

# 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. 32

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 1923

PRICE THREEPENCE

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## Views and Opinions.

### Our Civilization.

It seems to be taken for granted that we are in for a very black winter. Trade is bad, and there seems no prospect of immediate improvement. The war has, apparently, taught the majority very little, and nations nothing at all. They are going on in the same old way, each of them arming so as to keep ahead of the other, and our great victory has served to place the most military nation in Europe in a commanding military position on the Continent. The one thing that can overcome that—the expressed moral condemnation of the rest of the world—the rest of the world will not utter. Meanwhile we are promised a million and a half of unemployed during the winter months, which means a much larger number of people who are just on the border line of destitution. Doubtless quiet will be maintained by the continuance of the “Dole,” which does not pretend to give a family a sufficiency on which to live, but only enough to prevent their dying out of hand. That we are not oppressed by the prospect can only be accounted for on the ground that something of the kind is common at all times. The number may not be so large as it is just now, but numbers, while they make the problem more difficult to solve, add nothing to the individual suffering, nor the individual deterioration—physical and moral—which such a state of things involve. No single family suffers more because others are better off, and none suffers less because others are in the same position. The appalling thing is that something of the kind should be taken as inevitable, that, to use an expression of Richard Jefferies, in all these thousands of years humanity has not yet learned enough to build itself a home. That comes as near writing failure across the front of our civilization as anything can.

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### What Has Christianity Done ?

What is responsible for this state of things? We blame financial speculators and adventurers, we blame our land laws, our housing laws, the growth of the mania of money-making, international jealousies, and military ambitions—all of these are forces with which we must count, but outside the pages of a Freethought journal who is there that thinks of fixing some measure of responsibility on Christianity itself? Here

is a religion that has been in power for centuries, which has wielded enormous power, has had the control of almost fabulous wealth, and has claimed control of the lives of people from the cradle to the grave. Moreover, it has claimed as one of its supreme functions the task of teaching mankind its duty, and of establishing a right order of moral relationships. It is not possible, therefore, logically to acquit the Christian Church of responsibility. On the negative side the utmost that can be said in its behalf is that it has been unable to prevent the evils that have developed, and has not been able to discipline men and women as they might have been disciplined. During the last two centuries we have witnessed a gradual change in the quality of our civilization. We have seen a gradual shifting of the responsibilities of a great landed interest on to the nation at large without any corresponding release of privilege. We have seen the development of an industrial and commercial system which, whatever may be said in its behalf, has gone far towards destroying the human and moralizing relations that should exist between members of the same society. It has seen the development of numerous other evils, and in not a single case can it be said that these have found any serious obstacle in the existence of the Church. In not a few cases they have found apologists in the champions of the Church, and never have they who have taken advantage of all that the existing rules of the game permitted found their practice inconsistent with the profession of the most fervid belief in the Christian religion. They have spent freely on the Lord a portion of what they have wrung from the labourer. Nor is there any need to accuse them of inconsistency or conscious dissimulation in this. The vague generalities of the New Testament provide ample scope for saint and sinner to find therein warranty for their personal inclinations.

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### Christianity and the State.

The attempt to construct a social gospel from Christianity involves either failure or dishonesty. Either Christianity is made to mean what it was never intended to mean, or it breaks down. In the beginning it set social reform on one side as of no importance. To a handful of religious enthusiasts daily expecting the end of the world it seemed idle to waste time on schemes of social improvement, and when time and experience had dulled the edge of this primitive expectation the social task of the Church became that of subduing the secular powers to its service on the one side, and preaching a gospel of other world salvation on the other. But it had no theory of the State, and no conception of man as a member of a social community. Lord Hugh Cecil, in his little book on Conservatism admits this in the following passages:—

Neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles do we read much about the State. The duty of obedience to the State is more than once enforced. The separation of secular and spiritual matters is taught in the memorable “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are

God's." And throughout a teaching of patient submission even to oppression is prominent.....Certainly there is not a line in the New Testament that can be quoted in favour of the enlargement of the function of the State beyond the elementary duty of maintaining order and repressing crime. As has been already said the State is almost entirely in the background in the pages of the New Testament. We hear little of it, and nothing whatever of such ideas as are conveyed by the expressions "the community" and "society.".....Nor do we lack an example in the New Testament of how a social evil of the gravest kind may be tolerated and the mischief of it only mitigated in particular cases. The timidity of the English translators of the Bible has concealed from the ordinary reader in a manner, which if it had been done by Roman Catholics we should have probably censured as Jesuitical, the fact that St. Paul tolerated slavery, and instead of requiring its abolition among Christians, was content to turn the edge of its oppressions by inspiring both owners and slaves with the spirit of Christian brotherhood.

The value of that inspiration may be gauged by the fact that fifteen centuries after Paul the Christian world established and organized the most brutal form of slave trading ever known, that it is less than a century since it was abolished in America, and little more than a century since it was abolished in this country.

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#### Blessed Be Ye Poor!

To the poor Christianity has preached the duty of obedience, and of humility of mind and speech. To the rich it has at most preached the duty of almsgiving, so breeding servility on the one side and superciliousness on the other. But it has never dreamed of preaching that it was the duty of society to so organize itself that widespread chronic poverty should be almost an impossibility in a society which called itself civilized. And even its charities have been used largely as a new method of demoralization. Those who remember when Mr. Charles Booth published his elaborate survey of the London poor will not have forgotten his picture of the churches and chapels in poor districts using their charities, not with a single minded endeavour to relieve distress, but as so many agencies to attract larger congregations. And whenever and wherever a reformer has come along determined to arouse in the minds of the people a desire for a genuine improvement in the social state Church and Chapel have been foremost in any cry that would discredit his aims and actions. It is, in fact, simply incredible that had the Christian Church ever had any genuine desire for social development that things to-day would be as they are. For the task of social organization is not so insuperable as to completely defy the wit of man. Nor should it be overlooked that in the single case where the impact of a solid body of moral opinion might have saved Europe from the disasters that are now oppressing it—the making of the peace—the Churches have been either dumb, or have encouraged the people in a suicidal policy of retaliation.

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#### Christianity in History.

In sober truth Christianity has all along lived on the moral, mental, and political pauperization of the people. Independence of mind and character it has never permitted save under protest. To suffer in silence was a Christian virtue; to revolt against oppression—secular oppression—was a Christian sin. The civic independence of old Rome died under the shadow of the Cross, the culture of Greece declined beneath its influence. While it taught the spiritual equality of all before God, it emphasized the social inequality of man on earth. It

deliberately discredited the use of reason in all directions and so gave sanction to the application of brute force. And habits engendered by centuries of social rule cannot be eliminated in a single generation. They create an environment to which successive generations adjust themselves, and in this case adaptation has meant placing an emphasis upon qualities that are socially of the least use. Christians are fond of telling us what the world would be like under Free-thought domination. Unfortunately for these champions of the Cross we know what it has been and is under the dominance of Christianity. And over sixteen centuries of Christian rule have left us with a world divided against itself, with no two Christian peoples able to trust one another, and with many millions of Christian soldiers unable to keep peace over a territory which Pagan Rome, two thousand years ago, was able to guard with 400,000. It is history that condemns Christian practice, just as science and common-sense condemn Christian theory.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Public Worship.

WE are bound to feel more or less interested in the desperate attempt made by twentieth century educated preachers to "construe the Faith in terms of modern thought." Such an attempt indicates that to people of intelligence and culture the historic creeds, as they stand, are no longer credible. The contention is that, while the Church always held and taught the truth as it is in Jesus, her mediæval expression of it, though in many respects most excellent, is now antiquated. The form is obsolete, but the substance it enshrines remains unchanged and unchangeable throughout the ages. All advanced divines admit that Creeds are at present in a state of deplorable disrepute. They say that "much of our antique theology requires overhauling of a frank and drastic kind," and that "the creeds must be brought up to date and into line with to-day's knowledge of God and man." Their claim is that "there is an irreducible minimum of doctrine which we instinctively feel must be held and defended." As already intimated more than once in these columns, the book entitled *Nevertheless We Believe*, by the Rev. A. Boyd-Scott, M.C., B.D., of Glasgow, contains one of the most recent and notable endeavours to restate Christianity in terms of modern knowledge. We shall now cite another sample of what we consider the signal non-success of this work.

This sample is found in chapter fourteen under the astonishing heading of "The Supernatural Thing Called Public Worship." The most conspicuous fact concerning public worship to-day is the steadily growing neglect of it by the masses, and even by not a few who profess to be Christians. From all directions comes the heart-breaking complaint that churches and chapels are being deserted by the overwhelming majority of the population. Mr. Boyd-Scott's claim is that "Christ is nearer to us still when we meet in his house, when we assemble in his sanctuary." He says:—

In so far as Christian men and women forsake the assembling of themselves together, the living Christ is being denied points of living contact with his own world, doors are being closed against him and entrances blocked up, at which he stands tragically frustrated and excluded.

Here the faith of the few is set forth in condemnation of the practice of the many. Even in apostolic times it was the custom of some to absent themselves from public worship, and in all ages since that custom has prevailed. In course of time, in order to counter-

act that custom attendance at public worship was made compulsory, and heavy fines were imposed on those who dared to neglect it. In our day, so far as the State is concerned, church-going is purely optional, though still obligatory from the religious point of view. As a result of the increased amount of liberty allowed the majority abstain entirely from church attendance, not merely through religious indifference, but in most instances as the outcome of the lack of religious beliefs. Now the question is, which is right, the minority or the majority? Men of Mr. Boyd-Scott's stamp take it for granted that the truth is with the minority, while the majority is the victim of error and spiritual blindness. We, on the contrary, maintain that the few who still believe and worship are the slaves of ancient superstition, while the many are the most part are people who have been intellectually and spiritually emancipated.

Mr. Boyd-Scott is, of course, labouring under a serious bias in his treatment of those professing Christians who say, "I can worship God and commune with my Saviour as well by reading the sacred rolls in my own house as in going to the sanctuary. I can have as refreshing a communion on the far side of the Coelian Hill among the fields." At this point the reverend gentleman waxes offensively sarcastic when he says that those who spoke like that long ago "were denied the succulent spiritual nourishment of our Sunday newspapers, and had no petrol to propel them afar into the country on Sundays," and then adds:—

Nevertheless what they said of devotions at home and the Divine temple to be found in the fields and hedgerows, does, in a way, hold water. *But all the time the water of Life was leaking and being wasted.*

That italicized sentence comes from a man who holds a professional brief for public worship, and is an insult to people who may be as good Christians as himself, though they never darken the door of any church. But, alas, he has the Bible and the universal teaching of the orthodox Church at his back. And yet he suspects "that certain of the Sabbath ways of Jesus would have scandalized those followers of his, the Scottish Elders who policed Glasgow Green, one hundred and fifty years ago." Here follows a passage for which there is no warrant in the Four Gospels:—

I am sure that those who betake themselves to quiet hills and wide moors on Sunday in our own day would, on occasion, have met Jesus there. He, too, found thus an enrichment of the Sabbath. But this, too, I know: that, as they met him and went with him over the heather and the high white roads, they had found him stop and turn to go back all too soon in the day, it would seem to them. "Wherefore go back so soon, sir?" "I hear the bell of yonder little church," he would reply. "I must to worship there."

"That is what he always did," the preacher exclaims; and we peremptorily ask, where and when? Give us chapter and verse, please.

Mr. Boyd-Scott holds exaggerated views on the office of the Christian ministry. According to him the true minister possesses and exercises supernatural powers. The Gospel Jesus is reported to have declared: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." Commenting on that saying the preacher says:—

I grant you this Presence is not always felt by us in public worship, and I think I know why. Sometimes it is due to this, that the blessed current of the Divine Spirit, which is Christ, is earthed, so to speak, in him who conducts the supernatural rite called public worship. His is an awe-ful and perilous duty, who is set forth in the sanctuary to open doors and windows for Christ to come close to us. He may be an obstruction, as I suppose he often is. Be indignant with him; be angry with him, but sin not; and above all, pray for him.

To an unprejudiced student of religious rites, particularly the rite of public worship, the conductor thereof is an artist, just as much as a musician, a painter, or a poet; and as everybody knows artists are born, not made. The reason why so many ministers are total failures is that they are made, not born ministers. He alone is a successful preacher who possesses natural gifts for his vocation, and what was done at university and theological seminary was to bring out and train those qualities. We distinctly remember a young man who went triumphantly through public school, college, and seminary, and whose one ambition was to shine as a great, popular preacher; but neither in the United States nor Great Britain was he invited to the pastorate of a single church, large or small. His technical knowledge of the art of preaching was above that of the average minister, and he was well informed on most subjects, but he lacked the essential gifts for acceptable public speaking, and was ultimately obliged to settle down in a very humble way as a school teacher. All the popular preachers of to-day are men naturally qualified and specially trained for their profession. Now, where does the supernatural element come in? Where and how does the operation of the Holy Ghost manifest itself? The saying that God helps only those who help themselves divests the alleged fact of Divine help of every shred of evidence for its reality. So, likewise, the fact that only highly gifted men are successful messengers of the Cross destroys all proof of the claim that they are inspired by the Divine Spirit. If a minister of third rate ability suddenly shone as a mighty mover of men and women and numerous well-nigh miraculous conversions to Christ ensued, there would be some ground for attributing the marvellous transformation to the active presence of God. To be at all successful a preacher must at once have passion and the capacity to excite passion in others. Intellectually he may occupy an extraordinarily low level, as do many eminently successful evangelists; but he must own the gift of playing upon the feelings of his hearers. No one has ever done so in the absence of that power. Again we ask, what evidence is there of the reality of "the supernatural thing called public worship"? We challenge Mr. Boyd-Scott to adduce it. We aver that public worship is a wholly natural thing, conducted by purely natural talents, and that in response to the conductor's passionate appeals the worshippers become greatly touched by emotion, too. The only supernatural thing in public worship is the creation of the imagination of both conductor and worshippers. As long as they can believe in God and Christ both will be subjectively real to them. But happily, that superstitious belief is slowly dying out, and the majority of people are learning to rely upon Reason and knowledge and to govern their lives on wholly natural lines. J. T. LLOYD.

#### A PICTURESQUE PRAYER.

In Frederick G. Detweiler's book on *The Negro Press of the United States*, published recently by the University of Chicago Press, the author quotes the following prayer, delivered by a coloured parson:—

O Lawd, give Thy servant this morning de eye of de eagle and de wisdom of de owl; connect his soul with de gospel telephone in de central skies; 'luminate his brow with de sun of heaben; pizen his mind with love for de people; turpentine his imagination; grease his lips with possum oil; loosen his tongue with de sledgehammer of Thy Power; 'lectrify his brain with de lightnin' of de Word; put 'petual motion in his arms; fill him plum full of de dynamite of Thy Glory; 'noint him all over with de kerosene oil of Thy Salvation, and sot him on fire.—Amen!

This is fiery eloquence in more senses than one.

## An Atheist at Large.

There's society  
By the deep sea, and music.

—Byron.

OWING to the unusual industrial conditions on the Continent, British people have again been somewhat restricted in their search for holiday resorts. Before the war it had grown the fashion to decry home seaside places and to laud to the skies all Continental towns and even villages, whatever their real merits might be. Yet something may still be said in favour of the popular English coast towns, for their history and their attractions are actually entwined with the life of the nation, and the feet of some of the most eminent sons and daughters of England trod their streets and promenades.

Brighton, populous and pebbly, for example, was loved by Thackeray, who made the garrulous figures of the Regency revisit the glimpses of the moon. Hither went Herbert Spencer, one of the most intellectual of men, and George Jacob Holyoake, the brave soldier of Freedom, whilst hundreds of famous people have walked its sea-sprayed promenades. Edward Carpenter enjoyed himself dreamily on Brighton front, and on the breezy downs behind the town; but he was bored at socials and parties. Sunny and shrimpy Margate was loved by the great artist Turner, who came first to the place as a schoolboy, and fell in love with a chum's sister. Thither went John Ruskin later to see the glorious reality of the magic skies that Turner had put on canvas.

It was the old Margate hoy, the forerunner of the steamers, which roused the interest of that inveterate Londoner, Charles Lamb, who, with his sister Mary, spent a holiday there. They visited Hastings, Worthing, Brighton, and Eastbourne, on other occasions. From Hastings Lamb wrote that he had found so small a church that he was bringing it home in his pocket. Neighbouring Ramsgate, with its old-world harbour, attracted Heinrich Heine, when the sensitive poet was depressed by the noise of the Metropolis. High up on a balcony on the west cliff he found rest in the joyous music of the waves. The coastline of this favoured part of England, from Ramsgate to Herne Bay, is crowded with associations of Cowper, Dickens, Keats and Gray. Dante Rossetti is buried in the pretty churchyard at Birchington, and pilgrims visit the little church to see the superb window designed by this artist-poet.

At Canterbury, in the shadow of the Cathedral, is a memorial to "Kynde Kit Marlowe," an audacious poet who did not often trouble the pew-openers, and who did not die in sanctity.

When old and dying, Gladstone went to Bournemouth in the hope that the fine air might be a palliative; and that eccentric genius, Robert Louis Stevenson, resided there for three years. Boscombe, near Bournemouth, is crowded with Shelley relics, and the neighbouring Christchurch is famous for its splendid memorial of the poet. To St. Leonard's Carlyle took his wife when she was suffering in health, and the great writer found the sea and the charming Sussex lanes full of meaning when nigh all else was but dust and ashes in his mouth. People affect to despise Southend, but the broad expanse of the estuary, with its marvellous sunrises and sunsets, has found favour with generations of artists from Turner to Wyllie. Sir Edwin Arnold, the author of *The Light of Asia*, and Robert Buchanan delighted in it, both being tenants of the same house at different periods. Lord Beaconsfield, when plain Benjamin Disraeli, stayed at an old Tudor mansion whose front door was riddled with Cromwellian bullets, and whose cellars had been

used by smugglers. He was rapturous in its praise. "There is no finer place," he wrote to his sister Louise, "when the spring becomes a certainty." Thomas Hardy and Eden Phillpotts have blazoned far and wide the glories of the West Country, and Clement Scott's praise of the "Garden of Sleep" has made Cromer and her fair sister towns blossom like the rose. The truth is, the beaten track has its own peculiar claim, and it is none the worse for being in our own country.

In revisiting the scenes of former glories it is as well not to lay the praise on with a trowel. A former Bishop of Exeter lived at a beautiful house near Torquay, and an enthusiastic and impulsive lady visitor burst into adjectives, and cried: "How lovely this spot is. It is so Swiss." "Yes, ma'am," calmly said old Harry of Exeter, "it is very Swiss; only there is no sea in Switzerland, and there are no mountains here."

MIMNERMUS.

## The Retreat to Heaven.

IN our absurd arrogance we Europeans sometimes speak of the "savage and ignorant natives of Central Africa." These tribes, however, are not altogether inefficient in the spheres of the arts and crafts; and, after reading a Bantu legend current in Barotseland, I fancy some of them possess a type of shrewd and ironic philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Of this singular story I will give an outline. I call it "The Retreat to Heaven," and the reader will presently see by what extraordinary means this long journey was effected. The reason for the retreat was still more extraordinary.

Once upon a time—indeed, before human time started—a divine being, named Nyambi, and his wife, were the only persons in existence. Nyambi possessed abilities, and he amused himself in making rivers, trees, fishes, birds, and other animals; and at last he made a man and a woman, the man's name being Kumunu. Now, those of us who have been well educated know that when man was created in a region north of the equator, the result was unfortunate for the man. Man fell into sin, and John Milton, with the Heavenly Muse's aid, has given a complete account of the affair, beginning:—

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse!

A somewhat different account reaches us from Barotseland, which lies south of the equator, and it would appear from this report that the man Kumunu came out of the encounter with the Gods rather more successfully than did Adam.

The contest began over a spoon. Humble as a spoon may seem, its essential significance is profound. It is a tool, or instrument, enabling man to do certain things more readily than with his mere hands. If you examine civilization, you will discover that its triumphs lie in this very capacity to invent instruments which act as a medium between man and Nature, or man and man. From the spoon and hatchet to the surgical instrument, or the types used in printing, the vast series of instruments is a record of victory, of expansion, of ascent, and of the Promethean genius which ever looks forward to new achievement. So, when Nyambi made a spoon, Kumunu watched him; and Kumunu made a spoon, too; and this was the opening scene of human history.

<sup>1</sup> The legend is given fully in D. W. Stirke's *Barotseland: Eight Years Among the Barotse* (Published by J. Bale, 1922).

The iron age commenced. Kumunu killed an antelope with a piece of iron, and he ate the meat. God was alarmed. He drove Man to an outer wilderness. Man came back. If this is not excellent history, then I have never understood history. What is our entire past but a going into desperate wildernesses against our will, and a courageous and effective will-to-go-back? As I read such chronicles, I feel that I am a natural member of the Barotse school of sociology.

Nyambi was much perturbed when he was informed by a spy (a "small animal," says the reporter, with a sort of sarcastic smile) that Kumunu had been seen carrying an anvil and a pot of medicine. An anvil! Why, this is the means whereby man turns chaotic iron lumps into a cosmos, an orderly world, of knives, plough-shares, gates and bars. A pot of medicine! Why, here is the means by which man, more or less efficiently, heals his own aches instead of cadging assistance from Nyambi and the Nyambic priesthood. The small animal certainly knew how to pick out the evidence.

Kumunu asked Nyambi for a piece of land in which to plant a garden, and God, not without suspicion, granted the request. The first thing grown was mealies, or maize; and, having started in agriculture, our man resolved to protect the capital thus created, and he systematically killed the animals who got into his allotment, and ate his mealies. The Barotse chronicles rather oddly state that Nyambi forgave Kumunu. It has the air of a compulsory pardon.

But Kumunu's world had its tragedies. His dog died; his medicine-pot broke; his son died. When Kumunu approached Nyambi and begged for remedies for the ills that flesh is heir to, one might expect to hear Nyambi laugh in derision. Not so. There was a glint in Kumunu's eye, and a decisiveness even in his tone of prayer that warned God of coming revolutions; and Nyambi jumped on to an island in the midst of a big river.

The late Francis Thompson wrote a poem on the Hound of Heaven, in which he pictured the Spirit of God as perpetually pursuing man. Barotse poetry reverses the situation. Kumunu cut a bundle of reeds, constructed a raft, and followed Nyambi to the island. Destiny had now brought God and Man to a point at which a trial of strength was necessary. Both sides felt it. Nyambi bade the animals (his obedient servants, you observe) to fetch piles of fire-wood, and light an immense fire, on which God placed a huge pot. One fancies it as a kind of witch's cauldron. God called on animals and man to take the pot off the fire. And here comes in the decisive factor of the instrument, or faculty of adaptation. The animals rushed forward, and a universal burning of paws and claws ended in a universal failure.

Kumunu stepped last to the task. He shrewdly sprinkled water on the fire—a device which, like Columbus's breaking of the end of the egg, was simple enough if you happened to think of it. Then he fashioned a thick pad of grass, thoroughly wetted it, fastened it round the rim of the pot, and, to the amazement of animals and Gods, lugged the cauldron off the blazes without injuring his hands. I almost believe our friend Kumunu might have caught Herbert Spencer's meaning, when that philosopher of Derby said, in his *First Principles* :—

We perceive that this which we call Intelligence shows itself when the external relations to which the internal ones are adjusted begin to be numerous, complex, and remote in time or space; that every advance in Intelligence essentially consists in the establishment of more varied, more complete, and more involved adjustments.....Life, in all its manifestations, inclusive of Intelligence in its highest forms, consists in the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.

At any rate, when Nyambi had witnessed Kumunu's "involved adjustment" of the grass pad to the hot pot, he decided to relinquish the unequal duel. He called the Spider to him, and besought that representative of the engineering craft to spin a thread from earth to sky. The Spider did so. Nyambi, in the best sailor-style, climbed his rope, and retreated to heaven. Mr. D. W. Stirke, from whose careful volume I have drawn the foregoing particulars, adds that he is told by people on the spot that Nyambi is still the God of Barotseland. I am not sure that I understand the position. Perhaps Nyambi is permitted to stay in heaven on condition that, like a highly constitutional monarch, he never governs anybody or anything. Or perhaps he serves as a Barotse symbol of the wonderful First Cause which theologians learnedly talk about, and which always acts in human affairs through human means; that is to say, through comrade Kumunu.

In any case, the honours rest with Kumunu.

F. J. GOULD.

## About the Holy Bible.

### II.

(Continued from page 492.)

Is it because of total depravity that some people refuse to believe that God went into partnership with insects and granted letters of marque and reprisal to hornets;<sup>24</sup> that he wasted forty days and nights furnishing Moses with plans and specifications for a tabernacle, an ark, a mercy seat and two cherubs of gold, a table, four rings, some dishes and spoons, one candlestick, three bowls, seven lamps, a pair of tongs, some snuff dishes (for all of which God had patterns), ten curtains with fifty loops, a roof for the tabernacle of rams' skins dyed red, a lot of boards, an altar with horns, ash pans, basins, and flesh hooks, and fillets of silver and pins of brass; that he told Moses to speak unto all the wise-hearted that he had filled with wisdom, that they might make a suit of clothes for Aaron, and that God actually gave directions that an ephod "shall have the two shoulder-pieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof," and gave all the orders concerning mitres, girdles, and onyx stones, ouches, emeralds, breastplates, chains, rings, Urim and Thummim, and the hole in the top of the ephod like the hole of a habergeon?<sup>25</sup>

Is it to be wondered at that some people have doubted the statement that God told Moses how to make some ointment, hair oil, and perfume, and then made it a crime punishable with death to make any like them? Think of a God killing a man for imitating his ointment!<sup>26</sup> Think of a God saying that he made heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day and was refreshed!<sup>27</sup> Think of this God threatening to destroy the Jews, and being turned from his purpose because Moses told him that the Egyptians might mock him!<sup>28</sup>

What must we think of a man impudent enough to break in pieces tables of stone upon which God had written with his finger? What must we think of the goodness of a man that would issue the following order :—

Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.<sup>29</sup>

Is it true that the God of the Bible demanded human sacrifice? Did it please him for man to kill his neighbour, for brother to murder his brother, and for the father to butcher his son? If there is a God let him cause it to

<sup>24</sup> Ex. xxiii, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Ex. xxx, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Ex. xxxii, 11, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ex. xxvii and xxviii.

<sup>28</sup> Ex. xxxi, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ex. xxxii, 27-29.

be written in the book of his memory, opposite my name, that I refuted this slander and denied this lie.

Could it be a consolation to a man when dying to think that he had always believed that God told Aaron to take two goats and draw lots to see which goat should be killed and which should be a scape-goat? <sup>32</sup> And that upon the head of the scapegoat Aaron should lay both his hands and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and put them all on the head of the goat, and send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and that the goat should bear upon him all the iniquities of the people into a land not inhabited? <sup>33</sup> How could a goat carry away a load of iniquities and transgressions? Why should he carry them to a land uninhabited? Were these sins contagious? About how many sins could an average goat carry? Could a man meet such a goat now without laughing?

Why should God object to a man wearing a garment made of woollen and linen? Why should he care whether a man rounded the corners of his beard? <sup>34</sup> Why should God prevent a man from offering the sacred bread merely because he had a flat nose, or was lame, or had five fingers on one hand, or had a broken foot, or was a dwarf? If he objected to such people, why did he make them? <sup>35</sup>

How, in the desert of Sinai, did the Jews obtain curtains of fine linen? How did these absconding slaves make cherubs of gold? Where did they get the skins of badgers, and how did they dye them red? How did they make wreathed chains and spoons, basins and tongs? Where did they get their blue cloth and their purple? Where did they get the sockets of brass? How did they coin the shekel of the sanctuary? How did they overlay boards with gold? Where did they get the numberless instruments and tools necessary to accomplish all these things? Where did they get the fine flour and the oil? Were all these found in the desert of Sinai? Is it a sin to ask these questions? Are all these doubts born of a malignant and depraved heart? Why should God in this desert prohibit priests from drinking wine, and from eating moist grapes? How could these priests get wine?

Do not these passages show that these laws were made long after the Jews had left the desert, and that they were not given from Sinai? Can you imagine a God silly enough to tell a horde of wandering savages upon a desert that they must not eat any fruit of the trees they planted until the fourth year?

Ought a man to be despised and persecuted for denying that God ordered the priests to make women drink dirt and water to test their virtue? <sup>36</sup> Or for denying that over the tabernacle there was a cloud during the day and fire by night, and that the cloud lifted up when God wished the Jews to travel, and that until it was lifted they remained in their tents? <sup>37</sup> Can it be possible that the "ark of the covenant" travelled on its own account, and that "when the ark set forward" the people followed, as is related in the tenth chapter of the holy book of Numbers?

Was it reasonable for God to give the Jews manna, and nothing else year after year? He had infinite power, and could just as easily have given them something good, in reasonable variety, as to have fed them on manna until they loathed the sight of it, and longingly remembered the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt. And yet when the poor people complained of the diet and asked for a little meat, this loving and merciful God became enraged, sent them millions of quails in his wrath, and while they were eating, while the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, this amiable God smote the people with a plague and killed all those that lusted after meat. In a few days after, he made up his mind to kill the rest, but was dissuaded when Moses told him that the Canaanites would laugh at him. <sup>38</sup> No wonder the poor Jews wished they were back in Egypt. No wonder they had rather be the slaves of Pharaoh than the chosen people of God. No wonder they preferred the wrath of Egypt to the love of heaven. In my judgment, the Jews would have fared far better if Jehovah had let

them alone, or had he even taken the side of the Egyptians.

When the poor Jews were told by their spies that the Canaanites were giants, they, seized with fear, said, "Let us go back to Egypt." For this their God doomed all except Joshua and Caleb to a wandering death. Hear the words of this most merciful God: "But as for you, your carcasses they shall fall in this wilderness, and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years and bear your" sins "until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness." <sup>39</sup> And yet this same God promised to give unto all these people a land flowing with milk and honey.

And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day.

And they, that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.

And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.

And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died. <sup>40</sup>

When the last stone was thrown, and he that was a man was but a mangled, bruised, and broken mass, this God turned, and, *touched with pity*, said:—

Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue. <sup>41</sup>

In the next chapter, this Jehovah, whose loving kindness is over all his works, because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram objected to being starved to death in the wilderness, made the earth open and swallow not only them but their wives and their little ones. Not yet satisfied, he sent a plague and killed fourteen thousand seven hundred more. There never was in the history of the world such a cruel, revengeful, bloody, jealous, fickle, unreasonable, and fiendish ruler, emperor, or king as Jehovah. No wonder the children of Israel cried out, "Behold we die, we perish, we all perish."

I cannot believe that a dry stick budded, blossomed, and bore almonds; that the ashes of a red heifer are a purification for sin; <sup>42</sup> that God gave the cities into the hands of the Jews because they solemnly agreed to murder all the inhabitants; that God became enraged and induced snakes to bite his chosen people; that God told Balaam to go with the Princess of Moab, and then got angry because he did go; and that an animal ever saw an angel and conversed with a man. I cannot believe that thrusting a spear through the body of a woman ever stayed a plague; <sup>43</sup> that any good man ever ordered his soldiers to slay the men and keep the maidens alive for themselves; that God commanded men not to show mercy to each other; that he induced men to obey his commandments by promising them that he would assist them in murdering the wives and children of their neighbours; or that he ever commanded a man to kill his wife because she differed with him about religion; <sup>44</sup> or that God was mistaken about hares chewing the cud; <sup>45</sup> or that he objected to the people raising horses; <sup>46</sup> or that God wanted a camp kept clean because he walked through it at night; <sup>47</sup> or that he commanded widows to spit in the faces of their brothers-in-law; <sup>48</sup> or that he ever threatened to give anybody the itch; <sup>49</sup> or that he ever secretly buried a man and allowed the corpse to write an account of the funeral.

Does it necessarily follow that a man wishes to commit some crime if he refuses to admit that the river Jordan cut itself in two and allowed the lower end to run away? <sup>50</sup> Or that seven priests could blow seven rams' horns loud enough to throw down the walls of a city; <sup>51</sup> or that God after Achan had confessed that he had secreted a garment and a wedge of gold, became good natured as soon as Achan and his sons and daughters had been stoned to

<sup>32</sup> Lev. xvi, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Lev. xix, 19, 27.

<sup>36</sup> Num. v, 12-31.

<sup>38</sup> Num. xiv, 15, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Lev. xvi, 21, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Lev. xxi, 18-20.

<sup>37</sup> Num. ix, 16-18.

<sup>39</sup> Num. xiv, 32-33.

<sup>41</sup> Num. xv, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Num. xxv, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Deut. xiv, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Deut. xxiii, 13, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Deut. xxviii, 27.

<sup>51</sup> Josh. vi, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Num. xv, 32-36.

<sup>42</sup> Num. xix, 2-10.

<sup>44</sup> Deut. xiii, 6-10.

<sup>46</sup> Deut. xvii, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Deut. xxv, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Josh. iii, 16.

death and their bodies burned? <sup>52</sup> Is it not a virtue to abhor such a God?

Can any sane man believe that the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day, and that the moon stayed? <sup>53</sup> That these miracles were performed in the interest of massacre and bloodshed; that the Jews destroyed men, women, and children by the million, and practised every cruelty that the ingenuity of their God could suggest? Is it possible that these things really happened? Is it possible that God commanded them to be done? Again I ask you to read the book of Joshua. After reading all its horrors you will feel a grim satisfaction in the dying words of Joshua to the children of Israel:—

Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land. <sup>54</sup>

Think of a God who boasted that he gave the Jews a land for which they did not labour, cities which they did not build, and allowed them to eat of oliveyards and vineyards which they did not plant. <sup>55</sup> Think of a God who murders some of his children for the benefit of the rest, and then kills the rest because they are not thankful enough. Think of a God who had the power to stop the sun and the moon, but could not defeat an army that had iron chariots. <sup>56</sup>

R. G. INGERSOLL.

(To be Concluded.)

## Acid Drops.

The *Church Times* reviewer of Professor Van Dyke's biography of Catherine de' Medici points out that although she was one of the originators of the St. Bartholomew Massacre she was a woman of high moral character. This is a very striking tribute, and is worthy of more attention than we can give it at present, but it is illustrative of the narrow meaning which Christians habitually give to "morality." For all that is meant here is sexual morality. There is no doubt but that Catherine lied, abused, intrigued, played false, and was willing to murder thousands of men, women, and children, because of a difference of religious belief. But in the eyes of a Christian that did not prevent her being called a "moral" woman. For a really distorting influence on morals commend us to Christianity.

It may also be noted that Catherine's worst actions came out in connection with her religious convictions. And that illustrates another feature very usual with devout followers of the Christian religion. It has long been observed that some of the worst persecutors in the history of the Christian religion have been men who were in other respects admirable persons. Had they been more careless about the welfare of others they would have persecuted less. But the very fact of their concern for the welfare of others made them the more anxious to wipe out heresy. To put the matter in the form of a paradox, had they been worse men they would have been better citizens. As it was the effect of Christianity upon them was to distort their better feelings to a worse end. Christianity often gave a sanction to the gratification of man's worst passions, and quite as often it took his better ones and used them to a vile purpose. When the history of Christianity is written by competent and courageous historians, it is along this line that the severest indictment will be framed.

In connection with the Hickson Healing Mission in South Africa, it was reported at the last meeting of the Witwatersrand branch of the British Medical Association that there had been no improvement in any of the cases. Mr. Hickson had visited in the Johannesburg Hospital, and that there were no known cases of improvement in organic diseases. In fact, beyond an improvement in

some cases of neurosis, nothing was noted of any benefit to the patients visited. The matter came up for discussion as a result of a letter received by Dr. Charles Porter from a New Zealand practitioner, who asked what the attitude of the local profession was to the Mission. After some discussion it was agreed that a reply be sent that the Witwatersrand branch of the profession adopted a neutral attitude. Our own feeling is that Mr. Hickson stands in much the same category as the poor woman sentenced to imprisonment for fortune telling. Mr. Hickson professes to cure sufferers supernaturally, and even to expel devils by the sign of the Cross, and his pretensions are as fraudulent as those of the fortune teller. But while the latter exploits human credulity for pecuniary gain, the former does the same under the cloak of religion. Both are charlatans, but the one is lauded and revered, while the other is kicked and reviled.

At a Wesleyan conference held in King William's Town a resolution was passed asking for the immediate discontinuance of Sunday drilling by members of the Defence Force. Not content with the enslavement of the mind, these miserable ranters and kill-joys would hinder bodily development as well. Utterly callous and selfish towards the best interests of their fellow citizens, they would inflict their nauseous mouthings and superstitious rubbish upon all and sundry at the expense of both mental and physical development. To be logical they must also veto Sunday cooking, travelling, bathing, walking, and reading. But as this course would adversely affect themselves it is pretty safe to assert they will do nothing of the kind. Nor is their object otherwise than a sordid one, and they would force church attendance on the unwilling and replenish their dwindling coffers and lessening congregations. Under the hypocritical plea of Sunday Rest and the Sanctity of the Sabbath, they mask their real aim and religious graft. But cant, rant and religious hypocrisy have had their day like every other dead dog, and by resorting to such methods these modern successors of John Wesley are simply spitting against the wind and signing their own death warrant. If religious maniacs and back-worldsmen want to indulge their superstitious proclivities in line with the primitive caveman none will say them nay. Let them observe Old Sol's festival day to their hearts' content. But at the same time let them beware of attempting to thrust their religious nostrums upon those who view them with loathing and contempt. That way retribution lies.

It is instructive to note the ease with which the popular literary papers avoid any direct reference to Atheism or Freethought. For instance, we read recently an article on the "Last words of Great Men," in a paper called *Cassell's Weekly*, a journal which with *John O' London* shares the affection of the semi-educated British public. The anonymous paragraphist began with Goethe's death-bed request for "More Light," with Charles Sorley's comment that what he needed was more warmth. Poor Wilde is called a *poseur* because he told a sympathetic friend that he was "dying beyond his means." It may not be so edifying as William Pitt's "I think I could eat one of Bellamy's pork pies," but it was just as natural. The only remark that is quoted and which savours of contempt for popular religion is that of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, "I suppose I am becoming a God." There is an ironical disdain beneath the words that is worthy of Anatole France.

Over against Latimer and Cranmer with their prose or less apocryphal sentences, the paragraphist might have set Lucille Vanini, who was burnt alive for Atheism, with his "Come, let us die cheerfully and like a philosopher," and his disdainful reference to the mythical figure of the Gospels, "He sweated with fear and trembling, and I die undaunted." It was not an idle boast, but we suppose this would have been a little too strong for the readers of *Cassell's Weekly*. Yet we ought, perhaps, to be thankful that we were spared the stories of the deathbeds of infidels that were once the chief items of those who were not above lying for the greater glory of God.

<sup>52</sup> Josh. vii, 24, 25.

<sup>53</sup> Josh. x, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Josh. xiii, 13.

<sup>55</sup> Josh. xxiv, 13.

<sup>56</sup> Judges i, 19.

The first baptism for over 125 years took place in the Chapel of St. Nicholas, Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight, recently. This beats the record of some of the City of London churches.

In one week it is estimated that 40,000 persons visited the Holy Mary shrine at Carfin, Lanarkshire. Father Taylor, the local priest, invites all those who have been cured as a result of their pilgrimage. We have no doubt that a few will write, but there is the huge majority who have not been cured, and we wonder what Father Taylor will take of them? Forty thousand people travel to the shrine asking God to cure them. Two or three claim to be cured. On what ground did God make the selection? And why not cure the lot? All we have to say is that given a sufficient advertisement we will cure as large a proportion of pilgrims through stroking their left ear with a packet of fly-papers.

It seems to be the aim of the British Press generally to misrepresent the Russian situation. Dr. Rushbrooke, who has travelled extensively in Russia, has given the direct lie to some of the stories related in our newspapers; and at the World Baptist Congress recently held at Stockholm there were Russian delegates. The Rev. F. C. Spurr, having heard the story told by those delegates as well as by Dr. Rushbrooke, says, in his report of the Congress in the *Christian World* of August 2:—

One thing is certain—there have been exaggerations of the situation to the English public. There is far more religious freedom in new Russia than is generally supposed. Dr. Rushbrooke resents some of the statements made in the English Press.

Truth will out ultimately, however resolutely its enemies may endeavour to conceal it. Because the heads of the present Russian Government are Atheists, it has been taken for granted by the pulpit and the Press of this country that a policy of the cruelest persecution of Christianity is being heartlessly pursued in that land. We believed all along, and now we positively know, that the charge is and has been largely if not wholly false. Every now and then fresh evidence of its lying character oozes out. The following passage ought to convince any pulpit or newspaper concerned that it has been harbouring and uttering a lie against a Government it so utterly dislikes:—

In the *Christian Century* for July 19 Bishop Blake describes his recent mission to Russia along with Dr. Hartman, editor of *Zion's Herald*. Many of the facts are familiar, but it is interesting to learn from Bishop Blake that "fifty thousand Russian priests are doing their work as usual. I attended a service in the cathedral at Moscow," he says, "where more than 10,000 people were present, and there was no interference of any kind whatever. I preached twice in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Petrograd to crowded congregations. Our people have carried on their activities throughout the revolution without any interference from the Government whatever, and their work is more prosperous than ever before. It is the universal testimony that more people are now attending the services of the Church than before the revolution.

The *Church Times* of July 27 devotes a long leading article to a lively discussion of the Modernist School. A well-known characteristic of this School is that it retains Catholic dogma and ritual, but "provides them with a mythical basis." "It will be seen from this that the genuine Modernist is a very dangerous person, because he expresses himself in terms of the most unimpeachable orthodoxy." In other words, the Modernist cannot be a thoroughly honest man. He permits people to infer that he is what he is not by attaching new meanings to old phrases.

Modernism is a half-way inn between Catholicism and Secularism. Some Modernists have left the inn behind and are nearing the only logical destination. Professor Heiler, for example, insists upon "the irrational character of religion," and pours "contempt upon the philosophers and schoolmen." Faith, being essentially

irrational, needs no basis either in history or in metaphysics. Dean Inge says "that the Modernist position amounts to belief in and worship of a Being who never existed." From this it follows that the only really consistent Modernist is the Freethinker who neither worships nor believes in a purely imaginary deity.

The invisibility of God and Christ is freely admitted by all theologians, and yet highly emotional believers declare that they often see them both. The Rev. Boyd-Scott, of Glasgow goes further still and affirms that the Lord's Supper is "the Sacrament wherein we see Christ face to face." In calm moments the devoutest Christians are aware that such a statement is not and cannot be true. Those who believe it allow their unbridled imagination to run hopelessly away with them and put their Reason to sleep; and the worst that can be said of them is that they are perfectly sincere.

The Student Christian Conference has just been held at Swanwick. Among the speakers was Canon Barnes, who made a most extraordinary confession, for a clergyman. He is reported to have "suggested that the kingdom of God cannot come on this earth, though there has been progression during the hundred millions of years that have passed and will continue over the hundred millions the Canon thinks it will still last." No wonder such a statement did not meet with the sanction of the audience, for this is the claim for making which the *Freethinker* has been so persistently boycotted by Christians. This paper has consistently contended that Christianity is a failure because it is an impossible religion, and that it is an impossible religion because it is not true.

In connection with the Conference there was a "limerick session," during which a roguish member caused roars of laughter by declaiming the following impromptu and personal limerick:—

There once was a Canon named Barnes,  
Who was horribly fond of tall yarns.  
His tales about billions  
Were thoroughly silly uns,  
And how did you measure them, Barnes?

The Dean of Windsor declares that "people must learn to give and not to get." The clergy have said much the same thing for thousands of years, and they have usually had the alms-dish handy when they said it.

A notice of a new actor mentions that he has a throat made of leather and lungs of brass. The Christian Evidence Society ought to get after that man.

Birmingham police report 767 cases of individual loss or damage by lightning and rain during the recent phenomenal storm. What do the local clergy say of these "acts of God?"

Heavy rains have caused the Yangtze river to overflow, and twenty districts, an area of the size of England, are under water. One million people are homeless and heavy loss of life and property is reported. Swarms are perched on the hills without food, and the suffering is intense. There seems too much Providence in this account.

General Booth, on returning to London after a trip to Christiania and Stockholm, said that at a meeting in the former town he had five murderers among his audience. Let us hope that the faithful five will enter heaven arm-in-arm.

Parish magazines are a joy for ever. The Rev. R. C. Mackeown, Vicar of Fenny-Stratford, writes in his magazine that during the holidays the congregation need not slacken, as the Devil will be staying in the parish as usual. The camera-men should make a note of Fenny-Stratford.



### To Correspondents.

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

H. BLACK.—It is only what we should expect that your daughter would continue to do what she could in Australia to spread the gospel of Freethought. She is her father's daughter. Our regards to her when you write. We hope to be in Salford early in the Autumn, and the bigots will probably then regret that they were not animated by a livelier sense of justice when dealing with the *Freethinker* and the public libraries.

O. J. BOULTON.—Thanks for poem, which we regret we are unable to use. The versification is rather strained.

N.S.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges: R. B. Harrison, 5s.

H. W. HAYLER.—The views of Jews concerning Jesus differ, as they do among other people. He is regarded as a myth by some, or a mere teacher—of better or worse quality—by others. But there is no reason why present day Jews should know more about Jesus than other people, than there is for regarding an Italian as necessarily an authority upon the life of Julius Cæsar. One Jewish view of Jesus is to be found in the *Jewish Life of Christ*, which can be obtained from this office, price 6d.

OWING to the holidays some letters are held over till next week.

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 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 the 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 at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year 15.; half year, 7. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

### Sugar Plums.

A discussion is being arranged between Mr. E. Clifford Williams, president of the Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S., and the Rev. W. Rawlings, of St. Mark's Church. The subject is "Christianity v. Secularism." The date of the discussion is not yet fixed, but it will be about the middle of September.

After his successful three weeks' campaign in Preston, at which he addressed twenty-two meetings, Mr. Whitehead pays a return visit to Nelson where he is speaking to-day (August 12), and on Monday he goes to Birmingham for a fortnight and thence to Swansea. We hope to have as good reports from both these towns. Swansea Freethinkers should have their preparations well in hand. For further particulars see "Guide Notice."

A daughter of an old Manchester friend, Mr. H. Black, writes her father from East Australia that she has often noted how people who take no active interest in religion shrink from the suggestion of identifying themselves with Freethought. She thinks it will be a clever person who can devise a means of overcoming this difficulty. So far

as we are concerned we can see only one way in which this difficulty may be overcome. The class referred to is obviously one that is guided by thoughts of what is popular and safe. They do not intend to run any risks by championing an unpopular opinion. And, therefore, the only way in which the dull opposition of this class can be broken down is to go on making individual Freethinkers. Every convert we make is modifying the environment in the direction of making it possible for the class named to live a mentally healthy and honest life. When Freethought is more popular than it is there are thousands that will come with a rush. It is the work of the pioneer that is hardest—and the work that is best worth doing.

"Searchlight" writes us from South Africa:—

The circulation of the *Freethinker* in Johannesburg is increasing, and it seems larger quantities are being sold weekly. But owing to continued commercial depression and unemployment a considerable period is likely to elapse before the book trade becomes either normal or brisk. A certain amount of useful spade work is being done by individual Freethinkers in the way of advertising the publications of the Freethought Press by sending specimen copies of journals through the post sometimes accompanied by leaflets. Occasionally the societies and their publications show up in the Press. In the *Cape Mercury*, published in King William's Town, I read: "To-day there are a considerable number of people who call themselves Rationalists and Freethinkers. They publish such papers as the *Literary Guide* and the *Freethinker*, and have formed the Rationalist Press Association and the National Secular Society. These people do not look upon the Bible as a divinely inspired book. Of God, human beings, they assert, can know nothing. Every human being has a more or less different idea of Him. We should, they say, look to our reason as our guide in life. We should not accept as true anything contrary to human experience. If a thing is true it can be proved at any time. We are not justified in believing anything beyond human proof. We accept what we find beneficial and leave alone what we find to be harmful. Moral conduct has its foundation in self-interest or self-preservation, not in religious beliefs, which may or may not be true. We do the right thing because it contributes to the general good. If we do the wrong thing we are punished either by our fellows or by Nature."

We are pleased to hear of this growing interest in the *Freethinker*. There is room for much larger sales in all our colonies.

It is announced that the *Clarion*, after an existence of over thirty years, is to cease to appear. A very large sum of money has been sunk in recent years to keep it afloat, but bad times and the very high cost of printing have been too much for those responsible for its existence. Several other advanced papers have ceased to appear within the past year or two, and it is rumoured that others are nearing their end. Taking all things into consideration we should think the past three years have been the very hardest that papers championing unpopular causes have ever experienced. Only those behind the scenes know the constant worry and struggle involved. We are sorry to see the *Clarion* go. It has done substantial work. Those responsible would wish no better epitaph.

### THE MAN OF GOD.

He has an immense advantage over all other public speakers. The platform orator is subject to the criticism of hisses and groans. Counsel for the plaintiff expects the retort of Counsel for the defendant. Even the scientific or literary lecturer, if he is dull or incompetent, may see the best part of his audience slip out one by one. But the preacher is completely master of the situation; no one may hiss, no one may depart. Like the writer of imaginary conversations, he may put what imbecilities he places into the mouths of his antagonists, and swell with triumph when he has refuted them. He may riot in gratuitous assertions, confident that no man will contradict him; he may exercise perfect freewill in logic, and invent illustrative experiences; he may give an evangelical edition of history with the inconvenient facts omitted; all this he may do, certain that those of his hearers who are not sympathising are not listening.—George Eliot.

## The Star of Bethlehem.

EIGHTEEN hundred and ninety-eight years ago, if we are to believe the Gospel, a number of astrologers came from a wide region called "the east" to Judea. They were led thither by a wonderful star, which apparently accommodated itself to their rate of locomotion, and descended low enough to journey visibly over the earth's surface. This bit of celestial pyrotechny was of course the star of some great person's nativity, and on arriving at a house in Bethlehem, over which it rested, they learned that an uncrowned and unanointed King of the Jews had just been born in a stable and was cradled in a manger. After giving him the presents they had considerably brought with them, they returned to "the east," and were never heard of afterwards. What is still more curious, they were never mentioned in the whole course of that wonderful child's career, although their visit to Bethlehem, and the subsequent massacre of the innocents, should have kept them fresh in the memory of every inhabitant of Palestine.

It is also recorded in the New Testament that the birth of this wonderful child was marked by the appearance of angels to some nameless shepherds in an unknown place. These angelic visitors proclaimed peace on earth and good-will towards men, or peace among the restricted class of men in whom the Lord "is well pleased," as the Revised Version expresses it.

Accordingly, it has been the custom of Christian scribes and preachers to celebrate the astral herald of Christ's nativity as the morning star of a new day. Every fresh Christmas sees this threadbare theme new-worn. Pulpiteers and pious journalists expatiate *ad nauseam* on the immorality and brutality of pre-Christian civilization, and the goodness and tenderness which have gradually crept over the world as Christianity has advanced. Fortunately for these professional apologists, they can presume on the most utter ignorance of their readers and hearers, and, neglecting history and the logic of facts, they are able to give a free rein to their cheap and tawdry rhetoric. Nor does it in the least interfere with their periodical jubiliations that while they praise their perfect system, which has had eighteen centuries to produce its perfect fruit, they are obliged to bewail the ghastly diseases of Christian civilization; its chronic pauperism, its rampant vices, its widespread drunkenness, its criminality, its costly military systems, outvieing anything which even Rome ever witnessed, and the frightful scale of its wars, as well as its warlike preparations, which are a strange commentary on the gospel of peace. True, there are some dissonant voices in this well-practised chorus, but they are nearly lost in the swelling volume of sound. A Shelley sings of "the Galilean serpent," and a Swinburne of "the poison of the crucifix." Such voices, however, are only audible to discriminating ears, and so the sweet songsters of orthodoxy keep the concert pretty much to themselves.

Glancing back over eighteen centuries of history with a free and fearless eye, who can truthfully assert that the Star of Bethlehem was the herald of a better day? It is quite obvious to the candid student that Christianity wrought no practical improvement on the great body of the Roman Empire, either before or after it secured the patronage of Constantine. The early Christian emperors were not a whit more moral than the Pagan Cæsars. They were simply pale copies of great originals; and if their vices were less flagrant and monstrous than those of a Nero or a Caligula, their virtues were insignificant beside those of an Augustus or an Antoninus. Not is it easy to see in what respect the gladiatorial shows at Rome were

worse than the faction-fights at Constantinople. Still less is it easy to see how the burning and torturing of Christians by Pagans were any worse than the burnings and torturings of heretics by their fellow Christians.

Intellectually, Christianity merely substituted a new and vigorous superstition for an old and dying one, which was gradually being supplanted among the educated classes by a prudent, though spirited, philosophy. The gods of Olympus gave place to the Trinity and the Devil, who wielded all the arbitrary power of their predecessors without exhibiting any of their grace or *bonhomie*. The national religions succumbed to one of universal pretensions, and their spirit of mutual toleration was succeeded by a malignant fanaticism which regarded every difference of opinion as a crime. And while the national religions were always more or less subservient to temporal welfare, the new religion dwarfed this world into the mere vestibule of heaven or hell.

Borrowing the bigotry of Judaism, exalting faith as the supreme virtue, and denouncing unbelief as the blackest sin, Christianity did its best to obscure and degrade morality. At the same time it arrested intellectual progress, which always follows mental dissatisfaction and the restless spirit of inquiry. The proof of this can be given in a sentence. During six or seven centuries of undisputed supremacy Christianity could not point to a single new discovery in science, or to a single new book of the least importance to literature. What more damning impeachment than this could be conceived? Nor can it be answered by pointing to what Christendom has since produced, for there was no sign of improvement until Arabian science flashed its light upon the darkness of Europe. Even then the Church intercepted its rays as far as possible, and she might have succeeded in restoring the old darkness had it not been for the Renaissance, which was simply the revelation of the classic art, literature, and philosophy of Greece and Rome, and the political reconstruction of Europe, which, by inducing quarrels between princes and popes, led to the so-called Reformation.

Since the Reformation the progress of Europe has been wonderful, but it has not been inspired by Christianity. The leading minds in every branch of intellectual activity have been accounted heretics by their own generation, and the nearer we approach to our own day the more distinct is the line of separation between the Churches and the great discoverers and thinkers. It is now impossible to give an accurate list of the chief scientists and writers in Christendom without including three sceptics for every believer.

But while the progressive movement is wholly inspired by scepticism, and mainly conducted by Free-thinkers, the Government, that is the organized forces of society, is in the hands of orthodoxy, which rules in our legislative halls, our courts of justice, our universities, our schools, and in every department of the public service. Obviously, therefore, it is orthodoxy that must bear the responsibility for the chronic evils and the low tone of society. Let us look into these phenomena and see what that responsibility amounts to.

What has the Gospel of Peace brought us to? Europe has now more than ten times as many soldiers as sufficed to preserve the peace and integrity of the Roman Empire when it was surrounded by hostile and predatory barbarians. Europe is, in fact, an armed camp, not for the repulsion of barbarians, but for internecine war among Christian states. After eighteen centuries of the Gospel of Peace, Christendom is darkened by the shadow of the sword, and the highest honours are paid to successful generals who are skilled in the art of slaughter.

Treating man as a spiritual instead of a material entity, Christianity has no remedy for the vices it perfunctorily reprobates. Drunkenness is not diminished by sermons, nor are the grosser forms of vice lessened by unctuous texts, while families crowd in single rooms, while filth breeds fever, and promiscuous herding destroys modesty and self-respect. Not by futile appeals to the will, but by wise political and social changes can this state of things be altered. Christianity wastes its breath in preaching "righteousness," while Freethought strives for practical reform.

Hypocrisy, which is one of the meanest vices, is essentially a Christian product. Orthodox travellers tell us that they find very little of in the heathen world, but when they return to Christendom they find it circulating in the very atmosphere. The reason of this melancholy fact is not remote. The evil is entirely due to the exaltation of belief over conduct, and the erection of false and impossible standards which are openly revered and privately neglected. Theophrastus gives us one Character of a Hypocrite, and not a particularly offensive one. The literature of Christendom gives us scores of the most disgusting type.

The benefits of Christianity appear in the apologies of its professional champions, its evils are written large on the pages of impartial history. What real good has it ever achieved? Deny it the right to appropriate all the improvement of the secular intellect and the natural growth of humanity, and how much has it to boast of its own? But the miseries it has inflicted on mankind are appalling in their magnitude and number. It has shed oceans of blood, and bitter tears have rolled from myriads of eyes under its iron tyranny. It closed every thinker's lips. It kept men in darkness and slavery. It made men bow at the foot of the altar and the throne. It preached poverty to the poor and took its share of the wealth of the rich. It invented the rack, the thumbscrew, and the wheel. It illustrated its love of man with the flames of a thousand stakes. It has been a curse rather than a blessing. And its star of Bethlehem was not the herald of a glad new day, but the portent of a long and dismal and disastrous night.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sept., 1898.

## War.

Now that the pens used in the last war are busy turning out articles on Panel Doctors, latest murders, and crinolines for women, the time appears to be ripe for someone to take stock of affairs, and speak of things which may happen. The part that all religious bodies under the heading of Christianity played in the last war is known, written on the tablets of history, and was as effective as throwing petrol on a burning house. If we were prejudiced or narrow-eyed, we might say that Christianity would not count in the next war. It is a mistake to think so because there will be many more factors in a future war than there were in the last. The aeroplane has destroyed boundaries, but this fact has a double edge. The boys "out there" will be as safe as civilians, and neither will be out of the war zone. A load of gas, different in nature from recruiting speeches, will bring the benefits of one form of science to our very doors.

Lord Grey is an authority on war, and so is every ex-service man who spent his time in scratching, being shot at, and hoping for the end. So is every mother who had sons in the army. The only people who are not authorities on war are those who made profit out of human blood, and those who believe in the efficiency of force to settle differences. As Euclid says, Q.E.D.; look at Europe now, survey the cemeteries, and listen

to the creaking of artificial limbs. Furthermore, the question of pacifism will not arise. No more will men be asked what they would do if they saw their grandmother being outraged by the enemy. Such profound and at the same time philosophic questions propounded by our Justice Shallows will rise no more; for that relief much thanks. The powers that be have overreached themselves. The sword of war has two edges. The issue now is a plain yes or no—not for a part of the community but for the whole, and the whole contains Christians, profiteers, men above military age; the whole contains the whole. And the whole contains you Freethinkers whose demonstrated beliefs demanding the highest life of integrity never put a shilling in your pocket. Rice Christians in India, and bread and treacle Christians in West Ham can laugh at you as you sit down to Spinoza, or Spencer, or Locke and accept the responsibilities of life without taking refuge in the name of God—the sanctuary of ignorance. To condense this article we take the *Daily News* points from Lord Grey's recent speech in the House of Lords:—

1. At the moment the Government have no choice but to go forward with increased expenditure on our Air Force.
2. Suppose there had been, not a thunderstorm, but an air raid in London on Monday night.....we would have been within measurable distance of a revolution in this country.
3. If competition in armaments is to proceed it will undoubtedly lead again to another war—a war worse than the last.
4. If it continues Europe will perish. It is not yet certain that she will recover from the last war.
5. If we must perish, all would prefer that we perished together than that we should perish alone.

If the reader will go over them carefully, he will not need to bother his head about what self-interest will dictate any of our daily papers to write as a commentary upon them. What Dean Inge or the Rev. Ebenezer Scroggins of Little Bethel thinks does not matter. That also is a phase of this question settled happily and automatically by the fact that *everything* is contained in a "Yes" or "No" which we will explain in a moment. Number one is true, and despite Mr. George Lansbury's appeal for a change of heart, it is the inevitable outcome of our economic system so ably criticized by Mr. A. W. Coleman in these columns, and, like any writer worth his salt, he has demonstrated an alternative. Number two statement touches on a peculiar matter having many implications. After the great storm in London a friend of ours two nights later was very concerned about nine o'clock in the evening. Should we have another storm? After our repeated questionings as to why we should particularly have a storm in the *evening* we found that we were up against the *raid complex*. This is a factor not amenable to government, and it exists in millions of minds, and it is a terror that cannot be overcome by newspaper assurances. Coming from Lord Grey, we must publicly thank him for making public another factor that paralyses the hands of our one time fire-eaters and members of the "By Gad, Sir!" brigade. We would have been within measurable distance of a revolution—we will just ask his lordship one question in one word: Why? Any kind of answer will do, but it will not illuminate the statement any better than it illuminates itself, and, reader, fill any reason in that you like, that statement is indicative of the knot in which we are tied up, and more particularly the class that decides about war. There are many urges to war this time, and just as many against—this is one of the latter, more powerful to stop war than any reasons from the brain of a conscientious objector, and this time it

cannot be gayed and caricatured by the Gadarene Swine in the form of our Press.

Number three statement is substantiated by the Capek brothers, who wrote, "We shall have war because we have a new war machine." Number four is true, and Europe will not recover from the last war on the old economic basis. Consider, all the hands that set the European War going now want to get back to 1914 conditions. When anyone argues with a proposition of this kind, it tends to make one as stupid as the aspiration and those who put it forward. Number five would have sounded well in 1914, and it comes right down to the rock bottom of statesmanship—which means absolute bankruptcy of ideas. "Truth sits on the lips of dying men" someone wrote, and here is an instance where impotence is joined with a pious wish. In none of these points is the God of battles invoked; there is no reference to trusting in the Lord, for events have moved more rapidly than they did in the old days when fighters hewed each other to pieces. In other words reality now has gained such a size that there is not one of the old weapons that can be picked up by statesmen—except common-sense. If they refuse to use this last one, it will never be as in the old days—the battle front miles away and trusting to blunder through by pulling down the blinds and pretending that margarine is better than butter. It is now clearly defined that the head of Europe, the directing intelligence of the world, the very brain and guiding body of all countries depends now on "Yes" or "No." Whatever country says "Yes" to war in the future will be the blind Samson of civilization. The response to a religious war against Russia was feeble and finally vanished; that was but a raking in the mediæval witches' cauldron. Lord Grey sees clearly that another war has other consequences at home, and the "Yes" to war by any statesman at home or abroad rolls up the map of Europe. In reply to Lord Haldane's question as to whom is the naval base in the Far East to be used against, Lord Salisbury replied: "That is a very difficult question to answer discreetly." This may be the language of diplomacy, and we are not seriously concerned to point out the price paid and the price to be paid for verbal elegance of this kind; shut out from papers intelligent discussion of foreign affairs and then we will arrange matters for you, telling you only when we need your services.

To conclude these notes, it was stated a few years ago by prominent men of the world that civilization was not worth saving. If we were all agreed on the meaning of the word "civilization" it would be possible to resolve something from this plain definition. In the meantime, Lord Grey has brought the question down to the lowest common level, and those who pull the lever for war bring about their own destruction, which is natural, fitting and proper—we do not quarrel with the logic—the new logic in warfare. The new Leviathan of machinery has become the master, and pride, greed, and avarice, along with all the virtues, will be destroyed by it. Let the peoples of all countries take what consolation they can from contemplated mutual destruction; there is yet time to inquire into the cause of the race for armaments. The answer will be found in the superstition of finance, and bankers, against whom we have no quarrel, by adjusting their methods may assist England to first become sober. Freethinkers, each and everyone, by their speech and attitude and individual responsibility may take advantage of the interval of inhibition of action imposed on the war band. The danger appears to be real to us; we shall be glad if this examination is all wrong, yet we think, to save the world, the ideas of Major Douglas will have to prevail, whilst at the same time our collection of medicine men will have their mouths forcibly closed and conscripted by events stated above. In the

face of catastrophe the dustman is as good as the duke, but no better, the domestic servant stands on equality with all the mass of snobbery that is naked under its clothes, and death who accepts no gifts is the grandest democrat yet known. Lucian's tailor Menippus was the only one who came laughing to Charon; Lord Grey would have us perish *en masse*. Before this gesture of despair we commend to Lord Grey the theories of Major Douglas; let him make them as public as his wail about all perishing, and at the same time request the Lords Spiritual to close down their business as they say the wrong thing both in peace and war, and have done nothing to prevent the reason for the apocalyptic pronouncement of one who was and is an authority on war, which distinguishes him from men who drive trams, make bread, and hoe turnips.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## Rome or Atheism?

It is not surprising, when one considers the absurd doctrines taught by the Roman Catholic Church, that when one of its "faithful" secedes from that institution he invariably becomes a Freethinker and not a Protestant. The reason is easy to see if we trace the life of the average Roman Catholic from his childhood to more mature manhood and follow the various phases of thought he goes through. In doing so I am not only giving my own experience, but of many others who have forsaken Rome for Atheism—the only logical alternative.

In writing on the topic of Roman Catholicism I must ask the reader to imagine what England would sink to if the Roman Church once more became the dominant power in the land. That it is using every effort to regain this power is only too true. Why! the High Church Party of the Church of England to-day is the nursing ground of Roman Catholicism. It is no use Freethinkers imagining that they are beating a dead horse. It is very much alive and kicking, and it would not be surprising if it were found that some of the High Church "parsons" were but Jesuits in disguise; an artifice the Roman Church would not hesitate to use in order to achieve her ends.

In looking back to my own childhood I can confidently say without fear of contradiction that the average Catholic child is a frightened human being. Hell and purgatory were vividly depicted by the priests who were in charge of our education. Numerous tracts were distributed among the children portraying the sufferings of the damned, or the sufferings of the souls in purgatory; the intensity of the flames, and the ferocity of the demons. I well remember reading these books when I and other boys at the same college were preparing for our first confession and communion. I was twelve years old at the time, and have a vivid recollection how repugnant it used to be to have to relate all one's little peccadilloes to a strange priest. The object of these tracts was to show us the terrible risk we ran if we made a bad confession; that is, if we omitted to tell any of our sins to the priest. The great idea was to make a good and thorough confession, and the priest, by his inquisitive and obnoxious questions, took good care we omitted nothing. The far-reaching effects of this secret confession to the priest will be seen later.

Now, according to the Roman Church, there are two kinds of sin—mortal and venial, and if the child deliberately omits to tell one of those mortal sins, that confession is "bad," and becomes in itself a heinous mortal sin against the "Holy Ghost"—that obscure being over whom theologians have racked their brains to discover what connection he has to the rest of the

god family. Now, sometimes a child will conceal an act which it knows to be wrong, out of sheer fear and shame of acknowledging it to the priest. He then becomes an outcast in his own mind, and the longer he puts off telling it, the more impossible it becomes, and each subsequent confession makes a more grievous sin which he is afraid to acknowledge to the priest. Thus a boy who may have nothing bad in him except the failings common to all, soon becomes convinced that he is really a wicked child. He begins to think that one sin more or less can make no difference in his condition. Let us take for instance the boy who confesses his sins of thought and deed, the very fact that he goes over each thought and act, more especially of a sensual nature, such as the young are prone to, makes him repeat the offence in the same way. He is led by the study of the sin to attach an undue importance to it, and, being forbidden fruit, finds an increased pleasure in it. He knows that by performing a penance of a few prayers he can really be forgiven. In this way these kind of offences are encouraged, and they make the fatal mistake of thinking that all the consequences of the sin are obliterated by the absolution of the priest, totally ignorant of the damage done to health and character.

As all sins are considered as an exclusive matter of the confessional, the Catholic child is deprived of the confidence and advice of his parents, as it is forbidden to speak of what occurs in the confessional. This practice separates the child from the parent. It makes the young child sheepish and self-conscious, secretive and cowardly. It slowly eats away the mind, making really good boys the prey to scruples, destroying their courage and making them useless in the battle of life. The fruits of the secret-confessional are cowardly and spirit-broken children. The Roman Church has always claimed the right to educate its children, and at all times has made the priest the autocrat. To disobey the priest is the nearest cut to hell, for to disobey the priest is to disobey God, and his vengeance is too horrible to even think of. And now what do we find? The priest knows the secret sins of the husband that the wife has no idea of; he knows the secret sins of the wife that the husband has no suspicion of, and he knows the sins of the child that the parents have never dreamed of. I do not think there is any tyranny known to man that equals this.

Another phase in the life of a Catholic is matrimony. Let us see what kind of a tyranny the Church holds here. Marriage has been turned into a powerful means of proselytism. Before a non-Catholic can marry a Catholic he must not only give an undertaking that all the children shall be brought up Catholics, but he himself must become a Catholic, before the ceremony (unless he obtains a dispensation for a "mixed marriage") can take place. This rule is strictly enforced. There have been bishops of the Catholic Church in England who have gone so far as to declare that if any Roman Catholic contracts a civil marriage without the Church ceremony, they are not married in the eyes of the Church and are guilty of an "adultrous connection." This is a diabolical engine for the degradation of the home, for it concentrates all social and religious life in a series of sacrifices to the altar.

Even in death we find the tyranny of the Church is still exerted. It divides the faithful into two classes, the rich and the poor. To the poor, a simple act of contrition is all that is necessary to secure everlasting salvation; to the rich all sorts of spiritual attentions are necessary—such as the "laying on of hands," and "extreme unction" (whatever good that may do), and even after death money is extracted for "masses for the dead" so as to get them out of purgatory. What an imposition! What credulous fools people must be to pay money to the priest in order to help

their relatives out of a mythical purgatory. It is this tyranny, founded on the fear inculcated in the minds of the children, that becomes a second nature in men and women in after life. What has been the effect of Roman Catholicism in Italy, in Spain, in Portugal, and many South American States? Would they have been more illiterate and ignorant without religion?

Now let us take the men who have broken away from this tyrannical bondage. It has come to their knowledge one way or another that thousands of men have given all their lives to the study of Nature, and that there is hardly a single man of science or a clergyman of the Church of England with a reputation worth losing who does not accept evolution as true. He begins to find out that there is no other logical explanation of the earth's history or the origin of the human race. He begins to see how ridiculous is the story that the entire stellar universe was created in a few minutes. Science offers him a scientific explanation of the formation of this and other planets by what is known as the Nebula Hypothesis. He reads that all our best known astronomers have now come to the conclusion that the whole universe has evolved, and that every planet in the stellar universe has condensed to its present form from an infinite gas. All these astronomers flatly deny, with one accord, that the universe was specially created. How did it begin?

*It had no beginning.* Forms may decay, change, or disappear, but matter and force are indestructible; they are without beginning and without end. The Catholic then turns to geology, and he finds undeniable proofs that the world was not created 6,000 years ago as he was taught by the priest. He discovers that at a very early period the earth was a molten mass, and as this molten mass swung in space it cooled on the outside and formed a solid portion, which is the original crust of the earth. He then reads on and finds that under certain conditions of temperature it was possible for life in its simplest form to exist, and so on till he arrives at the history of primitive man. He is then able to trace the God-idea through the ignorance of our primitive ancestors, and if he has any intelligence at all he must surely realize that the whole fabric of supernaturalism is a huge delusion and a snare to keep him in subjection. He begins to understand that ignorance is the mother of devotion, and that science and progress owe nothing to his Church. Progress has been won by the self-sacrifice of courageous men and women, who have suffered persecution and imprisonment for their opinions fearlessly expressed. These are the men and women to whom we owe a deep debt of gratitude. Science means progress, and a nobler state of society has to be built. A nobler sociology has to be proclaimed and taught. Any institution to be at all a force in the world must bury its creeds and only work for the redemption of long-suffering mankind. The only true religion is the religion of Humanity—universal brotherhood. Progress is the offspring of civilization, not of religious creeds. Roman Catholicism has tried its utmost to kill science, and now science has avenged the insult. The only alternative to Rome is Atheism.

LEONARD MASON.

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I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys! Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a —!—*Robert Burns.*

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Religion is a psychic relic of the childhood of the human race. I go further and say that it is a functional weakness, caused by imperfectness of our organ of thought.—*Max Nordau.*

## Correspondence.

### THE DOUGLAS SCHEME.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Two or three years ago a lady wrote to the *Free-thinker* objecting to an article which had appeared in it because it indirectly or directly expressed dissent from some of the current views on marriage. Since then your contributor, much to my regret, has ceased to write. I hope if you insert this letter it will not have the same effect on Mr. Coleman, though I entirely disagree with his views on Major Douglas theories on credit.

Mr. Coleman says: "When it (our production system) has to pay wages to machines.....in addition to paying wages to individuals, it is obvious that (those) individuals cannot possibly buy the product in respect of which those wages were paid." This is very interesting. Does it happen in Mars, or where is it that machines are paid wages? Do the machines spend the wages on drink or hoard them up?

Mr. Coleman says there is confusion between goods and services and claims upon them. Quite so; Major Douglas appears to be over his eyes in it. In effect he says, "only multiply your claims up to the limit of future production and all will be well." He thinks there are too many goods for the claims; I think there are too many claims to the goods, e.g., Government wants half the goods that are produced and refuses to allow anyone to produce unless they consent to give up that half. Add to that the exactions of land, money and other monopolists; then say, "Does labour get a quarter of what it earns?"

W. W. KENSETT.

SIR,—In his admirable article on reparations Mr. A. W. Coleman says that only under the Douglas credit system could we receive reparation from Germany and justice be done. Gold would then be ruled out, leaving only material and labour. I regret that Mr. Coleman did not dwell in more detail on the way reparations would work out under the Douglas scheme. The quintessence of the scheme as I understand it is to make money-tokens credit command available practically *ad lib.* to everybody by nationalizing the banking and currency issue. The currency issue to keep prices steady would be regulated by an index number. Assuming the Douglas scheme to result in perfect distribution and consequent consumption would imply more labour for all or increased use of labour-saving machinery. But imported German labour or materials of all or any kind per reparations would have the same effect as labour-saving machinery—it would give all in this country, if not a complete holiday, much more leisure. Under the present system with limited purchasing and consequent consumptive capacity the influx of large quantities of goods from abroad that would not have to be paid for by exporting other manufactured goods from here would throw large numbers out of employment, in other words they would not have any credit command or money to buy and consume these things with because they had not been allowed to work, in return for which money symbols would have been given them. This may be economically sound according to the gospel of Douglas, but if continued for very long it must have demoralizing effect on us as we might lose our habit of working independence and initiative—after all it is a slave tribute of a victorious people much as the tribute of ancient Rome. And if other nations had not adopted the Douglas principle by getting our goods for nothing we could upset exchanges by underselling all competitors for some time, which must in time react on us as economics at bottom are simply barter and exchange. I think Norman Angell is right—war does not pay, and cannot be made to pay. MAURICE BARNARD.

Those who swallow their Deity, really and truly, in transubstantiation, can hardly find anything else other-wise than of easy digestion.—Byron.

Religion is a question of geography.—Gibbon.

## 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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No meeting.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park): Near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. A. B. Moss, "Man and Evolution."

FINSBURY PARK.—Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 6—10, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Blady; also every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 6—10. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Bandstand): 6. Mr. J. J. Darby, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, a Lecture; 6.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, a Lecture.

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission: Monday, August 13, Corner of Alum Rock Road and Anthony Road; Tuesday, August 14, Barton's Arms, Aston; Wednesday, August 15, Golden Hillock Road (Park Gates); Thursday, August 16, Washwood Heath (Fox and Goose); Friday, August 17, Six Ways, Erdington. Each evening at 7.30.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Friends' trip to Lock Libo; meet at Spiers Bridge at 12.30.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD'S MISSION.—Nelson, Chapel Street, 7.30.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Mr. R. Atkinson, a Lecture.

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