

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Loaded Dice.

It is true, we suppose, that the articles in the *Daily Express* dealing with the religious beliefs of certain well-known writers have aroused considerable interest. On the lower ground there is always some curiosity to know what noted people may think about certain matters, and on the higher some will be genuinely anxious to discover if others can afford them some help in solving problems that perplex them. It was, so far, a good idea for the *Express* to select ten well-known writers and get them to give their opinions on religion. But for such expressions of opinion to be really helpful two conditions are necessary. The writers must be absolutely honest in their expression of belief, and the ones selected must be representative of different forms of opinion. The first condition may be taken for granted—at the expense of the intelligence of some of the writers—but the latter was certainly not forthcoming. For not a single writer was asked to give an opinion who was known to be directly hostile to all forms of religious belief, and who might be depended on to say so. It would not, for example, have been out of place to have asked a man such as the Right Hon. John M. Robertson to have contributed an article to the series. Mr. Robertson is well known, he stands high in the world of literature, and he has occupied a good place in the political world. And he would have represented—in substance—the views of some millions of people in this country. But everyone who was asked could be trusted, if he did say something sensible in relation to orthodox Christianity, to make up for it by saying something conveniently stupid with regard to religion in general. In this way the general public would not be let into the secret of the extent to which able men and women have given up belief in religion, but would be encouraged to believe that fundamentally religion was accepted by all but a few who are quite negligible in point of both number and ability. In the act of acclaiming sincerity insincerity is established more firmly than ever.

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### Feeling and Fact.

The following are the ten who were selected to tell the world what they believed: Messrs. Arnold

Bennett, Hugh Walpole, Conan Doyle, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Compton Mackenzie, J. D. Beresford, De Vere Stackpoole, Zangwill, Henry Arthur Jones, and Miss Rebecca West. These are all writers who stand well with the general public, although it must be confessed that their right to speak with authority on the subject of religion is an unknown quantity. I am not aware that any of them have made a special study of religion, or that they are any better qualified to write on religion than I am to write on Sanscrit. But somehow or the other it is taken for granted that religion is the one subject in the world on which no study is required before one expresses an opinion. All you have to do is to work up a sloppy, emotional frame of mind, and then, if you can put your feelings into words, it is enough. You are able to talk or write on religion. I am not denying there is a certain amount of justification for this. From the Salvation Army preacher up to the Bishop of London all are on a level of equality so far as any scientific understanding about what they are speaking is concerned. There is really no difference, intellectually, between the street-corner preacher assuring his listeners that he feels Jesus within, and slapping the region in which an undigested dinner is uncomfortably resting, and any one of these ten writers explaining to all and sundry his emotions when fronting the world. Feelings, in this matter, may make very good material for diagnosis, but it is an expression of ignorance to take them as the equivalents of an intellectual proposition. To be told what a number of people believe is by itself about as helpful as it is to be told how often they have the stomach-ache.

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### Nine Out of Ten.

The first thing that stands out in this list of ten writers is that, with the single exception of Mr. Compton Mackenzie, who avows himself a Roman Catholic, and who believes that Catholicism will soon conquer the world, not one of the other nine writers believes in any of the Christian doctrines. It is really something, in a society saturated with the intellectual insincerity which Christianity has developed, to get that admission. Mr. Arnold Bennett, who wrote the first article in the series, says quite plainly:—

It is curious how bold some very ordinary statements seem when they are put into print in a popular newspaper. I do not believe, and never have at any time believed, in the divinity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, heaven, hell, the immortality of the soul, the divine inspiration of the Bible. These denials of belief are taken for granted in the conversation of the vast majority of my friends and acquaintances. And far from seeming bold, they are so commonplace to us that we very rarely trouble to repeat them, much less argue about them.

Curious, truly! But what a revelation as to the state of the public mind when such a confession is regarded as an evidence of courage! Because a man

does not believe in Christianity it is taken as an unmistakable act of boldness for him to say so! Could anyone frame a more serious indictment of the influence of Christianity than that? Privately these men, with multitudes of others, make no secret of their rejection of Christianity. But when it comes to public speech, where honesty of utterance is of even greater importance, then the rule must be silence. Why? The only possible reason is that it requires boldness to face the various forms of persecution that Christians inflict if a man is intelligent enough to reject their ridiculous creed and has the honesty to say so. I do not think that Mr. Bennett realizes what an indictment of Christianity his statement is. And it is certain that Christians themselves will not take it as such. They will accept it rather as a compliment. What they want is, if possible, uniformity of belief. And if that is not possible, then widespread hypocrisy and silence.

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#### Journalistic Religion.

The next thing that strikes one about these ten articles is their extraordinary commonplace character. The authors are advertised as ten of our leading writers—a claim I am not at all inclined to dispute. But of the whole ten, with the single exception of the article written by Mr. Zangwill, there is not one that shows the slightest indication of a capacity for ordered thought or for scientific thinking. Such childish absurdities as Virgin Births, Resurrections from the Dead, Vicarious Atonement, Hell, etc., are rejected, but even with these there is nothing said that the most ordinary mind has not arrived at years and years ago. And just as soon as these commonplace things are said the writers straightway rush off into the most unintelligent, if not unintelligible, of religious futilities. I will deal with some of these in detail later. At present I desire only to point out their general characteristics. There is all the usual gush about the figure and teachings of Christ, without one of them realizing the truth that "Christ" has meant something different to almost each century, and that it means something different to each group of people to-day. There is the same talk about true Christianity, again without there being any apparent appreciation of the uselessness of a word that means anything the writer or speaker cares to make it. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle calmly informs us that although he became a confirmed Agnostic he never ceased to have an equally firm belief in God, and Mr. Compton Mackenzie provides us with the information that although he reached "absolute materialism" he soon found out that it really made little difference whether one believed in the God of matter or a material God. One wonders whether these men ever gave five minutes' serious thought to the question of what really is meant by such words as Materialism, or God, or Agnosticism. And one also wonders whether, if these represent our leading literary men, if this is the quality of their thought, what ought we to expect from the man in the street who makes no pretence to much education or to serious thinking? All that these men, and one lady, really possess above the mind of the ordinary commonplace person is the capacity of articulation. They can write, perhaps speak, but beyond the power to express themselves, there is nothing in any of the ten articles that by the utmost latitude can be called a seriously thoughtful contribution to a discussion of religion. They express the religion of the commonplace mind in an environment which prohibits its expression in the set terms of established orthodoxy.

#### A Sham Fight.

Along with the invitations to these ten writers the *Express* issued invitations to a number of bishops to give their comments on the articles published. These duly obliged, and one can truthfully say that the articles are worthy of the replies, and that the replies fit the articles. The bishops are all very glad to find that the gallant ten still have some faith in a supreme mind; they congratulate them on being more Christian than they think they are, and with quite a pitying condescension they perceive that they are on the way to the appreciation of a true Christianity, and that one day these poor benighted strugglers may reach the lofty level of spiritual development attained by them. One wonders how the ten like this kind of condescending patronage? How do these leading men of letters like being told by a number of bishops—of present-day bishops, mark you!—that they really do not understand what they are writing about; that they are—at least in that part of them that is worth anything—Christians without knowing it? Well, if they do not like it, they have a very easy way of avoiding it in the future. When next they write about religion let them indulge in some preliminary and really scientific study of the subject. And as most of these writers claim to be interested in sociological subjects, and really do believe they possess considerable psychological power, let them consider the fact of the relation of Christian belief to social evolution on the one side, and the psychological aspect of religion on the other. If they do that they may then be in a position to not only say how much they do not believe, they will also be able to offer the world some sort of guidance to a genuine understanding of what religion is. Of old the bishops would have ordered most of these writers to the stake or to prison. To-day they patronise them. The persecution of bishops was very unpleasant, but, in our opinion, it was far more tolerable than their patronage. Patronized by a twentieth-century parson! Ye gods!

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I will deal with some of the arguments of the writers next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### The Essence of Christianity.

THIS is a subject on which there is no shadow of unanimity among professing Christians. Even in the pulpit we find no agreement as to what constitutes the essence of the Christian religion. Some clergymen hold that it is love to God and neighbour blossoming into actual service. Others maintain with equal assurance that it is complete obedience to the teachings of Jesus, which are faithfully recorded in the Four Gospels. The authority for this view is the following alleged sayings of Jesus himself: "If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him"; "Everyone which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man which built his house upon the rock." According to the latest phase of the phenomenal religious evolution of Dr. Orchard, the heart of Christianity is laid up in the Eucharist. The reverend gentleman has startled the small religious world of Nonconformity by giving emphatic expression, in the last issue of his monthly booklet on Foundations of Faith, to his acceptance of the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation and his "hope that the Mass will one day be discerned by all Christians

to be the one thing that matters." Dr. Orchard, despite his theological peregrinations, is a profoundly interesting character, and with considerable curiosity, not unmixed with a little innocent amusement, have we watched the wonderful changes he has undergone since the time twenty years ago, when he shone as an eminently brilliant star in the New Theology firmament, until now, when we behold him a full-fledged Catholic divine, openly teaching in a Congregational Church, "with immense gain in the sense of reality and efficacy," the full Catholic Faith.

For many years two powerful and contrary drifts have been in menacing operation in the so-called Protestant countries of Christendom, the one carrying all before it towards Catholicism, and the other towards Secularism. These opposite currents are seen at work particularly in the Anglican Church, as illustrated by the two strong parties therein, the one known as Catholic and the other as Modernist. Dr. Orchard, of course, stands absolutely alone among all his Nonconformist brethren, from the majority of whom he will get nothing but the black eye and the cold shoulder. Probably they will pursue him with conscienceless and persistent persecution, as they did not so long ago both him and Dr. R. J. Campbell when they posed as New Theologians.

Since the publication of Dr. Orchard's last monthly booklet we have learned that this distinguished Free Church divine and the Anglo-Catholics are doctrinally in full agreement. Let us now examine their position and views as they are represented in a sermon entitled "Christian Reality," which appeared in the *Church Times* of September 18, and which was recently preached in Westminster Abbey by the Rev. R. Lowman Lang, M.A., vicar of Holy Trinity, Taunton. The reverend gentleman opens his discourse with a quotation:—

"We are already far from the days when Lord Melbourne thought it monstrous that religion should 'interfere with the private life of a gentleman'; but we have a long way to go before we catch up with the New Testament," so wrote the Dean of Bristol recently. Would you say that the average Christian of to-day is nearer to Lord Melbourne's point of view or to the point of view of the New Testament?

We answer that question by affirming that the average Christian of to-day does not allow religion to interfere with his private life, or with his social and business life either. The average Christian is not one whit better than the average man of the world, and possibly he is a little worse in that he professes to be a superior person. We are reminded of a story Ruskin tells in one of his books about a stockbroker who was generally regarded as the most notorious swindler on the Exchange. The great author knew him personally; but he never imagined that he was a professing Christian until one week-end when he was the guest of some country friends who were in the habit of attending a Methodist chapel. On the Sunday morning Ruskin accompanied them to the service, when, to his infinite surprise, whom did he see in a position of honour but the said stockbroker. As soon as the service was over, Ruskin went to him and said, "What! you here?" "Yes," he answered; "this is the proper place for me, for here I can honestly pray, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" If we say that the stockbroker just mentioned was an average Christian, Mr. Lang may indulge in the retort, "No, he was not a Christian at all, but an odious hypocrite," which would probably be perfectly true. But, then, according to Mr. Lang's own teaching, can it be truthfully said of any average Christian that he or she is a Christian

indeed? What is it to be a Christian? What is the core of Christianity? Mr. Lowman Lang says:—

Now to-day, Holy Church sets before us in the Epistle the New Testament idea of religion, which is "walking in the Spirit," and its outcome (not its cause, mind you) is the avoiding of the foulness and nastiness and confusion and bitterness which are all around us, and the getting of those fruits of the Spirit which grow to perfection on no other tree. This is not a chance phrase, a pretty metaphor, which struck the writer's fancy just once (and was sufficiently in line with the general Gospel message to justify his use of it): it is the expression of a foundation truth of the Christian life. And though you may not use the words, you are not living the Christian life if you are not doing the thing. "Walk in the Spirit." It is the very heart of the New Testament. An isolated metaphor? No! It was the conception and experience of the early followers of Jesus. And it was theirs because it was his.

Here we pause in order to critically face this conception of the Christian life. Mr. Lang calls it the New Testament conception, and in a sense that is true, inasmuch as it is to be found in certain parts of that document. It does not occur in the Four Gospels, though Jesus is represented as a zealous believer in the Spirit. As far as the New Testament is concerned it is pre-eminently a Pauline conception, but it was in no sense original to the writer or writers of the Pauline Epistles, but was borrowed wholesale and without acknowledgment from Plato or Neo-Platonism, and then it was attached to the new religion as one of its foundation truths. Plato believed, and Paul adopted the belief, that there is an unavoidable conflict between the spirit and the flesh in man. The great apostle was always crying out in bitter condemnation of the flesh and its wicked lusts. Here are a few specimens written down in black and white: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"; "Miserable man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body which is bringing me to this death"? "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned." Well, this hideous doctrine of the flesh is happily founded, not upon actual fact, but upon pure fancy. The human body is not vile but beautiful and holy; an object not to be despised and frowned upon, but to be treated with every respect. Its desires are not lusts to be suppressed unless we by disregarding their nature degrade them into such. Yes, the Platonic and Pauline doctrine of the body is egregiously false to its very core, and has been the direct cause of incalculable mischief and injury ever since its first invention. Man is a wholly natural product, whose evolution can be traced back for many millions of years, while Paul's spiritual man is at once non-natural and anti-natural, a mere creature of the natural man's diseased imagination working while his reason was fast asleep. Wordsworth is radically wrong when he calls our birth "but a sleep and a forgetting." Science assures us now that in the human embryo are clearly represented all the stages through which man has passed in the long process of his evolution.

It is a most remarkable and significant fact that of the ten distinguished writers of fiction who have contributed articles on "My Religion" to the *Daily Express* only one professed to be a Christian, while only two or three expressed belief in the existence of anything above Nature. Nearly all of them laid their emphasis on the virtues called justice, sympathy, love, and service, in the absence of which happiness is utterly impossible, but in the faithful practice of

which joy flows like an irresistible river down picturesque mountains and through lovely meadows. And here again we must bear in mind that the virtues just named are also practised, on a more restricted scale perhaps, by multitudes of the lower animals. But, alas, we cannot afford to forget that, not only among lower animals, but in the human world as well, cruel vices and criminal instincts are still let loose on a terrific scale, not only in Heathendom, but also in Christendom, and make the life of countless myriads a veritable hell. These can be eradicated only by the spread of true education and knowledge, resulting in the triumph of love over selfishness, and of justice and goodwill over tyranny and self-aggrandizement.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Open Confession.

Thou comest in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak with thee.

—Shakespeare, "Hamlet."

I believe there are almost as few Atheists in the world as there are Christians.—Landor.

A LEADING London newspaper has published recently a series of articles on "My Religion," by ten living authors. The writers are not equally known, for they range from Mr. Arnold Bennett to a Mr. J. D. Beresford, the latter name scarcely being a "household word." One lady is included in the symposium, and the selection of Rebecca West could scarcely be bettered.

The publication of this series has aroused widespread interest, although the choice of nine more or less popular novelists and a famous dramatist is open to question. Perhaps the editor thought that men of letters could express themselves better than ordinary folk, but, even so, why confine the series to professional writers of fiction? There are scores of other writers who could have written as well, and, doubtless, have provided an equal stimulus to thought.

Excursions into the arid realm of theology by literary men have value if the writers are really interested. Matthew Arnold, for example, helped to infuse "sweetness and light" into an untoward generation by means of theological alarms and excursions. Voltaire, a far greater man than Arnold Bennett, brought a decadent Roman Catholicism to the Bar of Humanity by means of the written word. But elegant essays on religious subjects have hardly any ethical value at all. Browne's *Religio Medici* is superb writing, but, in the final analysis, is the expression of a mind saturated with superstition. The sincerity and experience of such works as those of Mark Rutherford are, in this respect, far more satisfying. Some years ago a literary debate took place between Robert Buchanan, voicing Freethought, and a number of other writers, the chief of whom was Mr. Richard Le Gallienne. The passionate sincerity and knowledge of Buchanan carried everything before it, and the languid posturings of some of his opponents really played into the poet's hands.

In the present symposium Mr. Arnold Bennett is by far the most important figure, and it is to be noted that he is a Freethinker. The other contributors nearly box the religious compass between them. Sir A. Conan Doyle is a Spiritualist; Compton Mackenzie is a Roman Catholic, and Miss Rebecca West, Messrs. Philips Oppenheim and Hugh Walpole voice various phases of religious emotionalism.

What strikes me, however, in this symposium is the very slender knowledge of religion displayed by the contributors. Of those mentioned above, only Mr. Bennett appears to have any acquaintance with

any religion save that of Christianity, and, even so, they interpret the Popular Superstition according to individual likes and dislikes. This is astonishing, for these folk are all professed *litterateurs*. If they had been ordinary business men, one could understand it better, for, in such cases, reading is but an interlude in a busy life. It only serves to show that education in this country is designed intentionally to favour Orthodoxy, and that it succeeds only too admirably.

Some time back a well-known Freethinker explained to me that the work of the militant section of the Freethought movement was superfluous and unnecessary, and that the intellectual Renaissance would be brought about by national education, pure and simple. "Angels and ministers of Grace defend us!" So long as Superstition is taught by 25,000 Anglican and Romish priests, 25,000 varied Nonconformist clergymen, 500,000 Sunday School teachers, and National Education is entirely in the grip of priests and their nominees, it is idle to talk in this vein. The figures tell their own tale. There are not a score of Freethought lecturers in the country, and work they ever so hard they cannot hope to do more than stem the tide of Superstition. No body of men work harder, nor work for such scant remuneration as Freethought lecturers, and they could never do such work at all if they were not animated by faith in the righteousness of the cause of the mental emancipation of Humanity.

Not only do the priests control National Education, but they have a powerful voice in the government of the country. The presence of forty Lords spiritual in the Upper House of Parliament is a greater menace to Progressive legislation than the mere figures suggest. Attendance in the House of Lords is more perfunctory than in the House of Commons, and the votes of the Bishops are always of great value to the Reactionaries. Only one conception of their duties as legislators fill the minds of these Bishops in Parliament. They think they are in the House of Lords to maintain the rights and privileges of the Government religion, and the constitution of which the Anglican Church is an integral part. They never appear to imagine that the Church of England could be improved, or the constitution strengthened. And the Anglican Bishops are like the Bourbons, "they learn nothing, and forget nothing." They are as great a danger to-day in Parliament as they have been for centuries.

Another contributor to this remarkable symposium is Mr. Hugh Walpole, who, unlike Mr. Bennett, was brought up in an ecclesiastical atmosphere and environment. Mr. Walpole's frankness is commendable, for he states his religious evolution as follows:—

- (1) Childish acceptance of dogmas.
- (2) Adolescent's reaction.
- (3) Evolution of personal opinion.

There is, however, one thing that excites remark in Mr. Walpole's "Apologia." He states that he was intended to be a clergyman, but, "suddenly, with a precipitancy far too crude, I believed in nothing," and the clerical life was abandoned. In this case the hand may be that of Esau but the voice is that of Jacob. This so-called "belief in Nothing" has done duty in hundreds of pulpits and on thousands of evangelical platforms. This "crude precipitancy" is not the negation which implies Freethought, but sheer indifference, such as a chorus girl might conceivably entertain on seeing a copy of the *Analects of Confucius*, or a work by Professor Einstein. And beliefs abandoned precipitately are very apt to be resumed as suddenly. So many religious folk have the quaint idea that conversions to Freethought are as swift as those professed by half-drunken navvies at revivalist

meetings, whereas conversion to Freethought principles is usually a process of slow but sure evolution.

Mr. Walpole's admission of his clerical environment reveals another matter. He points out that religion "in these post-war days" has become so "individual" that no one is afraid of speaking of it, and that "the time has long passed for religious persecution." It therefore appears that Mr. Walpole has never heard of the Blasphemy Laws, of the Sunday Observance Act, of the prosecution of the Peculiar People, and other awkward anachronisms in Christian civilization. This reference reminds me of a story told by George Foote, that most delightful of raconteurs. One day, travelling on a tram-car, he sat opposite a member of the Peculiar People who had just been released from prison for putting his belief in "God" instead of doctors. Foote shook hands with the man, saying, with a smile, "I have had twelve months in prison for disbelieving the Bible; you have had six months for believing it; we ought to be acquainted."

We are not blaming Mr. Walpole. He is the victim of his narrow environment. As may be seen, he is very innocent of so many things. His picture of "rose-water religion" is as far from facts as it is possible to imagine. Mr. Bennett, too, is in somewhat similar plight. An author of European reputation, he imagines that the fight against Superstition is over and done with. Even a hymn of victory would be out of place. Is it not true that the three things necessary to Freethought are publicity, more publicity, most publicity? If two distinguished members of society are so much in the dark concerning our work, what impression are we making on the ordinary citizen?

MIMNERMUS.

## "Back to Jesus."

### VI.

#### THOSE MARVELLOUS MIRACLES.

BEFORE I conclude this series of articles I feel that Mr. Knapp-Fisher will think he is hardly dealt with if I do not take up his statement that the miracles of Jesus "are founded upon fact." What does he mean? That the miracles are really true or that some incident, not a miracle, took place which made the authors of the Gospels think it was a miracle? To prevent a useless discussion, I claim that when the Christian uses the word miracle (and here I am not concerned with the broader discussion as to whether miracles are possible) he means that Jesus was able to perform something *which no mere man nor woman could perform*, because he, Jesus, had a power by virtue of his being the Son of God or God himself; that this power came straight from God (whether Jesus was really God himself or not) and that no other person could do the same thing unless first given the power to do so by Jesus (or God). Curing the blind by spittle and clay or turning water into wine or flying to heaven or rising again after being put to death are examples of Christian miracles. Mr. Knapp-Fisher's statement that the "miracles are founded upon fact" has no meaning therefore, unless he means that the miracles actually took place. Did they?

Personally, I would not believe my best friend on whose veracity I could stake my life, if he came and said he saw a miracle. This kind of evidence is worth nothing. I have seen with my own eyes two men from an audience saw a box in which a woman was lying full length, into two pieces, on the stage, and yet the woman came out whole and unhurt. Was this a miracle? It could not possibly be one in

this age, because nobody outside the Church or a lunatic asylum believes in miracles. In the time of Jesus, "miracles" were regular occurrences, because his age was one of hopeless ignorance and fear.

In *The Great Physician*, by Juridicus, the author attempts to show that a number of the so-called healing and other miracles can be explained away quite naturally. For example, when Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes, what really happened was that this was all the food Jesus himself had and he shared it with his own immediate friends. The crowd, seeing this act of generosity, shared their provisions with those among them who had none, in imitation of their Lord and Master, and there was your miracle! Of course, this explanation is as good as another, and is worth just as much. I once read an elaborate American *Life of Jesus*, in which the author proves to his own satisfaction the absolute naturalness of every incident in the Gospels. For example, Jesus merely swooned on the Cross, and was alive when put into the tomb. The "angel" of Matthew and the "young man" of Mark whom the women saw in (or out of) the tomb were really Jesus himself. And the "two men" of Luke and the "two angels" of John were Jesus and Joseph of Aramathea, who was trying to save the unlucky son of God—and did save him.

It is when you come to read a book like Canon Streeter's *The Four Gospels*, published last year, that one sees how the "miracles," far from having a "basis of fact," were really invented by the Gospel writers. An incident related somehow by Mark is improved upon or added to by Matthew and Luke, or told in another way by John, all four also using a sort of pre-Mark document, which is not in existence, and the contents of which we can only guess at. Where this document really came from or how it was written or in what language it was written, or who wrote it, or whether there was more than one document, are all mere matters of conjecture; and yet, after blowing the credibility of our Gospels and their authenticity into the air, Canon Streeter will preach "Our Lord and Saviour" without the slightest hesitation to admiring crowds of devoted believers.

Have the miracles of Jesus given the world any benefits whatever? Are our people better fed? Are we building more houses? Is the life of the average worker any happier because of the miracles? What has Jesus done for us? Let me quote the splendid and weighty words of Ingersoll:—

Is Christ an example? He never said a word in favour of education. He never even hinted at the existence of any science. He never uttered a word in favour of industry, economy, or of any effort to better our conditions in this world. He was the enemy of the successful, of the wealthy.....Christ cared nothing for painting, for music, for sculpture—nothing for any art. He said nothing about the duties of nation to nation, of king to subject, nothing about the rights of man, nothing about intellectual liberty or the freedom of speech. He never married.....All human ties were held in contempt; this world was sacrificed for the next; all human effort was discouraged.....Was he kinder, more forgiving, more self-sacrificing than Buddha? Was he wiser, did he meet death with more perfect calmness than Socrates? Was he more patient, more charitable than Epictetus? Was he a greater philosopher or a deeper thinker than Epicurus? In what respect was he the superior of Zoroaster? Was he gentler than Laotze, more universal than Confucius? Were his ideas of human rights and duties superior to those of Zeno? Did he express grander truths than Cicero? Was his mind subtler than Spinoza's? Was his brain equal to Kepler's or Newton's? Was he grander in death, a sublimer

martyr than Bruno? Was he in intelligence, in the force and beauty of expression, in breadth and scope of thought, in wealth of illustration, in aptness of comparison, in knowledge of the human brain and heart, of all passions, and hopes, and fears, the equal of Shakespeare, the greatest of the human race?

I do not suppose that either Mr. Knapp-Fisher, or Mr. Bullett, or Miss Rout, or any of those reverent Rationalists whose most earnest desire is to get us back to Jesus, have read the above extract from Ingersoll's fine pamphlet, *About the Holy Bible*. I have great pleasure, therefore, in calling their attention to it in the hope that it will show them that the "uniqueness" of Jesus was discussed quite a long while ago by one of the most generous-minded and, at the same time, one of the most militant of Freethinkers. Moreover, Ingersoll really had some humour—too much according to his opponents, and it is easy to see the "Man of Sorrows" was more an object of contempt for him than an example. The joke is that the very people who talk so profusely about humour actually take as their ideal someone whose published words and deeds show the very opposite of any sense of humour. A more mournful figure than Jesus is unknown in history, and there are no works in literature in which an absence of humour is so conspicuous as the Gospels. As a matter of fact, they make you laugh at them, and no religion in the world can long stand contempt.

I seriously contend that the works of such a writer as Jack London, and certainly those of Dickens, are immeasurably above the Gospels in *simple humanity*. Who can read *The Call of the Wild* without a heart-throb of love for man's animal friend—the dog, and without a passionate hatred for those who ill-treat dumb animals?

Humanity has passed the old gods in its march. Our ideals are finer and greater than anything Jesus and his brother deities have given us. Man is something nobler and better than the being "born in sin and iniquity" which dominated the ideas of the founders of Christianity. We have left them stranded long ago and nothing can stop our progress—certainly not the paltry efforts of those who stretch out their hands in feeble attempts to get us "back to Jesus."

H. CUTNER.

## Mischievous and Destructive Ghosts.

THE ordinary Christian believes in the immortality of the soul of man on purely religious grounds. Genesis tells him that "God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul." And that to him settles the matter. He is not prepared to hear any arguments against it. The statement is alleged to come from the word of God, and any evidence or arguments to the contrary are considered to be quite futile. It is of no avail to point out that all animals possess the breath of life, and that even insects possess it also; the Christian still clings tenaciously to the belief that man alone possesses the vital spark—the immortal element which will endure after that of all other animals have ceased to exist. But I have just discovered a rev. gentleman—the Rev. C. L. Tweedale, who is sometimes called "the Psychic Parson," who not only believes in man's immortality, but believes that some animals, if not all, will live again; nay, he goes so far as to affirm that he has seen the ghost of his domestic cat, and his wife has seen the ghost of the pet dog of his "Aunt Leah," and that this particular aunt came from the other world

"dressed in a robe of lace, and was accompanied by the apparition of a winged figure—presumably an angel—"something like a bird with wings two feet across." Yes, and not only did he see it, "but six people altogether, including our servant, saw "Aunt Leah" also. And he wishes all kind Christian friends to take his word, which he gives on "the honour of an English gentleman and as a minister of the Christian Faith." Well, the honour of an English gentleman might count for much in certain quarters, but when "a minister of the Christian Faith" is added to it a good discount should be taken off on account of the general disposition of such persons to believe without evidence, and as a rule to believe, in opposition to the strongest and most palpable evidence against his own faith. But he tells us further "that his mother once followed the apparition (of the dog) and made repeated attempts to snatch it, but her hand went through it. When it vanished from this room and went upstairs my mother clutched at it again and there was a dog's loud growling and a snarl." This "apparition appeared often and was seen by many." It seemed somewhat like the apparition of a dagger which Macbeth thought he saw when he had resolved to murder King Duncan.

He exclaimed:—

Is this a dagger which I see before me?

The handle towards my hand.

Come, let me clutch thee; I have thee not,

And yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible to feeling as to sight?

Or art thou but a dagger of the mind?

A false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.

A good many people see things when they are suffering from this form of mental oppression. But what else does the rev. gentleman say? Listen to this: "One day my wife and mother saw a white dog in a cupboard under the stairs. It was my aunt's dog. It used to follow her about with its eyes shining and used to disappear when she disappeared."

Was it merely the apparition of his aunt's dog and his aunt, and if it was, how does he explain what followed? "Twice the apparition of my aunt struck the gong in the hall and once the dog bounced into it and made it sound. Another time the dog sprang at my wife's shoulders and caused her to break a lamp she was carrying." What mischievous and destructive ghosts to be sure! But that was not all. "The apparition of my aunt spoke to our servant and said: 'Tell Mary to come to the Grey Room.' Eventually the figure spoke to us in a *tremendously loud voice*, which rang through the house. She talked about her life and her vault and said she was Leah 'from the other world.'" Certainly it is a very curious thing that all these ghosts speak in a *very loud voice*. Probably they think that we poor creatures are dreadfully deaf. But I am puzzled to know as to where the ghost of a dog gets his voice from. He has no material body—no throat, no tongue, and no lungs, and yet he can growl. Nor can I quite understand why the ghost of the rev. gentleman's aunt should tell them what her name was, when they all knew her quite well, and recognized her at once, without any formal introduction.

Apparently the rev. gentleman and his wife did not remonstrate with the ghost for causing the lamp to be broken, nor for frightening them by speaking in a *tremendously loud voice*, which rang through the house.

I have a fairly long acquaintance with cats and dogs, and I love them as domestic animals; but I have never seen the ghost of a cat or a dog, and should not know them apart from their flesh and blood organization. The spirits of such domestic animals may exist after they are dead, for all I know to the contrary; they may appear to the perturbed

imaginations of those who believe in them; but they have never appeared to me, not even in my dreams, and I therefore dismiss the stories of their antics, even when given on the testimony of one who speaks "on the honour of a gentleman and a minister of the Christian religion."

Turning to another phase of the subject I see by the *Referee* of Sunday last that Sir A. Conan Doyle has been over to France, and in Paris itself he has been exhibiting "spirit photographs," and on a screen he has shown "a series of ghostly pictures emerging from the Ectoplasm." "Ectoplasm," he explained, was a subtle vapour, chilly and fluid; a sort of half-way house between spirit and matter, which everybody threw out. But can "a subtle vapour" be caught and bottled? Does he carry any of it about with him? And how does he photograph it? And what does he do with it after it has been photographed? These matters are puzzling to the ordinary man who has never come across this subtle vapour.

But Dr. Conan Doyle "showed two pictures illustrating the development of a spiritual body from a mass of Ectoplasm. In the first plate the Ectoplasm appeared as a vague mass arising from the head of the medium, while the second plate opened revealing the face of the dead wife of the man who had been sitting with the medium."

Apparently Spiritualists cannot get even the spirit form of the face of a dead person without the aid of a medium. But when the medium is a lady all the Ectoplasm exudes from her body and she has to transform it into a "spirit form," which, of course, is the best imitation of the material form she is able to produce. But the most remarkable "spirit photograph" in the world Dr. Conan Doyle considers is one in which Sir William Crookes is seen arm-in-arm with an ectoplasmic figure which he called Katie King. I fancy I have heard the name of the lady more than once before in the world of Spiritualism. I do not wonder that we are told that the audience "watched the exhibition of the photographs with emotions which ranged from enthusiasm to astonishment and terror." And I fancy if Sir Arthur had shown some photographs of ladies who became younger in the spirit world, the older they grew, these photos would have been received with still other emotions, viz. ecstasy, joy, and rapture, by the credulous, and doubt and derision by unbelievers.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

#### MEN'S AND DOGS' RELIGION.

"I have been away at Boulogne," says a letter of June 12 [1872]; and now that I meet with this sentence, I remember that my old engineering friend, Loch, whose name has for a long time disappeared from the record, was staying there with his wife and family, and that to join him was the motive for going. He and I renewed our habit of early years, and took country rambles inland and along the coast. One of them left a permanent impression. We passed a wayside shrine, at the foot of which were numerous offerings, each formed of two bits of lath nailed one across the other. The sight suggested to me the behaviour of an intelligent and amiable retriever, a great pet at Ard tornish. On coming up to salute one after a few hours' or a day's absence, wagging her tail and drawing back her lips so as to simulate a grinning smile, she would seek around to find a stick, or a bit of paper, or a dead leaf, and bring it in her mouth: so expressing her desire to propitiate. The dead leaf or bit of paper was symbolic, in much the same way as was the valueless cross. Probably, in respect of sincerity of feeling, the advantage was on the side of the retriever.—*Herbert Spencer, "Autobiography."*

## Acid Drops.

The Vicar of Chiddingly writes as follows in the September issue of the Parish Magazine:—

During the war, whilst I was on the other side of the world, I was sitting one day on the doorstep in the winter sun reading the *Freethinker*, which a friend sent me at intervals, in the hopes, I suppose, of converting me to his faith. It is a clever paper, and I have learnt much from it. It has a witty way of peering at the inconsistency of Christians, and exposing fallacies in arguments often used by preachers and apologists, and is justifiably down on bogus revivalist anecdotes.....Whilst I was enjoying its sarcasm I was handed a cablegram from England. This was to say my boy had been killed while flying. In a moment the sun seemed to go out and I was left in a world from which the light had departed to seek consolation in the teaching of the *Freethinker*, or in the faith I had been brought up in. In that moment all the teaching of the former turned to dust and ashes. It could amuse and instruct when all went well, but in time of trial it meant nothing at all.

There is nothing at all new in this, but it is surprising that intelligent religionists do not realise how weak such an argument is. Death is the common fate of all, and all have to face it in the case of their friends and relations. And it is surely rather late in the day to claim that when death does come the manner in which it is faced depends upon one's religious opinions. If one were to observe, merely as an outsider, one who had lost a child, or a companion, would one be able to tell from his behaviour whether he were religious or not? The Christian derives no greater comfort from his faith than does the Freethinker from his view of life. And there is certainly something far more manly in the Freethinker's sorrowing for the ones he loves and facing the world with the calm courage that is born of a knowledge of things, and the Christian, the moment he is faced with a great sorrow, whimpering that but for his faith in God he would break down. It is a wonder the intelligent men and women do not the more readily perceive what a poor builder of character Christianity really is.

There has been a prolonged drought in some of the Western States of America, and after the drought had lasted for a long time prayers were offered for rain. And, lo! as the people were leaving the Church the rain fell. It is to be noted that the prayers were offered only after it had been dry for a long time, and the longer one waits in such circumstances the nearer they are to getting their prayers answered. But what are we to think of the Lord who goes on parching a whole countryside until the people remind him that they have had enough of it? Or did he forget about it? Or perhaps his geography is weak and he has been sending us the rain and thought he was directing it on Western America. The more one studies the ways of God the more wonderful they become. They are as incalculable as the actions of a lunatic, and as sensible as those of a man suffering from *delirium tremens*.

The Earl of Lanesborough, Swithland Hall, Leicestershire, is a social Sinbad. He is left, he says, without a church or a parson. The Bishop of Peterborough, as a compromise, has licensed (it sounds like the brewery business) a disused Wesleyan chapel for church services. The Lord Spiritual in his efforts to accommodate the Lord Temporal has not met with success. Lord Lanesborough says he would rather play golf than worship there. Which is, being translated, love's labour lost, and, incidentally, proves how deep and wide is the current of orthodox religion when two giants meet. It is a subject *pour rire* only.

Famous authors have as much right to a religion as famous prize-fighters or famous billiard players. If a

man dare not have, and has not reached his own authority in these matters, there is always an authority waiting round the corner. In the case of Mr. Compton Mackenzie, the authority he requires is the Vatican. Nietzsche's definition, "the sense for fact, the last and most valuable of all senses," might be with advantage applied by Mr. Mackenzie when he states of the war that, "Alone the Church preserved her integrity during that mundane epilepsy." If in plain English he means that the Church sat on the fence, we agree, but it is well known that the Catholic Church, until a few months previous to the Armistice, was definitely on the side of Fritz and his friends in the Great War—which to men who have begun to grow was nothing but a brutal backyard squabble in the House of Europe.

By a coincidence that can only be explained by the editor of the *Daily Express*, there is, in the same issue containing Mr. Mackenzie's advertisement, a leaderette entitled "The Faith of their Fathers." We are told that the "Jewish New Year" begins to-day. The two sects of Jew and Catholic have nothing in common only hatred, so that chronology was bound to be a detail.

A pious Christian correspondent in the *Daily Express* blames Nietzsche for Bolshevism. Full blown in the assurance that all the decencies of life rest upon the faith of the new Christian Church, this writer evidently has felt the whip of Nietzsche in his description of Christianity as a slave morality. The power of words is justified, but why stop at Bolshevism; the writer could have added the Riff War, the decline in the number of women who have had their hair bobbed, the traffic problem, and the epidemic of sore throats.

The *Daily Express* followed its series of ten articles by well-known writers with an article by an "Unknown Man." Well, he is certainly unknown inasmuch as no name is attached to the article, but we would wager that it is either by a parson or one who is in the same line in an amateur way. There is all the usual preaching cant about the Christ who makes it possible for man to face the hardships of this world, the power of the love of God, etc., all expressed in the same old way, and showing about the same amount of sense and cant. For most of this is sheer cant. People who really have an intelligent interest in their fellows do not go round the world with their mouths full of phrases about Love, and Love, and Love, until one begins to feel positively sick at the sound of the word. We have never found this kind of person more considerate of his fellows than are others, and they usually show less concern in practice. As a general rule we are inclined to look with suspicion on the man who is always whining about the love of his fellow man.

Following the "Unknown Man," a series of addresses are being given in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Aldersgate Street, on the subject of the "Express Articles." We don't know what they are expected to do, but the plan is to get a number of successful business men to speak, and they will all say how much Christianity means to them, what a dreary world it would be without Christ. One knows exactly what these men will say a long while before they say it. But one may be sure of one thing, and that is that by no chance will anyone be permitted to speak who is likely to tell a little of the truth about Christianity.

Harry Champion, the well-known comedian, has popularised one Henry the Eighth; Mr. Edward Gall, in the *Daily Herald*, has a good word to say for the king with a generous taste in wives. Writing of that king's incursion in history-making, Mr. Gall draws attention to the fact of the monks and nuns who held rich meadows, fat corn lands, horses and cattle, swine and sheep, lead mine and stone quarry. He points out that their enormous

holdings of these things threatened to give them as much economic power over the people as they already claimed in spiritual matters. There is some truth in the old adage that when thieves fall out, honest men get their due.

In two columns in the *Times Literary Supplement* we find, cheek by jowl with "The Growth of Brotherhood," the reminiscences of Lieut-Colonel J. W. Wray, "With Rifle and Spear." Next door to "Grace and Personality" we find the announcement of a book, *How to Shoot*. The setter-up must be a humourist.

Pantheism, states the Rev. A. C. Bouquet, leads to determinism and pessimism. What Christianity led Origen to is one of those uplifting stories in history that would have given some substance of truth to the monk's vows of celibacy if they had followed his drastic example.

From a newspaper we notice the following report: "Armistice Sunday, November 8.—The Archbishops of Canterbury and York recommend that where it is convenient the observance of Armistice Sunday should this year take place on November 8, rather than on November 15." The shining lights of the Church do not require instruction from American advertising experts.

Look you, Mr. Caradoc Evans, the Welsh author, has exclusive information about God. He says that when the Welshman goes to heaven he expects to find that God is a Welshman. O, surely, Mr. Evans, he will at least have to be a good linguist whatever, unless the language of diplomacy which he believ Mr. Lloyd George cannot speak, is the one in use for such interviews. Those French irregular verbs are more fearful to some statesmen than ruling Empires.

A Stornoway reader sends us an account, taken from a local paper, of a bird which entered the Free Church of Lochs, and, after flying round the building, settled on the head of the minister, the Rev. W. Cameron. It was driven off, but again came back to the same spot. Our correspondent asks what we make of the incident. We really do not know what caused the bird to make such a set for the preacher's head—unless it was looking for something soft on which to settle. The bird was said to be either a raven or a crow. The form assumed by the Holy Ghost was traditionally a dove. It was a visitor from below that came as a raven.

## How to Help.

There are thousands of men and women who have left the Churches and who do not know of the existence of this journal. Most of them would become subscribers if only its existence were brought to their notice.

We are unable to reach them through the ordinary channels of commercial advertising, and so must rely upon the willingness of our friends to help. This may be given in many ways:

By taking an extra copy and sending it to a likely acquaintance.

By getting your newsagent to take an extra copy and display it.

By lending your own copy to a friend after you have read it.

By leaving a copy in a train, tram or 'bus.

It is monstrous that after forty years of existence, and in spite of the labour of love given it by those responsible for its existence, the *Freethinker* should not yet be in a sound financial position. It can be done if all will help. The Paper and the Cause are worthy of all that each can do for them.



## Shall We Have an Endowed "Freethinker"?

### A Big Scheme With a Good Beginning.

I HAVE to put before readers of the *Freethinker* one of the most important proposals yet made in the history of this journal.

At the close of the Sustentation Fund last year it may be remembered I referred to a number of suggestions that were made to me as to the financial future of the *Freethinker*. At the request of some of the gentlemen responsible for these suggestions a meeting was arranged at the *Freethinker* office and the whole matter thoroughly discussed. The three present were all old and tried and generous friends of the *Freethinker*, and were, moreover, prepared to go on helping, financially and otherwise, to the end of the chapter. But, they said, we were getting "no forrader." Year after year a Sustentation Fund was found necessary; it has always been found necessary, and it looked like being necessary for many years to come. The annual deficit was always met promptly and generously by *Freethinker* supporters, but there still remained the financial worry of getting through the year, and there should be some way of getting rid of that.

So it was suggested that the way out was to form a Trust which should have for its object the endowment of the paper to the extent of providing the deficit which the accountant's report showed to have been incurred. Briefly, the main idea was that the subscribers to the Sustentation Fund should capitalise their donations, and give at once with a reasonable prospect of finality, instead of giving annually, with no prospect of finality. I agreed to the suggestion on the condition that before a public appeal was made, before even the Trust Deed was drawn up and executed, there should be shown a reasonable prospect of the scheme being successful. There was not long any doubt about that. A few friends were approached by those who met me, and a sum of about £2,500 secured. That looked quite a reasonable start with a very small circle, and it was decided to go on with the scheme.

A Trust Deed was accordingly drawn and duly executed. It provides for not more than five Trustees, one of whom shall be the Editor of the *Freethinker*, and whose signature, together with that of one other Trustee, shall be necessary to all cheques and documents connected with the Trust. There is thus an adequate check so far as that is concerned. The Trust must invest its funds—that is governed by the law controlling Trust investments—and the income received therefrom must be paid to the *Freethinker* annually to meet such deficits as have been incurred. In the event of things taking a turn for the better, and the whole of this income not being required for that purpose, the Trustees have the power to spend the remainder of its income in promoting the circulation of the *Freethinker* in such ways as it may seem advisable. And if it should be found at any time that the Trust is no longer necessary, the funds in the possession of the Trust must be paid over to the National Secular Society. There is therefore the fullest security that the funds, both as regards income, and ultimate capital, must be expended on propaganda.

The names of the Trustees are H. Jessop (Secretary), C. Bush, W. J. W. Easterbrook, E. D. Side, and myself.

The initial list of subscriptions to the Fund, from

the few mentioned who were approached as to their opinion of the plan, are:—

	£	s.	d.
H. Jessop ... ..	500	0	0
C. Bush ... ..	500	0	0
"A Friend" ... ..	500	0	0
W. B. Columbine ... ..	250	0	0
J. Cahn ... ..	250	0	0
W. J. W. Easterbrook ... ..	100	0	0
J. A. Fallowes ... ..	100	0	0
J. Davis ... ..	50	0	0
J. F. Shoults ... ..	50	0	0
"Sine Cere" ... ..	31	10	0
F. Lee ... ..	20	0	0
E. D. Side ... ..	10	10	0
J. Pendlebury ... ..	5	0	0
A. W. B. Shaw ... ..	5	0	0

An account in the name of the Trust has been opened at the Clerkenwell Branch of the Midland Bank, and subscriptions deposited, pending investment. There have been, besides, several promises of donations dependent upon the extent to which the scheme receives general support.

This is the biggest thing yet attempted in the history of the *Freethinker*, but there is no insuperable obstacle to its complete success. If the scheme is to be completely successful a sum of over £8,000 must be realized, but I believe there are very many who will welcome this opportunity of placing the paper in as near a position of financial security as it can be placed. Another 100 who would contribute £50 each would see the sum practically secured. But the Trustees are not appealing merely to the wealthier members of the party. This is an effort in which all can bear a hand, and 100 people who contribute a sovereign each is as good as one with 100, and from some points of view even more satisfactory. It is hoped to secure the whole of the sum required this year, but if it is not, the Trust will go on pegging away till it is successful in achieving its purpose.

With regard to the usual Sustentation Fund. There is of course the deficit of the past year to be met. But it would be awkward and confusing to run two Funds at once through the paper, so what the Trustees propose doing is this. From the whole of the sum subscribed this year through these columns the Trustees will take the sum of £400, which will be paid over to the *Freethinker* to clear off the past year's loss. The balance will be paid over to the Trust. Hereafter, the income of the Trust only will be used, and so far as that falls short of £400, the estimated deficit, the difference will have to be made up in the usual way by a direct appeal to *Freethinker* readers. But it is hoped that little will have to be made up in that way.

I do not think it is necessary to say very much more on this head, but if all is not quite clear to any intending subscriber, I shall be pleased to answer any question with regard to the Trust or other pertinent matters.

A word or two of a more personal matter is perhaps advisable. First of all, I want to remove any feeling that the Trust means a personal gain of any kind to me. I shall not get one penny extra on account of the Trust being in existence. To quite clear up any misapprehension I may say at once that for my work as editor, manager, paragraph and article writer—inclusive of out-of-pocket expenses—my salary stands at present at three guineas per week. That I am supposed to take when I can, and there is often more "when" than anything else. I am not complaining in any degree, but it is as well to make the situation clear. I should, of course, have no objection to receiving £1,000 a year,

but it is not there, and I have never made payment a condition of work. Between what I take and what I ought to take may be regarded as my annual contribution to the Cause, and on any financial valuation it is not a small one.

I have been personally responsible for the maintenance of the *Freethinker* for ten years. They have been ten of the hardest years in the history of Free-thought journalism. In spite of my doing the work week after week of two or three men, the costs of running the paper are to-day not less than £600 annually more than when I took on the editorship. It has been no light load to carry, and the anxiety of carrying on under present conditions week after week is great. I think I may safely say, and without undue conceit, that the *Freethinker* has during the past ten years not deteriorated from the high standard of efficiency established under G. W. Foote, and, if I am justified in that assumption, I am content. The services of the paper to the cause of Free-thought is great. It is the only paper in this country that is uncompromisingly Free-thinking, which makes no overtures to the enemy, which never lowers its colours, and which earns from the religious world the compliment of never ceasing hatred.

If the Endowment Trust is able to do what it aims at, what it sets out to do it will relieve me of much anxiety and leave me mentally freer for my proper work. As I have often said I should like to be relieved altogether of work in connection with the financial side of the paper.

It may also be noted that the issue of this appeal coincides with the completion of my thirty-five years' work in the Free-thought movement. For twenty-eight of those years there has been only one issue of the *Freethinker* that has not contained at least one article from my pen. It is a record of which I am very proud, and I am hoping for many more years of work yet. At the age of fifty-seven, and with fairly good health, I may reasonably hope for that. It would also be false modesty not to say that during that thirty-five years I have given of my best to Free-thought, and that what I have given has met with appreciation. I did not write or speak for appreciation, but it is pleasing when it comes unsought. If now the *Freethinker* can be placed in the position of practical financial security for the future I shall feel that I have received a very solid recognition of what I have been able to do. And it can be done, if all, big and little, lend a hand.

The Trustees are of opinion that in the case of the present appeal, it will be best for subscriptions to be sent direct to me, instead of to the Secretary of the Trust. These will be acknowledged in the *Freethinker* week by week, and duly banked in the name of the "*Freethinker* Endowment Trust." And I hope that the next week's list of acknowledgments will show that the Free-thought Party has made up its mind to make the scheme a complete success.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the "*Freethinker* Endowment Trust," and crossed Midland Bank, Limited (Clerkenwell Branch). All letters should be addressed to the Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### MR. G. WHITEHEAD'S MISSION.

The weather was so unfavourable for out-door propa-ganda for Mr. Whitehead's second week in Newcastle, that he was able to get in only five meetings. We are hoping to hear better accounts of the last week of his Mission when he returns to town, and will report in next week's issue.—E.

### 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.**

OWING to pressure on our space, and other considerations, we are obliged to refrain from dealing with certain letters till next week.

MARSHALL (Northampton).—We have received a telegram, but no address. Please forward this.

E. STERRY (Toronto).—Sorry we are unable to reply to your letter, but something has happened to the ink—probably damp. Anyway, it has run right through the rather thin paper in such a way that we find it impossible to read more than a word here and there. All we can gather is that you are making some efforts at propa-ganda, and in that we wish you all success. If we can give any help we shall be pleased to do so.

C. MELRUSH.—About the surest way of finding out that one has no time to do a particular thing is to wait until one has nothing else to do. But if one means to do a thing time will usually be found for it. Try it.

S. OWEN.—If you will get hold of the simple fact that "God" is of use only so far as it helps to explain things, and then seriously ask yourself what it is that "God" explains, you should soon clear your mind of much confusion on the matter. Otherwise, as we have so often said, you are using "God" as a narcotic. And drug-taking is not a habit we can recommend.

R. WRIGHT.—The address of the Anti-Vaccination League is 25 Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road. Mr. Bernard Shaw is opposed to vaccination.

J. W. EASTERBROOK.—Sorry we perpetrated the howler of placing Delabole in Devonshire, instead of in Cornwall. So now we have to apologise to both for mixing them up. We like both counties equally well, and detest the religion of both with equal strength.

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

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

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

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

*Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by 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 "Midland Bank, Ltd., 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.

Mr. Cohen delivers his first lecture this season in Glasgow to-day (October 4). He will lecture in the City Saloon Hall at 3 and 7. In the afternoon he will deal with the religion of the ten journalists as given in the *Daily Express* articles, and in the evening his subject will be "Christianity and Evolution." Free-thinkers should try and induce as many of their religious friends as possible to attend the meetings.

The weather remained fine on Sunday last, and the Bradlaugh demonstration of the South London Branch at Brockwell Park suffered no interference from

that quarter. There were a number of speakers, including Mr. A. B. Moss, Messrs. Saphin, Shambrook, Corrigan, Brown, and Constable. Mr. Cohen attended as promised, and the speakers throughout listened with the closest attention to all the addresses. We are glad to learn that all the *Freethinkers* on sale were disposed of, and five new members were made.

The discussion between the American Professor Price and Mr. Joseph McCabe, which took place recently in London, is now published by Messrs. Watts & Co., price one shilling. It can hardly be said that the disputants realized the chairman's hopes that they would come to grips on the subject, but it is very late in the day to be seriously discussing the question of the truth of evolution. We have only noticed one thing which should have been corrected before the debate was allowed to appear, and it must be due to a verbal slip on Mr. McCabe's part or to an oversight in reading the proofs. Mr. McCabe is made to say that fifty years ago a great man of science launched the doctrine of evolution upon the world. This is, of course, absurd, and we note it here because we have seen the same statement made of late by a number of ill-informed journalists. Anyway if the discussion sends people reading works on evolution it will do good, and if their reading leads them to understand the methods and principles of science, as distinct from mastering a kind of museum catalogue of specimens, it will do more good still.

The North London Branch having concluded the outdoor season in Regent's Park with an excellent address, delivered by Mr. A. D. McLaren, on "Bradlaugh Sunday," is resuming its winter activities at the St. Pancras Reform Club. The opening meeting will be addressed by Miss Ettie Rout, her subject being "Ancient Maori Freethinkers." Miss Rout has made an exhaustive study of the native races of Australia and New Zealand, and needs no introduction to a North London audience. Whatever she says is sure to be interesting and thought-provoking, and will afford material for a fine discussion. A syllabus of the lectures and discussions will be forwarded on application to the N.S.S. Offices, or to the Hon. Sec. of the North London Branch, Sunning Lodge, Bartholomew Villas, N.W.5.

We are asked to announce that a course of lectures on "Christianity, its Origin and Meaning," will be delivered by Mr. E. C. Saphin on the Sunday evenings of October, November, and December. The doors will be opened at 7.30. The lectures commence at 8.

## The Gnostic Origins of Christianity.

### III.

(Continued from page 619.)

THE great difficulty in unravelling the complicated origins of Christianity is that we come to the problem already obsessed with false ideas regarding the New Testament writings. We do not read them in the light of the time in which they were written, but unconsciously read into them our modern ideas, and therefore they become a stumbling block instead of a help. Upon this point we find ourselves in perfect agreement with a learned Professor of "Early Church History," who, after remarking that the attempts of historians to clear away these erroneous interpretations, "and to exhibit these early Christian writings in the white light of their original setting often aroused resentment," goes on to say:—

The documents had become so thoroughly modernized that popular use of them as a source of information for the Christianity of the first century meant little more than a reading into the past

of problems and interests that properly belonged to subsequent times.

Under these circumstances the New Testament in popular usage became a formidable obstruction in the path of the student who sought an acquaintance with historical Christianity as a religious movement in the ancient world.<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament writings we are in the land of faery. Things come and go. Phantoms and visions suddenly assume a solid form, like the fabled genie out of the bottle, and as suddenly vanish. Voices shout down from heaven. A star suddenly appears over a house. Multitudes are fed by a miraculous creation of food. The dead arise. Devils are cast out of men into pigs, who immediately rush into water and commit suicide. A miraculous light suddenly appears, and celestial beings arrive out of the blue, announcing supernatural events, and so on; and the orthodox Christian believes it all happened, because he has been brought up to believe it; but when he reads of similar miracles recorded in the Apocryphal Gospels, he regards it as a proof of their fictitious character, simply because he has been taught not to believe in them. As Prof. Harnack has remarked: "No one to-day can in all respects distinguish what to those thinkers was image and what reality, or in what degree they were at all able to distinguish image from reality, and in how far the magic formulæ of their mysteries were really objects of their meditation."<sup>2</sup>

Another hindrance in the way of a rational explanation of the origins of Christianity is the idea that Christianity is founded upon the New Testament. "The New Testament did not produce early Christianity. On the contrary, Christianity produced the New Testament.....The various New Testament books were written to serve the Christian cause." "Before the earliest book had been written, the Christian movement had spread beyond Palestine into Gentile lands."<sup>3</sup> The writings of the New Testament are not in any sense historical documents, even if we expunge all the miracles from them. As another writer observes:—

The key to all genuinely scientific appreciation of biblical narrative, whether of Old Testament or New, is the recognition of motive. The motive of the biblical writers in reporting the tradition current around them is never strictly historical, but always ætiological, and frequently apologetic. In other words, their report is not framed to satisfy the curiosity of the critical historian, but, as they frankly acknowledge, to confirm the faith of believers "in the things wherein they have instructed," to convince the unconverted, or to refute the unbeliever. The evangelic tradition consists of so-and-so many anecdotes, told and retold for the purpose of explaining beliefs and practices of the contemporary Church.<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament writings are not historical documents; they were never intended to be. As Dr. Louis Couchoud points out: "Paul never appeals to any historical account. For him the existence of Jesus is not related; it is revealed. It is no historical fact; it is a deduction from exegesis, confirmed by miracles. Its proof lies in the Scriptures and in man's spiritual experience, in the letter, and in the spirit. Nothing more is needed. This evidence is enough."<sup>5</sup> It was enough for them; it is not enough for us.

The greatest difficulty in dealing with the origins of Christianity lies in the fact that practically all the

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Shirley Jackson, *The Social Origins of Christianity* (1923), pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. i., p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> S. Jackson, *The Social Origins of Christianity*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>4</sup> B. W. Bacon, *The Beginnings of the Gospel Story* (1909), p. 9. The italics are the author's.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. L. Couchoud. *The Enigma of Jesus*, p. 89.

early Gnostic Gospels and writings were destroyed by the orthodox after their triumph. However, from time to time, fragments of this once vast literature come to light. Sometimes from monasteries where they have been overlooked, sometimes from the tombs and rubbish heaps of ancient Egypt. A few years ago a very important fragment of one of these Gnostic Gospels was dug up in an ancient cemetery at Akhmín, in Upper Egypt. It was a part of "The Gospel according to Peter," the part describing the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. It was in Greek, like all the other New Testament writings, and was translated by Dr. Armitage Robinson, and published, along with a lecture, by the Cambridge University Press, in 1892. It is this translation we shall quote from.

After describing the crucifixion and the placing of Christ in the tomb, it goes on to describe how the two soldiers placed on guard heard a great voice from heaven, and two men descended thence with a great light. As they approached the tomb, the stone at the door rolled away of itself and the men entered the tomb. It proceeds: "Again they see coming forth from the tomb three men, and the two supporting the one, and a cross following them. And of the two the head reached into the heaven, but the head of Him that was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, Hast thou preached to them that sleep? *And an answer was heard from the cross, Yea.*" The words we have placed in italics evidently refer to a supernatural cross, for nowhere is it recorded that the wooden cross was placed in the tomb, neither is it likely that the Romans would have allowed the instrument of execution to be dug up and carried away, even if the followers of Christ had needed it. No, this cross is a spiritual cross; it moves about and speaks. This tends to confirm the belief we have long held, that there was a cult, or mystery, of the Cross, long before the advent of Christianity. For, consider, when Jesus, according to Matthew, xvi. 24. (see also Mark viii. 34, and Luke ix. 23) tells his hearers to "take up his cross and follow me," he must have been using a well-known figure of speech, for his hearers did not know he was to die on the cross; yet not one of them enquires what he meant by "taking up the cross." Again, when Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. vi. 14), he is not referring to any real crucifixion upon a cross of wood, he is speaking the language of the mysteries—"the mystery which hath been hid for ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 26-27). His meaning is clear. The mystery which has hitherto been taught in secret, only to the initiated, Paul now brings forth and expounds to the whole world. And Paul was not exaggerating; the cult of the cross did go back for ages, almost to prehistoric times. Among the other startling discoveries made by Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos, in Crete, was that of the chamber of the Snake-Goddess, which contained a large marble cross, and Sir Arthur gave it as his opinion that the Snake-Goddess was not the central object of worship, "but the marble Cross," and he dates this at before 3,000 years before Christ. It was the Gnostics who combined the mystic cult of the Cross with the Saviour-God of the Mysteries. They knew perfectly well that there was no historical event, that there was no man Jesus who appeared in

bodily form. They openly taught it, and this constituted their heresy for which they were persecuted and finally suppressed. But the Gnostics were the first Christians and knew the truth about the myth.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

## Correspondence.

"FAITH AND REASON."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have just been interested to read a criticism of Dean Inge's views, in the article, "Faith and Reason," which you print this week. While I differ from the Dean in many points, I do agree with his recent utterances in so far as they support the only true religion, Christian Mysticism. And to say something in defence of this, attacked again by your contributor, shall be my letter's *raison d'être*.

It is said in the article referred to that "in their (*i.e.* the authors' of both the Gospels and the Epistles) opinion, a Christian must be a person dominated by sheer mysticism, to whom this world is of no account." I am delighted to find that statement expressed in such a form, for it admirably displays the Rationalist's blindness, which I will describe as intentional, towards ratiocination into religion, for the plain fact is that true religion is beyond the bounds of reason, is an emotion, or, as the Dean would say, is Faith. And so when "sheer mysticism" is suggested as the core of religion, the writer is on sure ground, though immediately afterwards he tumbles overconfident into a wretched slough.

I am well aware that various pseudo-mysticisms (and not all of them Christian) fall beneath the charge that, to their devotees, this world is of no account. Even then, however, we should admit the existence in these religions of a yearning for true emotion, though this yearning be obscured, as is the case, I believe with many of the Eastern cults, in a fog of verbiage. There is one Christian Mysticism which to me at least escapes the charge of "otherworldliness" brought against Mysticism in general. But first what exactly do we mean by *this world*? I think—indeed, I know—the writer to mean by these words the world that all agree in describing as material. But, whether or not those called Freethinkers have experience of another world, for such it is, the world of emotion not by any means altogether remote from the material nor by any means less beautiful to dwell in, the fact remains that for my own part (and by trial I find many others in the same case), I am ready to suffer every pain rather than deny the existence of this world which somehow I have discovered. It will be said, it may quite logically be proved, that I am in that very bad case, under a delusion, and indeed I can only retort then, Well, I know that I am not. In further demonstration of the reality of this other world, there is only to be brought forward the experience of one's childhood. In most cases, as regards emotional capacity, "The child is father of the man"; nor hath one to search further afield than in Wordsworth's own poetry to find how the grown man sees the visionary gleam:—

die away,

And fade into the light of common day.

Which fading away, I suggest, is the result of sole reliance on reason.

An article written by Dr. Inge not many years ago, contained the words: "The Quakers as a body seem to me to come nearest to what a genuinely Christian society would be" (*vide* "Religion" in the *Legacy of Greece*, Clarendon Press). Now it is Quakerism which, I feel, alone of all religions deserves the name of Christian Mysticism; and, if the Dean, as I believe he does, still abides by what I have quoted, theoretically at any rate, he must be a Quaker. Practically, of course, he is not: he is a dignitary, a paid dignitary, in the so-called Church of England. And this brings me on to say that where the Religious Society of Friends, of which I

\* R. M. Burrows, *The Discoveries in Crete* (1907), p. 115.

am not yet privileged to be a member, does merit the claim of Christian Mysticism, is that it does *try to put Christianity into practice*. No other section of Christianity, it appears to me, is at once so mystical, so sincere, and withal so practical.

Moreover, Quakerism is not antagonistic to Free-thought in the real sense of that word. Friends have always stood for Liberty of Thought in opposition often to other Christian bodies. Though perhaps they arrive thither by another way, they meet the Atheist on common ground when affirming in the court, or when raising their voices against Priestcraft, or when giving testimony against war, or when deriding the popular theology with its quaint heaven and ruddy hell. I am not at all certain that many who label themselves Atheists, Agnostics, or, what is worse, nothing at all, cannot be better classed amongst the Friends, providing they are ready to admit the dominance of emotion; and, in conclusion, among the great poets whom I claim as true Friends, I place one whom the *Freethinker* is never tired of claiming as an Atheist, I mean the poet Shelley.

R. ELDRED WITT.

#### THOUGHTS ON "THE PASSING OF WALDRON."

SIR,—As a relief to what has been said in praise of the late Rev. Waldron, I recall an event that occurred a good many years ago. A debate in the Morley Hall, Hackney, was arranged for two nights between Mr. Cohen and the Rev. Waldron, the subject was "Christianity or Secularism." My Christian friends had told me that Mr. Waldron was an invincible opponent, and I really ought to be prepared to see Mr. Cohen utterly routed. I was anxious and curious to see this wonderful champion, and my first impression was great disappointment. On the platform before me was a man of medium build with a colourless puffy face, very small eyes, and a mouth that gave me the impression of a triumphant insolent leer. Far from being anything of an intellectual, he seemed to me to approach more the bruiser type. He came armed with a number of volumes and opened his case by making the most extravagant impossible claims for Christianity with much gesticulation and emphasis. Mr. Cohen, in his reply, in a very calm, quiet, incisive way, and with pitiless logic, shattered his case. I was now curious to see what tactics the Rev. Waldron would then use. If he was a very clever, skilled, eloquent debater, rhetoric was still left to him, he could have made a subtle emotional appeal, and he could have filled in his time by making words answer for facts by skilfully and gracefully curvetting round the points at issue and always deliberately missing them. But he was not a cock of that feather, but in that "bruiser" manner he made the most virulent attacks on great Freethinkers, Bradlaugh in particular. Previous to this Mr. Cohen had taken up one of his volumes and corrected him on a passage he had deliberately garbled, and then said it was "a most serious and unpleasant duty for him to have to convict his opponent, Mr. Waldron, of being a deliberate liar." The Rev. Waldron may have been a very nice man in private life, but a man spoilt by a bad creed in public. Whenever I have heard him in Hyde Park I have always been pained and disgusted with the vulgar, utterly useless, gross personalities he would resort to.

M. BARNARD.

SIR,—“Mimmermus” not relating the following incident sets me wondering whether my memory is at fault. Some years ago a parson coming out from a conference of parsons with either one or two more of the Black Army with him, and seeing a crippled man engaged selling the *Freethinker* in the street, assaulted him. The Secular Society had him summoned before the magistrate, who let him off with a friendly reprimanding. This caused Mr. Foote to state, in the *Freethinker*, that if we could not get the protection of the law like other citizens, then there is enough broad-shouldered and muscular Freethinkers to exact justice in their own way. Unless I am mistaken that “fighting parson,” as a Manchester paper calls him, was Waldron.

J. BRODIE.

SIR,—With respect to your footnote to my letter last week, I may mention that my “real acquaintance” with Mr. Waldron and his career extends back to my college days. I maintain that he was not only a straight fighter, but a hard hitter, and that he never met his equal in debate. Had he not been “on the other side” you and other Freethinkers would have been proud to claim his championship.

E. TWYNAM.

[We do not care to discuss the character of a dead man, but Miss Twynam forces us to say that our experience of Mr. Waldron never showed him as either fair, able, or courteous on the platform. We met him in debate twice, the second time under protest, and even the Christians present on the last occasion showed their dislike of his tactics.—ED.]

#### Our Father in Heaven.

(1 KINGS XVIII. 27.)

“O God have mercy!” a mother cried  
As she humbly knelt at the cradle side;  
“O God, have mercy, and hear my prayer,  
And take my babe in thy tender care.  
The Angel of Death is in the room,  
And is calling loud for my babe to come,  
Thou, Thou alone hast power to save!  
O God, have mercy! 'tis all I crave.”

A tiny grave 'neath a willow's shade  
Telling the answer the Merciful made.

“O Father in Heaven, protect my boy  
From the wiles of Folly, from Sin's decoy;  
From the snares of Temptation in Life's dark sea;  
Guard him and keep him pure for Thee.”  
So a mother prayed as her darling one  
Went forth to battle the world alone—  
Alone, save the blessing his mother gave.

A murderer's gibbet, high in air  
Answered the mother's piteous prayer.

A father and mother knelt them down  
Together, before the Eternal One,  
And with trusting hearts implored that Heaven  
Would guard the flower its grace had given,  
Would keep their blossoming daughter pure,  
And guard her eye from the Tempter's lure,  
And from every stain would keep her free  
As the lilies that bloom in eternity.

A self-slain lost one, seduced, betrayed,  
Was the only answer heaven made.

A beautiful maiden knelt to pray  
For the life of a loved one far away;  
Away in the field where life and death  
Hang poised in the scales that tip with a breath:  
“O Father of Mercies, protect the heart  
Of him I love from the foeman's dart;  
When the death-bolts rain on the charging field,  
Be Thou his strength and guide and shield!”

A mangled corpse and a soldier's grave  
Was the answer the Father of Mercies gave.

The night was dark on the ocean's breast,  
And the waves rolled high in wild unrest,  
Where a stately bark was dashing on  
Towards a breaker's crest, with her rudder gone.  
Around the captain, in wild despair,  
The crew had gathered and joined in prayer  
To him who only had power to save,  
To deliver them from a watery grave.

A crash and a gulphing wave alone  
Were the answers of the Omnipotent One.

At noon of night, in the city's heart,  
Where slumber reigned o'er home and mart,  
The fire-fiend burst from his secret place  
And wrapped all things in his fierce embrace.  
Oh then how many a frenzied prayer  
To heaven, for safety, rent the air!  
For homes! for lives! for loves—and then  
The flames that crisped them sneered “Amen.”

Homes, friends, and loved ones, crisped and charred,  
Told how Heaven the prayer had heard.

From the earliest dawn of Nature's birth,  
Since sorrow and sin first darkened the earth;  
From sun to sun, from pole to pole,  
Where'er the waves of Humanity roll,  
The breezy robe this planet wears  
Has quivered and echoed with countless prayers.  
Each hour a million knees are bent,  
A million prayers to Heaven are sent;  
There's not a summer beam but sees  
Some humble suppliant on his knees;  
There's not a breeze that murmurs by  
But wafts some faithful prayer on high;  
There's not a woe afflicts our race  
But someone bears to the Throne of Grace;  
And for every temptation our soul may meet  
We ask for grace at the Mercy Seat.  
The beams smile on, and heaven serene  
Still bends, as though no prayers had been;  
And the breezes moan, as still they wave,  
"When man is powerless, Heaven cannot save."

CHARLES STEPHENSON.

(From the "Freethinker," Holiday Number, July, 1884.)

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 24.

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

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for the Leeds and West Ham Branches and the Parent Society.

The Secretary reported correspondence from Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, and Plymouth Branches, and the Executive expressed their willingness to assist in the two latter cases.

The increasing difficulty in obtaining halls for Sunday evening lectures and social meetings was again discussed, and it was resolved to ask all sympathisers to advise the Secretary of any likely places.

It was also agreed that application be made for the hire of the Stratford Town Hall for a Sunday in November.

The Propagandist Committee was asked to specially consider a scheme for the continuous distribution of free literature in both London and the provinces, and to report at the next meeting.

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE,  
General Secretary.

### THE NEW DOXOLOGY.

Praise God from whom all cyclones blow;  
Praise him when rivers overflow.  
Praise him who whirls down house and steeple,  
Who sinks the ship and drowns the people.  
Praise God for every dreadful flood,  
For scenes of famine, plague, and blood,  
Praise him who men by thousands drowned,  
But saved an image safe and sound.  
Praise God when tidal waves do come,  
Overwhelming staunch ships nearing home.  
Praise him when fell tornadoes sweep  
Their swift destruction o'er the deep.  
Praise God for sorrow, pain, and woe,  
For railroad wrecks, for storm and snow,  
For parsons who, with book and bell,  
Demand your cash or threaten hell.  
Praise God for war, for strife and pain,  
For earthquake shocks, for tyrants' reign.  
Praise him for rack and stake.....and then  
Let all men cry aloud, Amen.

### 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 postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Miss Ettie Rout, "Ancient Maori Freethinkers."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "Bertrand Russell's Religion."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "Resurrectionism."

STANLEY HALL (Hallam Street, Great Portland Street, W.1.): 8, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "The Solar Origin of Religion." With Lantern Illustrations.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3, Mr. H. Constable, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (City Hall Saloon): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Ghost of Religion: God and the Journalists"; "Christianity and Evolution." Silver Collection. Entrance in Candleriggs.

HULL BRANCH N.S.S. (Metropole Hall): 7.30, General Meeting; Business urgent; all members please attend.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Farnitane Street): 7, Mr. Lew Davies, "Freethought and the Labour Movement."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead, "The Case for Birth Control."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (3 Carmarthen Road): 6.30, Branch Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Ashton Market Square): 7, Messrs. Addison and Sisson.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Hall Steps, Bolton): Fridays, October 2 and 9, at 7.30, Messrs. Addison, Partington, and Sisson.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 3, Messrs. Addison and Sisson.

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Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

*A Form of Bequest.*—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

## PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS

### A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT.

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