

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### The "Freethinker."

The *Freethinker* has always been remarkable for the heartiness of the hatreds it has evoked and for the warmth of the friendships it has inspired. I regard both consequences as a compliment. No man and no journal ever yet did useful work that had not the same experience. No man during his lifetime had more bitter enemies than had Charles Bradlaugh, and none ever had friends who were more passionately devoted to him. Had he been less uncompromising towards the master superstition, his many sterling qualities and unusual endowments of character would have caused all to speak well of him, but he would have aroused about as much enthusiasm as Cleopatra's Needle and would have been just as useful to the community. The important thing in life is neither the enemies nor the friends that one makes, but the quality of either. That is the true measure of the worth of one's work; and it should be added that whether enemies or friends are made is the thing about which they who do the real work of the world trouble least. Whatever enemies or friends one has they should emerge—so to speak—by the way, one must not set out to make them. To do that is fatal. To write with an eye on whether it will offend this one or please the other one is fatal to one's independence. No journal can ever do good work under such conditions. It no longer leads; it follows. It places safety before truth, and profit before principle, and ends in deserving neither enemies nor friends.

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### A Suggestion.

I have written the above because of a new year's letter received from a friend, a great admirer of the *Freethinker*, who makes a suggestion which I have several times received from others. The writer's name is well known to all our readers, and for that reason I withhold it, but because it has been made by others I think it better to discuss his suggestion here. He says:—

It is with real diffidence I am taking this opportunity of alluding to a matter which I have promised again and again to do ever since you "ascended the throne." It is in reference to the name of your journal. I have given copies of it probably to fifty persons at different times. All have praised it, and often with considerable emphasis, but they invariably (I don't

know of an exception) wind up with the question: "Can't you get them to change its name?" They point out how impossible it is for them to use it either in the house, in the office, or in the cars. As one puts it, "Why label such an invigorating tonic 'poison,' and set everyone right off against tasting it." Many told me they would subscribe to it under an innocent name. You know quite well that except with the "saints" *Freethinker* and *Atheist* have an odium attached to them which awaken a repellant emotion calculated to defeat the end and aim of the journal. To destroy that odium with excellence, though a slow process, would be possible if it were not perpetually renewed by a vast organization of vested interest.

It should be said that the writer is not himself fond of compromise, the letter is written solely with the idea of increasing the circulation of this paper.

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### What's in a Name?

Let me say at the outset that my sole interest in this paper is the work it does. The name under which it does it matters little, and if it could do its work more effectively by being called "Daydawn" or "The Christian's guide to a better Life," I should have no objection whatever to a change of title. But I see no evidence that this would be the case. In the history of Freethought journalism in this country there have been a number of papers with quite innocuous titles. There was the *Reasoner*, and everyone believes in reason; the very cardinals of the Roman Church will tell you that reason is a capital thing, and we must be guided by it. There was the *Investigator*, and investigation is beloved by many; there was the *National Reformer*, and national reform is surely a "respectable" purpose; there was the *Secular Review*, a title stodgy enough to satisfy the most timid, and the *Agnostic Journal*, a title which aimed at pleasing such as were afraid of the more robust title of *Atheist*. The list might be considerably lengthened, but the important thing is that the *Freethinker* has existed for a longer period than any of these journals, and to the best of my knowledge has a circulation as large as any that has ever been attained by any purely Freethought journal in the British Isles. And, after all, there is nothing objectionable in the word "Freethinker." Very large numbers of Christians to-day claim to be Freethinkers, and resent our taking the word to ourselves. It is not the name of the paper that rouses antagonism, but what the paper says and the way in which it says it. Had the *Freethinker* called itself by some other name—and followed the same policy—it would by this time have aroused the same antagonism. It has always been a challenge to the religious world, and I do not see how it can fail to be so unless it changes the character of its writers. No one has a poorer opinion of the intellect of the Christian world, in relation to particular beliefs than I have, but it will not do to assume that it is stupid where its religious interests are concerned. In that direction it is peculiarly wide-awake, and it will not do to assume that merely by changing the name of this paper Christians will read it under the impression that they have got hold of another edition of the *Christian World*. The



*Freethinker* is hated because of what it says, not because of the name under which it says it.

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#### Let Us Have Courage.

Why is it impossible for anyone to leave the *Freethinker* about in the house or in the cars? As a matter of fact it is not impossible in thousands of houses, and it is left about in cars. But why does this particular person find it impossible with a paper which he finds he praises so highly and describes as an "invigorating tonic"? It is not because the paper is filled with abusive articles, suggestive pictures, or obscene jokes. It cannot be the name, for the name itself is not at all offensive. And there is no Freethought paper issued, either in this country or abroad, in which the level of the writing is higher or in which there is more "fundamental brain-work." Its real offence is its straightforward attack on all religious beliefs, and it is because so many lack the courage to let their real opinions on religion be known that they cannot leave this paper about for others to see. They do not believe themselves, but they do not want others to know the extent of their unbelief. In this way they frighten themselves with a bogey of their own creation. They invite attack because they permit religious people to see that they lack the courage to openly state and defend their beliefs. And the believer takes that class of unbeliever at their own valuation. The religionist sees the other man afraid of what he will think about him, and quite naturally he regards his own opinions with increased satisfaction and treats the unbeliever with merited contempt. But the *Freethinker* is not a challenge to the believer only; it is also a challenge to such as have given up belief in religion, and it would do its work but ill if it so acted as to provide a shelter for a lack of moral courage, and to even offer a justification for it. To-day the chief help of the Churches comes from the insincerity of men and women who countenance things which they know to be a lie, and until that support is withdrawn they will continue to flourish. The great need of the world to-day is not "liberal" thinking, but strong and clear thinking by men and women who know what their opinions are and are not ashamed to avow them in the face of the world.

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#### A Fight Worth Making.

Some time ago I was asked by the secretary of a provincial secular society if I knew of any way in which their membership might be rapidly increased. I replied that this might be done if they confined their lecture platform to addresses that never made a drastic attack on the Christian superstition, if they praised the character of some mythical, humanitarian Jesus, refrained from plain criticism of the god-idea, and nourished themselves on a windy diet of ethical aspirations; in a word, ceased to do genuine Freethought work. They would then get the support of all who were tired of the Churches, but were not mentally strong enough to take up with anything very much better. And this is also true of the *Freethinker*. If the character of the *Freethinker* were altered to that of one of the many periodicals which provide their readers with a weekly diet of harmless literary and biographical gossip, which does nothing any particular harm and no one any particular good, I have no doubt but that its circulation could be considerably increased. But that would be rather too big a price to pay. One is inclined to paraphrase a passage in the New Testament and to ask, "What shall it profit the *Freethinker* though it gain a huge circulation and lose its own soul?" Those who have given the best years of their life to the *Freethinker*, and those who have seen to it that the paper shall be kept going, have done so because they have recognized

that it was vital to the interests of militant Freethought, and that if once it were to be crushed the bigots would have it all their own way—until circumstances compelled the creation of a new *Freethinker*. For let us make no mistake on this point; the Churches have no great fear to-day of either men or journals that show themselves ready to compromise or are afraid to call a spade by its proper name. They know that another turn of the social screw, together with a little harmless compromise on their own part, will soon silence them. But they know they are powerless against those who laugh at social prestige, who decline to compromise, who will fight with the good old flag of militant Freethought flying to the breeze, and who even though they experience a temporary defeat will yet leave the story of their downfall as a legacy to inspire others to renewed and more successful efforts.

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#### Why Not?

Now, in place of trimming our opinions and our name in order to please Mr. Facing-both-ways and Mr. Worldly-wiseman, I suggest that all those who really value Freethought and who admire the work done by the *Freethinker* should try a bolder and a more manly policy. Instead of announcing their Freethought in a timid and apologetic way, and so placing the Christian in a position of superiority from the outset, let them assume—not by way of bluster and bravado, but quietly and firmly, that it is the Christian who is in the inferior position. We know that he is, and it may be as well to let him see that we know it. Any Freethinker worth bothering about knows quite well that the Christian religion is nothing better and nothing higher than a set of savage superstitions, and unworthy of the respect of a civilized intelligence. And it cannot but be dishonouring to a man or woman who, knowing this, approaches Christianity as though it were something that might be very valuable, and must only be criticized in a mild and tentative manner. And so much of it is altogether unnecessary. On the one side there are many thousands who merely profess a belief, and who are afraid to speak out, and on the other there are the thousands of timid unbelievers who veil their real opinions and use half-hearted phrases for fear of giving offence or of losing social caste. A little bolder speech on the side of the unbeliever would soon prove all this hesitation and even dissimulation to be quite unnecessary. More than ever to-day the world needs clear thinking and bold speech. More than ever they who are afraid to speak out are playing the game of the enemy. They encourage the Christians in their arrogance and superstition, and they obstruct the progress of Freethought by their ill-timed compromises. I suggest, therefore, that every Freethinker should quietly but plainly let all who will know exactly what their opinions are. Let them act with the *Freethinker* exactly as they would with any other paper with which they were in agreement. If they will do this I shall be surprised if they do not find themselves gaining increased respect from Christians, and winning a wider recognition of the truth of their own opinions. Courage never fails to command respect. Timidity generally incites the bully and encourages the coward.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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#### TRUTH WILL OUT.

In Europe we know that an age is dying. Here in America it would be easy to miss the signs of coming change, but I have little doubt that it will come. A realization of the aimlessness of life lived to labour and to die, having achieved nothing but avoided starvation, and of the birth of children, also doomed to the weary treadmill, has seized the minds of millions.—*Sir Auckland Geddes.*



## Did the Gospel Jesus ever Live?

### II.

#### HIS PORTRAIT AS DRAWN IN THE DOCUMENTS.

WE have seen that, from an historical point of view, the documents are wholly unreliable, and yet they all agree in representing Jesus as a supernatural being. Even in Mark, the earliest of the Synoptics, he is depicted as the Son of God, and without a doubt the object in so calling him is to differentiate him from all other men. Mark states that he "came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan," and that "straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him, and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." Furthermore, Mark tells us plainly that he was conscious of his Divinity, but unwilling to disclose it to the people generally. At Capernaum there was in the synagogue "a man of unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace." On the evening of the same day he was at the house of Simon and Andrew, and they brought unto him all that were sick and them that were possessed with devils, and he "cast out many devils; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him." One day he healed a leper, and said to him, "See thou say nothing to any man." To Mark he was the worker of mighty miracles. Twice he calmed a storm on the sea of Galilee, saying, "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Thus even in the Gospel of Mark Jesus is introduced as one much higher and more potent than a mere man. On one occasion he asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" Peter answered "Thou art the Christ." When he was taken before the high priest several witnesses bore false charges against him, of which he took no notice whatever; but when the high priest himself asked him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" he instantly replied, "I am." Perhaps the most astonishing passage in the whole Gospel of Mark is the following about the Lord's Supper:—

And as they were eating he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it and gave to them, and said, Take ye: This is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them, and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Turning now to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke we find that his Deity is more prominent still. According to these he is at most only half human, being deprived of a human father. Even in the Sermon on the Mount he is made to regard himself as an absolutely infallible teacher, the doing of whose sayings insures endless life of infinite bliss, but disobedience to which leads to incalculable loss.

It is generally conceded that both Matthew and Luke borrow largely from Mark, but their quotations are by no means verbatim. They make numerous modifications and omissions, the aim of which is to raise Jesus to a higher pinnacle. Their Jesus is less human than Mark's. In Mark he confesses his ignorance of many things, particularly the time of his Second Coming, while the other two omit the confession of ignorance, and employ every method possible to sublimate his character and works. When the storm on the sea was at its worst Mark represents the dis-

ciples as saying, "Teacher, carest thou not that we perish!" but Luke, transcribing the passage, substitutes, "Master, master, we are perishing." But to Matthew even "master" was too familiar, so, in transcribing the passage, he substitutes, "O Lord." Thus we see, by such apparently small and trifling verbal changes, that the deification of Jesus was an evolutionary process which covered many years, with the result that the Gospel of Jesus gradually degenerated into the Gospel about Jesus. It is true that in a late addition to Mark's Gospel these words occur: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," and these words illustrate the necessity of obeying the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." But such words are utterly out of place in Mark's Gospel. Matthew's Gospel, however, ends quite suitably with these words:—

And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

The Jesus envisaged by Matthew and Luke is more divine than human, and in relating the amazing story of his birth the latter says:—

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes living in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.

Familiar with such statements, of which there are not a few in the Synoptics, we are not startled overmuch to read in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus is God himself become or made flesh. This Gospel opens with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and it was this Word, to whom the whole universe owes its existence, that was "made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."

Such is the portrait of Jesus presented to us in the Gospels, and we are bound to call it the portrait of an absolutely impossible being, a being that has never existed, and never can exist, save in the feverish imagination of credulous and superstitious people. The idea that such a being could benefit mankind is ineffably absurd; and yet no idea was more common in the ancient world. We discover it in Egypt, Greece, Persia, and India, in full operation, centuries before the Gospel Jesus was heard of. Dr. Bacon is Professor of New Testament criticism and exegesis in Yale University, and he frankly admits the truth of that statement. Numerous were the Saviour Gods of the old Pagan world. Some of them, such as Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and Mithra are names well known to us, and they were all said to have died and risen from death in order that personal redemption might be realized in mystic union with them. As Professor Bacon well puts it:—

Whether Paul himself so conceived it or not the Gentile world had no other moulds of thought wherein to formulate such a Christology than the current myths of Redeemer-God (*Making of the New Testament*, p. 50).



We differ from the Professor only in holding that the Christian Saviour God is fully as mythical as were the Pagan ones. The Gospel Jesus is quite as impossible a being as Osiris or Mithra, and belief in him is steadily dying out. Our present point, however, is that the Pauline theology is an unavoidable inference from the alleged history of Jesus in the Gospels, and that no other interpretation of the Gospels than that held by the orthodox Church can be honestly regarded as fairly founded upon or as drawn out of these documents, as we hope to prove in the course of these articles.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Torch-Bearers of Liberty.

Souls tempered with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

—Matthew Arnold.

"You see how this world goes!" is one of Lear's pregnant exclamations in the greatest tragedy penned by the master-hand of Shakespeare. Gloucester, who is blind, says he sees it feelingly, and Lear replies: "Look with thine ears: see how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?" Lear, even in his ramblings, gives terse, pungent expression to thoughts extraordinary for acuteness and depth, but he seldom surpasses this transformation scene in respect to suggestive import and vivid presentment.

The paradox is explained by the history of religion. Read the stories of the judicial murder of heretics, Jews, and witches. Read Draper's *Conflict of Religion and Science*, and Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. See how, through many ages, independence of mind was killed off and hypocrisy and servility fostered. For many centuries Europe was given up to priestcraft as a sheep to the shearers. With thumb-screws in hand, and lies on the tongue's tip, the priests did their awful work. Thus it happens that some prison records are bright spots on the scroll of history.

There is an unfortunate affinity between pioneers and prisons. Many of the noblest men and women in history suffered long and cruel incarceration within the grim walls of prisons for their devotion to truth. Prisons have thus not infrequently been glorified by the halo of the martyr. How many brave soldiers of the Army of Human Liberation have rotted in gaols? How many men of genius have solaced their imprisoned hours with their pens, learning in suffering what they taught in books?

The ancient priestcraft commenced the work of persecution. In old-world Athens Socrates solaced his prison hours with philosophy before he drank the deadly hemlock among his sorrowing disciples. The Christian priests, even more fanatical than their predecessors, sometimes dispensed with the mockery of a trial, and, as in the case of the unfortunate Hypatia, resorted to plain murder. The great Galileo, when he was old and poor, suffered in a Roman dungeon, and Roger Bacon was on two occasions imprisoned—once for a period of ten years—on the common charge of heresy and magic. Yet he, too, like Galileo, disturbed the pious ignorance of his contemporaries with ideas of discoveries that were to be realized after his death.

Nor can we forget that the hapless Giordano Bruno, perhaps the greatest martyr of all, suffered the horrors of a cruel imprisonment before his tragic end by burning at the hands of the hired assassins of the Great Lying Church. Thomas Paine was another fine illustration. To relieve the tedium of loneliness during his captivity in prison he composed part of the world-

famous *Age of Reason*, a work for which scores of persons afterwards suffered imprisonment. It was while in the Bastille that Voltaire wrote the greater part of the *Henriades*. The priests were always anxious to arrest Voltaire, whom they regarded as anti-Christ, but thanks to his adroitness and influence he always evaded their eager clutches. Richard Carlile, his family and friends, had more than their share of pains and penalties for daring to defend free speech. Carlile himself suffered over nine years' imprisonment, and his family and shopmen divided among them fifty years' confinement. That warm-hearted poet, Leigh Hunt, endured two years' captivity for satirising the Prince Regent, a Royal buffoon of indifferent memory. Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, was no stranger to the interior of a gaol. His *Purgatory of Suicides* was another instance of mind triumphing over captivity. Ernest Jones, another Chartist leader, who belongs to the roll of men who have, by the resources of genius, converted a prison into a palace of thought.

Another noteworthy prisoner was honest John Bunyan. He was not a Freethinker, but he spent twelve years in Bedford Gaol for militant Nonconformity, and wrote part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* while in durance vile. It is a singular coincidence that the authors of two of the most popular books ever written should have been not only contemporaries, and of the same nationality, but both imprisoned in the same country. Daniel Defoe did not write *Robinson Crusoe* while he was imprisoned, although other works of his prolific pen were born of his captivity. Cervantes, a much greater writer than Bunyan and Defoe, and one of the world's foremost authors, was held captive by the Moors for five years.

Among the host of famous names of those who have suffered imprisonment we have referred only to a few, and most of these were apostles of Freethought. Freethinkers have ever been the most potent forces of progress. No other men dig their furrows in history deeper, but magnificent as is their life-work the men themselves are greater. Hissed at by superior people, stoned by the vulgar, they find that intellectual honesty is not a paying career, yet good and true men have had to submit to this treatment. Bradlaugh, prematurely aged by his fight for liberty, saw honours heaped on men not fit to black his boots. Ferrer, fronting the rifles of his assassins, had to find his reward in his own conscience. Foote had to listen to the mocking voice of the Roman Catholic judge telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the service of the Devil. Yet, in their hours of apparent failure these men had triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm but not the pains of martyrdom; heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the trumpets and jublations of victory. They laboured not for themselves but for the world and coming generations.

MIMNERMUS.

Say not, the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain:  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;  
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And but for you possess the field.

For, while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward look, the land is bright.

—Arthur Hugh Clough.



## Random Reflections.

THE efforts of the religious apologist to square his theory of an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving God with the universe revealed by modern science is an instructive study for the psychologist. It is the supreme dilemma of theism, and one that theists face only under pressure; and when they *do* face it, the manner of their treatment of it is a sufficient condemnation. There is only one honest answer to the question: are you satisfied that the world you see bears upon its face the hall-mark of divine workmanship? The believer is debarred by his belief from answering it according to the dictates of reason and love. Instead, he shuffles and resorts to subterfuge. If the world be God's world, then, it must be, for the religionist, the best of all possible worlds. As the evil in the world is not entirely man-made; as much of it springs from the very nature and conditions of existence, the believer is ultimately driven to deny the existence of evil; to refer to it as being merely negative; or to take refuge in what Moncure Conway termed "the fatal fallacy that evil is only good in the making."

But what of God's omnipotence? If He be all-powerful, clearly He could have arranged things differently; and so the more acute believer is driven to limit even the omnipotence of the Almighty. "The struggle and effort towards progress of which we are conscious.....extends even to the Deity," says Sir Oliver Lodge (although one would really like to know how *he* knows), and so by a process of metaphysical thimble-rigging we reach a "limited-liability God" with whom it is our happy privilege to co-operate—said God, of course, in his historic rôle of sleeping partner.

One cannot help asking if all this subterfuge and sophistry is really worthy of honest men and women anxious to face facts? Does it not show clearly the enervating moral effects of religious belief? Is it not rather akin to the subtleties of a shady barrister anxious to secure the acquittal of a client whom he knows to be guilty? Just as the special pleading of the barrister tends to lower (it may be unconsciously) his mental integrity, and his sense of moral values; so the believer must also undergo a like process of mental and moral degradation. But, unfortunately, the evil does not end here. One cannot have one's moral nature warped in one direction, and be perfectly honest in others. The same frame of mind will inevitably manifest itself in the more important relationships of social life, and thus perceptibly lower the *morale* of the social whole. Herein lies the root cause of much of the cant and hypocrisy for which the British nation has always been notorious.

Many of the propositions that are accepted as axiomatic truths by the religious world owe their existence to the fact that believers accept them on no other grounds than that of their repeated asseveration. They come to believe in them because they never really ask themselves exactly what they mean by them. The religious mind has always prided itself on being able to produce a proposition that defies a rational appreciation. Inconceivability is never an obstacle in the pathway of the faithful. Take, as an illustration, the belief in a future life. We are told that because we are unable to realize all our desires and aspirations in this life; because we cannot develop to their utmost all our latent potentialities in this world, there *must* be another world in which this lamentable state of affairs will be righted. When, however, we consider the question more closely, we find that this is one of the neces-

sary conditions of life; it is the motive-power from whence springs all progress. In its absence life would become stagnant. If then the after-life is a continuance of this, the same state of affairs will still prevail, and we shall always be in the position of being unable to fully "realize ourselves." And as we are to live "for ever" we are faced with the prospect of an eternal pursuit of ideals that we shall never achieve. Surely nothing could be more irrational; less satisfactory; and less morally justifiable than this. That the present life does not admit of a moral justification is admitted by all religions; but the fact that the remedy lies in a *future* life in no way meets the difficulty—even if it were true. If things are wrong *here*, then a true morality would only be satisfied by having them put right *here*. Surely of all the arguments put forward in the name of *morality* this argument for a future life is the strangest.

Closely allied to the moral argument for a future life is the argument that since the present life is so full of pain and misery (often unmerited) there *must* be another life in which happiness shall be, if not the only condition, at least the preponderant one. But again we find that pain and misery are, unfortunately, one of the conditions of sentient life. Without them there can be no happiness and joy, since the two things are correlative. This is admitted by the believers in immortality, but what they fail to see is that this being so we get nothing in the next life (presuming there is one) that we have not already got here—except, indeed, that we are doomed to the conditions for ever, without even death as a means of escape. A spiritualist relative of mine for whom I have the deepest affection and who is very anxious that I should seek for evidence of my wife's continued existence, wrote to me to say that he thought that my wife would be very unhappy and suffering great anguish at my attitude towards the question of life after death. If, therefore, Spiritualism be true, our friends and relatives whom we loved so dearly and for whom we would, indeed, have given our life's blood, are perhaps enduring suffering and unhappiness in another state in which we are not able to lend them aid, affection and succour as we most certainly would have done had they been living in this. And this message, "There is no death" is, we are told, "glad tidings of great joy!"

In reviewing the foregoing we see clearly the relation between the two basic beliefs of supernatural religion. The world we live in is so wonderful that it needs *must* have had an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving Creator. On the other hand, the world viewed morally is so unsatisfactory that there *must* be another world in which to put right the wrongs of this. So stated (and unfortunately the apologist hasn't the honesty to state his case quite so clearly), the arguments effectually cancel one another. And the Freethinker will not be long in drawing his conclusions.

It has often been pointed out in these columns that the religionist who says that he could not get along without the consolations of religion is on all fours with the confirmed toper who faces the prospect of a world in which he would be deprived of his half-pint, with fear and shuddering. Religion and alcohol are both narcotics, and the fact that many people declare that they are essential to human life and well-being is no proof that they *are* necessary; whilst the fact that a large number of people do just as well in their absence entirely destroys the validity of both claims. Let us push the analogy a little further. Just as alcohol affects different people in different ways, so does



religion. In some, alcohol has the effect of producing a spirit of jollity, geniality, and generosity; under its soothing influence they would pawn their shirts (and often do so) to help a friend. In others it brings out all their latent savagery and bestiality; they want to pick a quarrel with everyone they meet, and finish up by going home and kicking the cat, thrashing their children, and beating the wife. So with religion. In some it produces a sympathy and goodwill, or a sloppy sentimentality that devotes itself to irrational and blind-alley charities; whilst in others it leads to intolerance, sectarian bitterness and fanaticism, and hypocrisy. We repeat: religion and alcohol are both narcotics. Happily there is an increasing number of us who can go through life, and do our duty, without the artificial stimulus of either Jesus Christ or Johnnie Walker.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

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### Free Thoughts.

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Every honest man is an Atheist.

---

When it rains God does not get wet.

---

The Roman Catholic religion is obedience to the priest.

---

No man is ever so good as he intends to be when young.

---

The reign of law makes a Providence an impossibility.

---

Evolution allows God to sit on the fence and think it over.

---

No inventor has given us a machine equal to the human body.

---

The man who behaves himself does not think of being saved.

---

Everything that makes it easier for man to live has been done by man.

---

The Mason and Dixon line divides the Northern Sabbath from the Southern Sabbath.

---

I could never be saved with Roman Catholics. I should want to be saved from them.

---

A man who has read the Bible through more than once must have been short of reading matter.

---

One reason why Jesus thought so much of his father in heaven was because he had no earthly father.

---

Someone has called this an age of dollars and cents—dollars for the few and cents for the many, I suppose.

---

The teachings of Jesus are out of joint with all the high, noble, sweet things that men and women hold dear and are living for.

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When the pulpit urges woman to hold on to the Bible and assures her that the holy volume is her best friend, we would like to know what this book says that is calculated to benefit her as a wife, a mother, a companion, or as a member of the human family.

Truthseeker, New York.

L. K. WASHBURN.

### Acid Drops.

Mr. Edward Clodd calls himself, we believe, a Rationalist, but a letter of his in the *Times*, of December 23, sets us wondering as to the value of the "Rationalism," for which he stands. He writes:—

I stand for true religion *versus* superstition and obscurantism. That is to say, for the cultivation of the religious instinct—indestructible as it is—in all schools in such a way that no part of it shall clash with the great body of facts adduced by every branch of science, from comparative biology, comparative ethics, and notablist of all, comparative theology, wherein the Bible falls into due place among the sacred writings of great religions, differing from other scriptures only in degree and not in kind.

Now we have a very strong opinion that this is exactly the kind of language upon which "superstition and obscurantism" lives. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, as a good Roman Catholic, would agree to stand with Mr. Clodd for "true religion *versus* superstition and obscurantism." So would Dean Inge as a Protestant, so would many, many thousands of other Christian preachers up and down the country. Such language is of exactly the value of the talk about standing for "true" against a false Christianity. It is a claim that my Christianity is a true one and that of everyone else is false. It is a position that helps to "save one's face," but it does not get one very much further.

We are disposed to spend a little space on this deliverance of Mr. Clodd, because of the use that may be made of it to bolster up that superstition and obscurantism to which Mr. Clodd says he is opposed. What is true religion? If comparative religion has any meaning, and if rules of logic have any force, then true religion must involve belief in supernatural beings. In actual history it has always meant some sort of a belief in some sort of a god and in some sort of a future existence. Does Mr. Clodd believe in these things? If the answer is yes, of what scientific value is his dissent from Christianity? If the answer is No, what is the use of his saying that he believes in "true religion"? Of course, Mr. Clodd may reply that he does not mean by religion the things stated. But that only leads one to ask the value of the kind of thinking which leads a man to call anything in which he believes "true religion." That kind of loose thinking will call anything and everything a religion. Conservatism and Radicalism, Socialism and Autocracy, Theism and Atheism, all fall under the head of religion. Everybody is religious, and as everybody is religious, and by the definition cannot help being religious, its value in either fact or controversy is exactly nothing. It is about as valuable as the statement that man has a spinal column.

Another item in this confession of the Rationalistic faith of Mr. Clodd's is that he believes in the indestructibility, and, therefore, the cultivation of the religious instinct. So might we if any such thing existed. But we find it exceedingly difficult to cultivate the non-existent. Psychologists of any weight, even such as the late Professor William James, long ago came to the conclusion that a religious instinct is pure nonsense. There is no more a religious instinct than there is a footballing instinct, or beer-drinking instinct, or an instinct for eating fish and potatoes on a Saturday night. All the qualities involved in the holding of religious beliefs are involved in the holding of other beliefs. All the qualities involved in a manifestation of religious belief are involved in the holding of beliefs about politics, or art, or other forms of mental activity. Anger and love, admiration, awe, veneration, devotion, etc., etc., are not religious qualities at all, but they may be directed towards religion, as they may be directed towards other things. But there is no such thing as a religious instinct. To talk of its indestructibility and the necessity for its cultivation, is indeed the kind of language which delights the upholder of superstition and obscurantism. He feels quite at home, for that kind of pre-scientific psychology is part and parcel of his "true religion."



The immediately practical part of Mr. Clodd's letter is that dealing with the Bible in the schools. It must be remembered that it was written as a reply to the editor of the *Modern Churchman*, who had requested his co-operation, as a Rationalist, in establishing "true religion" in the schools. And it is, therefore, quite as well to make plain what is the attitude of Freethinkers on this matter. Thousands of Churchmen and Chapel men to-day would agree that the Bible is only one among the religious books of the world, and if Freethinkers permit this kind of talk to go unchallenged we may see before long a new compromise effected between the sects, with the supposed agreement of non-Christians, a revised form of Christianity firmly established in the schools, and the disaster of 1870 repeated.

The Bible in this country is the Christian's book, and to have Christian teachers, or teachers acting under the instructions of Christian managers, placing it before children as a volume which shows man's intercourse with God in a higher and better way than any other religious book, is to place the Bible in a privileged position, and to give to Christians all that they can reasonably hope to get. Of course, Christians may get their way whether we oppose them or not, but to get their way with the sanction of a professed Rationalist, is to make the position infinitely worse, and it is incumbent upon all Freethinkers to protest against this method of "selling the pass." Besides, if children are to be taught comparative religion in schools they should be taught the truth about it in such a way that it will not conflict with knowledge they may afterwards attain. Will Mr. Clodd advise the Editor of the *Modern Churchman* that children should be taught that the idea of God and a future life began in the ignorance of the primitive savage, and that these beliefs, in the light of modern knowledge, have no other and no better foundation? If he does, it is certain that Christians will not appeal for his co-operation. And if he does not, all the talk of fighting against "superstition and obscurantism" is so much tinkling sound.

Finally, Mr. Clodd's letter may be taken as an opportune illustration of what is said in another part of this issue in relation to a suggestion that we should try changing the name of this journal. The need of to-day with reference to religion is plain speaking on behalf of those who do not believe in it. It is useless to-day attacking a few Christian dogmas—which scores of Christian clergymen are also attacking, and then explaining that all the time we stand for "true religion," and desire to place the Bible in the front place among the religious books of the world. That is giving away on the one side all that is claimed on the other. It is to make the "advanced" Christian feel that he need not advance any further, and that he is justified in opposing those terrible people who do not believe in religion at all, and it satisfies the less advanced Christian that he is fundamentally in the right. More harm is thus done to genuine Freethought than many people imagine. It is a form of compromise that gives the enemy almost all for which he asks, and we are not surprised at the *Church Times* saying that the "Rationalist Press Association and the *Modern Churchman* meet in principle in a close embrace." We should like to hear that in this connection Mr. Clodd is speaking for himself alone. If he does not, we can only assure the *Church Times* that Mr. Clodd in no wise represents the position of British Freethinkers. We know too well what British Freethinkers are after to remain silent in the face of such a monstrous misrepresentation of their position. They may lose a fight, but they never desert to the enemy.

Recently the Pope blessed every subscriber to a Roman Catholic paper. Hats off to the Holy Ghost as a circulation manager!

"I do not believe in Church interference in politics, but I do believe in the Church's inspiration of them," says the Bishop of Chelmsford. We always thought there was inspiration behind Church rates, tithes, and the Blasphemy Laws.

The spread of foot-and-mouth disease continues. Already 50,000 cattle and 25,000 sheep have been killed, in addition to 26,000 pigs and other animals. Rinderpest has broken out in Australia. A somewhat grim comment on the popular idea of a paternal Providence.

We have seen combinations and amalgamations in the industrial world, and there is general talk now of a fusion of interests between Protestants and Catholics. On a trade basis, for no one in their right senses would apply any other reason to religious lions and lambs lying down together, it may be presumed that this action is inevitable. Which impregnable rock is it that requires support? Disinterested people might say that it would be better for mankind if both businesses, having nothing to sell that cannot be done without, put up their shutters and closed down.

Mr. John Blunt (what's in a name?), of the *Daily Mail*, enlightens his readers in an article entitled "Clairvoyants' Season." In three parts of a column of delicious surface skimming the writer states of clairvoyants and fortune-tellers:—

Such people batten upon the hopes and fears of mankind and flourish during times of misfortune and disturbance.

It will be noticed in the wills immediately underneath this article, that the Rev. Francis Slater, Reading, leaves £40,342. We would not assume for one moment that Mr. John Blunt (is there anything in a name?) wishes us to make any inference whatsoever and notwithstanding.

At a Vienna trial, the prosecuting counsel said that three centuries ago the prisoner would have been burnt as a witch, but to-day such cases were regarded as mental invalids. An unconscious criticism of the barbarous Bible command: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

Mr. Joseph Shaylor, in his book, *Sixty Years a Bookman*, makes the admission of a notable decline in religious works. This was hardly necessary after a poke in any twopenny box at any secondhand booksellers.

"Tomfool," of the *Daily Herald*, is a woman, and so is Miss Muriel Stuart. The former writer relieves herself in the paper of the following lines, entitled: "Mary's Burden":—

My Baby, my Burden,  
To-morrow, the morn,  
I shall go lighter  
And you will be born.

This is above and beyond criticism; it is the poetry of a Lying-in Hospital, and it would have been better if it had never been born. It is a muzzy image of nothing of human importance, as it is the vocabulary of Rome. In *Northern Numbers*, Miss Muriel Stuart writes as follows of a mother addressing the unborn child:—

Oh! thou are so impatient of thy birth;  
As in her blind hood gropes the daffodil,  
As in the pale flower leaps the rebellious fruit,  
Lie still beneath this most unquietest heart,  
For thou a calmer pillow shall not know  
Upon this side of sunset.

This is the sad, sweet music of humanity, and it comes home to the hearts of all who can think of life in other terms than plaster images and candles.

Whilst Churches are more and more obliged to resort to music-hall tactics to fill the pews, in his choice of subject the Bishop of Manchester is doing his best. His Lordship (remembering that we are all equal in the sight of the Lord) intends to lecture at King's College on "The Philosophical Pre-suppositions of the Doctrine of the Incarnation." For anybody who mistakes sound for sense, this is suitable. Straightened out this farago of nonsense means, "We put the rabbit in the hat; let us consider how it got there." If we were serious, which the Lord forbid! we might say that the lecture in question is Nero



fiddling. Homes, food, clothes, health, contentment—in the name of common sense what have these done to be neglected for cobweb spinning?

In three lectures, the Rev. Professor F. C. Burkett, F.B.A., D.D., will discourse on "Christian Beginnings." Living in a world where a genuine Christian gets sent to prison for praying to God to heal his child, we suggest that King's College will not be large enough to accommodate all those who would be present to hear a farewell service to Christianity.

We wonder what religious person wrote the leaderette entitled "Professional Discipline" in the *Times Educational Supplement*. He or she states, "The chief business of a teacher is to mould character and to graft the main principles of the teaching of the Founder of Christianity into the personality of each child." If that is the chief business of teachers there is no excuse for their existence—or the existence of the *Times Educational Supplement*. Let us hope that teachers (with the bread and cheese age) who have to take scripture, think better of their profession than the leaderette writer in question.

They who flatter themselves with the notion that we are not a priest-ridden country will do well to reflect upon the fact—one of many similar facts—that clerical influence has secured the closing of the British Empire Exhibition on Sundays. This was done in the face of "strong representations to the contrary." The official explanation is that Sunday opening of the exhibition would give offence to the religious sentiment of those of the community who would regard it as an entertainment rather than as an exhibition, and, of course, the clergy add that it would involve a certain amount of Sunday labour. The crowning piece of humbug, and the final insult to decent-minded men and women, is that the Stadium is to be open on Sundays for "certain religious events." This means that while the clergy will not permit an exhibition that may keep people away from their own miserable exhibitions, they are ready to have a part of the place open on Sundays—which will involve labour—and so get people to come who will see that portion of the exhibition premises. The cunning character of the move is worthy of the clergy of the Christian Church. That is perhaps the worst that can be said of it.

As another illustration of the same thing we may note that the parsons are establishing an increasing monopoly of the wireless for their Sunday use. We have now full religious services arranged for, and on all occasions there is a religious address with hymns and other theological trimmings. These things ought to give all Freethinkers food for reflection. The parsons will take all they can get, quite irrespective of moral right and wrong, and the only way to check them is to make our propaganda more vigorous than ever. We are not surprised that they hate the *Freethinker* as they do. It appears to be the only paper that speaks out plainly with regard to them and their miserable superstition.

A committee, appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been sitting to consider the question of faith-healing. The report is to be published shortly, and we may have more to say about it when we have a chance of reading it. But from the summaries that have appeared in the Press we gather that the committee has played for safety. It concludes that "no sick person must look to the clergyman to do what it is the physician's or surgeon's duty to do." Now, that is a piece of artfulness that will probably work with those whom it is intended for. Observe that the clergy dare not deny the power of faith to cure sickness. Jesus Christ fitted his followers out with the power to do so. On the other hand, there are the doctors to consider, and if they went in honestly for faith healing they would have the professional interest of these to fight, to say nothing of the law, which declares that in

certain circumstances a doctor must be called in. Hence the midway position.

But that leaves us as far as ever from determining what it is that God does, or offering us anything in the shape of a test. God will not cure a disease if the doctor can do it alone. Well, but will he cure diseases that a doctor cannot cure? Suppose a man is suffering from a fever and a doctor gives him up, but the patient turns to prayer and then recovers. The believer will tell you there is a clear answer to prayer. But doctors have given up a man before now and the man has done nothing but "cuss" them, and still he has recovered. What cured him? Perhaps it may strike someone that doctors are sometimes wrong in either their treatment or their diagnosis, or both. There is one clear case that might be made out. Whether the doctor, or nature, or both combines, or one in spite of the other cures a man, is always a matter of doubt. But suppose a man has just had a leg off, or there is some other accident in which the skill of the doctor, or the power of natural recuperation is clearly out of court. Now that would be a case for God to deal with, and a cure in that case would be a clear indication of divine power. But nothing like that occurs. Or, finally, we might take the question of averages, and under identical conditions take two lots of cases, subjecting one to medical treatment and the other to prayer. It would then be possible for us to test the power of prayer by noting the number of recoveries in either case. But these parsons will not trust God to manifest His power in this way. His cures always remind one of the coroner's verdict that "the deceased came to his death from a visitation of God—owing to suspicious circumstances." The cases of faith-healing are always performed under suspicious circumstances.

From a paper, *The Maha-Bodhi* and the *United Buddhist World*, we note that there is an interesting correspondence taking place over the book writers by Mrs. Cleather, entitled *The Great Betrayal*. We gather that "Thus spake the Lord" by the plain religions becomes tilting tables, planchettes, trance mediums, and Sinnett intermediaries by the fancy religions, and if they all had their fling, there would only be one bump in the human cranium—the bump of credulity.

The *Church Times* says, "There is undoubtedly need for some restatement of human origins which shall preserve the truth of the unity and solidarity of the human race, made bisexually in the Divine likeness." Well, we have had God represented as a male for long, and women have asked why the Deity was not represented as a female, and now the *Church Times* asserts that he is bisexual. An hermaphrodite God is rather a new thing, we imagine. Still, we take it that the *Church Times* knows as much about the nature of God as anyone.

The Pope has applied to the Italian Government for permission to erect a powerful wireless station in the Vatican gardens. Perhaps Papa wants to get into touch with the faithful in Paradise and collect some contributions.

A Kingston-on-Thames centenarian has described her first ride in a motor as being "like heaven." If the motor had gone over a brick, the veteran might have compared the journey to another place.

As Swedenborg wrote on so many questions he could not fail to be right on some, so the programme on the circular of the Board of Education must touch a right note—even by accident. In connection with the British Empire Exhibition we notice on a suggested synopsis of study under the heading IX. The Nineteenth Century; "Growth of humanitarian consciousness, especially after the Napoleonic Wars, which had shown the futility of force" (our italics). By shooting at the pigeons of patriotism, the compiler killed a crow—which was resurrected in 1914.



## The National Secular Society.

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

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

### 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.

J. MACKERROW.—Mr. Cohen wrote you concerning your subscription to the Sustentation Fund, but the letter was returned. You will see it was acknowledged last week.

J. PAYNE.—Thanks for article, which we regret we are unable to use.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Mrs. A. Capron, 5s.; H. J. V. Templeman, £2.

F. SUTHERLAND (Queensland).—Living at so great a distance it is inevitable that your letter should arrive long after the discussion had closed. This, however, robs it of suitability to readers. An article on the same topic would be on a different footing.

J. & A. CAPRON.—We are not surprised at the reply of the Broadcasting Company. The parsons appear to be getting their way in an increasing measure. The excuse that a full religious service is arranged for the benefit of sick persons who cannot go to Church is ridiculous. It is certain that no such request came from the sick persons themselves, but only as a suggestion from the parsons. Still, there is something in the company pleading that the service is intended for sick people. We cannot imagine it being required by healthy ones. The Broadcasting Company appears to agree with Heine that Christianity is a capital religion—for cripples.

H. MAIR.—If you know there is a God that amply justifies our believing in him. But you cannot expect us to believe because you know. We remember that the Bible says something about God revealing himself to babes, and apparently he does not bother about those of more mature intelligence. Babies are very interesting and important things, but we do not usually defer to them in intellectual matters.

H. J. TEMPLEMAN.—Thanks for contribution. It is the consciousness of so many warm friends behind the good old paper that gives us the courage to continue a struggle that would be otherwise too severe for one person to conduct.

L. MASON.—Thanks for cuttings. Sorry. There are no portraits of Mr. Cohen now in stock.

H. R. WRIGHT.—Mr. F. J. Gould has written a number of books intended for young persons. Among these are two dealing with the Old and New Testaments. It is not easy to find writers who are really able to write for the young.

W. MILLS.—Sorry we cannot find space for your letter. But you do not touch the main point, which is the power of prayer to cure sickness.

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communi-

cations 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.

To-day (January 13) Mr. Cohen will pay Plymouth a visit. He will lecture in the Plymouth Chambers at 3 and 7. Admission is free, but there are some reserved seats for which a charge will be made. We trust that our readers in the district will do their best to make these meetings as widely known as possible.

Mr. Cohen's recent "Views and Opinions" on the Peculiar People case will be reissued, as soon as printed, as a leaflet for free distribution. This is being done at the request of the N.S.S. Executive, and it falls into line with suggestions made by many of our readers.

We are glad to hear from Miss Vance that members' subscriptions for the coming year are coming in well. Before the end of the month all ought to be cleared off. As we announced last week, all members' subscriptions to headquarters fall due on January 1. At the same time it should be borne in mind that the Society's work cannot be effectively carried on with a bare membership subscription. This is also intended for the eyes of those who are not actually members, but who may desire to see the work of the Society go forward.

Our old friend, *The Positivist Review*, makes its appearance with the new year's number under a new name, *Humanity*. Mr. F. J. Gould succeeds Mr. Swinney in the editorial chair, and we wish the new editor every success. Mr. Gould, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. C. H. Hereford, and the editor contribute articles to this number, and under the new editor the journal bids fair to maintain the reputation it has established for itself. It is published by Watts & Co. at threepence.

The South London Branch commenced the second portion of its winter work on Sunday last with a very successful "Social." There was a good attendance, and an excellent programme of songs and music. We trust it will bear fruits in the lecture attendance.

Mr. George Whitehead lectures to-day (January 13) for the Manchester Branch N.S.S. in the Amalgamated Engineering Union Hall, Rusholme Road, at 3 and 7. His afternoon subject is "Socialism, Christianity, or Constructive Secularism?" and in the evening, "The Religion of G. Bernard Shaw." Manchester saints will please note.

Some very good letters appear in the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* in criticism of various religious ideas. We are glad to see them, if only as evidence that the persistent propaganda that has been going on there is bearing fruit. Mr. Cohen has arranged to pay the town another visit on February 17. We are informed that his visit is being looked forward to.



At the St. Pancras Reform Club to-night Mr. F. P. Corrigan and Mr. Oscar Baker will debate the question, "Do We Forsake our Freedom by joining the Roman Catholic Church?" Mr. Baker is a member of that Church and Mr. Corrigan an ex-member, so friends in North London may look forward to an interesting evening, and we hope the room will be filled. For further particulars, see the Guide Notice.

## The Myth of Resurrection.

### II.

(Continued from page 6.)

AMONG Christians the cross is looked upon as a sacred symbol of sacrificial atonement and promise of man's resurrection and immortal life, and too frequently as if its significance in that direction were exclusively Christian. But the cross played an important part, not only as a means of punishment, but also as a religious symbol long before Christianity appeared to disturb the life of man. This is admitted in the third (1862) edition of Kitto's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*. The writer describes the sign of the cross as a "holy symbol among several ancient nations," and after speaking of it as being "generally understood to be symbolical of the divinity or eternal life" and as having been found in the temple of Scrapis as an Egyptian emblem of future life, remarks on its various significations. "Sometimes it is the Phallus, sometimes the planet Venus, or the Nilometer, or an emblem of the four elements, or the seasons" (Vol. I, p. 590).

In the cults of Osiris and Mithra, the cross was a greatly venerated symbol of regeneration and immortal life.

It must be remembered that, while many a substitute for a representative of a god has been nailed to a cross, no god has been crucified except on the cross of the heavens. J. B. Hannay tells us that there were over twenty saviours crucified, crossed over, or passed over at spring-time, in Asia Major and Minor, for the salvation of mankind, and on page III of *Symbolism in Religion to Religion*, he says:—

The Sun-babe is born at the winter solstice (Xmas), and is received with great rejoicings as he comes to save man from starvation, and drive away evil (cold of winter), but the good weather does not come then; his final triumph over winter is not consummated till after the Spring Equinox. Although crucified, crossed over, he still lives and slowly ascends into heaven—so this ascension is never clearly dated, as he is ascending from 22nd March till 22nd June. The sun is truly crossed over or crucified to the salvation of mankind.

In ancient Tsur, or Tyre, a festival was held to celebrate the rebirth or awakening of the god Malkarth, who, as incarnation of the sun, was born or reborn at the winter solstice, and came to dispel the darkness and dearth of winter and thus make possible the annual revival of nature. The second day of this festival corresponded with December 25, and part of the ritual consisted of placing the god on a pyre in the belief that through fire he would receive new life.

In its earliest form the Feast of Passover was a spring festival, held to celebrate the passing of the sun over the equator, when winter was vanquished and the light, warmth and joy of summer were renewed to mankind. It was a time of rejoicing and expectation, and men looked forward in the hope that the fertility of nature would yield them food and drink in plenty.

The Lamb of God was slain and sacrificed in the heavens, as the sun passed into Aries (the Ram or Lamb) and the latter was scorched to death by the rays of the all-powerful solar deity.

In the myth of Adonis and Aphrodite (or Venus) we have the idea of the death and resurrection of nature. With the beauty of Adonis, Aphrodite was charmed when she beheld him at his birth. She consequently concealed him in a chest which she entrusted to Persephone who, on discovering the treasure which was in her keeping, decided to retain Adonis in the under-world. Persephone refused to give up Adonis, and the dispute which arose with Aphrodite had to be settled by Zeus. It was decided that Adonis should spend four months by himself; four with Aphrodite; and four with Persephone. But he preferred to spend his own four months with Aphrodite, in addition to the four which were decreed to be spent with her. When the youthful Adonis was wounded to death by a boar, Aphrodite exercised her power as a fructifying principle of nature and caused flowers to grow from his blood which she sprinkled with nectar.

In another form of the myth, Adonis descended to the lower world on being killed, but was allowed to return to Aphrodite in the upper world for six months in every year. Nature died at the beginning of winter and returned to life in spring.

The worship of Adonis seems ultimately to have spread to many of the countries around the Mediterranean.

In most Grecian cities a festival was celebrated by women only. It lasted for two days, and was attended with much lamentation; the women beating themselves and performing funeral rites on the first day. To quote Plutarch's "Alcibiades," in "the feast of Adonis; the women walked in procession with images, which represented the dead carried out to burial, acting the lamentations, and singing the mournful dirges usual on such occasions" (J. and W. Langhorne's trans.).

On the second day, merry making and feasting were indulged in, and the women rejoiced for Adonis who returned to life and was to live for six months with Aphrodite.

The principle of fertility becomes pronounced in the myth which makes Priapus the son of Aphrodite by her double marriage with Ares and Adonis, or as a result of having yielded to the embraces of Dionysus and then, being faithless to him, lived with Adonis, as according to another form of the myth.

In the Syrian Adonia mysteries and sacrifices were celebrated every year at Byblos. The same funeral rites, the same public mourning and lamentations were indulged in for the dead Tammuz as for the dead Adonis in Greece. And this was followed by rejoicings and festivities when the god was believed to have risen from the dead.

When the Syrian river called Adonis changed its colour and became somewhat blood-red, from the marl over which it ran, the women, who saw in this the shed blood of Tammuz, began their weeping, but their sorrow was exchanged for joy as the red colour of the river disappeared and the god returned to life.

It is believed that during the Syrian celebrations for the death and resurrection of Tammuz many women, as well as the men, shaved their heads just as the Egyptians did at the death of the god Apis.

Women who refused to shave their heads were forced to submit to "religious" prostitution, and their gains were dedicated to the Syrian Venus; or went into the pockets of the priests.

If we turn to Babylon, we find the agricultural myth of the mother-goddess and a young god had numerous variations, but we need only concern ourselves with Tammuz who, like Adonis, is beloved of two goddesses, the Queen of Heaven and the Queen of Earth. Over him there is a dispute which is settled by Tammuz having to spend part of the year with one goddess and



the remainder with the other. Thus Tammuz dies and is reborn every year.

His death took place when the heat and dryness caused the death of vegetation, and a time of wailing for him took place about June-July. Herbs, grain, flocks, and even children perished at the death of the god of fertility. Rivers became dry, and meadows, forests, and gardens became parched. But in due season the god returned to earth, and the fertility of all nature was renewed, to the joy and satisfaction of all men and women who had mourned for the lost Tammuz during his long sojourn in Hades.

In one form of the myth, Tammuz is not the beautiful youth with whom Ishtar, Queen of Heaven, fell in love. He is the patriarch possessed of agricultural knowledge and capable of giving mankind instructions in the growing of fruit trees and the cultivation of corn. But, in this respect, Tammuz is evidently a saviour-god, a divine representative, perhaps an incarnation of Ea, god of the Deep, who, in a practical way, saves mankind from drought and famine.

His significance in an economic aspect is, however, obvious, whether he is the young and beautiful corn spirit, undergoing death and resurrection, or the patriarchal representative of the gods instructing mankind in divine knowledge of agriculture. Without Tammuz, or some such god of fertility, there could have been no daily bread for the Syrians and Babylonians. And, after all, a religion which develops around the needs of the stomach is as important to the generality of men as any religion which answers to the yearnings of the heart. (A more detailed account of the Tammuz and Ishtar myths is to be found in chapter five of D. A. Mackenzie's *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria*.)

The institution known as the Eleusinian Mysteries, held at Eleusis near Athens, and dating back for hundreds of years prior to the Christian era, was one of the greatest of ancient Grecian institutions, and was probably an exclusively aristocratic festival held in honour of Demeter (Ceres) and her daughter Persephone (Proserpine). These profound mysteries held out to the initiated the hope of resurrection and immortal life, which was doubtless a development from the central idea of the popular myth of the rape of Persephone and the consequent blighting of the earth by her mother Demeter, for a period during which she wandered about on the earth in the form of a mortal, seeking her lost one.

As in the case of all other myths it is easy to dismiss the one under consideration as being the embodiment of mere foolishness, or as a beautiful and fanciful product of the imagination. But, as Grote says, when speaking of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter:—

Though we now read this Hymn as pleasing poetry, to the Eleusinians, for whom it was composed, it was genuine and sacred history. They believed in the visit of Demeter to Eleusis, and in the Mysteries as a revelation from her, as implicitly as they believed in her existence and power as a goddess (*History of Greece*, Vol. I, p. 41—12 Vol. Ed. 1869).

While the Freethinker may consistently treat this and any other myth as foolish but interesting as an embodiment and expression of ancient beliefs, the Christian who scouts this myth, while he himself believes that a divine Jesus visited the earth, is but making an exhibition of his own thralldom to popular religion, and his own habit of antagonism to other forms of religious myth. If the Christian smiles with incredulity at the ritualistic assurance of immortality given to the initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries, so may others smile with scepticism at the Christian Easter ritualism and the sacramental eating and drinking of the body and blood of Jesus as a foretaste of immortal life.

In the myth of Demeter, the beautiful daughter of the goddess and of Jupiter was playing and plucking flowers in a soft meadow at Enna, in Sicily. But the sportive moments of Persephone, the daughter, were brought to a tragic end. The beautiful and fascinating display of flowers—roses, crocuses, lilies, violets and hyacinths, etc.—formed but a snare to lead her into the arms of the watchful Pluto, god of the infernal regions, who had fallen in love with Persephone, and while she was enjoying the sunshine and all the glory of nature, Pluto came forth from a gap in the earth to carry her off to the darkness of Hades.

On hearing that her daughter had disappeared, Demeter, an immortal being, came down from heaven and in human form wandered over the face of the earth, trying to earn her subsistence. Dressed in the guise of an old woman she became a nurse and ultimately obtained employment at Eleusis, where she took charge of the king's son. The child, Demophon, made rapid progress under the care of Demeter, who breathed the breath of life upon him, dressed him with nectar, or ambrosial ointment, and at night was in the habit of putting him through a mysterious fire process, by means of which all earthly dross was to be purged from Demophon, so that he might become immortal. But his mother, Metaneira, became curious, and on one occasion watched the process by which he was to be made one of the immortals.

On seeing her son in the halo of flames, Metaneira, not knowing a goddess was performing the mysterious ceremony, screamed with fright, and Demeter allowed the boy to fall into the fire. Demophon perished, and the old nurse threw off her disguise and revealed herself as a goddess. She then forced the people of Eleusis to build a temple to her honour, and in this she dwelt while she continued the search for Persephone. Being unable to endure the loss of her child any longer, Demeter brought famine upon the earth and the lot of mankind became very bad and full of misery. The earth ceased to bring forth fruit and vegetation. So men prayed and sacrificed until Jupiter sent Mercury to bring Persephone back from the lower world.

Pluto, however, tempted Persephone to eat a pomegranate seed before permitting her to depart. She yielded to the temptation, and consequently was doomed to spend one fourth of each year in the infernal regions with Pluto; the remaining three-fourths were to be spent on earth.

In Demeter and Persephone we have the mother—and the daughter—corn or cereal goddess. The one representing the old and the other the new year's harvest; while the mother suffers the loss of her fertility in the disappearance of her daughter to the under-world, during the dark time of winter, and in the return of Persephone to earth we have, as it were, the renewal of the life of the mother in that of the daughter. The old crop having given to the soil the seed from which the new crop has grown.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be Continued.)

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#### HIS LIMIT.

It is related that an ordinary man was once present at a gathering of Theosophists who were discussing the future state. After enduring for some time in silence while such words as Paranirvâna, Dharmakâya, Mûlaprakriti, Mahâpursha, Pralaya, and the rest, were hurled to and fro above his head, he arose, remarked that if he could not go to heaven in English he would prefer not to go at all, and left the room.—G. H. Bonner, "The Nineteenth Century."



## Some Reflections in a Church.

SOME go to Church proud, humbly to repent; some go to scoff, but few, I fear, remain to pray. Churchgoing is a fashion, a function, not a conviction. Were the congregation all convinced they would indeed be "miserable sinners." The conscience of the great majority remains untouched by the most eloquent sermon, except now and then when the preacher startles the worshipper by accidentally referring to some common-sense aspect of life, moral, affective, human; an aspect which is not less but more valuable considered apart from the pulpit's transcendental theme, but which pure humanity is always robbed of, in having its sense of values obscured and diverted, by ascribing all goodness to God or Jesus Christ—the celestial father and son, eternally, and with damnable reiteration, magnified at the expense of every good father and son in the poor world below. And still the congregations sing:—

My soul doth magnify the Lord.

They magnify him, indeed, out of all proportion, all conception, till he becomes less than a "nebular hypothesis." They minimize themselves only in words. It is the fashion. No one imagines he is much less august than God Almighty. One's neighbour only is considered as a worm of the dust. Between this celestial maximum and earthly minimum, even in the most stupidly pious mind, anthropomorphism is a passing phase. In the process of God-making, or God-erasing, the Christian congregation may overtake the Secular Society, and at the end remark, "I told you so." Such will be your thanks, ye pioneers of commonsense:—

As though to say while you have been  
So fast to toe the mark,  
We waited till it rained, and then  
Got tickets for the Ark.

But justice even to Christians, some rarer specimens: Meek souls there are who little deem their daily task an angel's theme. I have seen, in St. Paul's and Westminster, and in humble country sheds, the quiet, noiseless woman in black—it is nearly always a woman—steal unostentatiously into pew or altar and "alone with God" beseech the unanswering heaven—for sin, for solitude, for sadness, for remorse, for all or any of the emotions that afflict the sensitive and gentle breast. Such is the attitude of true faith, true religion, at least sincere piety, simple, subjective, the objective imagining but the reflex of its opposite. The poor daughter rises from her knees comforted, calmed, consoled, humble, contrite, resigned; her love of God again but the reflex of her love of mankind. She was answered, but the answer was her own, the mysterious echoes of her own sweet human breast. Again "God" gets all the credit. We would not ask the dear lady, "Who is God?" she would only be distressed. A shallower nature would not. God in this instance was a goddess, albeit only a gentle and loving woman; and this ultimate and priceless product of the slow millenniums the clergy must snatch from earth, where it belongs, and ascribe to an impossible heaven where dwells their barbaric God. In some cases the clergyman may be as sincerely and satisfiedly deceived as the meek and saintly worshipper referred to.

We have all known the man who told a favourite lie so often that he came to believe in it himself. So use doth breed a habit—and a conviction—in a man, especially in a clergyman, who has the honour, ease, and emoluments of office to sustain his wavering faith, who in the last resource may comfort himself with the reflection that even if the thing is not true it may yet serve as a vehicle for the solace and uplift of his "people"—a most fallacious and disastrous conclusion.

It was curiosity that took me to Church the other night, the attraction being a sermon by a visiting minister, one who had been locally famous, but owing to some petty scandal—petty in the eyes of a mere Freethinker, but in the light of superior Christian morality, not to be condoned—something about domestic debts, and added to that, the minister's too Christ-like attitude to the grimy sons of toil—he was obliged at last to seek a humbler shed; with some repute from the past, and loved by many, he was able on this occasion to fill to its utmost capacity the great barn-like Church of a former brother in the Lord, one which on ordinary occasions—sadly, not scoffingly, be it said, for the regular parson was a man of good presence, sincere and eloquent, but too earnest, too gesticulative, wafting about too much the vestments of his holy office, swaying and bending his body within, reaching his hands over the pulpit's narrow curve, but failing, one fears, to impress the pews. The tone and mannerism of the visitor were different, but as sadly overdone. Little wonder the Churches as a rule are emptying. The Gospel story, symbolically and sensibly told, might still command the interest of the people, but unctuously, extravagantly, platitudinously rendered, one wonders how intelligent people can stand it, and wonders still more how the college-bred clergy have not more cunning and better taste. The preacher in question was disappointingly evangelical. Jesus to him was an actual person—how he rolled upon his tongue that adorable name, pronouncing it "Je-sus" with all the sustained sibilance of lisping love:—

Jesus, the very thought of thee  
With sweetness fills the breast!

But we are not envious, not even sarcastic; we, too, have something to love and reverence, something to regard and regret. Unlike the mythical Jesus, our friend lived; and is dead, alas, not merely translated to an upper region of the air. Dead, yes, but we think more of humanity because he has lived.

The narrative of Christ's doings in Palestine was to our preacher actual history. A neighbour of mine at the close of the sermon remarked: "Mr. K— is more emotional than intellectual, but he is a good fellow," a remark which quite sums up the situation, and which leaves one wondering: Are Church people really pining for intellectuality in the pulpit?

ANDREW MILLAR.

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## Correspondence.

### A DANGEROUS ILLUSION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I thank Mr. Leonard Mason for his criticism of my article, "A Dangerous Illusion" (*Vide Freethinker*, December 16), but I am afraid he has quite missed the point of my article, which is that "the majority of those who do not believe in" religion to-day are rather swayed by a mass-reaction than motivated by rational considerations. The danger we may have to face is that such a non-rational mass-movement may as suddenly and unaccountably swing back to obscurantism; as it vaguely and herd-like headed towards apparent Atheism.

Scientific and militant Freethought, I think, has influenced and is more likely to affect that consciously-intelligent minority of our population of which, as I wrote in the article, it is computed there are to-day some 500,000 thinking units played upon by the stream of modern ideas. That these 500,000 do leaven the unthinking mass is doubtless the case, but, so far as this mass is concerned, I submit that influence operates more or less sub-consciously. And a sudden wave of fanaticism spreading over Western Europe—as it may conceivably do—is hardly likely to be combated by a mere herd-instinct, or the mass-indifferentism of the many who have not had the opportunity or inclination to think out their position.



It is immaterial to my argument whether or no you use the terrible word "Atheist" in asking a person as to his or her beliefs. You may put it: "Do you believe in God?" or formulate it otherwise, the result will be the same.

In this, as in other matters, time will show the mistakendness or truth of this sceptical attitude. *Don't let us relax our efforts.* The enemy is not dead or sleeping.

HAROLD T. WILKINS.

#### FINGER-POSTS.

SIR,—Your esteemed contributor, Mr. G. E. Fussell, judging by the title of his letter, "The Drama and Hero Worship," has rather misunderstood our use of the name Pantagruel. By using this name we hoped to make it clear to all readers that mankind was intended; to particularize, we meant: Mr. Fussell, myself, all his relations, all mine, and every mother's son and daughter now alive—we would not even leave an idiot out—we would not damn or exclude one person—although our cultured betters set us examples in this direction. We might have used any of the following names:—Candide, Mankind, Humanity, Gulliver, to mention a few off-hand, but we chose Pantagruel, for the Pantagruelist is one who lives in peace, joy and health, always making good cheer, and with him, prudence and energy go hand in hand. We object to seeing the name of Pantagruel in the company of Napoleon and Northcliffe for many reasons; but the chief is, that the whole (Pantagruel) is greater than a part. Further, Spencer tells us all we want to know about Napoleon, and Northcliffe, to speak charitably of the dead, was simply an outsider of high finance. Blake sums up both these types—"They are sent in every age for a rod and scourge, and for a blight, for a trial of men, to divide the classes of men—they always command and domineer over the high and low vulgar." With this explanation, the major portion of your contributor's letter is beside the point.

To repeat our previous letter in another form, we ask, What did Shakespeare preach in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, or *Romeo and Juliet*? Our answer is—Nothing. Shakespeare depicts mankind struggling with fate. What preaching is there in the end of Ophelia, that symbol of purity? What preaching is there in the figure of Lear with the dead body of Cordelia in his arms? And, as Expressionists, the Capek Brothers say in effect in both their plays, "That is the way mankind is taking"; they have written present-day history on the stage in letters of fire, and Pantagruel can take it or leave it. Shakespeare depicts virtues and vices in the palm of the hand of fate; the Capek Brothers depict the misdirection of mankind.

Byron wrote:—

And no one virtue yet, except starvation,  
Could stop that worst of vices—propagation.

The writer of Proverbs, chapter 30, verse 19, was evidently aware of it. Grand Opera is the same thing set to music. According to Mr. Fussell, the moral of the Capek Brothers is a continuance of the chief function of life—that already exists, and can well look after itself. Orthodox religion in the "Insect Play" was a thing only fit to be kicked; the glory of war was reduced to the drains and sewers of society, and it was controlled by levers; industry was an object of acceleration; are these samples of negation? This matter of "negative influence" is the chief bone of contention, and when Mr. Fussell will leave out any suggestion that we take pleasure in using the correspondence columns of this paper we shall both approach, in a universal manner, the very stuff of life, on that battle ground in the world of ideas, for there, and there only, is decided the destiny of mankind. In the words of Voltaire, "We wholly disapprove of what he says, and will defend to the death his right to say it."

WILLIAM REPTON.

#### EAST AND WEST CONTRASTED.

SIR,—I am afraid Mr. Bhatia has not quite grasped the meaning of my reference to the Oriental's attitude towards his ancient cultural history. Religious hostility to new ideas and discoveries is common at all stages of civilization, but this is not the same thing as the tendency to regard with approval, and even with veneration, the intellectual, social, and moral ideals of long past ages.

This tendency is, I contend, much stronger in the Oriental than in the Western mind.

That Oriental thought is distinctively prone to mysticism scarcely needs stressing, as it is pretty widely admitted—though I never asserted that "Orientals alone specialize in this commodity"—and it is borne out by the fact that all the existing great religions of the world are of Eastern origin.

Mr. Bhatia remarks that I am not quite clear in my statement regarding the principles of the ancient Oriental civilizations being incompatible with human progress, so will try to make my meaning clearer. The aristocratic types of society which characterized those civilizations, founded, as it was, on a rigid and inviolate system of Caste, made all knowledge and enlightenment a monopoly of the intellectual classes—usually the priestly caste—and forbade its diffusion among the people; while it is almost an axiom of our sociology that social progress depends on the widest possible diffusion of knowledge and culture among the people. Hence the native genius and capability of the "common people" had no opportunity of development, and that vast field of fertile soil in which the seeds of knowledge would have sprung up and borne rich harvests remained for ever barren. And not only was progress thus rendered impossible, but the nemesis of retrogression was, sooner or later, certain, for such scientific or philosophic knowledge as the intellectual classes possessed, being strictly confined to a limited caste, tended always towards stagnation and decay. Thus these civilizations contained within themselves the causes of their own dissolution, and suffered an inevitable decadence which our modern democratic civilizations will probably escape. For among these, despite their superficial social distinctions, there exists no parallel to the atrocious Caste system of the East—one of the most cruel and degrading superstitions that have ever darkened the minds of men. Moreover, this horrible institution is so utterly alien to the spirit of true Democracy that no community in which it prevails can be regarded as fit for the responsibilities of self-government.

I fear, sir, that both I and my critic have strayed rather widely from our original subject, so this letter is going to close the discussion as far as I am concerned.

A. F. MADDOCK.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 3, 1924.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, and Silverstein, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. Financial report received. New members were received for Birmingham, Finsbury Park, Plymouth and the Parent Society.

A letter was read from the International Freethought Bureau, announcing that a Congress would be held in Rome in 1925. The suggestion that a strong English delegation, including friends of the movement, on the lines arranged by the N.S.S. in 1910, was adjourned for later consideration.

In *re* the proposal for assisting coming speakers, it was reported that some replies had been received to the questionnaire, and that requests for further application forms were receiving attention. It was resolved that these should be dealt with, as a whole, at a later date.

At the request of the Executive, Mr. Cohen gave permission for the reprinting of his article, "Faith *versus* Fact," as a tract.

It was reported that the arrangements for the Annual Dinner were now complete and instructions were given for enquiries to be made in *re* a course of lectures at the South Place Institute.

The meeting then adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

Imagination the mistress of error and falsity.—*Malebranche.*



## Mixed Pickles.

Christianity is a crystal in which only the eye of the credulous can descry visions.

"Blood and Fire?"—" 'Tis a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Christianity is suffering from "the morning after" feeling. Spiritual like spirituous debauches have but one ending.

Verily, religion is the hemlock of all social relation. "A man," says the Christian, "is a good man or a good citizen only when he holds the same belief as I hold"; Egotist and Christian are synonyms.

The truly great idea is a young cuckoo in the nest of thought.

If an epoch be styled a book-mark in the volume of Time, then the poisonous ivy leaf may well mark the Christian epoch.

Ridicule, irony, laughter—these are the mightiest weapons in the armoury of progress. The pious must ever be retrograde, for they are impervious to the mightiest of weapons.

The crank or the fanatic is often a manifestation of the matter-of-fact temperament running riot, practising the letter, not the spirit, of but dimly perceived principles.

D. P. STICKELLS.

## Obituary.

It is with profound sorrow that we have to report the death of Mr. James Partridge, of Birmingham. Mr. Partridge was an outstanding figure in the ranks of Birmingham Freethinkers, and his name was well known to Freethinkers all over the country. He was secretary of the local Branch for over thirty years, and no society ever had a more loyal, a more devoted, or a more disinterested worker. Never absent from a meeting, quiet in speech and manner, he was always to be found where most needed, and strangers were quite unaware of how much was being done by that quiet and unassuming figure. No labour was too exacting so long as it served the movement he loved.

When we first went to Birmingham on a lecturing tour, now over thirty years since, we first met Mr. Partridge in the old Baskerville Hall, and in nearly all our meetings since he has been a familiar and a welcome figure. The one or two meetings from which he was absent left us with a sense of something wanting, and Birmingham will not be quite the same to us with him away.

For some time he had been in indifferent health, and this led to him quite recently resigning the secretaryship of the Branch. But we had no idea that the end was so near, nor, we think, had his immediate friends. On Friday, January 4, shortly after entertaining a few friends, he died quite suddenly—probably from heart failure. His death came as a shock to the local friends, and it will be received with sorrow in many quarters. A man of broad sympathies and generous impulses, we never knew him to give utterance to an ungenerous thought, and still less could we think of him doing an ungenerous action. His death has come to us with the sense of a heavy personal loss. We know that the Freethought Cause has lost a gallant and devoted worker, and we have lost a very dear friend.

His wife, a daughter of that fine old Birmingham Freethinker, J. Ridgway, survives him, and to her we offer the sincere sympathy of ourself and of all who knew James Partridge and his work.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.—INDOOR.

**ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE** (19 Buckingham Street, Charing Cross): 3.30, Lecture in French by Made-moiselle Delbende on "Notre Civilization."

**METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY** (160 Great Portland Street, W.): 7.30, Debate—"Can Man Thwart God?" Opened by the Rev. S. G. C. Goldsack; Opponent, C. H. Keeling. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

**NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.** (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"Do we forsake our Freedom by joining the Roman Catholic Church?" Affirmative, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Negative, Mr. Oscar Baker.

**SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.** (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W.9): 7, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "The Challenge of Secularism."

**SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY** (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Dr. F. H. Hayward and Mr. W. G. Glock, "A 'Sullivan' Celebration."

**SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY** (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Dr. Bernard Hollander, "The Psychological Conditions of Success in Life."

**WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.** (Upton Labour Party Hall, 84 Plashet Road, Upton Park, E.13.): 7, Mr. H. Spence, B.Sc., "The Ascent of Man."

## COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

**BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.** (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. V. J. Hands, "The Case for Atheism."

**BOLTON SECULARIST SOCIETY** (Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street): 2.15, Mr. W. H. Sisson, "Science and Secularism."

**GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.** (Shop Assistant's Hall, 297 Argyle Street): Mr. S. G. Service, "The Control of Life—No. 2, 'Reason and Social Responsibility.'"

**LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S.** (Shop Assistants' Rooms, Duncan Street, entrance Central Road): 7, Mr. Moffatt, Limelight Lecture, "Wild Life in the Shetlands."

**LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY** (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Percy S. Wilde, "Evolution." (Lantern Illustrations.)

**MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.** (Amalgamated Engineering Union Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, Oxford Road, Manchester): Mr. George Whitehead, 3, "Socialism, Christianity, or Constructive Secularism"; 6.30, The Religion of G. Bernard Shaw."

**PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.** (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "Are We Civilized?" 7, "A Candid Examination of Christianity." The Discussion Circle meets every Friday at 7.30 at the Labour Club, 6 Richmond Street.

**FREETHINKER**, age 27, experienced commercial traveller, would be glad to hear of any vacancy occurring in similar capacity.—V. J. HANDS, 59, Exeter Road, Nottingham.

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