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Views and Opinions.

Mystery Mongers.

It would not be strictly correct to speak of the priest as being as old as man, but he certainly made his appearance very early in the history of the race. Once the stage of mental development which pictured man as surrounded by hostile spirits had been reached, the immediate problem was how to placate or get the better of them. Magic and religion came from these two aims. Quite naturally some individuals were credited with greater skill at the game than were others, and power over the tribal spirits was one of the earliest conditions of leadership. The primitive priest and the primitive chief were combined in the same person, and we have a reminiscence of this in the power claimed by the priest on the one side and of the semi-sacred atmosphere which still surrounds the monarch, even in our own country, where his chief function has become that of acting as a more or less decorative figurehead at public ceremonies. But gradually "spiritual" affairs become the business of a number of specialists, and their profession has always involved, along with considerable capacity for self-deception, a cunning quick to take advantage of popular ignorance. So we may say that while primitive ignorance creates the gods, primitive fear and credulity credits a class with a knowledge of the wishes of the gods and of methods of gaining their goodwill. Social growth separates these intermediaries between man and his gods into a distinct class, and thus a separate social group—priests—makes its appearance in the theatre of human history.

* * *

The Priest at Work.

By separating the secular from the religious functions a distinct priesthood is created. But the area of secular life is a constantly extending one. Experience shows, time after time, that events once thought to be strictly the concern of the priest belong to the region of understandable and controllable forces. The most familiar of these is the making of rain and the curing of disease. The first has passed completely out of the hands of the priest, but our prayer-books still provide for it, although the power to do the latter is believed in only by the most ignorant. Increasing knowledge thus gives man a sense of dignity and of power fatal to the pretensions of the priest. If knowledge can be prevented he checks its growth,

if it cannot he seeks its control. The Biblical warning that man must not eat of the tree of knowledge expresses the true spirit of priesthood all the world over. And against the encroachments of knowledge the priest erects the barriers of mystery and fear. Men fear what they do not understand and venerate a mystery in proportion to their timidity. So it happens that while science is everywhere filling man with a sense of the power of knowledge the priest impresses him with the immensity of his ignorance. Science fills man with the desire for more knowledge, the priest harps upon the fundamental uselessness of all enquiry. "Be strong" is the message of the one, "Realise your weakness" is the cry of the other. One inspires with the tonic of a promised success; the other debilitates with a prophecy of failure. Always the religious appeal is to man's weakness, his ignorance, his helplessness, his inability to face life satisfactorily if his only dependence be upon human knowledge and strength.

* * *

Taboos.

Every priest is a born mystery monger, and his success as a priest is proportionate to his mastery of the art. Neither time, nor place, nor sect, makes any substantial difference in this respect. The earliest type of medicine man began the game, and the latest up-to-date one is still studying its rules and applying them so far as modern circumstances will permit. The primitive man makes certain things taboo, or "sacred," in order to keep laymen from perceiving the truth. Contemporary medicine men play the same game. A church or chapel is a "sacred" place which one must enter with special reverence. The Bible is a book that must be handled in a spirit different from the way in which other books are handled. If we talk about Jesus, or God, or a future life, we must not use the same freedom of expression we use when talking about other subjects. The object of all this taboo is precisely the same as in primitive times. If we talked about Jesus or the Bible in the same way as we talk about other things we should not be long in discovering the mountains of nonsense that are uttered about both. If we thought of a church as no more "sacred" than a music-hall, we should not be long in detecting the unreality and stupidity of the service. In cultivating a stereotyped "reverential" frame of mind we administer a narcotic to our critical powers. We acknowledge the taboo and admit the mystery. The priest has achieved his aim by inducing us to mark off a certain number of things which we must not treat in an ordinary manner. The tactics of the medicine man are the same to-day as ever. Whatever change there is lies in the form, not in the substance.

* * *

A Game of Bluff.

The special dress, the special manner, the special jargon of the priest are all part of this age-long game. Forms of speech that are obsolete in other departments flourish here. Whether he be a Red

Indian medicine-man dressed in paint and feathers, or a clergyman wearing his vestments, the policy is the same. As a priest he claims a distinct place in the social structure, and demands special privileges as a consequence. In order to prevent life escaping his control he claims a suzerainty over whole branches of knowledge. He admits that science may explain the mere mechanism of nature, but the deeper and ultimately satisfying explanation rests with him. Science, he says, is at its greatest brought up against a mystery, the key to which lies with religion. It is all the most elaborate nonsense, and whether expressed in the fallacious obscurities of Dean Inge or Lord Balfour, or in the easily seen stupidities of the average parson, the quality of nonsense clings to it still. Science, in fact, while it has many problems, has no mysteries. And even if they existed the supreme absurdity of looking for their solution to a body of men who—save in very rare instances—are by nature and training disqualified for accurate thinking, should be patent to all. Still it is an ancient game. Among savages little can be attempted without the aid of the priest. It is continued, in form at least, with ourselves. We have special prayers at spring and harvest time. We have ships and troops blessed by priests. On many important occasions we have the priest offering intercessory prayers to the deity. There is small room for us to laugh at the savage for his dependence on the tribal wizards. We may be intellectually more advanced because most of us can see that the whole is a pretence. But morally we are a little worse than the savage because of that very fact.

* * *

Life and Religion.

In the ancient world one of the titles of the priest was "The Guardian of the Mysteries." It was quite an accurate title, because that is one of his chief functions. His duty is to preserve the mysteries, not to help to their understanding. Mystery is a tree that the priest guards closely, and wherever possible he takes care to plant cuttings. His is one of the oldest occupations on earth, and, so far as the community is concerned, the least productive. From the earliest time it has saddled the people with the maintenance of an army to fight phantom enemies. It is the most expensive and the least productive of all social bodies. To the mass of inventions and discoveries upon which civilization rests, it has, as a priesthood, contributed absolutely nothing. And if one could add together the time, and labour, and money spent on a priesthood all over the world, the service to fabulous deities, the obstruction to advancing knowledge, the ill-feeling created by the different priesthoods, the blood that has been shed as a consequence, the whole would represent a mass of cruelty, waste, and disaster such as could be placed to the credit of no other body of men and women. The priesthood has taken toll of the living in the name of the dead; it has persecuted the memory of the dead for its own profit; it has seized upon the ignorance of the child and the weakness of the aged. Nothing has been safe from its attacks. The only thing against which it has been powerless has been the slow, uneven progress of knowledge. There was a maxim among the Greeks that "Against stupidity even the Gods fight vainly." Our inspiration to-day is that against the accumulating knowledge of man even the Gods fight a losing battle.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Does God Dispose?

In that great book, *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, there occurs a saying that has become extremely popular in the religious world, namely, "Man proposes, but God disposes." Thomas à Kempis was wholly ignorant of the world and its life. In the year 1400 he entered the Augustinian house of Mt. St. Agnes in the Netherlands. It was there he assumed the monastic dress (1406), and was ordained priest (1413), and it was there he spent the rest of his life till he died in 1471, in the ninety-first year of his age. These times were darkened and befouled by all sorts of warlike and revolutionary movements, "Bohemia, Huss leading, was ablaze in revolt at one end of Europe; France and England, then France and Burgundy, were at death-grips at the other." The Church also was rent asunder by several angry and tumultuous factions; two rival popes were kept busy cursing each other in the name of the God of love. Of all such odious facts Thomas à Kempis took absolutely no notice, devoting himself entirely to the interests of the Brotherhood in the convent. Indeed, his ignorance of worldly affairs was colossal. He led a simple, quiet, and peaceful life, utterly undisturbed by the noisy world outside. Most of his time was occupied by the writing of books, chief among which was the *Imitation of Christ*. Had he known something of what was going on in the world and in the Church he would have hesitated more than twice before penning the famous sentence, "Man proposes, but God disposes." Certainly, neither in the world nor the Church was there at that time the least sign discernible of the active presence and rule of a God of righteousness, truth, and love.

Recently the Rev. Archibald Chisholm, D.Litt., preached a sermon at Langside Hill United Free Church, Glasgow, which appears in the *Christian World Pulpit* for February 18, with the saying just quoted as its title. Dr. Chisholm chose as his text Proverbs xvi. 9: "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." A few of the opening paragraphs are apparently irrelevant, not being even remotely suggested by the text. In these Dr. Chisholm complains that "in many quarters there is a tendency to decry some of the religious practices of our Scottish ancestors, and to paint the religious life of our land in a former generation, as though men had been imprisoned in a system of thought which made life morose, and sentenced them to a gloomy obedience to a stern Deity." Then he says:—

The former observance of the Lord's Day is frequently the special target against which the arrows of criticism are ruthlessly aimed. One writer speaks of the days of his boyhood in a Scottish village, and declares that it was as though a Newfoundland fog had come down upon the community. The fogs which sometimes descend off the shores of Newfoundland are certainly unpleasant. The voyager who has been walking round the deck gazing upon the glory of a great circle of ocean clear to the furthest horizon, finds the line at which the sky seems to touch the ocean becoming obscured, and slowly but with sure steps from all directions the enveloping mist creeps in until the vessel is left to find its way, the man on the look-out gazing intently over the very short space which is visible to him, the fog-horn blowing regularly, the mist seeming to penetrate one's very clothing. Scotland is pictured as having lived in the sun six days out of seven, but on the seventh day the clouds gathered and gloom prevailed.

To some extent the reverend gentleman admits the truth of that charge, but he denies that a Newfoundland fog formerly descended on Scotland. Surely,

It is a matter for great regret that the inspiration of the New Testament did not extend to its literary style.—*Schopenhauer*.

he forgets that not so long ago a man and his wife were excommunicated from church membership because they dared to go out for walks in the fields on Sunday afternoons, and that it was only after a desperate struggle at a General Assembly that the excommunication was withdrawn. It was also considered a sin to play the piano on the Lord's Day. Of course, Dr. Chisholm may not hold the view which the Scottish poet so scathingly ridicules in the following lines:—

O Thou wha' in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha' as it pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory
And no' for ony guid or ill
They've done afore Thee.

It is not fair, however, to affirm that those lines grossly misrepresent the religious thought of Scotland as it generally was not so many years ago.

At this point the preacher makes an approach to his text, saying:—

From the theology of these days a word comes which we do not use much to-day—the Foreknowledge of God. This phrase represents a valuable element in our thought. The idea that God in his wisdom can see away into the future, can work for our good and plan for us, anticipating problems and difficulties which we cannot envisage, so that in our lives there is nothing for which provision has not been made.

Very probably, if the Christian God existed he both could and would have done all that is predicated of him in that passage; but that he has ever actually done so there is not a single scrap of evidence. A man's safety, good conduct, usefulness, and prosperity in this world depend exclusively upon himself and the sympathetic help of his fellow-beings. The saying, "God helps only those who help themselves," gives the Christian case completely away. If a man makes every possible effort to succeed in life, on what possible ground can he thank God for his help? There is another equally silly expression, "Trust God but keep your powder dry." What conceivable alliance can there be between trust in God and powder, wet or dry? The fact is that you cannot demonstrate the truth of any statement whatever made concerning God, both his existence and activity being objects of mere *belief*, not of *knowledge*.

Now if it be true that "in our life there is nothing for which provision has not been made," if Paul's teaching in Romans ix. 19-24 be accepted as true, is it any wonder that some believers hold the view thus described and condemned by Dr. Chisholm?—

Yet there are forms of this conception with which none of us can have any sympathy. For example, some hold that all the sin and travail of the world are there by God's special appointing, that from far-off ages before the world was created, God knew that in the opening decade of this century we would find ourselves as neglectful of the teaching of true religion as we have shown ourselves to be, that the efforts of the best men after social improvement and world peace were from the centuries before life was known of God to result in the slight achievements which we witness, that before the first man raised his hand against his brother God knew that in the year 1914 there would break out a devastating cataclysm which would submerge the attainments of past years and rob us of the finest fruits of many noble efforts to develop a spirit of friendship among the nations.

For what reason is Dr. Chisholm out of sympathy with the conception of God's foreknowledge expressed in that extract? Surely it is fully as scriptural as the conception which he holds himself. In Isaiah xlv. 7 Jehovah is represented as saying: "I

form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord that doeth all these things." In Romans ix. 21 Paul says: "Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Foreknowledge implies foreordination, and both signify that God, "willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory." We frankly admit that such a doctrine of God portrays him as the cruellest and most despicable of monsters, and all we claim for it is that it is definitely taught in the Bible.

The only conclusion, to which we are both logically and ethically driven, is that any and every doctrine of God must of necessity be pronounced absolutely contradictory to and inconsistent with all the facts known to us. Christian apologists used to declare that apart from the belief in God the universe is wholly inexplicable; but Freethinkers maintain, on the contrary, that it is only the belief in God which renders the universe incapable of any intelligent interpretation. Science, without taking God into account, is gradually, by means of its numerous experiments and discoveries, getting Nature to explain itself, and teaching us at once how to obey and make profitable use of it. Thus man becomes both proposer and disposer, and here he stands, as Meredith puts it:—

Obedient to Nature, not her slave:
Her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows;
Her dust, if with his conscience he plays knave,
And bids the Passions on the Pleasures browse.

J. T. LLOYD.

Riding Inside the Tiger.

You cannot force figs from thistles—even in a greenhouse.—*Israel Zangwill.*

BISHOPS still have some little value. They may have outstayed their welcome in the body politic; they may even be a strange but picturesque survival from the Ages of Faith; but as fun-makers they have no equals. Professional comedians have their little day, and make their exits; but the Right Reverend Fathers-in-God manage to keep their fund of laugh-making undiminished. For a whole generation the genial Bishop of London has kept us all laughing with his comic ideas of finance. His jest is that the more a man earns the poorer he becomes. In his own case he has a paltry £10,000 a year, and he contends that the longer he draws this modest salary the more he gets into debt. His Lordship is as pessimistic as Mr. Wilkins Micawber was optimistic. You will remember that when the brokers visited the Micawber household the irrepressible Wilkins actually discussed the question of having bay-windows placed in the house which he was doomed to leave in a few days. The Bishop is in quite a contrary mood. In spite of his ten thousand crisp bank-notes, he looks with lack-lustre eyes at the front door of Fulham Palace, and every moment expects the red-nosed broker's man to make his horrid appearance. Nothing will soothe the poor bishop; and even Christian faith is of no avail in such a piteous tragedy, "too deep for tears."

The two archbishops also try to add to the gaiety of the nation in a time of trouble. His Grace of York, for example, forgets his position as a bishop of Christ's Church, and wants to usurp the functions of the still more awful editors of Fleet Street. His little jest is that the naughty newspaper men

devote too much space to saucy details of Divorce Court proceedings. He harrows drawing-room audiences with comparisons between Hyde Park after dark and Sodom and Gomorrah. He wants to know when the naughty young novelists and dramatists are going to stop imitating the Rabelaisian frankness of the authors of the Old Testament. The jest is a good one, for His Grace's duty is to save men's unctuous descriptions of wantonness. No sane person would pay an ecclesiastic £10,000 yearly merely for suggesting ideas of wickedness to audiences, mostly of women, who have little or no previous knowledge of such saucy misdoings.

This is not the only example of the Archbishop's peculiar humour. He has brighter moments, suggesting Shakespeare's lines:—

Made glorious summer by this son of York.
Now is the winter of our discontent

Speaking at the Church Assembly at Westminster, and referring to one of his own residences, His Grace said: "I modestly disclaim the ancient title of palace for my cold fortress and prison house." Such charming candour and such refreshing humour is remarkable in an ecclesiastic of such exalted rank. See how he disarms the truculent democrats who wish to see the Church prelates reduced to the alleged simplicity of the twelve disciples, with their fishing nets and blue blankets. And the modesty is not overdone, for the title of "Palace" so often suggests a cinema, or a music-hall, and what right reverend Father-in-God would wish to be associated with such extremely vulgar forms of amusement.

His Grace of Canterbury is more ambitious in his joking, as befits his great position on the throne of Saint Augustine. Seeing the industrial crisis in this country, he desires "to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm." That is what he desires, but those who have seen him ambling along Rotten Row on a horse as sedate as himself have their misgivings. The present crisis, according to "Randall Cantuar, Esq.," as an innocent clerk, fresh from a Council School, once addressed him, is so grave, so serious, that it must be left to Almighty God to settle. We, poor worms, must wait on the Great Big Noise, and rely on "Christian Brotherhood."

Leaving the matter to "God" is really a counsel of despair. "Is it so bad as that?" asked a wife once when the doctor used a similar expression regarding her husband's condition. We have gone to the bow-wows, and only the spirit of Christian Brotherhood can save us. But that particular "spirit" is more dangerous than wood-alcohol, a beverage beloved of Bootleggers. The last time the world suffered from its effects was the Great War, when thirteen millions of men, in the prime of their manhood, were slaughtered, and more millions were mutilated. The spirit of Christian Brotherhood not only did not prevent this terrible war, but it actually accentuated its evil effects. It was Christian priests who blessed the standards of murder, christened battleships, and shouted the odds on recruiting platforms. The same priests also saw the boys off at the railway stations, and returned to hold the girls' hands whilst the soldiers were away. So careful were they of their own skins that they got themselves exempted from military service. When they did go as army chaplains they received officers' pay, and conducted services at the back of the firing lines. Mind you, all this trickery was done, not by common or garden Christians, but by priests, pretending to be in the direct line of Apostolic Succession. Is it not a splendid jest, if a little caustic?

Christian brotherhood is simply make-believe. Even in the ranks of the clergy there is no such thing. The higher clergy treat their humbler colleagues with

the utmost contempt, and curates are paid as little as possible. Organists, choir-masters, choristers, and church-workers, are notoriously underpaid. Anglican parsons and Free Church ministers, with rare exceptions, are not on speaking terms. As for Catholic priests they would not be found dead in the same cemetery as their rivals if they could help it. Even the fancy religionists are tarred with the same brush and the flat-chested warriors of the Church and Salvation Armies display as much fondness for each other as Riff tribesmen and Spanish soldiers.

Yet, such is the value of repetition, that some Socialists act as if the help of the clergy was desirable. The clergy themselves flirt with the Labourites for their own purpose, which is to render the Democratic movement harmless to themselves as a clerical caste. To this end they use the language of Democracy the while they are working for the triumph of Theocracy, a vastly different thing from Government by the people for the people.

The Anglican Church, with its 25,000 priests, is the most formidable Christian association in this country. It is a purely Capitalistic body, controlling property worth at least £20,000,000. As a landlord the Church is one of the most rapacious and extortionate as its tenants can testify. This Church has forty representatives in the House of Lords, and the ranks of the higher clergy are recruited from the governing, and not the working, class. The curates come from middle-class families with rare exceptions. Even the ritual is Royalist in the extreme, from the prayers for individual members of the Ruling House to the antiquarian and nonsensical service for "King Charles the Martyr." In the hymn-book of this Church there is only one sacred song which can fairly be described as being addressed to working-men, and it is not unlikely that it was inserted for purely political reasons. Yet, because half a dozen disgruntled curates talk of forming a trade-guild, innocent Socialists seem to think that the Church will help them to victory. They fondly imagine that they are to harness and ride the tiger, but that wily animal knows only too well that they will ride inside instead of outside, which is really the richest joke of all.

MIMNERMUS.

The Story of Evolution.

III.

(Continued from page 107.)

PRIMITIVE MANKIND.

So much nonsense has been said and believed about savage tribes that it is highly necessary for us to know the facts about them. For instance, religious people will solemnly state that in all parts of the world and by all people is a god worshipped; it is also believed that savages are all cruel, revengeful, and treacherous, without any morality, good feeling or sense; that men are higher mentally than animals in every way, and that by teaching they can be improved. All these notions are wrong. Some tribes are capable of improvement, but not many, and the intelligence of some is lower than that of the higher apes. As a rule, the lower the type of man, the less he thinks of anything supernatural.

There is no doubt whatever that the assertion of the eminent biologist, Dr. Saleeby, is true: "Man is *par excellence* the social animal." Very seldom indeed is he ever found in solitude, or even in mere family isolation. And in cases where he is living alone, he is always dependent upon others for, at least, a portion of his food and clothing. We ought

not, therefore, to be surprised that the Chucunaques, a remote tribe on islands in the Carribean Sea, off the coast of South America, are now living a life of perfect equality. Mr. F. A. Mitchell Hedges arrived at Southampton in April, 1923, from an exploration of that region. He says:—

Every man supplies his neighbour with what he requires, and the neighbour responds in the same way. Everything is exchanged; they build one another's houses, and class distinctions are unknown; even the chiefs work in common with the humblest native. The Chucunaques are a simple, absolutely honest community, in some ways far better to live with than civilized races, because everything is so perfect; there is no stealing, no immorality.

One of the least advanced of all races is the Fuegian, inhabiting the extreme southern part of South America, and the thirty-one islands at Cape Horn. Although the climate is rigorous, most of the tribes wear no clothing of any kind, but at some places an animal skin, undressed, and with the hair outside, is thrown over the shoulders. When Darwin visited Woolya in 1833, a cove at Cape Horn, he found a tribe, naked, stunted, and miserable, whose only domesticated animal was the dog, and with very poor weapons for fishing and hunting. They were living in perfect equality among the individuals, without chiefs. Although these people have some intelligence and can imitate the cries and actions of animals in a wonderful manner, their language is very limited, consisting of guttural grunts. Darwin writes:—

Everything that was given to the natives was divided among the community, even the cloth was torn into strips and shared out. A missionary was landed and a wigwam built for him, and supplies left, but when the ship called a short time afterwards, the natives had taken nearly all his possessions and he was glad to come away.

At another place, while the sailors were replenishing the water-barrels, a woman, nursing an infant, came near and looked on. The falling snow thawed upon her breast without her seeming to notice it. Some of the tribes are of better physique than others, and have better conditions, but have no religious belief other than some fear of spirits.

Although the Fuegian is higher in mental capacity than the aboriginal Bushman of Australia, the latter show some advancement upon the former. The Australian has invented the boomerang, spear and throwing stick, can climb trees by a method of his own, and can track animals in a clever manner, when hunting. If we may exclude magic, these people have no knowledge of anything approaching religion. Sir J. G. Fraser informs us in *The Golden Bough*:—

Roughly speaking, all men in Australia are magicians, but not one is a priest, everybody fancies he can influence his fellows, or the course of nature, by sympathetic magic, but no one dreams of propitiating gods by prayer or sacrifice.

Sympathetic magic is imitating something to gain a personal advantage, thus, if one wants rain, he sprinkles water about to simulate rain; if he wants sunshine, he makes a bright ball, and hangs it on a high bough of a lofty tree; if he wishes to injure an enemy, he makes an image, gives it the enemy's name, sticks pins into it, abuses it or destroys it. This absurd notion is held by many savage tribes and traces of the practice is found among civilized nations nowadays.

Passing a little higher there are the Sahn, or Bushmen of South Africa, who were the earliest known to inhabit the district of Cape Colony. Of these we

read in the Rev. W. P. Greswell's *Geography of South Africa*:—

.....there were only 5,296 Bushmen left in Cape Colony in 1891, and they lived a separate existence far to the north-west, and on the borders of the Kalahari desert. Like the Australian aborigines they seemed destined to become extinct. Their language, myths, cave-paintings, and modes of life, representing as they do, the lowest type of mankind, are interesting chiefly to philosophers. They possess most wonderful powers of vision and can trace animals over the hard surface of the veldt with unerring skill. They have an intimate knowledge of the plants and herbs of the field, and tip their arrows with the deadliest poison extracted from them. But there has never been a single instance of a civilized Bushman.

And Dr. Bleek gives much information regarding these dwarfs in his *Hottentot Fables and Tales*:—

.....There are the Bushmen, speaking only dialects of one harsh clicking and guttural monosyllabic language of the genderless class.....a hunting nation, worshipping the moon, generally strictly monogamous, poetical in their ideas, with an extensive folk-lore, mostly of a mythological character, but destitute of any numerals beyond a third.

This means that they live with one wife only, but cannot distinguish in their language between man and woman, nor count over the number of three, and are quite unable to be improved by education.

The Khoi-khoi (called the Hottentot), also of Cape Colony, are still in a savage state, but superior to the Sahn, whom they call dogs, in that they have a sex-denoting language, and in their agricultural pursuits. Dr. Bleek has remarked upon "a striking similarity between the Hottentot signs of gender and those of the Coptic language," and re-echoes a statement of the Syro-Egyptian Society: "that the signs of gender were almost identical in the Namaqua and Old Egyptian." This may indicate that the primitive ancestors of these races had a common origin, one branch moving to the south and making no progress, while the other travelled north, and came into touch with higher races to their advantage. To quote Mr. Greswell again: "The sun, moon, stars, animals of the veldt, lion, jackal, baboon, tortoise, snake, zebra, all figure in Hottentot primitive literature." They are pastoral in their habits, occasionally polygamous, organized in tribes under chiefs, possessing some poetical ideas, and a literature full of myths and fables, with a decimal system of counting.

A decided step upwards is found in the African Bantu, or Caffre (Kaffir) tribes. These include Zulu, Pondo, Bechuana, Mashona, and a number of others, all of which are warlike; then there are the Damaras, a purely pastoral people with great wealth in cattle and sheep; and the Ovambos, an agricultural tribe. The Kaffirs are the only "savage" people who are not decreasing in numbers before the white settlers in every part of the world; in fact, they are increasing so rapidly that the governments are perturbed over the question. The Kaffir is believed to have migrated from Central Africa in recent times, say, within the last two hundred years, and has brought with him some ideas and customs which evolved through many ages of the past.

It is interesting to know how tribes come to change from a hunting life to a pastoral or agricultural one. Doubtless, as all conditions are not the same, there are various reasons in different places. In *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, Grant Allen suggests that the cultivation of the earth originated in the practice of turning the soil, and so eliminating weeds, in burial ceremonies, when grain and other seeds were scattered on the grave for the use of the dead in a spirit life; and Karl Pearson thinks that the origin

of agriculture and domestic animal keeping arose from the need of women for shelter and sustenance at, and after, child-birth, and the spilling of seeds near the cave or other shelter. Both these causes may be correct, and we shall see in some tribes instances of the transition period, where hunting, pastoral, and agricultural pursuits are carried on simultaneously.

Savages, originally, had no idea of trading and carried on no bargaining or exchange of goods among themselves, but, after a while, when they came into contact with other tribes, they began to exchange goods in times of peace, and certain spots were marked off for meeting the strangers who came to them, and definite times were set apart for the market. Kropotkin writes of this in *Mutual Aid*:—

.....in order that the stranger might come to the barter-place without risk of being slain for some feud which might be running between two kins, the market was always placed under the special protection of all kins. It was inviolable, like the place of worship, under the shadow of which it was held.

On the general question of human origin, Kropotkin is exceedingly clear and exact, and a fitting end to this chapter is the following:—

As far as we go back in palæo-ethnology of mankind, we find men living in societies—in tribes similar to those of the highest mammals; and an extremely slow and long evolution was required to bring these societies to the gentle or clan organization, which in turn had to undergo another, also very long evolution, before the first germs of family, polygamous or monogamous, could appear. Societies, bands, tribes—not families—were thus the primitive form of organization of mankind and its earliest ancestors.....none of the higher animals, save a few carnivores, and a few decaying species of apes (orangs and gorillas) live in families, isolatedly straggling in the woods. All others live in societies. And Darwin so well understood that isolatedly-living apes never could have developed into man-like beings, that he was inclined to consider man as descended from some comparatively weak, but social species, like the chimpanzee..... the first human societies were a further development of those societies which constitute the very essence of life of the highest animals.

E. ANDERSON.

Acid Drops.

It is good to discover what God does, and for whom he does it. We now learn that he has been attending of late to the case of the Countess Cathcart, who has been prevented from entering the pure atmosphere of the United States because she is a divorced woman. The ban against her has been temporarily withdrawn, and Lady Cathcart is convinced that it is in answer to her prayers. Of course, this would not have happened had the prayers been offered up by an ordinary emigrant. But there must be many people in the United States who will regret that either Lady Cathcart did not pray earlier, or that the Lord did not earlier influence the United States officials in the direction of common sense.

It is always interesting to notice how far behind the *Freethinker* is the general newspaper press, and those ladies and gentlemen of the more fashionable world who regard themselves as pioneers in religious matters. If they are no more than a generation behind we have cause to congratulate them on their development—or on their courage, and to congratulate ourselves on our having so affected the world as to make their "boldness" possible. This serves to indicate the

strength of the influence of Freethought propaganda on the religious world, and also to confirm the belief that one day—when it is quite safe, or when it can no longer be denied they will be where we are now. But by that time the contemporary Freethinker will be some distance from where he is now waiting for the then "daring" publicist to catch up with him.

It is for this reason that we call attention to a notable article on "The Desire for Immortality," written by Mr. Israel Zangwill. We quote a few utterances, all of which will be quite familiar to readers of this journal:—

The fear of death is the beginning of folly.

Religion is the one subject on which professional (clerical) opinion is valueless.

Except for the soldier of the Crescent, whose heaven is a harem and whose eternity a perpetual polygamy, does anybody really believe in the resurrection?

If the after life were that that insubstantial apery of the present which Conan Doyle deems so delectable, we should have a thin time. The whole conception reminds me of the "hear beer" they have invented in America to comfort the thirsting.

An after life would be no more proof of the existence of God than the present life.

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die" seems our one real hope of survival.

What possible reunion can there be, say, between a father who dies at twenty and a son who lives to be an octogenarian? It were nobler for humanity to face the fact that the reward for goodness is goodness, and the only punishment for wickedness, wickedness.

That, however, as we have often had occasion to point out, is a conception of morality much too high for the Christian teaching or the Christian consciousness.

Another example of the same kind is furnished by a recent address on Eugenics given by Bishop Barnes. He pointed out that under civilized conditions many survive who would not do so under earlier conditions, that there was a certain pathological type that perpetuated itself very freely, and it would be in the interests of society if this type were prevented multiplying. One of the daily papers headed this, "Daring Theory." But all students of the subject know that during the past fifty years this point has been dwelt upon by many medical men and very many laymen interested in Eugenics. The only reason that we can see why the suggestion is called a "daring" one is that it is made by a Bishop. One is bound to assume that the sight of a Bishop saying something that approaches common sense is so unusual that newspapers grab at it as they would at the birth of a child with two heads.

But it would be very unlike a Bishop if, having approached dangerously near a sensible suggestion, he did not straight away temper it with a lot of religious nonsense. So Bishop Barnes removes any suspicion as to his religious soundness by informing us that "God, by allowing fit and unfit to arise, and by using environment to destroy the unfit, has produced in humanity spiritual understanding." So that we are to conclude that the arrival, and the survival, of the unfit is deliberately designed by God. It was God's plan to benefit the other section of the race. He creates a lot of degenerates in order that some of us may learn something from their existence. It is not clear what we learn, and, at any rate, it is rather rough on the degenerates. They are born, suffer, and die, leaving descendants who tread the same miserable path as they have trodden, and Bishop Barnes says it is all part of God's plan to benefit other people. The ancient Spartans are said to have made some of their slaves drunk in order that their children might learn the benefits of sobriety. There might be some excuse for them, since they had to do the best they could in the circumstances in which they found themselves. But this production of miserable and undesirable specimens was "allowed" by God so that the rest of us might benefit. All we can say is that a God of that kind deserves the kind of Bishops that serve him.

True to his character as a Christian preacher, Bishop Barnes remarks that man is a religious animal, which is about as unscientific a statement as anyone could possibly make, and then adds that in the congested areas where degenerates are produced, religious work is very difficult, while "absence of religious interest is evidence of mental abnormality." We presume that by absence of religious interest the Bishop means lack of belief in religion. For the first statement we need only say that it is among the lower orders of city life that religious superstitions of all kinds flourish most luxuriantly. And for the second one, if the Bishop will, instead of speaking like a Christian Evidence lecturer, or Salvation Army preacher, devote himself to an examination of the facts, he will discover that sexual and mental abnormalities are nearly always accompanied by strong religious belief. Any medical man could enlighten the Bishop on this point.

There is one other sentence in the Bishop's address that calls for a word of comment. The religious fancies that run riot to-day, he remarked, have a singular likeness to those which ran riot during the second century of our era. There is more in that than Bishop Barnes sees. For it is just from the riot of extravagant religious beliefs that were current in the Roman world some nineteen centuries ago that Christianity took its rise. Cotter Morrison pointed out many years ago that Christianity survived an environment in which intellectually respectable things found it difficult to exist. And when history is written freed from Christian prejudice it will be found that one genuine mark of that degeneracy was the triumph of the Christian religion. That religion was, as we have so often pointed out, a reversion to a lower order of thought, intellectually, morally, and religiously. It was one of the disasters that has overtaken civilization, and in the vogue of gross superstitions to-day we have, indeed, a similar state of affairs. That is why we are so often pointing to the danger present in the way in which politicians of different kinds pander to this or that section of the Christian Church. The one lesson we need to take well to heart is that no civilization is safe where Christianity is strong.

One other illustration of the nature of the "advanced" thinking of Christian dignitaries. Bishop Gore informed a St. Paul's audience the other day that "the progress of science has invalidated many of the doctrines on which the Christian religion is based." He also admitted that some of the Bible would have to go as it was no longer possible to claim the Bible as an infallible historical document. Now there is a dare-devil kind of thinker for you! Thomas Paine was not by any means the first who told some of the truth about the Bible, but it is over 130 years ago since the *Age of Reason* was published, and now Bishop Gore attracts extra notice from our highly intellectual press because he repeats some of the mildest of Paine's strictures on the Bible. And Bishop Gore is considered one of the ripest of Christian scholars, and one of the most profound thinkers in the Christian Church. One never feels so much contempt for the Christian Church as when one comes across some of its alleged thinkers and notices the grounds on which their reputations rest. If there was ever a heaven for mediocrity it is the Christian Church. There is no other walk in life in which men of so small mental attainments can reach so great a position. Even the House of Commons is a gathering of philosophers at the side of it. And Bishop Barnes says that men of poor mental ability take no interest in religion!

In the *British Weekly* for February 11, there is a curious article entitled "Evangelism at the University," the University being that of Cambridge. The article is partly a report and partly a criticism of a mission held during the first week in February with the object of winning the students at the University to Christ. But it was the strangest mission ever held anywhere. This

is frankly admitted by the reporter and critic, H. C. Carter, in the following words:—

The Gospel has indeed during the week been exhibited in the University as a many-coloured thing, showing very differently, through the prisms that its various preachers held up for its light to shine through For some it must have been hard work not to thank God they are not as these Fundamentalists, or Anglo-Catholics, or liberal Churchmen, or even as these Non-conformists.

The missionaries represented three different and conflicting schools of Christian thought: the Bishop of Manchester, a great hero of the *Church Times*, preaching a mild Anglo-Catholicism and semi-Socialism; Father Vernon, dressed as a Friar, advocating what he considered everyone's supreme duty of "submission to Holy Church and whole-hearted reliance upon the grace of sacraments"; the Rev. W. P. Nicholson, an Ulster Presbyterian and ultra-Fundamentalist, denouncing all and sundry who did not believe in the absolute infallibility of the Bible and in the doctrines of grace as taught by the orthodox Church; and the Rev. Dr. Norwood, the Nonconformist of City Temple fame, whose theology is not easily defined, though he is distinctly of the evangelical order.

The reporter, who is also a critic of the mission to the Cambridge undergraduates, ends thus: "The Spirit of God has been doing his work in Cambridge this week. We give him praise, and go on looking in patience and in hope for the perfect day." This would really be most amusing were it not symptomatic of the mournful fact that England is still, to an alarming extent, under the sway of the darkest superstition. On eight consecutive days three essentially irreconcilable Gospels were preached at Cambridge, and yet the reporter, fully cognizant of this, adds that "the Spirit of God has been doing his work in Cambridge this week." If the Spirit of God had an objective existence how terribly such a statement would grieve him, and how dreadfully severe the reporter's punishment would be.

Mr. James Douglas is the pious journalist who recently declared in a daily paper that, if it was not for his religion, he would be like some of his agnostic friends—untroubled by conscience and guilty of all kinds of meannesses. After uttering this uncharitable slur on better men than himself, he now exhorts his readers thus: "Let us start the golden rule at once. Let us begin by governing our tongues and our pens. Let us practise good fellowship in our talk and our writing. Let each.....strive to cast out hate and rancour." All we will say to that is: Physician, heal thyself.

Seemingly, there is now moving among the pious a spirit which makes, not for righteousness, but for candour. At long last our religionists are beginning to see themselves as others see them. At least, a few of them are, and these are telling their more myopic brethren a number of home-truths which we fancy are none too palatable. In a Methodist journal recently, a candid Wesleyan, Mr. W. Handley Jones, after having made what appears to be a careful study of his brothers and sisters in Christ, presents the result of his observation in an article, "The Unco' Guid." Says he:—

The unco' guid surround themselves with artificial prohibitions, are wary of their natural affections, and starve their hearts to save their souls. To be frankly human is a luxury which they feel they cannot afford. They often adopt a precise yet fruity manner of speech..... Prayer-meeting phraseology, pulpit oratory, and religious journalism are all thick with juicy specimens of this language of Zion.

We wonder how pious readers like that kind of medicine.

After administering this dose, Mr. Jones does a little more plain speaking. The long struggle of orthodoxy with science, he says, resembles the efforts of an obstinate schoolmaster trying to make a pupil of alarming

intelligence recite, under threat of the birch, the answers laid down in the catechism. And, he adds, "It is a humiliating thing to recall—this industrious effort of the religious mind to trim and shape truth to patterns of its own designing." We are glad to have this confession. What Mr. Jones says justifies the existence of the *Freethinker* and the work it sets out to accomplish—the work of beating down clerical obscurantism, of spreading the truths of science, and of enlightening the Christian mind. That task, however, is by no means finished. There are still many hundreds of thousands of Christians who are yet by no means prepared to admit, as does Mr. Jones, that they have been, or are now, at fault, and that their pious conceptions are slightly askew. Hence, there is still plenty of employment for the energies of militant Freethinkers truly in earnest.

Mr. Jones appears to believe that it is the two things, stupid opposition to science and sour pietism, which are keeping people away from the churches. He says: "What with the squeeze of orthodoxy on one foot, and that of pietism on the other, it is hardly surprising that so many refuse any longer to go through life in the footgear of conventional religion." Possibly these two things may be responsible for making religion repulsive to the more enlightened. But the main cause of the slump in church-going is, people are ceasing to believe. They are discovering Christian dogmas to be a jumble of impossibilities and absurdities inconsistent with common sense and scientific fact. When Reason comes in at the door, Faith gets kicked out at the window.

Writing in a popular paper, "Woodbine Willie" declares, "It is dishonest to be stupid, prejudiced, and unreasonable. It is dishonest to be ignorant when you ought to know." If Willie is right, there must be a terrible lot of dishonest Christians in the world. Later, our woodbiney friend offers us what he calls a prayer to pray. This is it: "From all self-deception, sloppy thinking, and secret greed may the Good Lord Deliver Us." We fancy the Lord can't be listening-in to Willie's broadcasting. For Willie still produces more sloppy thinking per column than does any other popular writer, bar Mr. Harold Begbie.

Our Prime Minister has been trying to cheer up the Methodists who he seemingly has noted are seriously perturbed at the decline in church-going. At a dinner at the Langham Hotel, where sixty of the elect had been invited to meet Mr. Baldwin as principal guest, this gentleman recited to them the sad old tale they know so well. The world to-day seemed more irreligious than it had ever been before. Pleasure-seeking abounded; church-going had lost its hold on the people; candidates for the ministry are difficult to find. Still, he believed this condition of affairs would pass; a statement which was, we fancy, merely a pious wish and not a conclusion warranted by any careful survey of facts that confront the churches. Mr. Baldwin then declared that the side of Christianity which took into view all kinds of activities for the social betterment of the people was the side that appealed most to the present generation. This we take to be a gentle hint to Christian leaders to haul down the tattered old flag of Christian dogma and to hoist the new ensign of social reform. That is a typical politician's move. Find out what the people are demanding and then shape your policy accordingly. The Premier's advice, however, is a little belated. If the churches evince a sudden concern in social reform, they will be regarded with suspicion by the more alert men and women working for social betterment. The churches' fell record and past apathy are too well known now for any hasty conversion to be regarded as sincere.

Mr. Baldwin in closing his speech declared that undoubtedly there was as much philanthropic and altruistic work done by all kinds of people as was ever done. That is a pregnant admission. It implies that the feelings which move men and women to aid the poor and suffering are just as active as ever, despite the fact that

religion has ceased to play any part in most people's lives. This, of course, but bears out the Freethinker's contention, which is that these feelings are social in origin and have nothing whatever to do with that which merely exploits them—religion.

If anyone doubts the brutal and savage nature of Christianity the Lenten Pastoral of the Archbishop of Tuam supplies evidence. We are all so much in the habit of taking notice of the comparatively small number of Christians who have been sufficiently civilized to grow ashamed of the doctrine of hell fire, that we are apt to overlook the fact that the majority of Christians still believe in it, and that it is part of the New Testament teaching. So the Archbishop reminds us that hell—good old-fashioned, flat-footed hell, as Harold Frederic called it—is still taught by the majority of Christian preachers. And those who do not believe in it, when brought into public discussion, are marvellously quiet about it when dealing with their fellow believers.

But here is the Archbishop, as reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* for February 15. Christians, he thinks, need fear to keep them straight, and of all fears that of hell is the most effective.

In hell there is not one tittle of consolation.....of all the different pains of sense that there may be in hell the most formidable is the pain of fire.....Some go so far as to say that God is too good to condemn anyone to this hell of our Catholic faith.....But there is hell all the time open to swallow all those who die enemies of God.

And if anyone doubts it, there is, he says, the clear words of Jesus, "The Son of Man shall send his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity and shall cast them into the furnaces of fire." If there is any teaching for which a man ought to be imprisoned it is this. It is one of the most brutal and the most brutalizing conceivable. In this direction there is hardly another religion that stands equal to Christianity in this barbarity. And we have to bear in mind that this was once the universal belief of Christendom. Children were brought up to believe it, and it is the religion which taught it, that teachers claim exerted a good moral influence. The man who is not ashamed of it marks himself as little above the level of the savage, without the excuse of the savage for his belief.

Puritanism gets some hard knocks at times, but for it to get a buffet from a writer within the Puritan stronghold itself is, we think, the unkindest cut of all. Thus Mr. Percy C. Pegler, in a Wesleyan Methodist journal, after declaring that there is in every heart something which demands the beautiful as well as the true, continues:—

Our cherished Puritanism has its virtues, and they are not to be derided. But if it exposes itself to criticism, as it sometimes does, of cherishing ugliness and of making insufficient allowance for the God-given sense of beauty; if it wars with art and holds itself superior to culture; if it despises the gentle and more gracious things and comes to count dullness a synonym for goodness and to confuse sunshine and joy, sweetness and light with wickedness and a certain departure from the paths of virtue; it will alienate more than it will win and be counted by many as standing for deprivations not willingly to be contemplated.

From all this we gather that Mr. Pegler has been scrutinizing the Puritan animal pretty keenly. What we should like to point out is this: If Puritanism reforms and no longer exposes itself to criticism on the counts enumerated by this gentle critic, it will no longer be Puritanism. It will be something rather more decent and wholesome. Such a reformation, however, is long overdue. But the task before the Puritan is admittedly a hard one. It is in the nature of a miracle. He has to turn the sour milk of human kindness into something sweeter. Still, as he comes in contact with more culture and education, it may be possible that even so sour a thing as Puritanism will acquire some "sweetness and light."

The National Secular Society.

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

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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.

S. HOLMAN.—We are not surprised to learn that the local paper refused to issue your very temperate article, even though it was written by request. The Labour papers are quite at one with the rest of the press in seeing to it that no attack shall be made on the Christian religion. This is not because those responsible for the papers are always believers in Christianity, but simply because they are afraid to offend the Churches. The *Freethinker* appears to be the only paper in the country in which a genuinely straightforward opinion about religion can be obtained. That is one of the reasons why we are so proud of it and its history. It is also the reason why Christians hate it so energetically.

C. MORGAN.—What we mean when we say that the morality of Christianity is low, is that the morality of Christianity is low. Just that, and nothing more.

H. L.—A Christian who is unable to understand the *Freethinker* would not be likely to forsake his religion even though we wrote in the language of a kindergarten school. We should say that such a one was doomed by nature to be a Christian to the end of his days. After all, to be a genuine Atheist implies some degree of intellectual development.

S. WARR.—Other Labourites beside yourself are disgusted with the attempts of writers such as Mrs. Eyles to identify Socialism with Jesus Christ. But it is, presumably, considered good for vote-catching, although if the *Freethinkers* within the Socialist camp made their opinions better known the game would not be such an easy one.

J. BREESE.—Parcels of *Freethinkers* sent as desired. Glad you are so pleased with the last issue of the paper. A great many of our friends are undertaking its distribution, and we have no doubt the edition will soon be exhausted. Having let the public once see what the case for genuine Freethought is, the clergy are likely to move heaven and earth to prevent the papers doing it again.

A. CLARK.—Crowded out this week.

C. HARPUR.—Next week.

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.

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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 62 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, 62 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 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):— One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 28) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Stratford Town Hall, taking for his subject, "The Doom of the Gods." Trams and buses pass the door from all parts, and there should be the usual good attendance. We hope to see more than the usual number of Christians present. On Sunday next Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Ashton-under-Lyne.

There were two good audiences at Manchester to listen to Mr. Cohen on Sunday last. In the afternoon the hall was comfortably filled, and in the evening uncomfortably so. Every inch of floor space was filled, with people standing packed in the approach to the hall. Mr. Monks occupied the chair on both occasions, and a gratifying feature of the meetings was the number of newcomers present. There was quite a deluge of questions after the evening lecture, but at the end of two hours and a quarter the chairman was forced to bring the meeting to a close. The meetings should lead to good results so far as the local Branch is concerned.

There was no mistaking the interest aroused by Mr. Cohen's article in the *Manchester Evening News*. The local clergy are not yet finished sermonising on it, and one of the five who replied in the columns of the paper announced his Sunday night sermon as "Mr. Chapman Cohen, Atheist; My Reply." But none of the five have yet screwed themselves up to the point of replying in a set discussion with Mr. Cohen on the other side of the table. There is, however, still time.

The special issue of the *Freethinker* has been well distributed in Manchester. The organization of this was undertaken by Mr. Black, who went into it with his usual energy. It was being sold by a number of street sellers, as well as by some of the ordinary newsagents. That too, should have good results. As we said last week, we printed a very large special edition of this number, and we can still supply them to those who can undertake their distribution, at 6s. per 100, carriage paid. Lancashire friends and others should see that these are well distributed while the matter is fresh in the public mind.

We fear the Rev. W. Fiddian Moulton, of Cliff College, has been dipping into Freethought publications. In discussing re-union of the Christian churches, he declares that history is not encouraging to the idea of re-union. For—

it is a fact of history that the Church was never more corrupt than in those days when it was most united. When autocratic, it can never be trusted to use its power justly. In the sphere of religion no one can be trusted with autocracy.

We may add to these statements that not only is an autocratic church not to be trusted to use its power justly, but no church if it has any power at all is to be so trusted. All European history bears testimony to that fact. Ecclesiasticism and justice are like oil and water. They don't mix. Ecclesiasticism always floats on the top.

The Gospel History a Fabrication.

V.

MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

THE Gospel in use among the Nazarenes—viz., that "according to the Hebrews"—was, as we have seen, called by many "the original Gospel of Matthew," and was said by some to be the canonical Matthew "mutilated" because it did not contain the Virgin Birth story. It would appear, then, that if the first two chapters of Matthew be expunged, that Gospel would be little more than a revised Greek copy of the Gospel of the Nazarenes. Now, if we compare the Gospel of Matthew with the other two Synoptics, we find that Matthew differs chiefly in containing certain lengthy discourses which are not given by the others. Chief among these is the Sermon on the Mount, which fills three long chapters (v., vi., vii.), though Luke gives a number of extracts from it (vi. 20-49). The next long discourse given by Matthew only is chapter xxv., which, after introducing the subject by two parables—the ten Virgins and the Talents—gives a graphic description of the Last Judgment, in which only those were allowed to enter heaven who had showed kindness to the "brethren" by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, and visiting the sick. This Last Judgment scene is of the same character as one found in the ancient Egyptian "Book of the Dead," and was, no doubt, taken from that book by the Nazarenes, and made their own plan of salvation. Hence, the religion of the primitive Jewish Christians was simply humanitarianism, the belief in Jesus as a god forming no part of their creed. To this twenty-fifth chapter should be added several parables bearing upon the same subject which are recorded by Matthew only. These include the Tares and the Draw-net (Matt. xiii.), the Merciless Servant (Matt. xviii.), the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. xx.), the Marriage of the King's Son, and the Wedding Garment (Matt. xxii.).

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

This notable "Sermon" is represented in Matthew's Gospel as delivered upon an unnamed mountain; Luke's short version of it is said to have been spoken upon a plain: it is also represented as delivered at two different periods in the ministry of Jesus. After reading Matthew's long and complete version, we need little critical knowledge to see that this so-called "Sermon" is in character and structure a purely literary composition, which was never uttered extempore on either of the occasions represented. Moreover, it is in itself a complete code of rules and prescriptions relating to conduct, which are identical with the known doctrines and practices of the Essenes. The Nazarenes and Essenes were Jews who conformed to all the Mosaic ritual except animal sacrifice, for which they substituted gifts to the altar at Jerusalem. Matthew's Sermon is but a copy of the doctrines and principles of the society, drawn up by elders of the sect, and was probably read out daily by elders of the sect, and was probably read out daily to new members until they knew all the paragraphs by heart. The Essenes did not go about trying to make converts, as described in the Book of the Acts. Their principles were known and respected by all Jews, and those who had thoughts of adopting their mode of life went to their houses, and were allowed to stay with them for a short period. Josephus did so before deciding to become a Pharisee. The following passages in the "Sermon" show that it was drawn up for Jews who still conformed to the "law of Moses":—

Matt. v. 17.—Think not that I am come to destroy

the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Matt. v. 23, 24.—If therefore thou bring thy gifts to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

The following passage commends the continuance practised by the stricter order of the Essenes:—

Matt. xix. 12.—And there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

The Christian teacher, Origen, understood the last passage literally, and being "able to receive it," he did so: but it is possible that the passage only means what is stated in Rev. xiv. 4.

THE TEMPTATION AND TRANSFIGURATION.

One of the most obvious of the Gospel fabrications is the story of Jesus being tempted by a real live Devil (Mark i. 12-13; Matt. iv. 1-11; Luke iv. 1-13). This temptation is threefold: (1) Jesus having fasted forty days is asked by the Devil to turn stones into bread; (2) Jesus is placed by the Devil on the pinnacle of the temple, and asked to cast himself down unharmed; (3) the Devil promises to give Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world" if he will worship before him. After resisting these temptations "the Devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him."

In the Zend-Avesta, the holy prophet Zoroaster is first assaulted and afterwards tempted by the Persian devil Ahriman. One of these temptations is that Ahriman promises to make him "ruler of all the nations" if he will renounce the god he serves—which he refuses to do.

In the Buddhist scriptures, Gotama, when about to leave home, wife, and child to devote himself to the enlightenment of mankind, is tempted by Mara, the Evil One, to wait for seven days until "the wheels of empire" should make him "sovereign over the four continents"—but he refused to stay. Many years later Gotama Buddha fasted for several weeks, during which he was assailed by Craving, Discontent, and Lust, the daughters of Mara, whom he resisted; then, on the forty-ninth day "angels came and ministered unto him." These legends date from several centuries B.C., and were, no doubt, known as the Nazarenes, to whom they suggested the story of the temptation of Jesus.

A second obvious fabrication is the alleged transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. xvii., Mark ix., Luke ix.). Upon this occasion the Nazarene, with Peter, James, and John, ascended a high mountain.

And Jesus was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.....and behold a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.

In this story, Peter recognized the two resurrected men, and names them. The Buddha was also transfigured before his death. Another obviously fabricated story is that of the baptism of Jesus, with the dove and the voice from heaven. It is almost needless to say that all the alleged events in the Gospels are narrated as historical occurrences: hence, all Christians who endeavour to get rid of the most obvious fabrications by treating them as allegories are simply perverters of their own scriptures.

It is unnecessary to cite further examples: the whole of the Gospel "history" is of the same fictitious character. There is not a scrap of evidence that any human being ever heard or saw any of the

sayings or doings ascribed to "Jesus the Nazarene." They are one and all early Christian fabrications, and as such I will now leave them and bring this series to a close.

PALEY'S EVIDENCES.

One writer said of Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* that if his premises were granted, "his conclusion would be hard to refute." What an "if"! I thought everyone knew that it is in the premises all the fallacies lie. Thus, Paley's main "argument" for the truth of the Gospel miracles runs as follows:—

If twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their own eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived.....If I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burned, or strangled rather than give up the truth of their account;—still, if Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to say, that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them.

Here we see assumption piled upon assumption, every one of which can be challenged. I select this example because the same style of reasoning is still employed by all kinds of Christian advocates. I have noticed several cases during the last year or so.

Now, it is scarcely necessary to say that we have not the testimony of the "twelve men" who witnessed the alleged Gospel miracles: we have not even the testimony of one man. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not witnesses of anything they record, and though two of the apostles are said to have been named Matthew and John, the latter were not the writers of the Gospels so called. Not one of the writers of the canonical Gospels was an apostle, and all four lived in post-apostolic times.

Paley's "twelve men" are the so-called "twelve apostles" of Jesus, respecting whom nothing certain is known except the names: and such being the case, it is simply ridiculous to so assert that they were noted for "probity and good sense," in the modern acceptance of the terms. Assuming that they were no worse than other Jews of their time, were they very ignorant and credulous men, whose heads were filled with all the superstitious ideas of the times in which they lived: they could not, in fact, be otherwise when their teacher himself believed in demoniacal possession. Paley further says that the "probity and good sense," with which he gratuitously credits them as possessing, "had long been known"—which is obviously untrue.

In drawing up his premise, Paley evidently had his eye on the accounts narrated in the Book of the Acts, in which twelve apostles are represented as going about preaching a new religion and creating disorder, regardless of threats, stripes, or imprisonment. It never entered his mind that no Roman procurator would have allowed such doings to go on for a single day; but apart from that, he ought to have had the sense to know that in the account in the Acts we have not the testimony of the "twelve men" to anything done by Jesus: for they are merely some of the *dramatis personæ* in that work of fiction, and, as everybody knows, an author can make the characters in his story say or do anything he pleases. At the very most, the testimony derived from the Acts could only be that of one person, the writer; but in this case we have not even that testimony, for Luke was not a witness of what he records in that book. Moreover, the long speeches placed in the mouths of Peter, Stephen, and Paul are fabrications made by Luke himself. The critical

scholar Renan and the author of *Supernatural Religion* have each independently compared those orations in the Greek, and, after studying the various forms of expression, have arrived at the same conclusion—that they were all composed by Luke himself. A writer in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* makes the same admission.

Paley further says that the Gospel miracles were "wrought before the eyes" of his "twelve men," and that "it was impossible that they should be deceived"—his only authority for which statement being the Gospel narratives themselves. But, supposing those narratives to be pure fiction—as they undoubtedly are—how then were miracles "wrought before the eyes" of the apostles? And not having witnessed any of these "mighty works," what nonsense it is to say "it was impossible that they should be deceived"? We are thus dealing with silly assumptions.

Lastly, what evidence have we that these "twelve men" allowed themselves to be "racked, burned, or strangled, rather than give up the faith of their account"? We have none whatever. Many absurd stories of martyrdom are told by later Christian writers; but these, when sifted, prove to be nothing but fables. We do know, however, that in later times thousands of Christians have suffered tortures and death rather than deny certain facts or doctrines which to them were simply *matters of belief*: whence it follows that the only apparently real argument used by Paley—that of steadfastness to religious convictions under persecution—is no proof of the truth of the matters believed. ABRACADABRA.

Books and Life.

A book that will give pleasure and perhaps not a little instruction is *Fragments from My Diary*,¹ by that well-known Russian author, Maxim Gorki. It contains some thirty-seven tales—each one having a distinctiveness, but no pattern can be made of the lot. *Don Quixote* is no doubt familiar to our readers, and as will be remembered, Spanish proverbs are woven into the texture that provoke a smile before we begin to feel really sorry for the woeful knight. In the same way, in the book before us, Russian proverbs are encountered showing that the crystallization of wisdom is not any particular country's monopoly. The proverb that arrested us was to be found in the tale entitled "The Shepherd Discusses Learning"; it has a flavour that recalls Whitman, Emerson, and Burns, and stirs the atmosphere of those far-off primitive days when the magic word "help" was born in the human dictionary: "It is said that everyone is a brother to another against his own will." In "Fires," Gorki chronicles a penetrating and shrewd remark made by a superstitious but successful man who attributed his good fortune to the fact that, acting on advice from an old woman, he preserved the clippings of his nails and always threw them unobserved into a stranger's fire; "When one loses faith in one's own strength, one has to seek faith in something outside oneself." This is the case in a nutshell against the pill of priestly authority in whatever metaphysical jam it may be smothered. In the story, "The Food of the Soul," the author gives extracts from the diary of a timid man, who, because he was so afraid of meeting people, used to go out on rainy days. Hegel stated that "thinking, too, was divine service," and our quiet and timid man wrote, "To think is the duty of every educated person," and again, a novel recipe for saving the world:—

Only he knows what toothache means who has had it, and then only while the tooth is actually aching. When it is over, a man forgets how tormenting it can be. It would be an admirable thing if the whole population of the earth could have toothache for at least

¹ *Fragments from My Diary*, Maxim Gorki. Philip Allan & Co., Quality Court, London.

several hours a month, all at the same time. That alone would teach people to understand one another.

In this volume we also learn of Tchekoff's "struggle for life"; in the "Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft," Gissing's life was quite as pathetic, and if money was as plentiful as priests and prayers it would be no exaggeration to say that most of the miserable and pitiful crimes that fill our daily papers would come to an end. Coarse anecdotes never provoked a smile from Tchekoff, but even this master of the short story was somewhat adrift in his conception of Atheism. In a confession he told Gorki that he was going to write about a school teacher; she would be an Atheist, adore Darwin, be convinced of the necessity of fighting with the superstitions and prejudices of the people, but this would not prevent her from boiling a black cat in the bath-house at midnight to obtain a certain bone as a potent love charm. Very amusing as a story, but evidently Tchekoff did not know that the sole reason of the existence of the Atheist was to enable the Church to prove that he did not exist. Voltaire will be recognized in Tchekoff's saying: "If every man did all he could on the piece of earth belonging to him, how beautiful would this world be." Gorki's objectivity allows him, in "Peculiar Tramps," to offer, through the mouth of a tramp, a criticism of Russian literature that is not without some truth..... "Russian literature is very much like a fungus. It draws out of life its dampness, its filth, its abomination, and unavoidably infects with its gangrene every healthy body that comes into contact with it." But two things Gorki writes, and writes finely, using with ease the bold similes that only a fine writer can: "Man is the axle of the world, in spite of his sins and defects. We all hunger for the love of our fellow men, and when one is hungry even an underbaked loaf is sweet." Again, in his conclusion, he uses the methods of Remy de Gourmont:—

There are, I assure you, many truths which it is best not to remember. These truths are born by lies and possess all the elements of that poisonous untruth which, having distorted the relations of man with man, has made of life a hell, at once filthy and absurd. What end does it serve to remind humanity of something which should disappear as quickly as possible.

In this latter category we include the ruck of our daily newspapers; in reading the manly and positive statement above about man as the axle of the world, our mind unconsciously went back to Stratford Town Hall, where, on a battlefield of intellect Canon Storr's sincerity received applause from his opponents. The human plane of debate was elevated for a few hours to that position we feel when reading the dialogues of Plato. Both combatants were in the life stream and truth must have been awakened in the vigorous search for her by two sincere men. Perhaps she was hunted there with more ferocity and with less destruction than she was pursued on the Western Front. We take this debate as a gift of civilization—for civilization's gifts are like the proverbial angel's visit. Man is the axle of the world; here, Gorki pays his tribute to the blundering, groping, striving object that has paid dearly for all the gifts from the Gods, and a reading of *Fragments from My Diary* leaves us with the impression that his faith in man is unshaken and that the best is still to be.

A study of comparative religions widens the mind and is in the nature of listening to evidence. Patanjali tells us in a sutra that "the elements of sound intellection are: direct observation, inductive reason, and trustworthy testimony." In *The Sources of Christianity*,² by Khawaja Kamal-Ud-Din, the author has made the study of comparative religions clear, definite, and, most of all, he has written with a clarity that does not leave a muzzy picture of his meaning. There is something wrong when a Muslim states that "Muslims and Christians both cherish an equal love and respect for Jesus; but they are at daggers drawn against each other." We are inclined to the opinion of Mercutio, and although

² *The Sources of Christianity*, by Khawaja Kamal-Ud-Din, The Mosque, Woking.

later on the author writes that "sin is an acquisition, and not an heritage," this restating of orthodoxy does not bring the comment within the purview of materialistic criticism for, whilst God is an hypothesis that does not work, sin is a little chip of the old block—a whip for a priest, a vague word of abuse with only the shadow of a meaning to those who regard life in terms of conduct. Modernists, in the author's opinion only represent Islam, and he pours a lusty broadside into the hulk of Christianity. In a word he says, Jesus taught Islam and not traditional Christianity. An excellent term is taken up by this critic when tracing the usual pagan explanation of Christianity; we confess to a liking of his "sky-scripture," which transports us to the time when astronomy was born, and the sky was the playground of the children of the gods. An illuminating comparison of the Babylonian Passion Play and the Christian Passion story is given seriatim, the former being in existence centuries before the birth of Jesus, and the author declares the evangelical records to be complete plagiarism. A tribute from a Muslim to the Romans for allowing the buildings of temples of all creeds sounds refreshing when we look over the hedges called national boundaries. Mr. Khawaja Kamal-Ud-Din has, in the cause of Islam done his work thoroughly; he leaves Jesus as a prophet, quotes as copiously from the Al-Qur-ân as any theologian with a good memory, and brings us to common ground in the meaning of Islam. It was meant, he infers, to raise humanity from the verge of animality: Islam succeeded in transforming scattered desert tribes into a nation and created a force that cannot be overlooked by the West, but we trust for that scrupulous understanding by the author of Atheism and Materialism, which we in this paper extend to Islam. If it is given, he will acquit or excuse himself for attributing the state of unrest in the world when he writes on pages 192 and 193 that the cause is Atheism and sordid Materialism. Bacon has given Atheism a status; Materialism cannot be made squint-eyed by an adjective, and we trust, apart from this slight example of loose writing, that his book will receive as careful a reading by Christian critics as that extended to it by us. But we are doubtful at the mention of daggers, and convincing opponents in intellectual matters by physical force is a method that might be regarded as a relic of the past if man was left to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws and reputation.

A copy of *A Dominic's Log*,³ by A. S. Neill, M.A., has come our way and brings with it a little fresh air on the subject of education. Mr. Neill's difficulties in this matter are no doubt the difficulties of all teachers, and the author struggles with a curriculum made up by a department without a body to be kicked or a soul to be damned. Of interest to readers of this paper are his remarks on the teaching of religion:—

I do not think that I have any definite views on the teaching of religion to bairns; indeed, I have the vaguest notion of what religion means. I am just enough of a Nietzschean to protest against teaching children to be meek and lowly.

In a sketch he gives us the benefit of his observations of the domestic life of his scholars when grown up; yesterday Mag Broom was an outworker at Millside; to-day she is Mrs. Smith with a house of her own. With the pawky humour to be expected, he writes:—

Her mental horizon has widened. She can talk about anything now; the topic of child-birth can now be discussed openly with other married wives. Aggressiveness and mental arrogance follow naturally, and with these come a respect for church-going and an abhorrence of Atheism.

With the closing of the book and the receipt of Form 9b, a very pleasant hour has been spent with Mr. Neill, who writes in a style that holds the reader. He has something to say, and if mankind continues to grow up, he will have added something in his way to that time when school will neither be a place for cruelty to children nor a hunting ground for cranks and a forcing house for industrial slaves.

WILLIAM REPTON.

³ *A Dominic's Log*, by A. S. Neill. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 3 York Street, St. James's, London, S.W.1.

Correspondence.

MATERIALISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The *Freethinker* is always very intellectual, and at times, possibly on this account, a little austere. Therefore the wit of Mr. Panton in a recent edition, like the laughter of the fool in "Lear," comes as a welcome relief. I consider his long letter, with its assumed criticism of your series of articles expounding Materialism, as masterly.

It is a consummate satire on the average man's understanding of the question of Materialism and the banal verbosity of the Christian Evidence man. Him, he has mimicked with inimitable skill until, like Achilles to Thersities, I cry "Enough, oh enough, I die." To have given us, your readers, such an example of the bad manners—muddled-headed thinking, pomposity, irrelevancy, and crass stupidity of the average critic of Materialism is a masterly achievement. Mr. Panton must have made close and prolonged study of the type to be able to have done it.

I am sure your readers have enjoyed the following instances no less than myself to have pretended to have thought that Mr. Cohen indicted his series of masterly articles, with their amazing lucidity, specially to convince him is, in its assumed egotism, reminiscent and not unworthy of Heine. Only second to this is the excellent pompous fooling in the attempt to generalize a law that is first positive, then negative, then back again. In and out of an epoch like a jack-in-a-box.

Then inviting Mr. Cohen to prove a negative is most delectable. Mr. Panton has all the qualities of the great artist; he effaces himself, although with any but a *Freethinker* public, which is very acute and has a keen sense of humour, this would be very risky; they might think he was serious. Here Mr. Panton becomes so identified with his subject it is actually the usual crass Christian Evidence man speaking. "Mr. Cohen's article is a jumble of all sorts of truths, half-truths, and nonsense." That is it exactly, Mr. Panton, superlative Sir; misstatement and bad taste and all there, excellent! But criticism must fearlessly discriminate. I shall not be accused of carping now after so much previous unqualified praise. I fear this is too realistic. Not even a C.E. man could be quite so ill-informed and silly as this to speak of scientists who "put forth the elements that compose the ether." But it is good fun. More, more, I prythee more, Mr. Panton.

M. BARNARD.

SIR,—I have just read Mr. Panton's interesting article on Mr. Cohen's exposition of Materialism. The idea of butting in between two Philosophic Goliaths fills me with a just apprehension, but I am tempted to engage on the venture because it may entice others into the dispute with profit to myself and other philosophically ambitious readers.

In the first place I fear I have not fully appreciated the difficulties of the subject. It has appeared to me to turn largely on the conception that two things cannot be identical, otherwise they would not be two things, but one thing. And I am forced to confess that all the revolutions of Mr. Panton's gramophone record do not help me out of the difficulty. When Mr. Cohen says, "The world outside of us cannot be the same world that is within," I am set wondering why he is put to the necessity of saying it, until I realize that Mr. Panton is prepared to contradict him.

"If this statement was correct," says Mr. Panton, "then we would have the peculiar condition of unlike knowing like." I think it cannot be identity but similarity that Mr. Panton is driving at. If this is clearly realized, then his task becomes slightly different. If two things are similar, but not one and the same thing, we feel desirous of knowing in what respects they are similar, and particularly in what respects they are prevented from being one and the same thing. If the world that is consciousness is not identical with the world that is not (and I take it the contrary is unthinkable), then the man who deals in a knowledge of the latter world is called upon to tell us of those characters

which render it not identical with, yet like, the world that is in consciousness. And we listeners are faced with the task of appreciating his remarks consciously. Come, is it not clear that every time we commence to argue from concrete examples we beg the question? Mr. Panton's gramophone (which is in danger of becoming as famous as Paley's watch) is useful as a means of illustrating what is in his mind, but we cannot argue externality from it without begging the question.

One can only repeat Mr. Cohen's observation that he failed to understand how Mr. Panton got outside his own consciousness.

The question of identity crops up again on the gramophone, and ultimately we get it on the brain. Mr. Panton's knowledge of physiology is really astounding. "If the frequency of the vibrations set up by the record were not identical with those registered in the brain, how could the individual repeat them!" I will grant him this, he certainly puts a mark of exclamation after it. But his transition from cerebral vibrations, identical in frequency with sound waves, through consciousness to the motor phenomenon of speech, is nothing short of a physiological inspiration. And he goes on to argue from it. "The same applies to a knowledge of externality, or matter," etc.

In conclusion, I would suggest the utility of realizing the following truths:—

1. "Energy" expresses a conception arising out of experience.
2. "Force" expresses the same.
3. "Matter" expresses the same.
4. "Ether" expresses the same.

If we ponder over these words we will see that not only do they not stand for "external reality," but they do not even connote percepts. Mr. Cohen mentioned the subject of a good text-book. Karl Pearson's *Grammar of Science* deals very lucidly with the ideas of "Force," "Matter," "Ether," etc. MEDICUS.

SIR,—I have followed your articles on Materialism with interest, but with some exasperation. Personally I wish to premise I am an out-and-out Rationalist, not a Materialist, and for reasons set forth below. Further, I am scientist enough to be convinced that there are other forces in Nature—physical nature, I mean—other than material forces, and to account for tangible phenomenon, but which you, in your article, assume Materialism does account for natural causes. This is the main reason of this address. The word "Rationalism" embraces all Nature, and which I consider is the word you should have used. I mean Rationalism as apart from mind and the problems of life. For instance, the word Materialism does not account for the phenomenon of either gravitation or generation, to wit, only. Neither does Materialism explain by what mediums light and heat transmit, and plenty of other things you imply Materialism accounts for. It does not. You have no space to list half the phenomena Materialism cannot account for or explain. Scientists I know attribute the medium by which light and heat transmit to ether. But what is ether? and is it ether or nothing? It is gross ignorance and cant to imply that Materialism accounts for natural phenomena. This is more in Nature than Mind and Matter. But here forgive me if I appear to imply spirit (except White Horse and Johnny Walker, both going strong) as the other three causes of natural phenomena besides Mind and Matter. That all phenomena has a scientific or natural basis is not only my creed, it is a concrete fact. But the word "Materialism" is a very unfortunate word generally for *Freethinkers* to use. To wit, to oppose Spiritualism, which I loathe, being my life's ambition to expose and expunge it from modern society. I consider for *Freethinkers* to use the word Materialism as opposed to Spirit will only succour our enemies—the deists—and aid them to longer support their falling temples of rottenness and to prop them up. Therefore let us be unanimous in not using words (Materialism) that only benefit these arch rebels, thereby pulling away the last remnant of props that sustain religion, the greatest curse ever inflicted on the human race.

WALTER BIRKS.

"POST-MORTEM."

SIR,—I have just read Sir Walter Strickland's letter on p. 798 of your issue of December 13. The railings at medical men are not wholly justifiable. In skin and nervous diseases the idiosyncracies of the individual patient often defeat the remedies commonly successful. Ointments in particular vary terribly in their effects. Boils are particularly erratic in responding to treatment.

It is not my profession, as you know from my earlier letters, but I do a little amateur medical work, for myself and also in aiding Chinese, and even friends. I was one of the first to use the High Frequency Electricity treatment out here. Now, of course, the hospitals, etc., here have got big machines. In cases of herpes, etc., and boils, that treatment has frequently been found very valuable, after all usual methods of treatment have failed of result. The *small* (not the toy variety) class of machine is not expensive, and would *possibly* cure your correspondent's ailment, without introducing such rare, and very hypothetical, factors as "eruptive tertiary regions." Treatment by H.F. is very simple indeed and can be done to oneself.

Shanghai.

V. DENT.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM.

SIR,—It would be difficult to decide which ill quality was uppermost in the letter of Lenora Eyles. It was rather cruel kindness to publish it. Anyway, your readers must decide either as to its impertinence or imbecility. Fancy a Socialist telling his followers to sell all they had and give to the poor, and then letting one would-be follower off with half of what he had. Fancy a Socialist saying, "The poor ye have always with you." In connection with this question I am reminded of a hymn I have often heard sung with great ferocity, "I do believe, *I will* believe, that Jesus died for me." Well, you can't argue with people who will believe and damn the evidence. I think in face of Christ's saying, "My kingdom is not of this world," to say that he was a Socialist shows the courage of invincible misconception.

A. J. MARRIOTT.

North London Branch N.S.S.

Mr. Saville's thoughtful and excellent address on "Education and Communal Life" gave rise to a discussion in which Mrs. Ratcliffe and several ladies took part. To-night, our good friend, Mr. George Bedborough, takes for his subject, "Is Prison Reform Desirable?" So many conflicting opinions are abroad on this subject at the present moment, we expect a good audience and a brisk discussion. The opener feels strongly on this subject, and we know will put his case in the most interesting and convincing manner.—K. B. K.

Obituary.

We have to report with extreme regret the death of Mr. R. G. Fathers, one of the oldest members of the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society, and for ten years its President. His active interest in Freethought in Birmingham never wavered, nor was an opportunity ever lost by him to advance it among the general public. At his own wish he was cremated at the Perry Bar Crematorium, where an address was delivered by the President of the Branch, Mr. Clifford Williams. Mr. Williams paid a very eloquent tribute to the sterling qualities of the dead man and pointed out that to the intellectual sturdiness of men of his type the world owed much more than it readily acknowledged. The work of such men enabled the work of Freethought to be carried on under much easier conditions than of old, and that was a fact of which we ought never to lose sight. There was a large attendance at the service, and many non-members expressed their appreciation of the beauty and simplicity of the service.—CLARA WILLIAMS.

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.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Debate—"That Christ is a Legendary Character." Affirmative, Mr. E. C. Saphin; Negative, Rev. W. H. Claxton.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. George Bedborough, "Is Prison Reform Desirable?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. Harry Snell, "The Ethical Movement and Modern Rationalism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John Russell, M.A., "Dr. Kinsopp Lake's 'The Religion of Yesterday and To-morrow.'"

STRATFORD (The Town Hall): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Doom of the Gods."

COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Jas. R. Raeburn, "Waste: Human and Industrial." Questions and discussion invited. (Silver Collection.) The Committee will meet at 5.30 in No. 2 Room.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street): 7.15, Mr. S. Richardson, "Municipal Finance; or, What are the Rates?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Arthur Kitson, "Unemployment: Its Cause and Cure."

SALE AND EXCHANGE.

This column is limited to advertisements from private individuals only. Letters may, if it is so desired, be addressed to the Box Number, c/o "Freethinker" Office. Advertising rates 6d. for first line, every additional line 4d.

FOR SALE.

ON approval, brown tweed suit, 34 in. chest, 5ft. 7in. height; worn once; £5 15s. 6d. new (1925); accept £2 15s.; £1 to Endowment Trust on sale.—WHITEHEAD, 22 Hamlet Road, Chelmsford.

ONE H.P. HORIZONTAL PETROL ENGINE, complete; new; £17; £5 goes to Endowment Fund when sold.—HAMPTON, Garden House, Duxbury, Nr. Chorley.

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Devil's Pulpit, vol. i.; Thomson, *Essays and Phantasies*; Sherwin, *Life of Palne*.—A. G. BARKER, 29 Verulam Avenue, Walthamstow, E.17.

The Glory of the Pharaohs (Weigall).—Box 81.

G. W. FOOTER'S works.—List, condition, and prices to "B," c/o *Freethinker* office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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