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Views and Opinions.

A Believer on Belief.

I dealt two weeks since with an article by the Rev. Clement Rogers on "The Case for Christianity." To that article Mr. Rogers replied in a letter which appeared in last week's issue, advising people to read his two pamphlets on "Why Men Believe" and "Is the Claim Credible?" As it appeared to me that the only reason for Mr. Rogers advising these pamphlets was that they contained some sort of a reply I made it my special business to get them. But after reading them I find they make no attempt to reply to the issues raised by me. I am not really surprised at this, because had Mr. Rogers had any real reply to make it might as easily have been done in these columns, and in that case the same readers would have read both sides. Moreover, as I pointed out, the case set out by Mr. Rogers is so terribly old fashioned, it so completely ignores the standpoint of an up-to-date scientific Free-thought, that I really did not expect to find any adequate reply in his pamphlets. The only thing I have learned from Mr. Rogers is that the old Christian Evidence, with which I used to come into close contact some twenty years ago, is still active. Mr. Rogers has advertised his pamphlets, and I hope that they may be read. If a dose of Christian Evidences cannot cure a really thoughtful mind of belief in Christianity I know of nothing else that will. But I can hardly congratulate him on the policy of advising, as a reply to an attack, the reading of a pamphlet which has nothing to do with it at all. That will "save his face" with such as do not read the pamphlet commended, but certainly not with those that do.

What is Belief?

But having laid out half-a-crown on the purchase of Mr. Rogers' 100 page pamphlet I may as well give *Freethinker* readers the benefit of my purchase. And as Mr. Rogers appears to be under the delusion that he has dealt with the psychology of belief, and thinks so highly of the lectures that after having delivered them at King's College, an institution which some years ago separated the chair of logic from that of divinity when one of its professors (Dr. Momerie) was discharged on account of heresy, he repeated them three times in Hyde Park, we may take it that we are having Christian Evidence up-to-date. If the com-

bined cultural atmosphere of King's College and Hyde Park cannot establish the reasonableness of Christianity, surely the case is hopeless. Mr. Rogers' first point is to set out what he considers the psychology of belief—not what people believe, but the psychological processes involved in the act of believing. There is, of course, room here for a very interesting and instructive essay, but we do not get it. Men, he says, fondly believe they are convinced by a process of reasoning, and ask, "Can you believe in a thing you don't understand?" As a Christian advocate Mr. Rogers aims at showing that they can, and that they are wrong who ask such a question. But are they? Suppose I ask a man whether he believes that three sides of a kerfoozleum are exactly six feet in length. Can he say that he believes it? Of course he may repeat the words "I believe" exactly as a man may say he believes in the most tangled section of the Athanasian Creed. But that is all. Quite clearly it is essential to real belief in a proposition that one shall be able to understand what the proposition implies. And the sole reason why a man cannot truthfully say that he believes in my proposition about a kerfoozleum is that he doesn't understand what it is all about. Understanding is absolutely essential to belief in all its stages, and our belief or disbelief increases in strength as we understand all the implications of the proposition before us. Belief follows understanding and on evidence that falls something short of complete proof. The real charge against the professed believer is that he does not believe all he professes, and cannot believe it, because in many cases he is quite in the dark as to what it means. In the absence of understanding we have not belief but an empty verbal assent to a meaningless proposition.

* * *

Why We Believe.

Reason, says Mr. Rogers, may confirm, but it cannot create faith. There is an element of truth here, although not quite of the kind Mr. Rogers desires, and when we read a little further we discover that Mr. Rogers—in spite of his having run the academic gauntlet of King's College and Hyde Park—does not distinguish between reasons and causes. He uses the one when he means or ought to mean the other. For instance:—

We believe in Christianity as we believe in anything else—in our political opinions, in our friends, in history, in science—for a multitude of *reasons*; because of home tradition, of heredity, of experience, from the infection of enthusiasm (nearly everyone is a Socialist at a certain age), from peculiarity of tastes, from the attraction of moral beauty.....by the force of mere repetition, whether of the reiterated assertions of advertisement, or because we have said a thing so often that we have come to think it must be true. We believe for any or some of these *reasons*, as they convince in varying proportions and with alternating force; in other words, we believe for the so-called woman's reason, "because we do."

I leave this for a moment in order to note some more of the extraordinary stuff that Mr. Rogers calls psychology. Discussing some of these alleged "reasons"

for belief in detail, he begins with the fact that man is a social animal. He ought to have begun earlier and commenced with man as a gregarious animal, for he apparently limits the social quality in its early stages to the family. But, he proceeds, as development goes on man develops the "tribal instinct," then as the child comes out of the family it develops the "gang instinct," and later the "gang instinct" gives way to the "altruistic instinct." Now that is really the most extraordinary psychology I have ever come across, and I sympathize with the divinity students of King's College who had to listen to it. For all these things that Mr. Rogers mentions are not separate instincts at all. He appears to have an instinct ready for every day in the week and for every occasion that may arise. All the things that Mr. Rogers names are forms of what is fundamentally the gregarious instinct, which is to be found beginning in the animal world. The gregarious instinct, which means the herding of members of the same species together, obviously leads to the human being paying more regard to his particular group than to other groups. The same quality leads the child to seek other children as playmates and companions. And the "Altruistic instinct" is a product of the conditions which compel animals living together to pay some regard to the welfare of the whole. We would humbly suggest to Mr. Rogers that before he again sets out to demolish Freethought in Hyde Park or elsewhere he would strengthen his case, or diminish his lectures, if he paid some attention to the points suggested above.

* * *

Are Beliefs Reasonable?

Now let me ask the reader to return to Mr. Rogers on the forces that make for belief. If the reader will turn to the passages quoted he will soon see that when Mr. Rogers talks about the reasons for belief, he really is talking about the causes of belief. And these things may be quite distinct, and often are distinct. When one speaks of the causes of a belief one means all the forces that eventuate in the establishment of a belief, and these may be wholly or partly of the kind named by Mr. Rogers. No one disputes that. But when one speaks of the reasons for a belief one means the bringing before the mind of a number of relations between facts that when laid out will command assent. The first simply sets out what is, the second provides a justification for what is. Mr. Rogers, as a Christian apologist, sets out to justify belief in Christianity before the bar of reason. He begins his task by telling you that belief is not the product of reason at all, which is not always true. The belief in the truth of natural selection, for example, is wholly a product of reason. The belief in the law of gravitation is another product of reason. There are a thousand and one things that are wholly based on reason, or that may be rejected by reason. There are, of course, many things we believe without reasoning about them, but in this case we mostly feel assured that if we did set out to discover the reason that would justify our belief, not the causes that induced them, we should find our belief re-established by reason. On the other hand, one can quite understand why Mr. Rogers parades the causes of belief in the conviction that they are reasons. They are of the kind that would help religious beliefs so much. Home traditions, heredity, the influence of words, the force of advertisement, all these are causes of belief, and particularly of religious belief. But I may remind Mr. Rogers that it is one of the functions of reason to be continually overhauling the beliefs handed down to us by tradition, the beliefs that are strengthened by mere verbal likenesses, or forced upon us by advertisement, and to estimate their truth and utility in the light of contemporary knowledge.

Mr. Rogers says, in effect, if you believe certain things on these grounds you should believe in Christianity on those grounds also. But that is not the issue at all. The belief in Christianity is not the only unreasonable belief that man entertains. There are many others. But it seems poor advice to people to tell them that because they accept unreasonable propositions in other directions they ought not to reject an extra one in the case of Christianity. The way to sanity must begin at some point, and it may as well begin with an examination of Christian belief as with anything else.

* * *

I will deal with the balance of Mr. Rogers' contribution to the psychology of belief next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Judgment of the Heathen."

THE religious press just now is devoting itself to the discussion of party politics. The Nonconformist journals are generally advocating Free Trade and bitterly denouncing Protection. The *British Weekly* of November 22, for example, does little else than publish the views of prominent ministers and others on the political situation. The Correspondence Column of Professor David Smith, however, ignores the election campaign altogether, and endeavours to solve a difficult theological problem. A correspondent, "L. C.," expresses the problem thus: "On reading your correspondence column of October 18, we were greatly concerned to know what becomes of the Amalekites and the other Heathen nations in the next world, who have been swept away knowing nothing of our Lord. Had they souls? And do they still exist?" This is an old problem which has challenged the divines in all ages, the majority of whom firmly held the view that, as Christ is the only Saviour, such unfortunate Heathens are now suffering the torments of the damned in hell-fire. Referring to Acts iv, 12: "And in none other is their salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved," Dr. Smith says:—

Christ is indeed the only Saviour as it is written.

But does it follow, according to the remorseless logic of the old theologians, Romanist, Lutheran, and Calvinist, that therefore the Heathen who have never known him are eternally lost? That was the Reformed view, and we find it in Article xviii of the Anglican Church and, in almost the same words, in Chapter x of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

On that point the Professor is entirely right. Though the problem itself did not present itself to New Testament writers there is no escape whatever from the conclusion that only faith in Christ crucified is a saving grace. No logical fault whatever can be found in the said Article xviii, nor with Chapter x of the Westminster Confession, nor can a genuine believer in the inspiration of the New Testament arrive at any other conclusion. Besides, only those chosen by God from all eternity are able to accept Christ as their Saviour. Paul endorses that teaching with great zeal, saying: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." Thus you see Paul accepts that doctrine, not because it was a pleasant or reasonable one but because it rested on the will of the Creator. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why didst thou make me thus?.....What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory?" Thus it is the absolute sovereignty of the Creator that is all deter-

mining in the matter of salvation and exclusion from salvation. Feeling is only a subsidiary consideration. God is a being who can even love or hate whomsoever he chooses.

This is undoubtedly a biblical doctrine in which divines generally acquiesced until lately. Richard Baxter's heart rebelled against it, and so did that of John Eliot, the apostle of the Indians in New England. Baxter says: "Yet I am not so much inclined to pass a sentence of damnation upon all that have never heard of Christ, having some more reason than I knew of before, to think that God's dealing with such is unknown to us, and that the ungodly here among us Christians are in a far worse case than they." Speaking from the same spirit, Dr. Smith himself condemns the dogma that all Heathens who have died without having ever heard of Christ are lost, saying: "No humane or truly Christian mind could permanently acquiesce in it." As a matter of fact humaneness has absolutely nothing to do with the matter, the only question that is vital being, Is it a New Testament doctrine, or is not? Dr. Smith tries his best to prove that it is not, at least not a dominant one; but the attempt is utterly in vain. The parable of the faithful servants does not really bear upon the point, the principle of the parable being, as Dr. Smith points out, that opportunity is the measure of responsibility. The appeal to the solemn picture of the Final Judgment in Matt. xxv, 31-46 is equally futile. Dr. Smith says:—

It is a difficulty which interpreters generally felt regarding this passage that it presents as the test not faith in Christ but kindness to one's fellows. The evangelical requirement is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," but here the decisive question is whether one has done deeds of charity, thus, albeit unconsciously, serving the king, since the suffering are so dear to him that whatever is done to them is done to him. What is the explanation? Look at verse 32: "Before him," says the Authorized Version, "shall be gathered all nations;" but the Revisers have "all the nations," and this little correction illumines the situation. In scriptural phraseology, "the nations" are "the Heathen"; and this it appears that what is here depicted is the judgment not of mankind but of the Heathen who have never known Christ or heard the Gospel.

This is indeed an ingenious method of disproving an unpalatable Christian doctrine; but it lacks the convincing quality. In the first place, there is nothing to show the authenticity of that description of the Final Judgment. In the second place there is no indication that the Heathen shall be judged by themselves and that humanity at large shall be judged separately. In the third place there is no evidence at all that a Final Judgment shall ever be held by Jesus Christ or another. Indeed, the Day of Judgment is one of the many superstitions cherished by Christians, though to most of them to-day it means practically nothing. As a matter of fact almost all allusions to it are of a jocular character. Of course, the Professor's belief in it is a stupendous reality, but the peculiar thing about it is that it flatly contradicts the Gospel teaching as to the doom of the Heathen who, while they lived, never even heard the name of Christ. Dr. Smith is too tender-hearted to believe such a horrible dogma. And yet he sees nothing to object to in the cruel destiny to overtake those on the Judge's left hand: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels."

The more articles like the present by Professor Smith that we read the deeper and stronger becomes our unbelief in the whole Gospel story and in supernaturalism generally. We know from the Gospels themselves that Jesus was not a writer, and when he is represented as teaching orally we know that there

was no one present to take down his words, with the result that whether he taught or not we possess no literal and reliable statement of his messages. What we have in the Gospels is a number of sayings attributed to him by people in the second century who probably had neither heard nor even seen him. And all who are well up in the study of comparative religion are fully aware that the Christian Gospels contain nothing new, nothing that had never been heard before. Nearly all the sayings recorded therein are to be found in the Old Testament and other Jewish documents, as well as in many ancient religions, such as Confucianism and Buddhism. All this being unquestionably true, are we not justified in pronouncing Christianity a new religion merely in name. It is well known to scholars that its central doctrines were in the world for centuries before Jesus was ever heard of. We have no hesitation, therefore, in characterizing it as false and impotent as the older religions to which it owes so much. We must except two of the older religions from the charge of being false and impotent, namely Confucianism and Buddhism, both of which are moral philosophies, in which the Deity at first had very little or no place at all.

Instead of saying with Dr. Smith that "Christ is indeed the only Saviour," we are prepared to aver that he is no saviour at all, because the world needs salvation more to-day than it ever did before, but no Saviour is at hand. The Professor knows this as well as we do, and yet he persists in preaching and asserting the infallibility of the Christian faith. In this connection comes the timely question, "Did Jesus ever live?"

J. T. LLOYD.

The Priest in Politics.

Liberty's chief foe is theology.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*

We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions. —*G. W. Foote.*

The modern Labour Movement has never proclaimed, and never sought after, an alliance with the clergy. So evident is this aloofness that, whenever a Trades Union Congress is held, the clergy are certain to break out into hysterical appeals to Labour leaders to remember that "God" and the Churches have always been on their side, and their hearts have always bled for the poor working man. But, as an old proverb assures us, in vain is the net spread in full sight of the bird. The instinct of self-preservation on the part of the Labour leaders prompts other and safer measures than a close alliance with the Black Army of priests.

Why this feeling of estrangement should exist between the Labour Movement and the Black Army is explained by the history of Priestcraft. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest. On the Continent, where people think logically, the incompatibility of priestcraft with the democratic programme has long been recognized. Continental Labour leaders regard Clericalism as their chief enemy, recognizing that it is idle to pretend that intellectual liberty and real progress can be found inside the ring-fence of the Great Lying Church.

Men's memories are short, and the clergy's new-found zeal on behalf of Labour may deceive some people. It is, however, better to attach more importance to what the clergy do than what they say. In their hearts these priests care as little for the welfare of the working-classes as the Sultan of Zanzibar for his slaves. The votes of the bishops in the House of Lords proves it beyond cavil and dispute. The bare record, printed in the pages of Hansard's Parliamen-

tary Debates, is sufficient to rouse the lasting hostility of all right-thinking people, and their shameful and cruel opposition to all progress shows how hopelessly the clergy are out of touch with democratic aspirations and humanistic tendencies. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of Labour have been opposed by the purse-proud prelates, and their record carries its own lasting condemnation.

Among other things, the bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to University degrees, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers. They bitterly opposed the introduction of Free National Education, and voted against admitting women as members of London borough councils. Not one of the whole Bench of Bishops took the trouble to vote for the abolition of flogging women in public, flogging women in prison, or the use of the lash in the Army and Navy. When Nonconformists wished to bury their own dead in their own manner, the bishops were hostile. Even so modest a proposition as the provision of seats for over-worked shop assistants was anathema to these ecclesiastics. Nothing was too small for the priestly enmity, provided only that it was a democratic measure. Yet these same clergy never tire of telling their congregations that the brotherhood of man is one of the primary elements of Christian doctrine.

Turn from the damning record in "Hansard," and refer to the pages of history, and see what the Church's action has been in other matters. Britain has waged over a hundred wars, great and small, during the past three centuries. In every instance the Church has been the obedient, humble maid-servant of the Government of the day; blessed the standards of murder; and sung "Te Deums" for victory. "The Book of Common Prayer," issued with the sanction of the British Parliament, assumes always that truth and justice is on our own side, and reminds innocent and credulous worshippers that "there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God." Nor is this all, for during the last war hundreds of men were actually treated as criminals for attempting to take the Christian religion seriously, but these conscientious objectors were not drawn from the 25,000 clergy of the Anglican Church. No one, remembering the shameful facts, can but see that the Church's doctrines are of one aspect, but its practices of another.

After a thousand years' uninterrupted power in this country, the clergy are now exceedingly anxious to persuade everybody that they have had a very important share in the improvement of the people. They wish working people to forget the past, and let bygones be bygones. Hence, it is not surprising to find in a Church of England hymn-book one solitary hymn intended to appeal to the sympathies of the workers. Listen to the dulcet tones of the clerical syren:—

Sons of Labour, think of Jesus
As you rest your homes within,
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary
In the stable of the inn.
Think, now, in the sacred story,
Jesus took a humble grade,
And the Lord of Life and Glory
Worked with Joseph at his trade.

"Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Where are the hymns of hate, the spiritual songs of hell and damnation, and the blood of the Lamb? Where are the fervent appeals to regard the Union Jack among the sacred symbols of the national religion? Without unduly elaborating the matter, this change of front is disingenuous and by no means clever. Do these priests imagine that we were all educated in their wretched and ill-equipped Church Schools? Is it possible that the growth of the Democratic Movement has frightened these men of God, and they are actually preparing for the dreadful day, when Labour is

supreme at Westminster? Someone ought to remind the Black Army of priests that it is within the bounds of possibility that a State Church and a clerical caste may be found incompatible with a democratic government.

Such a pitiful record should bring home to everyone the real cleavage between Democracy and the Black Army. Civilization has widened in ways never dreamt of in the narrow and exclusive Oriental philosophy of the Christian religion. The nations of Europe are progressing beyond the reach of outworn ideals. The clergy mouth ancient ignorance which men have outgrown, and they can no longer arouse any response. At the recital men's minds and feelings rouse to no movement except amazement. The "old, old story" comes like "the horns of Elfland, faintly blowing," and men realize that it was meant for other ears than ours, and is, in truth, but an echo from the far-off days of ignorance and bigotry. The conscience of the race is rising above dreary dogmas hatched in the intellectual darkness of the third century.

Priestcraft had not a safe seat on British shoulders in the ages of Faith, even before the days of the Reformation. Priestcraft as a tyranny in Britain finished with the glare of the fires of Smithfield. Priestly domination is an impossible dream now that there is an organized national Freethought Party, which has inscribed on its banners that significant Voltairean phrase, "Crush the Infamous."

MIMNERMUS.

The Story of the Great War.

WOMEN AND CELIBACY.

BISHOPS GRANTED POWER TO GIVE THEM DISPENSATION FROM PLEDGE.

The question of the celibacy of a deaconess was raised at the afternoon session of the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury yesterday.

It was suggested that a woman might be moved to pledge herself to celibacy in a moment of excitement after hearing the powerful oratory of a speaker, and it was agreed that a bishop should have power to give her dispensation from such a pledge.

—Daily Paper.

To keep fairly *au fait* with what is going on in the world of parsons, men, women, and humans, compels one to look through (and over) an inordinate mass of trash. The wise thing to do (if one could only do it) would be to employ a secretary, or two, to do the "dirty work"—to pick out the (rather rare) worthwhile bits from the many messy columns of the daily Press. However, in our sphere, 'tis only editors of Freethought journals who can afford to employ assistants to wade through the mud for them. Poor hard-working men, such as the present scribbler, are forced to do the digging-out themselves. The wine-press, on the whole, turns out a more pleasing product than does the Daily Press. Of the latter, we cannot say, "I often wonder what the writer buys, One half so precious as the 'stuff' he sells!"

While engaged on this task (for task it is) an occasional sentence or paragraph may be found with a wealth of meaning. Such a find is full of thought—to the thinking mind. Some time ago, when at home, my morning's wading was thus rewarded with a catch. The catch was the paragraph quoted, which conveys in some eight lines the whole history of Christian superstition in method and result. It also constitutes a justification of the glorious cause of Freethought down through the ages. Probably most of those who read the paper—if they noticed it at all—passed it over as a bit of news that was no news at all, at all. To me those few lines raised the curtain (in my mind's eye) upon the age-long, and often tragic, struggle of

Reason against Authority, Knowledge against Superstition, Freethought against Faith. And, of all Authorities, all Superstitions, all Faiths, the Christian varieties are far and away the worst. That Great War has been fought ever since Man began to think. Victory has been increasingly on our side; but it is still far from being finally won. The snake of supernaturalism is in sorer straits to-day than ever; but it can still wriggle, its venom is not all destroyed, and it yet may do much damage in the world. This news paragraph is a proof of that. These eight lines (with all that is implied therein) epitomize the evil that has been, and is to-day, inflicted on its victims by the curse of Christianity. These evil practices, too, are too common to all sections of the Christian sect (in greater or lesser degree). Look at it for a moment, and it must be noted that the "question" referred to applies to men as well as to women. The "suggestion" also covers a great many "questions" besides that of "celibacy." In fact, the same thing is true of every "question" in practical morality—where the question of Christian authority, and Christian superstition is concerned. Men and women have been (and are) "moved" to pledge themselves to celibacy (and to other Christian evils) "in moments of excitement after hearing the powerful oratory of a speaker." That is the Christian way—the way of the Cross—which (almost) moves rational folk to be cross. Happily for humans, that oratory is less powerful to-day. For which relief, much thanks—to Freethinkers, past and present.

Men and women have been "moved" in this way to polygamy—and to worse. In Britain, after Mormon Christian Elders have feelingly "moved" young women, other Christians have physically moved (or removed) the Mormons. The whole sorry (and sordid) business is a "moving question." Perhaps they have never (or hardly ever) been "moved" to polyandry, but that is due to the fact that man has taken precious good care to be top-dog in the Christian Churches throughout the reign of Christianity.

Men and women have been "moved" to surrender themselves to that vile institution—the Christian confessional—by having their emotions played upon, and with. Once caught in that Christian trap, the victim—especially the emotional woman—has little chance of freedom. Not only is mental freedom (with all that that implies) gone, but self-respect as well is lost. Reason and knowledge, count for naught.

Christian men and women have been "moved" in "moments of excitement" by the Christian priests and parsons to murder thousands of other Christian men and women (and children) on the authority of the Bible that the victims were possessed by devils. Even Christians ought to know by now how Christians in the south of Ireland and Christians in the north of that unhappy Christian land, have been "moved" to commit all kinds of atrocities in their Christian crusades. Spain, Russia, Italy, New England, and many other countries, as well as Old England, Ireland, and Scotland, have thus been marked by the black and red curse of Christianity. The greater the power of the Christian religion in any land, the worse it has been for the people of that land. The more the bishop, priest, parson, or minister, could "move" the people in (and into) "moments of excitement," the more bitterly have the victims had to regret their (often more than momentary) religious intoxication. Religious doctrines may be moonshine, but religion can intoxicate as insanely as the worst "moonshine" ever illicitly distilled in the driest State of any States.

"The name of God has fenced all crime with holiness."

Christian priests and parsons have admitted that they have to capture the minds of boys and girls (before

they reach an age of discretion) by playing upon their emotions and feelings at a period when they are peculiarly susceptible to such excitement. Chapman Cohen, in particular, has dealt with this process in his *Religion and Sex*. Where, or when, the paid officials of the Christian religion cannot capture the minds of girls, women, boys, or men, by "moving" them through their feelings, there is little chance (or none) of getting occupants for pews by an appeal to Reason. The past strength of the Christian religion—and what of strength it still possesses—has been (and is) obtained by "moving" men, women, and young folk, through ignorance, through fear, through "moments of excitement," through an emotional appeal. To be—or to become—a Christian, you must abandon Reason and Knowledge, submit yourself to the authority of priest, parson, or presbyter, have faith in the unseen and unprovable, be guided by your feelings, emotions, prejudices, and (sometimes) by your "economic interests." This newspaper paragraph, unconsciously, gives the whole tabloided tale of Christian exploitation. The Christian mumbo-jumbo-man's motto might be:—

Work on,
My medicine work! Thus credulous fools are caught.

This condensed story tells us something more. It reveals (should revelation be required) the infernal impudence of the Christian fetish-men. They know less than their victims of the unseen, for they do not know that they do not know. They cannot see that they cannot see. Still, having captured their victims (most when young and/or ignorant) they arrogate to themselves—and to themselves alone—the power to release the unfortunates from their mental bondage. They bind with a vengeance, and they (may it please them) unbind. When they do unbend far enough to unbind, the welfare of the victim will not be the motive. For the victims, the binding is their undoing—rationally; and when a "dispensation" is (more or less) graciously granted, the unbinding is only too likely to be a further "undoing." The Christian bishop, priest, parson, or minister, is never so dangerous to social life as when he appears to be "liberal." Beware of them when they bring gifts.

The worst part of this sad story is that this bad Christian influence is not confined to religious "questions." Consciously, or unconsciously, it extends into all walks and spheres of life. Those swayed by Christian superstition and led by Christian authority are likely to be unreliable rationally in matters of morals, economics, politics, civics, history, and international problems, etc. We live in a (nominal) democracy. The administration of our local and national affairs is decided by obtaining a majority of votes. This deaconess may have a vote—at least many such do possess the franchise—and use it. The Christian religion, Christian superstition and authority, is never likely to lead to the wise use of this democratic method. You do not gather grapes from thistles, neither do you get rational decision under religious influence. Taking "Rome" as standing for Christianity, the choice to-day is still Rome or Reason—and not alone in the realm of religion. The whole past history of the Christian religion, from the time of its establishment by Constantine down to to-day, is a damning indictment of Christianity.

In more recent times, as in older, we can see how the Christian religion has been the enemy of all rational reform, social progress, human happiness and freedom. To-day it takes a Christian to benefit from easy divorce in one land, while obstructing any rational reform of our marriage and divorce laws in this land. Christian superstition and authority are the enemies of Knowledge and Reason. Birth control is one of the most pressing problems at the present time.

Even many Christians are being compelled by the force of facts to admit that. Our failure to tackle that all-important question has been due to Christian authority more than to any other influence.

Marriage, divorce, birth-control, education, peace, unemployment, poverty, food-supply, housing, taxation, international relations, and all the multitude of "questions" that imperatively interrogate us, can only be answered by reliance upon Knowledge and guidance by Reason. The spirit of Christian superstition and Christian authority is bred first in religious belief. It extends into all other spheres, prolongs the misery, and intensifies the bondage. Even where "economic interests" are to blame Christian superstition and Christian authority are the most potent weapons these "economic interests" have. Thus do they retain their power—at the expense of the suffering people of the world.

The fundamental needs to-day for social progress and human happiness are Freethought, not Christian Faith—Knowledge, not Christian superstition—Reason, not Christian authority.

Freethinkers are not angels, therefore they will not weep. Rather will they fight on, against this impudent Christian arrogance. And, while marching on to victory, with philosophic imperturbability, we can indulge in a smile of pity at—

.....Man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

ATHOS ZENO.

Drama and Dramatists.

A STIMULATING and at the same time a searching question is, whether Freethought is a part of life or the whole of it? This may not be the correct method of approach to a subject deeper than the sea and higher than Mount Everest, but it has often crossed our mind when sitting in front of the stage. The actors and actresses are children of a miniature destiny existing in the dramatist's mind—and he knows—he knows. The dramatist in turn is influenced by Aristotle or Seneca, or, in the case of Shaw, by Aristophanes and Nietzsche. They in turn have received inspiration from sources which are lost in the dim recesses of antiquity, and we may just as well try to trace the beginning of the lowest form of life as to fix our finger on the precise date when the first dramatist conceived the idea of creating a world on the stage.

The *Insect Play* does not conform to any dramatic standard. It is Job without the theology. As Hinton attempted to explain the fourth dimension by the use of twenty-seven different coloured cubes, so Karel Capek brought a new view-point to life through a study of insect life. Man is above, and rightly so, any example to be found in ants, bees, butterflies and beetles. Bipedes may be satisfied to imitate ants and bees, to live as butterflies, or merely have perfect arrangements for perpetuating their kind as in the case of bees. Needless to say, my readers are perfectly familiar with biblical and poetical injunction to go to the ant, and to regard the bee as a wonderful little creature. They are also warned about living like a butterfly, and although there is nothing beautiful or repulsive about a beetle, saving is an English virtue at which is it easy to throw an economic brick. Major Douglas states that saving is waste. William Blake, probably in the same happy financial state as Rabelais, whose will stated, "I have no available

property; I owe a great deal; the rest I give to the poor," summed up the beetle in a couplet:—

The owl, the beetle, and the bat,
By sweet reserve and modesty wax fat.

It is a peculiar twist in theologians that is significant; Swedenborg was not above drawing from the insect world some wonderful lessons. Capek acts differently; he sees that insects are restricted in their activities and that man alone can create a purpose above and beyond perpetual work, perpetual play, perpetual fighting, and perpetual saving. That we may be able to sit indoors and hear voices hundreds of miles away is a proof that man, if he has the passion, may one day be able to make this world a place where we shall smile at our entry to it and smile at our departure from it—and smile in the interval between. But man, to accomplish this will have to be in a different temper from that which takes him to the planchette, the oija board, and other paraphernalia proving that spirits are so homely that they require coaxing through a glass or the stump of a pencil. To return to our first consideration, we are of the opinion that Freethought is the whole of life. We have turned our emotions or part of ourselves out to grass when we catch ourselves entangled in the meshes of music, ritual, or ceremony; we may learn through our emotions, but they are not our only teachers. We cannot use our emotions on machinery, but the derrick will lift a stone out of our path. Freethought is that derrick, and the stone is theology that could not be wished away.

The stone is not seriously considered by Capek, who has a vision of mankind in the golden age that is to exist here—not beyond the grave. There is no accusing of the Almighty, there is no blaming of the Devil; theologians have much to answer for in imposing additional burdens on mankind through the introduction of God and the Devil. We admire this dramatist's deliberate ignoring of the tribe that cannot justify its existence. He has looked about the question and left God where the theologians found him—in the sky.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

The will of Lord Morley has now been made public and it contains the following paragraph:—

I desire that my ashes after cremation should be placed in some spot in Brookwood or other cemetery without ceremonial or spoken words. I fain would trust a lingering memory of me to the silent hearts of such as have been, and still remain, my friends.

Language could hardly put the desires of the dead man more plainly. Yet in spite of these expressed wishes a religious ceremony was held over the grave and the wishes of Lord Morley completely disregarded. If he was "Honest John" while alive, he was made a liar so far as his religious friends could manage it after he was dead. And yet there are people who talk of Christianity as being a help to morals! Why it cannot keep people decently honest in even the presence of death! Where Christianity is concerned neither decency nor truth nor honour appear to count, and clergymen can be found who will solemnly act a lie over the body of a man who deliberately repudiated them and their creed while he was alive. What a creed!

We are pleased to know that Freethinkers are keeping up the bombardment of the Broadcasting Company over the use made by the parsons of the broadcasting apparatus on Sunday evenings. It will probably not stop the parsons using the apparatus, but it will let the Broadcasting Company know that there are other people on the world besides the fetish worshippers, and that all in Britain are not quite on the level of the Stone Age in their beliefs

about gods and ghosts. One reader sends us a copy of a letter which he has sent to the editor of the *Radio Times*, and asks whether we would accept a bet of ten to one that it will *not* appear. As our finances do not warrant rash speculation we decline the bet, but here is the letter:—

Dear Sir,—I feel somewhat churlish at weighing in with a grievance, in view of the truly Gargantuan intellectual repasts provided by your company at a figure which our French friends would justly regard as *vraiment dérisoire*. But to my mind, one course in the menu is a little thin, and ludicrously out of place alongside the succulent dishes so lavishly set upon your hospitable board. To vary the metaphor there is a fly in the ointment—I refer to the Sunday evening sermon.

May I respectfully submit it is unfair to allow the parsons an innings without compelling them subsequently to field while their opponents bat. If the clergy are to be allowed to broadcast their views upon life, then on the following Sunday a representative Freethinker, say Mr. Chapman Cohen, President of the National Secular Society, or Mr. Joseph McCabe should be invited to show how and why the clergy, in postulating the reality of a Supreme Being and a future life are assuming at least a little more than they know. This, it seems to me, would create a sporting atmosphere which would vividly appeal

With all good wishes for the prosperous development of your company,

Your obedient servant,

A. G. EARLEY.

That is a very good letter, and it may serve the purpose named above. All the same it misses what we regard as the essential point. For our own part we are not asking that Freethinkers should be heard side by side with the parsons. That is too much like the Nonconformists who justify their own plundering of the public purse because the Established Church also does it. Our point is that the broadcasting apparatus should not be used for propaganda at all, whether it be of the religious or the anti-religious type. It is taking an unfair advantage of the situation, and unfairness does not become fairness because the unfairness happens to favour one's own side. The business of the Broadcasting Company is to provide entertainment with the addition, at most, of genuinely and admittedly educational subjects. The parsons have taken advantage of this, and the Company, either because some of its directors are under the influence of the parsons, or because they think it will give their Sunday concerts a respectable appearance in this land of religious humbug, have permitted them to use their machinery for the purpose of pouring into unwilling ears yards of clotted nonsense. So we repeat, what we want to see is fair play to the public, not unfairness in which the unfairness is distributed in equal or unequal amounts between ourselves and someone else.

Just one other moral may be drawn from the situation. The fact of the clergy using the wireless as they do ought to give thought to those who talk of other countries as being priest-ridden. We are ourselves priest-ridden to an extent that few people realize. It is not the open priestly rule of a Roman Catholic country, it is the sly, cowardly priest-rule of a clergy which will stoop to almost anything to get its way, which will work in all sorts of underhand methods, and because it is without the intellectual conviction of the Catholic clergy will use all sorts of instruments for imposing their views on the public. If we could only get the inside of the history which would record how the time for broadcasting the Sunday evening concert was changed from 6.30 till after church time, that in itself would be interesting. And that is only one of a score of ways in which the clergy are at work, scheming to utilize public offices and instruments to the interest of their churches, packing public bodies, so far as it can be done, and encouraging underhand and cowardly methods all round.

We agree with the papers that the death of Dr. Clifford, at the age of 87, removes a very prominent figure from the ranks of the Nonconformists. When a man has

reached that age, and has taken the opportunity of expressing opinions on a large number of subjects before the country, he becomes a kind of an institution, and the churches are too keen advertisers to lose sight of the fact. So far as the public is concerned it is mere pretence to affect deep sorrow at the death of a public man at that age. To intimate friends and relatives death always comes as a blow, no matter what the age. For some time it leaves a hole in the world.

But when that is said and done we may pass a word of comment on the eulogies paid to Dr. Clifford as a man of rare conscientious scruples. There was an unintentioned satire in some of the papers talking of him as representative of the Nonconformist Conscience. That was true enough, but we regard it as anything but a compliment. Without the Nonconformist twist Dr. Clifford might easily have been an ardent worker in reform movements. With that he was unable to see things fairly. Thus, in the matter of Secular education it was never possible to get him to act or speak plainly on a clear matter of principle. He professed as loudly as anyone the duty of the State was not to subsidize or interfere in matters of religion, and one of the papers gave it as a proof of his adherence to principle that he would never pay the education rate till summoned because part of it was given to the support of Church-schools. But when it came to the question of retaining the fetish books of Protestants in the schools, and so making all pay for a religious teaching with which all did not agree, he considered that only fair and proper. So with the relief from taxation which the churches and chapels get and which amounts to a very substantial State endowment. Here again Dr. Clifford found nothing wrong, nor did he object to the State subsidizing and patronizing religion in many other indirect ways. All this shows how a man might have a very strong conscience twisted and distorted by religious bias. And public men will have to have a very much clearer sense of what is just towards the whole of the community than this if our public life is to be all that we should desire.

After many columns of biblical quotations interlarded with extracts from the speeches of public men on the subject of war, the International Bible Students' Association, 34 Craven Terrace, W.2, offers the gentle reader eight Bible-study books for fourteen shillings, post paid. During the last war, Freethinkers kept the name of God out of the business, and, in the event of another one, there will be no reason to change their attitude. The causes of war are perfectly well known to thoughtful people who do not wear theological blinkers.

Mr. Baldwin's politics are outside our scope, but he appears to be sounding a new note for a public man. Speaking of his early life when he met shepherds and workmen, he said that it was from this association that he learned the profound sympathy and affection of common men, of whom he was one. We wonder if a statement of this kind would give a crick in the neck to such figures as the Archbishop of Canterbury and the many bishops who are naked under their uniforms.

Hardened Freethinkers who recognize that the theological vocabulary is something apart from life and remote from common-sense will not be surprised to know that Eric S. Waterhouse, D.D., rattling the bones of religion, states, "The actual endurance of pain and conflict with evil seldom destroys religious convictions." We do not expect anything else from one in the trade, but it is safe to surmise that the Church suffered casualties in the Great War that will never be made good in this generation or any other.

The Rev. W. W. Cash, writing on missionary problems, declares that, since the Armistice "more Copts are joining the ranks of Islam annually than Moslems are becom-

ing Christians. This appears to be as explicit as the hall-porter's answer to the gentleman's enquiry if his lady was at home: "She was at home just now, but she's not gone out yet." Freethinkers, however, will not have to look twice at the above missionary report to catch the meaning of the Rev. W. W. Cash.

Poor Judas Iscariot is in great demand lately; he is now reincarnated in female form to make a novel entitled *The Outcast*. He seems to be a figure that can neither be praised nor blamed, yet the whole Christian profession turns on this figure's business bungling; he is the Jonah of theology, and any of our modern dramatists could have used him to better advantage, with less disastrous results.

A correspondent sends us a record of five clergymen whose wills are published in the course of one week. The united value of their worldly possessions amount to over £180,000. There are a lot of underpaid clergy, but there are evidently many who stand in no danger of starvation. And it is the plums of a profession that attract.

The members of the Free Church and the Plymouth Brethren at Brora, Sutherlandshire, do not live in that brotherly harmony which we are assured is the inevitable outcome of belief in Christ. For when the Plymouth Brethren arrived at the Fishermen's Hall to hold a conference they found that the Free Church members had been there before them and had smashed the windows and taken away the lamps belonging to the Brethren. So their light could not shine before men, and the conference had to be abandoned.

Several London music halls have been refused a licence to sell intoxicating drinks. On the other hand a licence was granted to Glendale Hall, Tottenham, for November 29 and December 1, when a bazaar is being held in aid of a Roman Catholic Church and School Fund. We may say their spirits will rejoice in the Lord.

At West Ham a man and his wife have been committed to take their trial on a charge of manslaughter for not calling a doctor to their child who was suffering from diphtheria. The couple were sincere Christians who believed that the New Testament told them the truth when it informed them that the prayer of faith would save the sick. So they relied upon prayer instead of upon the doctor, and a Christian magistrate has committed them for trial, and probably a Christian judge will later send them to prison for acting upon what the Christians' "sacred book" tells them. And the 50,000 parsons will stand quietly by while two of their ignorant dupes are imprisoned as a consequence of their teaching. We shall watch this case with some interest.

It apparently does not matter much what one says in the pulpit so long as it sounds all right. For example, Canon Barnes says, "Man was not originally endowed with a soul, but had come to possess it through the processes of biological evolution." Now what a Christian means when he talks of the "soul" is something that may exist independently of the organism. It works with or through the organism but is not dependent upon it. So one would like to know just what Canon Barnes means. Does he mean that at a certain stage of biological evolution the activity of the organism becomes such that it exhibits certain functions that may exist apart from the activity of the organism itself? That would be a most remarkable result, and is the only case in which the activity of an organism may exist apart from that upon which it is dependent for its existence. Or does he mean that the soul is something that is hanging about, so to speak, waiting for the organism to develop to such a stage that it may pop in and take possession, afterwards popping out again and continuing its suspended

existence elsewhere? In that case we should like to know how Canon Barnes reaches this remarkable conclusion. But we suspect that he does not really mean anything at all. These parsons get in the habit of saying things, and as they know that their listeners will not question, and will get no answer if they do, they go on with their chatter. They are the most irresponsible body of chatters in the world.

Canon Bell, of York, thinks that bishops should be allowed to wear ordinary clothes. In our opinion that would never do. These people are picked out by divine grace, they have a call from the Lord to their work, and how will the ordinary man be able to pick them out from the common crowd if there is no distinction in dress? He will not be able to tell them by their being better looking, or better behaved, or more intelligent than other people. It will ruin the influence of the clergy if the suggestion is acted upon. By all means let them be dressed so that we can tell the Lord's selected by their clothes. We have no other means of distinguishing them.

A citizen of Ohio, U.S.A., in 1918 died, and in his will devised to the State 500 acres of land to be known as the John Bryan Natural History Reserve. A provision of the will was that the State should not permit any religious institution on the said reserve. There was some trouble over this clause in the State Legislature, but eventually the condition was accepted, and now some of the Churches are up in arms. They say it would be an insult to the State of Ohio to permit this will to be enforced. One wonders why? If the will had arranged for prayers to be said every day over every natural history specimen on the land, with a fee to be paid for some parson to say the prayers, the only quarrel would have been between the clergymen themselves as to who should have the payment. As it is we haven't the slightest doubt that before long some parson will be on the job, and the provision of the will be ignored as the wishes of other testators have been ignored when it suited the religious world. But here is another example which may go along with the funeral of Lord Morley to prove that where Christianity is concerned decency and justice stand but a small chance of being put into operation. And as a matter of fact the Constitution of the United States expressly provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." But in spirit and in underhand practice that has long been ignored.

A suggestion has been made that in law courts the expression "irresistible accident" should take the place of "Act of God." Some people will leave nothing alone. Once upon a time God did almost everything. He gave health and inflicted death, he sent the harvest and managed the weather. Gradually all these things were taken away from him, but he has been left with earthquakes, shipwrecks, sudden death, and such like reminders of his gracious presence. But now if these are taken away people will be wondering what he exists for. A God who does nothing is not very attractive. It is something if he only wipes out a hundred thousand or so every now and again with an earthquake.

The *Times Literary Supplement* is to be congratulated on the essay entitled "The Humanitarian Movement." It is too much to expect it to have any definite goal other than keeping its 25,000 subscribers interested and incidentally helping publishers. But in this process it frequently says some good things that deserve attention from citizens of the world. In the essay under notice, it states that the speculations of Locke gave a philosophical basis to the revolt against the Church as a representative of supernatural authority. These things require stating, and we care not who states them, even if this "Acid Drop" has one leg in "Sugar Plums."

A man is free when he fears nothing, and desires nothing.—Pétiet (1784-1858).

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.

- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Shipp, 10s.; W. Hill, 5s.; J. McKerrow, 10s.; John's Parents, £1; F. A. Hornbrook, 10s.; J. Gair, 2s. 6d.; D. Cameron, 3s.; J. Thackray, 2s.; J. Anderson, 10s.; J. Wright, 5s.; C. K., 5s.; Derwent Branch N.S.S., 5s.; J. Christie, 10s.; W. Milroy, 5s.; J. Mathews, 10s.; Dr. J. R. Bhatia, £1 1s.; R. L. Martland, £2 2s.; R. J. T., 2s. 6d.; S. E. Beardall, 4s.; J. A. Hindman (Derby), 10s.; J. Thomson, 10s.; W. Dulloche, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. White, 5s.; Mrs. Wade, 2s. 6d.; H. J. Barraud, 15s.; G. Webb, £1 5s.
- J. SHIPP.—*The Road to Endor* is published by Macmillan & Co. We fancy the price is about 7s. 6d.
- H. STICHELLS.—Thanks. Shall be able to use in a week or so. We think an article on women writers and their attitude towards Freethought would be of great interest to many of our readers. Perhaps Mr. Underwood will consider your suggestion.
- J. GAIR.—Very sorry to hear of your wife's illness. Please give our best wishes. Shall hope to see you in the near future.
- H. LUCAS.—We know we can depend upon you to sow a little of the seed whenever possible. We have not forgotten our promise to pay you a visit, and one day will do so, but we have little time to spend on such pleasant dissipations.
- J. R. BHATIA.—We should be, like yourself, appalled at the ignorance and prejudice afloat regarding Freethought, but for the fact that we have had so many years' experience of it. And now we have come to take it for granted. We are glad to have your high opinion of the *Freethinker*.
- E. A. PHIPSON.—Doesn't it strike you that if the Jesus legend is a part of a general mythology or arose late in the day, there is ample explanation here why no one who lived at the time of the mythical Gospel Jesus denied his historical character.
- J. CLARK.—Thanks for the good wishes of the Derwent Branch.
- S. E. BEARDALL.—It is the usual fate of reform papers—and reformers—to be hard up, but a reform that brought financial gain would not, as the world goes, be worth much.
- J. FARMER.—Several of our friends back up your suggestion to make the Sustentation Fund a yearly institution till the need for it has passed. We have no doubt all would support it, but it is early yet to decide, and we will not give up all hope of making the paper self-supporting. New subscribers is the imperative need from both a financial and a propagandist point of view.
- H. PRINCE (Secretary Bolton Branch N.S.S.).—We regret to learn that your President is leaving your town for Sheffield and note your warm appreciation of his services both as lecturer and official. We trust that he will find a sphere for more Freethought work where he is going. We can do with all the workers we can get.
- 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 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

In spite of the election fever there was a good audience at Swansea on Sunday last at Mr. Cohen's lecture. The Swansea Branch, owing mainly to the state of trade in the district, is passing through a very trying time, and it is to be hoped that all our friends in the district will do what can be done to help. Mr. B. Dupree, Secretary of the Branch will be pleased to answer any enquiries from those interested.

Mr. Cohen was to have lectured in Manchester to-day (December 2), but owing to the elections being only a few days off, and the city being in the grip of electionitis, he thought it best to suggest to the Branch that the visit should be postponed. This has been decided on, and Mr. Cohen will lecture there as early in the New Year as is possible.

The North London Branch continues its Sunday evening discussions on various subjects, and these are being followed with considerable interest by those who attend. Last Sunday Mr. George Bedborough lectured on "Utopias, and How to Reach Them," and the address was followed by discussion. To-day (December 2) Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman, Secretary of the "Divorce Reform Union," will open a discussion on the subject on which she is so enthusiastic and so well informed a speaker. Full announcements in Lecture Guide.

The Unabashed Atheist.

"William J. Bryan made this wise remark: 'I am not worried about an Atheist who admits he is an Atheist. The man who denies the existence of God is not apt to have much influence.'"—Arthur Brisbane in the *Denver Post*, July 6, 1923.

This is one "wise" man flattering another, chiefly, presumably, because they are engaged in the same business—the money-getting business. There is the same calibre of wisdom and truth in Bryan's remark as there is in the unprincipled and characterless Giovanni Papini's saying that "the name of the path which conducts to perfect liberty [slavery] is..... Holiness" (*Life of Christ*, p. 205).

As the belief in the existence of God is commonly thought to be the height of wisdom, and the denial of his existence the height of folly, let us briefly examine this popular belief and find out its true nature.

Before he denies the existence of God, the first thing an Atheist obviously must do is to find out what the believer means by the ambiguous word "God." Is his God an objective reality that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted as, for instance, the sun or the moon, a stone or a tree, an animal or a man, a "holy" wafer or some other object, then, of course, no Atheist is so stupid as to deny his existence. His quarrel with the believer will then not be about the existence of his particular God, but about the existence of certain attributes which the believer might associate with his God.

And if the believer says that his God does not belong to the realm of objective realities, then the Atheist asks him if his God perchance is synonymous with some particular abstraction, as, for instance, love, courage, goodness, truth, liberty, beauty. Should this be the case, then there is no quarrel between them as to his existence. Their opinion as to what is truth, or goodness, or beauty may vary greatly, but they agree that there is such a thing as truth, goodness, or beauty, should one of these be the particular God of the believer.

In either of above cases, then, we see that the Atheist and the believer are equally wise, for they both recognize the existence of that particular object or that particular abstraction which the believer terms God. The difference between them is that the Atheist does not label with the word God that which the believer does.

But, on the other hand, if the believer's God does not belong to either one of the above classes of gods, but to the anthropomorphic, then the Atheist must ask the believer what evidence he has for the existence of an anthropomorphic God, that is, a supernatural superman with superhuman attributes, as, to cite the three most familiar ones, Odin, Zeus, and Jehovah. If the believer be a Christian and a good Bryanite, then, in order to be considered wise and make the Atheist appear foolish, he obviously must bring forth evidence which clearly shows that Jehovah really exists. But can he do this? Can he bring forth evidence which shows that the existence of the barbaric Jehovah who, it is said, exhibited parts of his person to Moses, rests upon a better foundation than does the evidence for the existence of Odin or Zeus? This the Bryanite, of course, thinks he can; the Bible tells him "all about it" and that settles the matter. But the ancient Scandinavian legends have much to say about Odin, and the Homeric poems much to say about Zeus, and yet no man accepts this as evidence of their existence. Can that be? Why should Odin and Zeus be considered mythological characters and Jehovah, the tribal God of Jewish barbarians and the least noble of the three, a real character when there is actually no more evidence for his existence than there is for the existence of the others? Intellectual consistency and honesty demand that, if we consign Odin and Zeus to the mythological realm, we must do likewise with Jehovah; and the history of the evolution of the idea of God plainly shows that, instead of God making man in his image, as the Bible says, it is *man* that has made God in *his* image and given to him human attributes.

Now which is wisdom and which is folly—to affirm without the least evidence the existence of the anthropomorphic Jehovah, or on the evidence of the history of God-making deny his existence? To us the affirmative attitude is not only evidence of folly but also of great ignorance and arrogant self-conceit on the part of the Jehovahist. But, on the other hand, is the Atheist wise in denying outright the existence of Jehovah? In other words, would it not be wiser to embrace the Agnostic attitude? No, decidedly not! That attitude relative to the existence of supernatural things is childish. If Jehovah *may* exist, which is the Agnostic attitude, then intellectual consistency and honesty demand us to admit that Odin or Zeus or, in fact, any other imaginary being (be he ever so fantastic) which supernaturalists may conceive *may* exist, as there is no more evidence for the existence of the one than there is for the others; and if anything is the height of folly, that certainly is. Hence the negative attitude of the Atheist relative to the existence of an anthropomorphic God is logical and rational.

Let us next proceed to examine the position of the Atheist relative to the theistic God, the God of Brisbane and most "respectable" people. What is this personal God called the Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the universe? We are told that he is immaterial, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, all-good, all-loving, all-merciful; but what does a personal God with such extraordinary characteristics look like? Before the Atheist can deny his existence he demands that the Theist answer these questions. And what are the answers? Simply that he cannot be defined, which is tantamount to saying that he is inconceivable. And if this be so, then the Atheist

wants to know what the Theist really believes in? (Bear in mind that the theistic God, though accredited with omnipresence, is not synonymous with the pantheistic God, but has an independent existence apart from Nature). Can a person believe in the existence of a being that is inconceivable, of whom his mind cannot form the faintest picture? Surely not. He merely *thinks* he believes in his existence; *actually* he does not. And just as little as the Theist can actually believe in the existence of his God, just so little can the Atheist actually deny his existence, for he cannot deny the existence of that which his mind is incompetent to conceive; he can deny the existence of an anthropomorphic God, for such a being is conceivable, but not the theistic God. If an Atheist should deny the existence of the inconceivable theistic God, he would obviously place himself in the same position as the Theist—he would then merely be *talking*. And when was mere talking considered wisdom among thinkers?

And the Agnostic position in relation to the existence of a Supreme Being equals that of the Theist in absurdity. The Agnostic tells the Atheist not to deny the existence of the theistic God because he *may* exist. What is it that *may* exist? We have seen that the Theist cannot actually believe in and the Atheist cannot actually deny the existence of the theistic God simply because he is an utterly unintelligible concept, and from this it follows that the Agnostic is talking unmeaningly when he says that the theistic God *may* exist. It is to be noted, however, that neither the Agnostic nor the Atheist denies the existence of the theistic God, *though for quite different reasons*; the Agnostic because he does not realize what is involved in the Theist's belief in God, and the Atheist because he does.

Once in a while there comes to our notice some article wherein the Atheist is depicted as being extremely stupid and his Atheism so "cheap" that it is not worth refuting. If we then look for the cause of this strong censure, we frequently find that its author is himself a Pantheist, whose God is identical with Nature, who harbours the delusion that the Atheist denies the existence of Nature. Like ninety-nine per cent of the decriers of Atheism, he does not know what Atheism really is, nor does he, apparently, care to know. To him Atheism stands for the denial of God's existence, and as his God happens to be identical with Nature, ergo: "The Atheist denies the existence of Nature! What ignorance! What incomparable stupidity!"

As a matter of fact, the Atheist and the Pantheist are twins, so to speak, and were so considered by the chief apostle of modern Pantheism, Haeckel. Neither the one nor the other believes in the existence of a supernatural God; to both Nature is the only existing reality. The Pantheist, however, calls Nature God, to which the Atheist has no objection whatever as long as the Pantheist makes it plain to supernaturalists that his God is identical with Nature and not with their personal God. Such Pantheists may be called scientific Pantheists. But the majority of Pantheists apparently do not belong to this type. These, though being Pantheists in the sense that they do not recognize the existence of a personal God, use the word God so ambiguously and mix their Pantheism with so much unintelligible mysticism that they, perhaps unintentionally, delude Theists into believing them to be "pious souls that worship God with a humble faith"! And yet they are as great Atheists as the scientific Pantheists and the "unabashed" Atheists, for they no more than the others recognize the existence of a supernatural personal God; and, moreover, the censure they receive from Atheists as well as from scientific Pantheists like

Haeckel, is not on account of their identification of God with Nature, as some muddled heads seem to think, but on account of their mystical word juggling, which greatly retards the dissemination among mankind of the scientific and realistic view of life which is so necessary to progress.

Now a few words about the Atheist not being "apt to have much influence." A few examples will show the error of that statement. For instance, Kapila, the father of Indian philosophy, was an Atheist, and yet he has influenced Hindu philosophy for about twenty-five hundred years. Confucius was an Atheist, for he frankly admitted that he knew nothing about the existence of God, and yet his influence has dominated the Chinese people for almost twenty-five hundred years. Gotama, whose influence has affected the lives of billions of men during the last twenty-five hundred years, and affects the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the East to-day, was an Atheist. It was impossible for this great mind to reconcile the ugly aspects of life with the belief in the existence of a personal God, nor did he think that mankind's hope for a better future depended upon belief in the existence of God. On the contrary, he clearly realized that ".....there is hope for man only in man," as Arnold put in *The Light of Asia*.

But there is no need to go back to ancient times to find Atheists whose influence upon the history of mankind has been immense. For instance, what about the influence of the atheistic Karl Marx? Have we not been assured late and early by the Press for the last five years that it is the influence of his teaching which is responsible for the Russian revolution and for the present unrest among the working classes everywhere? What were the two "wise" men thinking about when they overlooked the epoch-making influence of this Atheist? Possibly they were doing no thinking at all, but, as usual, were merely talking when they said that "an Atheist is not apt to have much influence."

Moreover, if we look for the cause of the present unrest in religious circles—the controversies between Fundamentalists and Liberalists, and the frantic but futile efforts of the theistic evolutionists and a few inconsistent pantheistic scientists to reconcile the irreconcilable, science and religion, when properly understood—we shall find that it at bottom is nothing else than the influence of Atheists which the "spiritual" forces are trying to counteract. And it will be the influence of Atheists that will finally sweep all theological rubbish into the sea of oblivion and inaugurate an age of Love and Reason.

O. KIHLMSTROM.

Truthseeker (New York).

The Wonderful Power of the Blood.

OH, the blood! Oh, the blood! There's *wonderful* power in the blood!

No one knew whence they came; and there were about thirty of them—strange, uncouth messengers out of the Unknown, who had come to tell us about the power of the blood—the *wonderful* power of the blood.

They were anchored outside the "Blue Stag"; and, very appropriately considering the nature of their "message," they were almost precisely opposite Mr. Cole's. Mr. Cole is one of the several local butchers; dead pigs and bleeding rabbits with tin mugs on their noses swayed in the cool, late afternoon breeze. Oh, the wonderful power of the blood!

The president was an elderly "beaver"; his benevolently vacuous face was completely fringed with a definitely religious border of white whiskers; under his left arm slumbered a godly umbrella; in his right hand reposed a sacred hymn book in a cheap, holy, bright red cover.

Oddly, these advocates of sanguinity, these protagonists of "the precious blood," were curiously anæmic, judged by the merely worldly eye. A pallid spinster with a "kind face" mournfully manipulated a tinkling harmonium, and the brethren—or congregation—or members—all joined in, taking it in turns to say the words of the verses before they were "sung." One's quite involuntary amusement was mingled with an equally involuntary feeling of life-tragedy. Any bright disciple of Dr. Sigmund Freud would have "spotted" a likely client in every one of the poor, pale, undeveloped creatures around the harmonium. *Were* they undeveloped, or degenerate, or both? No; probably they were simply warped, drowned psychically in that "precious blood." Spiritually speaking, they'd never had a chance. That blood must have corroded.

The vision before me was an epitome of bourgeois England as it survives to-day; Puritanism run to seed, its ranting enthusiasm all turned to slop—generously mixed with "the precious blood"; unsatisfied yearnings of all kinds seeking extra-natural outlets, and finding them in spiritual orifices made specially to be flooded and choked with that scarlet fluid shed upon Calvary in order that you and I, dear reader, might be "saved." It is unquestionably a sub-conscious yearning for a fuller, healthier, more normal life that forces these poor, lily-livered, timid, negative, spiritually starved creatures to turn to that unnatural, beastly remedy—that divine quack nostrum—the precious blood.

Such is non-conforming Protestantism! A poor, pale, Pussyfoot Jesus, and streams of rich, rolling, red blood for his friends to enjoy as a "saving flood." Poor Jesus! Poor Protestants! Poor England! And to attempt to tell the truth about these little matters is called blasphemy. Is it no blasphemy against man to distort his mind from the very cradle with lies?—But to our sheep! Our Christian lambs!

A white-eyed, subdued damsel, who might have been attractive had she ever had a chance, distributed tracts amongst the audience: "A Sinner's Confession"; "An Atheist's Cry"; "Lost!"; "Newton's Testimony"; and others referring to "the blood." "There's wonderful power in the blood!" About a dozen of us constituted the audience: stolid matrons nursing junior infants; stocky, indifferent yeomen; a labourer puffing at his pipe; and one or two children.

These poor blood-bagmen had thoughtfully brought with them their own "scenery"; posters with great, ugly lettering, borne upon poles by the faithful. Jesus and "the blood" had hereon a splendid—and presumably free—advertisement. "The Lord's Coming is at Hand"; "Behold! He cometh as a Thief in the Night!"; "Believe in the Lord Jesus and ye shall be saved"; "The Lord is a Consuming Fire"; and more about hell-fire and, of course, "the blood." Let no one accuse Protestantism of being dry! On the contrary, it may be called sticky.

John—three—sixteen! That was the ticket for salvation; the winning number in the divine sweep-stake. "For God so loved the world....." You know the rest. If not, you will find it in Holy Writ.

God, you see, who is a walking compendium of all the virtues—mercy, justice, truth, and the rest—"sent down" his only son to be tortured to death that "we"—that is, you and I, sweet reader—might be "saved." In the divine alchemy, fire is to be avoided only by blood. That is a bald translation of

our wandering gossellers' doctrine, "roughly done into the vernacular." Well, no one can say that in the divine household charity began at home! On the contrary; and very much so at that!

Poor old God! Poor little Jesus! And poor, silly Evangelicals! What a lot they all miss!

The sacred doctrine that we have tried to condense was given to an eager world to the accompaniment of passing cars and carts; of whistling errand-boys and playing children, all completely indifferent to the only true scheme of salvation. No one seemed to care, and in the golden-orange hues of a perfect summer sunset the unheeding trees swayed happily and gently, while busy hands of rooks went cawing indifferently about their homes in the elm branches. And the "meeting," run by strange folk, atavisms, half butchers and half medicine-men, continued until the shadows began to lengthen, and great green day gradually grew into soft grey night. "There is wonderful power in the blood." Unfortunately it is a power wholly for evil; but it has one point in its favour; it is a waning power. Wherefore thanks be to Man!

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

The Importance of Reason.

RECENTLY I was watching the preparation for departure from one of the most famous London termini of a train which was booked to run 120 miles without stopping at an average speed of nearly sixty miles per hour. The bustle of leaving clustered the doors of the long and comfortable train with a crowd that made one wonder what sort of machine could be expected to move all those people besides the locomotive itself. Therefore to the locomotive I went. The men who made her had, with a sort of unreasonable felicity, called her "Lady Superior." Her great bulk loomed above my head, her hoarse voice roared away to make the steam pressure mount to 200 lbs. per square inch, her driver and fireman, like nurses, tenderly oiled her, touched her here and wiped her there. As the time for departure drew near the driver mounted to his place while the fireman keenly watched the bustle on the platform for the right away signal. The time is up, the signal is given, "Lady Superior" gives a short sharp shriek and silently and effortlessly the train begins to move. A yard or two forward and a blast comes from the funnel that almost rings like the crack of an explosion. The driver with a touch eases the throttle and opens it again, followed by a slow but successively faster series of tremendous blasts. Before I realize it half of the long train has passed me and then with obviously gathering speed the rest of the train slides easily by and disappears round the curve beyond the station.

That reasonable miracle happens many times a day. It happens every day for years. Millions of people are hurled comfortably about from spot to spot on the earth's surface in that way and are safer than they would be walking in the streets of London. The immense size of the train, the weight and power and speed of the locomotive, the relatively tiny ribbon of steel on which they are borne, the still smaller flanges of the wheels that keep the train on those ribbons of steel, the radius and angles of the curves, the intricate organization that wafts these trains along in their right places—yes, and the ten thousand things that make the railway what it is are a triumph of human reason.

While watching "Lady Superior" I was reminded of a remark made jointly by two friends in a discussion we had together a short time previously. One is a clergyman of the Established Church, while the

other, in religion as in a number of other things, can only be called a rebel. Yet they were in agreement that reason was not the most important thing in man's life. How, I wondered, is this idea to be applied to the train and all the other characteristic miracles of our time—miracles of reason. Without these things and all that they represent life for us would be entirely changed. Not merely should we, who depend upon them for our lives, suffer as children of the twentieth century. The race of men itself would never have existed, for reason is as deep and as old as the history of man. Our modern scientific contrivances are but part of the base of an inverted pyramid of reason whose point fades away into the precocious dreamings of some ape-like progenitor whose curious thumbs gave him the extraordinary capacity of trying to make the dreams come true. When I stood beside the locomotive and saw the easy way in which it moved its great load, I thought of those distant forbears of ours, for every blast from its metal throat threw into the air a monument of steam to their dreams and to their thumbs and thrilled me with the peculiar triumph of man—the triumph of reason.

Anyone arriving at that station would probably, upon leaving, board a motor bus which, as it winds its way through the traffic under perfect control over scientifically laid roads, hums a tune to reason. Under the bonnet is an intricate piece of mechanism built to make thousands of explosions per minute of *practical use* so that a crank can revolve thousands of revolutions in the same time. The speed of the engine is so great that each explosion is lost in a continuous drone escaping from the silencer, yet each represents the separate opening and closing of valves, electric current switched on and off, levers moving this way and that, a terrible maze to the non-mechanically educated. Upon leaving the bus one might use the telephone, take a tram or travel in a tube train, listen to a gramophone, send a telegram, consult a dentist, eat a meal, write, take some part in manufacture, read a book, drink a glass of water. Not one of these things can be said to be indebted to anything but reason for their existence. And if they fail, when a train is derailed, when a boiler explodes, when the crops fail, with an unreflecting unanimous accord, all those people who are responsible for the proper working of such things, and most who are not, resort to more and yet more reasoning as the best method of assuring themselves against such a disaster again. In the face of trouble mankind goes to reason instinctively.

But then some people are saying that instinct or the unconscious mind, is of more importance than reason. Our loves, our hates, our unreasonable speech, our customs, our dreams, the sort of lives our physical history and environment dictate, our prejudices, our likes and dislikes; in short all those things in us which represent the enormously greater part of the history of the race of life, are non-reasonable. Our physical history has built for us a huge foundation of alogical material. Some reasoners, scientific psychologists mostly, are insisting more and more upon the part this singular foundation plays even in our conscious and reasoning moments. They say that the only explanation of the curious mental expressions and their concomitant behaviour which very often startle us by cropping up among the ordinary life round about, is that this foundation is much more active than appearances indicate. Sometimes it overflows, much as the interior of the earth boils up through a volcano, to show us what extraordinary and non-reasonable energies lie beneath the ordered and apparently secure surface of our everyday life. The importance of this psychological aspect is growing, for the ordinary processes of mind are being rele-

gated slowly but surely to this background of consciousness. As an immediate consequence a number of different sorts of people are saying that they had told us so before and that reason after all must take a back seat. It is demonstrable, they say, that reason is not the most important thing in life; at one time we merely suspected this, instinctively we knew it to be true, but now we have science to support us.

The psychologist, or whoever the person is who maintains the importance of the instinctive point of view, was hardly needed to tell us that the reasoning part of our mental life was but part of a whole woven by the dim and distant experiences of the past and by "the emptiness, the enigmatic spaces and silences, the winds and torrents and soulless forces that lie about the lit and ordered life of men." These emotional and subconscious expressions (now being systematized) are plain to all reflective people and must be taken into consideration in sketching a map of life. Music, painting, sculpture, literature, are the intellectual and ordered expressions of these surrounding mysteries; and even religion plays and has played its part in giving them expression in men's lives. But where is the cosmic balance into which can be put reason on the one scale and the subconscious on the other. When the question is asked, which is the more important, we are perpetuating the error of the school-boy who mixes the oranges with the haddock and the halfpence with the pounds. If instinct is the pound weight and reason will not drag the beam down by what standard shall we certify the pound weight value. Where is the cosmic inspector of weights and measures?

This then should be the answer to those who claim for instinct a relative superiority. That the psychology as well as the terminology of the market place has so overwhelmed our minds that we must speak in the lingo of "value." It is this that produces abstract discussions on such subjects as the relative value of the dustman and the doctor. This disease of intellect might be satirized in propagating the doctrines that the right leg is more important than the left; that water is more important than lemon juice in the making of lemonade; that the driver is more important than the engine in running a train. The plain fact is that both are necessary in a world whose chief amusement is a scandal consisting of making necessarily invidious and odious comparisons. The horse-play of intellect.

But, I imagine the protagonist of instinct to say, do you claim that reason is so important that there is no necessity to make an effort in the propagation of instinct? To which I reply that emotion, instinct, the subconscious, have propagated themselves from the beginning of life and are probably doing so now without human assistance for all I can say to the contrary. In any case I do not know how to organize support even for instinct except by reasoning. The only thing even that makes music and art what they are is the more and more ordered and reasoned expression of profound emotion. The tom-tom of the savage represents the beginning of that order, that intellectualization of instinctive feeling which we know as art, and which "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." Where is the madman that would say "get rid of all the schools for teaching the technique of art and support schools for the development of instinctive feeling." Who would support "airy nothing" and leave the "local habitation and a name" to look after itself. Yet this seems to be the effect of practically applying the principle that instinct is more important than reason.

And when reason fails, as it is bound sometimes to do by its very constitution, the only thing left to do is to reason again. The cure is homœopathic. If

reason cannot help reason and men go back, weary and thwarted, to merely instinctive methods, then mankind is doomed. In the present state of the world one might be pardoned for believing that such is already the case, a state of affairs brought about by the common failure to secure the use of reason in international affairs. In this confusion there are, and have been for some time past, a number of ostentatious and pompous banners of unreason raised whose noisy recruits manage to focus upon their efforts a great deal of attention. But meanwhile the only hope for the world rests upon that inconspicuous few who believe in that hope and, so believing, develop and use every effort to apply it reasonably. May they not fail.

PERCY S. WILDE.

Letter to Aunt Muriel.

III.

I WENT last Sunday to hear your parson, Aunt. Somewhere in the Gospels Christ speaks of rascals who sit in the receipt of customs; and a fellow who takes toll out of souls that he nets for God Almighty, preaching that infamous doctrine of vicarious punishment, I hold to be as shameless a rascal as there is on earth. The Quakers (put it to their credit!) will have no such prostitution of service.

Well, there he was, Aunt Muriel—your parson, in church vestments and ring on finger. (You will have noticed that ring, Aunt.) His "text," he said, was "from the First Epistle General of St. John, fourth chapter"; it was "part of the sixteenth verse." (Parsons seem to be very sparing of Scripture nowadays.) After some pulpit antics, as if the "text" was too holy to utter, he repeated in a sort of snuffle: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in....." The rest was indistinguishable—submerged in the snuffle. Not long since, in another church, I had heard this variety of pulpit utterance. "Have parsons," I said to myself, "some special gland that discharges a fluid into the nose when they utter the 'text,' producing that penitent do-de-do-de-do-de? Does the Holy Spirit operate the tap?" But a lady of the congregation, who had heard your parson before, told me "he does that for effect." Then followed the usual pulpit clap-trap and little stories, the pulpit logic and dogmatism. "You go into a hospital," he said; "you see the suffering and the dying; and when you come out, you realize what a blessing is health; you realize God's love to you." The altitude of the logic alleviated a feeling of nausea at the comfortable selfishness of it. "But at times," he said, and his features narrowed, and the old evil blood of the theologian darkened his eyes, "God finds it necessary to punish. But he does it from love." "And how many times," I thought, "have you, and those like you, and those whom you put on, vented your dirty theological spite under some fine pretext!"

You of his congregation, Aunt—you who have "accepted Christ as your Saviour"¹—say you, you "dwell in God, and God in you"? No peccadilloes, Aunt? No animosities? Those two sisters, members of your Church, who sit apart in enmity, "each jealous of the other as the stung are of the adder," what of them? Both stand well with your parson. (They have long purses.) Both have accepted Christ as their Saviour. And of how many thousands are they the type?

For the rest, the church needed renovating. The estimate for the work was £500. To help to raise the money, there would be Thursday evening socials. "The Socials," he said, "would have their social side, but they would have also their financial side."

¹ See Letter I.

("Heavenly enlightenment!" I laughed.) "And it is *your* church," he added. ("Vision and unanimity!")

"This!" I said to myself as I came away, "This! Sunday after Sunday!.....The poor Church dupe!"

Ay, the poor dupe. First, you stuff your creed into the child. Grown up, he finds himself bearing everywhere his church label, can see nothing for it but to face it out. He has put many a threepenny, many a bob, too, on *The Blood* for the Heaven and Glory Stakes, and to admit now that he has doubts as to their existence is to admit that he has been fooled. So he goes on backing the theological fancy, goes on giving "for the Lord." And your parson smiles like a bookie, Aunt.

H. BARBER.

Correspondence.

ROME AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—According to a newspaper report Mr. G. K. Chesterton says he has "been led to the conclusion that if any body of persons had collapsed in the War it was the Secularists, the Freethinkers, and the Materialists." Lecturing in Liverpool on the "Cant of the Age," he told his audience that "even if his mind had not already been moving in a Catholic direction he thought the Great War would have converted him to the Catholic Faith."

I presume "G. K. C." is a man possessed of ordinary intelligence, and perhaps of super-intelligence, and it always appears to me when men of this type speak they invariably do so from their super-intelligence, which nobody can understand.

I should like him to tell us what the Vatican did in the Great War, whether it did anything except wait and see which side was going to win. I would suggest another lecture on the "Cant of Holy Mother Church," but the type of mind referred to would not be able to comprehend that.

SINE CERE.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT.

SIR,—As one of those "Gentlemen of the Press" to whom your correspondent "Mimnermus" refers, I am irritated by the inaccuracies which he has contributed to your printed matter.

It is, of course, easy to accuse a dead woman of "swelled head," and to write condescendingly about a mere "maid of all work" (itself an inaccuracy), but the writer should at least make sure of the outstanding facts of the subject.

"Mimnermus" judges Joanna's prose and verse harshly, yet writers of repute of many nations have formed quite opposite opinions. Someone must be wrong I suppose.

I should like once more to contradict the spiteful lie concerning Joanna's "business instincts" with regard to the sale of "passports to heaven." The seals were in no sense passports to heaven, and they were never exchanged for money.

Of course, "Mimnermus" is safe in writing gossip about a dead woman, but should he ever be able to contribute to the *real* Press, or write about a living person who can "hit back," I would suggest that (to avoid a libel action) he becomes less slipshod in his handling of facts. Why, even his opening sentence is faulty. The "Book of Sealed Writings" to which he refers was certainly never written by Joanna Southcott—at least, her followers have not previously heard of it!

J. C. SMITH.

[Several letters are held over till next week.—ED.]

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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.

EAST ISLINGTON LABOUR HALL (16 Highbury Grove, N.): Tuesday, December 4, 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead, "Why Man Made God."

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, A Social. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday evening at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. Continuation of discussion on the "General Election."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman, "The Law and the People."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. Van Biene, "Einstein's Theories—What I Don't Know About Them."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Joseph McCabe, "My Impressions of Australasia."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "A Puritan Boyhood."

WEST HAM BRANCH.—No Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought Lecture on Sunday at Marble Arch at 3.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Is Religion a Social Necessity?"

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street, Bolton): 2.15, Mr. W. McClellan, "Selfishness of Morality."

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (City Hall Saloon): Mr. George Whitehead, 11.30, "The Problem of the Night"; 6.30, "Would Jesus Christ Join the I.L.P.?"

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Youngman's Restaurant, Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Councillor Stanley Horrel, a Lecture.

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