W. MALCOLMSON.

As far as I am concerned, I wish to be out on the high seas. I wish to take my chances with wind, and wave, and star. And I had rather go down in the glory and grandeur of the storm than to rot in any orthodox harbour whatever.—*Ingersoll*.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, S.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Christianity's Harmony with Science—Anthropology."

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. Gopal C. Bhaduri, "India and Universal Brotherhood."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Humour of a Social Science."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Town Hall): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Why Christianity has Failed."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—Mr. Joseph McCabe, City Hall (Saloon), 11.30, "The New Theology and the New Universe"; City Hall (Grand Hall), 6.30, "The Dawn of European Civilization." Questions and Discussion. Silver Collection.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (2 Central Road, Duncan Street, Shop Assistants' Rooms): 6.45, Mr. Haywood, "Christianity and Astronomy."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead, "The Crimes of Christianity."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Discussion Class meets at Mr. Rosetti's, 39 The Crescent, Flixton, at 6 p.m. Train leaves Central Station at 5 p.m. Mr. Seferian will open with a summary of "The Evolution of the Idea of God."

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