

THE ETHICS OF THE PULPIT.

The FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

The Ethics of the Pulpit.

A CHRISTIAN reader, I am glad to say the *Free-thinker* has many, takes me to task for what he calls my sneer at the Bishop of Southwell in my recent "Views and Opinions." He thinks I am unfair to the clergy in speaking of them as though they were all dishonest, and that in taking up this position I am not doing my cause any good. But I am not aware that I ought to plead guilty to this charge, because I fancy we are using the term "honest" with rather different applications. I do not assume that a clergyman is more likely to steal than are doctors or lawyers, or the members of other professions. I expect they pay their tradespeople as regularly as do other people, and make just as good husbands, and friends, and citizens as do others. In all these respects they are neither better nor worse than others. And I have often said, both in these columns and on the platform, that taking the clergy as a class, they are with respect to the non-religious relations of life, no worse and no better than others, so long as we pay due regard to all attendant circumstances. But if this is admitted, it at once disposes of the claim to any particular virtue attaching to either their profession or their selection. The power of religion to induce or develop a higher type of character thus breaks down in the persons of its selected and public representatives.

* * *

Intolerance as a Virtue.

If I had to compress my indictment of the clergy into a sentence I would put it, that while the clergy play the game according to the rules of their profession, as do doctors, lawyers, merchants, trades-unionists, and others, the class ethic in operation in the pulpit, and in relation to religion, moves on a lower and less developed level than does the class ethic in other walks of life. Conduct is legalised in

the pulpit, and in connection with religion, that has become illegal in other directions. And the proof of this is seen in the fact that a parson will do things in connection with religion that he would be almost ashamed to do in connection with other things. The subject of intolerance forms a first rate illustration of this. In every question other than religion, men and women are ashamed to admit that they have formed an opinion without looking at the other side of the case, still less would they boast of not having done so. Neither in politics, nor in science, would any public teacher advise his hearers that they must not read anything that is to be said against the opinions they at present hold. Outside religion no one counts intolerance as a virtue; or the exclusion of the other side as a safe or sound policy. But in religion, a parson never hesitates to warn his listeners that they should not read unbelieving books, or listen to Free-thinking lectures. Not to permit one's religious belief to be disturbed by studying the other side of the case is counted a counsel of perfection, and what is generally recognised as a mental or moral vice in other directions, takes rank as a virtue of the first order when we touch religion.

* * *

Christian Medicine.

That is the kind of thing I have in mind when I speak of the low type of ethics current in the pulpit. And here is an illustration or two of what may be called dishonesty, that is sanctioned by religious usage. The Rev. Archibald Fleming is a well-known London clergyman, whose business premises are at St. Columba's Church, Pont Street. Replying to Lord Inchcape's recent exposure of the influence of Missionaries in China, he says: "It is difficult to be patient with the ignorance that appears to be unaware that every medical missionary is, *ipso facto*, a Christian missionary." It will be remembered that Lord Inchcape's charge was that Christian missionaries, by their ignorant treatment of native institutions and beliefs and national rights, stirred up ill-will against foreigners generally. Mr. Fleming replies that medical men attached to the mission stations do good to Chinese men and women who come to them for treatment, and that these are all Christian missionaries. And this is not merely an evasion of the issue raised by Lord Inchcape, but it is a dishonest statement of the facts of the case. It would be quite fitting to reply to Mr. Fleming that it is difficult to be patient with the casuistry that pretends to be unaware that a man practising scientific medicine and scientific surgery is not, *ipso facto*, a Christian missionary at all. A Christian missionary treating disease would do so on the lines laid down in the New Testament. It is true the disciples were told they should cure disease, but it was to be done in "my name," and the only medicine they were to

carry or administer was faith. Jesus taught his followers that all disease was supernaturally caused and was to be supernaturally cured. A *Christian* missionary would depend upon that treatment and nothing else. But Mr. Fleming knows quite well that the medical missionaries who attend Chinese patients do not attempt to cure epilepsy by casting out devils, they do not attempt to cure a fever by prayer, and therefore they are, as medical missionaries, not Christian at all. Mr. Fleming is guilty of attempting to gain public support by false pretences. In commerce this kind of thing is called a swindle. In science it is called charlatanism. In politics it is called dishonesty. In religion it is considered quite permissible and praiseworthy. Mind, I do not charge Mr. Fleming with being consciously dishonest. He is only putting into operation the ethics of the pulpit, which move on a lower level than the ethics of the world at large.

* * *

Faith and Fact.

We have an illustration of the same point in the questions of prayer and faith-healing. In their pure form both involve belief in miracles. Universally, whenever people have prayed they have expected that God would do something by direct interposition that he would not, otherwise, have done for them. When nothing happened a combination of asinine and sheep-like piety satisfied itself with the reflection that it was all for the best. But the essential truth remained. So also with faith-healing. The cure of an ailment by faith meant that some supernatural power had done by direct interposition what natural forces had not done or could not do. However stupid the belief, it was so far honest. It is a belief that flourishes with all uncivilized or semi-civilized minds, but which weakens with the progress of scientific knowledge. And it is at the point of its weakening that the crooked mentality of the clergy manifests itself. It is undeniable that in very many ailments anything that serves as a stimulant will have a beneficial effect. Particularly is this the case in purely nervous derangements. If a man believes in the power of prayer, that may help. So would the belief about writing the name Allah on a piece of paper, burning it and then mixing the ashes with water and drinking it. One may use anything, the name of Jesus, of Mumbo-Jumbo, bread pills, or sleeping with a copy of the *Freethinker* sewed into one's nightshirt; anything will serve. These are facts perfectly well known to every medical man of intelligence (there are plenty of medical men of the other variety), and there is nothing in the least mystical, mysterious, or supernatural about it. But when, because this is the case, it is argued that, therefore, when Jesus talked of the power of faith and prayer, he had in mind what medical science had laid down as true, we have to deal with simple dishonesty. What medical science asserts is the causative nature of all physical, biological, and psychological processes. What Christianity has always taught is the overriding of these causative processes by some supernatural power. And the two things are totally distinct. If the clergy were quite honest they would admit that they had misunderstood the nature of certain natural facts, and give up their position as clergymen. Some of them, when they discover their mistake, have done so. But they are the few. The majority spend their lives in seeing by what tricks of text-twisting, by what methods of evasion, suppression, or falsification they can harmonize the formulated tenets of the savage with the teachings of contemporary science.

Piety and Slander.

One could fill a volume with similar instances. I have space for but one other. Among decent men and women there is no vice so thoroughly detested as that of slander. It is cowardly, it is contemptible; and there are methods of slandering that leave a victim almost helpless. Many judges have denounced it from the bench as the vilest of offences, and I agree with them. Even in the political world the slanderer is shunned, and a politician who spent his time in inventing slanders against his opponents would soon be a ruined man. But of all offences this is the one that has flourished most among Christians. From the very earliest times Christians have slandered each other and their non-Christian opponents. They have charged one another with the vilest of offences, from simple lying to wholesale murder and incest. Their opponents have fared, if possible worse. Tracts by the million have been issued; sermons by the hundreds of thousand have been preached, detailing the vile lives of unbelievers and their hideous deaths. Time manages to kill a number of these lies; but they are still with us, and the noticeable thing is that never has any of these detected liars suffered in the opinion of his fellow-believers because of his vile inventions. Ecclesiastical historians have pointed out their falsity, but it has been accompanied with no strong personal condemnation of the practice. Usually some such remark as, "the slanders usual in such cases," accompanies the exposure and explains much—to the non-Christian. But the solid fact that remains is that there is no other department of life in which lying and slander have flourished so much as they have in connection with Christian history. The liar has flourished like the green bay tree, and his lying has taken away neither the sense of his holiness nor the appreciation of his fellow-believers.

* * *

Religion and Morals.

Now, I hope that my correspondent will understand what I mean when I say that the ethics of the pulpit move on a lower level than do other departments of life. When the parson is dealing with other people or non-religious matters he is likely to apply the current conceptions of right and wrong in such relations. But when we touch on religion, the other rule is applied. He will do things then that he would not do if religion were left out of account. He does not realize that this trickery and twisting and falsification are wrong, because the history and practice of the pulpit have legalised them. Because the whole history of the Christian Church has sanctioned the slandering of opponents, even the best of parsons will meet it to-day with but a mildly deprecating smile. Because intolerance has been always preached as a sign of religious strength, the parson is not ashamed of preaching it to-day in connection with religion, even though he may denounce it in politics or elsewhere. It is a law of sociology that so soon as a separate class exists, there will arise an ethic peculiar to that class. We see this with doctors, with lawyers, and with others. The unfortunate thing is that with parsons the operative class ethic consecrates practices out of which other classes have long since developed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The history of prophecy, were it ever written, would be an illuminating testimony to the truth that the human mind, despite an intermittent resort to scepticism, prefers to believe, rather than to think. "The Law and the Prophets—New Style."—H. L. A. Hart, in the *New Age*.

Mass Attacks on Christianity.

In the *Sunday Chronicle* for January 23, on the front page, there are flaming headlines, such as "Christianity assailed by many enemies," and "Mass Attacks on Religion"; but when we come down to particulars we find that they scarcely justify the headlines. We read, e.g., "from all countries disturbing signs of the existence of a deliberate war on religion that is being waged with great energy. Anti-Christian demonstrations are being deliberately fomented, religious belief of all description is being violently assailed, and war on what is termed "the autocracy of God" is being openly proclaimed." The *Sunday Chronicle* is evidently pro-Christian, for it characterizes what is taking place as "a sinister movement to smash religion and destroy belief in its tenets." All this renewed Freethought propaganda is said to have been stirred up by the publication of a new book by the celebrated Danish critic, Dr. Georg Brandes, entitled, *Jesus a Myth*. Dr. Brandes has always been an ardent Freethinker, exerting a tremendous influence all over the Continent and in America. Now he assures us that the Gospel Jesus never lived at all, but was an invention, a legend. In this new book he does not give expression to any really original thought, but emphasizes the well-known view that "the figure of Christ was the pious myth of the writers of the Gospels." Then he comes to a Freethought commonplace, namely, that St. Paul, not Jesus, was the real founder of Christianity. The *Sunday Chronicle* says:—

A grave menace is to be found in the anti-religious Communist organizations designed to exterminate religion in all its forms. In Great Britain nearly half a million children are having their minds poisoned by the blasphemous doctrines preached at "Red" Sunday Schools. These schools have increased by 25 per cent. in the last four years, and they are still increasing. Some are openly advertised. Others are run secretly, often in the homes of notorious Communists. Among their teachings are the following: God is that power which man in his ignorance deems supernatural. Arise ye under-dogs. Down parson, priest and king. Cease praying for a bone. Use force and you will win.

Such teachings Christians naturally resent, and had they the power they would surely close all such Sunday Schools. And yet, in spite of all these powerful attacks upon the Christian religion, there is a well-known Vicar who remains utterly undismayed. The Rev. W. P. Bickford, Vicar of St. Clements Dane, London, and a popular preacher, says:—

It is most terrible that this sort of thing should be published, but Christianity has nothing to fear from such attacks. Religion can never be booted out. We shall always stand up for it, and there will always be found people who will die for it. What has lasted so long can withstand such attacks as this.

The *Sunday Chronicle* seem to think that a man like Vicar Bickford is equal to the task of disposing successfully of the present attacks upon religion, or if Mr. Bickford were to fail, there lives in Manchester a gigantic defender of the Faith, namely the Very Reverend Dean Hewlett Johnson. If we remember rightly this is the gentleman who, some months ago, lacked the courage to meet Mr. Chapman Cohen, editor of this paper, in public debate. In any case let us see what this dignitary of the Church has to say to the *Sunday Chronicle*:—

What the Christian religion has to fear to-day is not any widespread active and positive opposi-

tion, but indifference and ignorance. It often happens that those who attack Christianity have formed a wrong and jaundiced view of its teachings and meaning, and have thus mistaken their friend for an enemy. The trend of scientific thought is more sympathetic to Christianity than it has been for years, and is moving away from what was once a materialistic outlook.

Canon Peter Green is brief and to the point. He claimed that "the theory that Christ was a myth is, of course, derided by all educated people." The Canon knows perfectly well that his statement is a downright lie. Dr. Georg Brandes is a highly-educated man, who, after most careful consideration boldly calls the Gospel Jesus a myth, and there are scores of other thinkers, fully as well educated as Canon Green, who agree with Dr. Brandes. Canon Green, being a clergyman, is professionally bound to accept certain dogmas as true, however unconvinced of their truth his intellect may be. Dr. Brandes, however, is free to reject all dogmas which do not appear to him as true.

So far the only thing that has stood out as self-evidently true is the fact that not one of the three clergymen mentioned by the *Sunday Chronicle* has qualifications for adequately dealing with the present intellectual attacks upon the Christian faith. The man who states that science is assuming an attitude of friendliness towards religion understands neither science nor religion. Are Christian theologians aware that already science has made the belief in the historicity of the first chapters of Genesis absolutely impossible, and shown the hollowness of St. Paul's most cogent argument in the 5th of Romans? The theology which was acceptable to our forefathers of a hundred years ago is laughed at to-day as false as the astronomy of the first century. Mr. Bickford thinks the present violent attack upon religion will soon die down as all former attacks have done. The Dean of Manchester is of opinion that men like Dr. Brandes are the victims of some intellectual kink, and that all he and his friends have to fight are indifference and ignorance. That is the fundamental mistake which most, if not all, our theologians commit. Christianity is rooted and grounded in the supernatural, which is a realm not yet discovered by science. The existence of God cannot be demonstrated, while the action of God the Son in coming down to earth and assuming by an inconceivable miracle a Divine human career, is an anti-natural and impossible state of things. We challenge the theologians to prove that Christianity is a reasonable and believable religion as it is described in the New Testament.

According to the testimony of Dr. J. D. Jones, as supplied in the *British Weekly* for January 27, the chief theologian in Australia is Principal Rich, who is pronounced a scholar of high degree, but also a very vigorous, forceful Christian personality. He is a voracious reader; he is alive to the latest developments of philosophic and scientific thought. He is himself modern in his own outlook, but with all his scholarship and modernity, he keeps a firm grip on the essential evangelic verities, and is able to expound them with lucidity and peace." This made a most favourable impression upon Dr. Jones. But having read the article most carefully we find no possible escape from the conclusion that he is not competent to answer Dr. Brandes' arguments against the Christian faith. Here is a man born without a father; here is a woman who gave birth to a child without having ever known a man. Is such a story believable? We can but come to the conclusion that Dr. Brandes' arguments are abso-

lutely unanswerable, and that in consequence many well-educated and intelligent people will no longer even profess to believe in Christ. J. T. LLOYD.

Nebulous Nonsense.

The system which begins by making mental indolence a virtue and intellectual narrowness a part of sanctity, ends by putting a premium on something too like hypocrisy.—*John Morley.*

There is no darkness but ignorance.—*Shakespeare.*

IN his day, Macaulay noted the singular periodic manner in which the British public took up questions relating to religion and morality, and, incidentally, demanded some one's head on a charger. To-day John Bull scarcely remembers that he has a soul to save. Indeed, he is largely indifferent to those theosophical folk who assure him that he possesses seven principles, and no soul. Maybe, he is unaware that he has so many lodgers in his interior. Meanwhile, he is not driven to drink by remorse; but he reads novels, light literature, and newspapers; especially the latter, when the football prizes are on a generous scale. Another reason is the lower mentality of the clergy themselves. There are, no longer, great ecclesiastics; and it certainly cannot be said that the contemporary champions of Christendom show too much intellect in the production of religious books. Not for present-day clergymen are the rolling harmonies of Jeremy Taylor, the subtle cadences of Milton, the chastened utterances of Newman. They cannot even echo the plain, but excellent, language of Baxter or Bunyan. There is not an original idea in present-day theological literature. Everything is twenty-second hand, threadbare and bug-eaten; and the paucity and poverty of the prose emphasize the emptiness of their heads. Yet another cause of the decline of religious literature is the diffusion of Freethought. Ordinary men and women are no longer content to sit at the feet of the priest. Even the force of Puritanism has spent itself; it no longer inspires, but merely perspires.

The decline began in the last generation; and Spurgeon fulminated against the down-grade theologians. Brought up in a rigid school of Nonconformity, he realised that undogmatic religionism was nebulous nonsense, most unlikely to keep Christians in the fold. To-day, the only Christian body which tenaciously defends the old landmarks is the Roman Catholic Church. All other communities are hastily adapting themselves to changed conditions; and the English State Church has actually excised portions of the Christian Bible, and remodelled the Book of Common Prayer.

A striking example of the changed method of theologians is to be found in *Religion in the Making*, by Professor A. N. Whitehead (Cambridge University Press), a book which has received extravagant praise in the Press from the pens of journalists who ought to know better. The very title should have warned any writer capable of reflection; because there are a hundred religions, differing as widely as the North and South Poles. Yet Mr. Whitehead will have it that there is only one; and that one an invertebrate version of Christianity, almost unrecognisable by believer and unbeliever alike.

"The inspiration of religion lies in the history of religion," says the sapient Mr. Whitehead; and he adds, calmly: "By this, I mean that it is to be found in the primary expressions of the intuitions of the finest types of religious lives." But what are "the finest types of religious lives?" Religious types are as various as mankind itself. A lunatic

like St. Simeon Stylites is a type—of a sort. Torquemada is another. Joan of Arc is now regarded as a saint; but she was burned alive as a witch by the Christians of her day. Mahomet, slaying the infidels, is yet another type; so is "Woodbine Willie," making a collection. And was it "intuition," divine or otherwise, that caused Brigham Young to decide that twenty, and not forty, was the correct number of wives for a male believer?

Here, as the extracts show, Mr. Whitehead spreads the net too wide. It is a habit with him, for he says on another page: "If the modern world is to find God, it must find him through love, and not through fear; with the help of John, and not of Paul." This pontifical utterance disposes, "at one fell swoop," of nearly twenty centuries of Christian teaching; and ignores the whole trend of historical Christianity. By a few strokes of his pen, he destroys the Devil; and "puts the lid on" hell. It is a revolution, in Christian thought, which makes the Protestant Reformation seem but a nine days' wonder.

So loose, so inchoate, is Mr. Whitehead's theology, that it almost challenges comparison with Mrs. Eddy's rubbish, miscalled, "Christian Science." "The great religious conceptions which haunt the imaginations of civilized mankind are scenes of solitariness," says Mr. Whitehead; and he instances "Prometheus chained to his rock," and "the man on the cross" as being prominent examples. But, we fancy that civilized man does not lie awake at night worrying over Prometheus; and, if we are not mistaken, the Gospel records state that Christ was crucified between two thieves; which was almost as solitary as Clapham Junction Railway Station.

Mr. Whitehead is not always so playful, and sometimes he can be quite serious; as in his suggestion that the Christian God is a limited liability deity. To quote his own words:—

The limitation of God is his goodness. It is not true that God is in all respects infinite. If he were, he would be evil as well as good.

This is quite bright—for Mr. Whitehead. It is not original; for Freethinkers have said it thousands of times; but it is interesting to find a Christian exponent thus flattering sceptics. It is a pretty fashion, when it is done delicately. Some there are, however, who are not content with bestowing flattery which is unobtrusive, but they put it on with a trowel. The trouble with Christian theologians is that they know so little; they seem to have been born in a ginger-beer bottle, and never to have looked over the edge. Mr. Whitehead, for example, will have it that all men are religious. But by no conceivable trick of eugenics can men have been born with knowledge. Knowledge must be won by hard work, by varied experience, by patience. There is no royal road to knowledge, either by reading the *Christian World*, or in studying a history of the universe in fortnightly parts, or in perusing sermons about night clubs and cocktails.

The Freethinker, who has studied and revised the opinions thrust upon him in his years of adolescence, knows so much more than the mere student of sectarian literature. It is because he knows so much more that he does not always see the need of using words of elaborate respect towards complacent and even aggressive ignorance when he finds it in theologians of this post-war generation.

What is the sense of pretending that there is but one religion, when there are a hundred? or, of saying that there is but one god, when there are thousands? There are enough "sacred books" to fill a shelf in any library; why contend that the

Christian Bible is the only one? And what is gained by asserting that Christianity is "the religion of love," when priests have threatened unbelievers with "hell" right through the Christian era? A theologian may be famous, and know no more about reality than a Pekinese dog on a cushion. To write as Mr. Whitehead does is simply an attempt to perpetuate ignorance. And ignorance is a great breeder of strife and ill-will. The savage distrusts a stranger from another village; and the civilized man distrusts a foreigner. On the other hand, anything which advances real knowledge is a step forward for humanity; and should serve as another bond between man and man. Professor Whitehead reminds us of the young Cook's excursionist, who was waited on by an auburn-haired Parisienne, and who promptly wrote home to his parents: "All the chambermaids in France have red hair." It was a hasty generalisation, but Cook's excursionists, like professors, do not know everything. The most thoroughly equipped "professor" we have seen was a lion-tamer; and he was obliged to know his work.

MIMNERMUS.

The Pagan Roots of the Christian Creed.

(Continued from p. 54).

PART II.

We will next consider the Pagan roots of the Christian rites and mysteries.

Very few people realize the significance of the fact that every Christian, in the strict sense of the term, is a member of some church, society, fellowship, or brotherhood. That is to say, that the profession of Christianity implies the idea of membership, and a membership of so strict a nature as to necessitate a period of probation and initiation. Now, that was a noted trait of the cults of dying gods. The candidate for membership was first a catechumen or probationer, undergoing instruction and initiation in the mysteries of the new religion. When he was fully initiated he was baptised, crossed on the forehead, prayed for, and admitted to the full communion and privileges of the Church. That is to say, Christianity, like all the saviour cults, was essentially an esoteric religion, in which the celebration of mysteries formed a superlative part—indeed, the central item—of its ritual. This practice alone would be sufficient to identify Christianity with the cults of Dying Gods. It was by far the most conspicuous feature in the worship of Osiris, Attis, Adonis, Dionysos, and Mithras.

In very early times an animal was sacrificed during these observances and was eaten sacramentally. Later, the meal dwindled into a sacramental rite, or Eucharist, at which they renewed their religious vows and received secret knowledge and blessing. The terms "baptised," "communicant," and "initiated" are relics or fossils of Pagan times and Pagan thought. With Protestants, much or most of the reality of meaning and sincerity of belief has vanished, and the terms have become more or less formal; but in the Catholic Mass of to-day we have in a somewhat new guise, the celebration of the mysteries of Mithras perpetuated, and the Catholic party within the Church of England are straining every nerve to restore this piece of Paganism into its service. The sacramental meal or rite was so fundamental an item—so pivotal of its entire ritual—that it demands more than a passing allusion and calls for special notice.

The ceremony included the slaying of something as a sacrifice; but it must be particularly observed that the victim was not slain as a propitiation to appease an angry deity, as in the case of a primary God like Jupiter or Jahveh. It was not to atone or to expiate; it had altogether a different significance. Instead of being a gift or an offering to a god, the victim represented the God; indeed, when the priest had performed the mummary of consecration, it was not even its surrogate or substitute, but the very God itself. When, therefore, the victim was eaten and its blood drunk, the votary was eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the God. In this way the meal became a sacramental one.

It was in this eating of the flesh of the God and in this drinking of his blood that the value and efficacy of the rite consisted. Its sole meaning was not to expiate for sins, but to become possessed of the attributes and the virtues of the God.

There is no doubt, that, for long ages, the victim was a human being; and anyone wishing to make himself acquainted with the revolting brutalities committed in the observance of this rite should peruse works devoted to the subject, such as Fraser's "Golden Bough" or Robertson's "Pagan Christs." From these it will be learnt that the practice underwent a series of evolutionary changes. As the savage in man became progressively less assertive, the ritual became progressively less brutal. At first a king or a king's son would represent the deity; then a person noted for greatness or for piety; and at other times the sons of nobles. Then, successively, first borns, youths of exceptional beauty, volunteers, slaves; and, lastly, criminals were sacrificed as embodiments of the God. At the next stage animals were substituted; and, finally, the meal was eaten in symbol. Bread and wine were substituted for the flesh and blood of the victim, and the sacramental meal became a sacramental rite—that is an Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper.

Despite all these evolutionary changes and substitutions, the priestly fiction was perpetuated; even the bread and the wine were mystically changed by the mummary of the priest into the actual flesh and blood of the victim. The climax of the grotesquely absurd was reached in the Catholic wafer, which, though consisting of only one element, yet is said to be both the flesh and blood of the Lord. Thus, from first to last (from human victim to Catholic wafer) it is an act of theophagy or god-eating.

In the whole history of human agony I do not know of a chapter more gory and revolting, more replete with the sadness of suffering and the tragedy of barbaric ignorance than this self-deluded practice of god-eating. I am tempted, therefore, to quote a paragraph from Robertson's *Pagan Christs*, in which he epitomizes in his uniquely pithy and incisive style this tragical scene in the never-ending drama of the "martyrdom of man":—

Thus in an appallingly long-drawn evolution, summed up for the modern world in a symbol—the wafer—which to the uninstructed eye tells nothing of the dreadful truth, and presents a fable in its place. If to die as a human sacrifice for human beings be to deserve the highest human reverence, the Christs of the world are to be numbered not by units, but by millions, by thousands of millions: the truth is, indeed, too vast for translation. Thus have nameless men and women done, many millions of times, what is credited to the fabulous Jesus of the Christian Gospels: they have verily laid down their lives for the many: and while the imaginary sacrifice has been made the pretext of a historical religion during 2,000 years, the real sacrifices are uncommemorated save as infinitesimals in the records of anthropology. Twenty literatures vocifer-

ously proclaim the myth, and rivers of tears have been shed at the recital of it, while the monstrous and inexpugnable truth draws at most only a shudder from the student, when his conceptual knowledge becomes for him at moments a lightning-flash of concrete vision, through the awful vista of the human past. In a world which thus distributes its sympathies, a rational judgment of the historic evolution is not to be looked for, save among the few.

Delusion as to the course of religious history must long follow in the wake of the delusion which made the history possible.

Such are the biting, burning words in which Mr. Robertson finds expression for the sadness of soul which he feels when, in his high philosophical reverie, he meditates upon the incalculable sufferings endured by man on account of his religion. Again I repeat the Poet's immortal line:—"To such cursed deeds Religion does impel."

KERIDON.

(To be Continued.)

Acid Drops.

Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett has apparently touched a tender spot. In a contribution to the *Daily Express*, January 26, the distinguished writer stated that: "Around the person of the Pope are to be found clerics with the sinister features of those whose prototypes sent thousands to the stake in the name of the Lord during the Inquisition." This has aroused the ire of Mr. W. P. Mara, Hon. Secretary of the Westminster Catholic Federation, who protests most vigorously. We are not concerned overmuch with the protest or the accusation, but both will serve as a reminder to the shooting of Ferrer some few years ago. And this martyr's views, somewhat similar to the views of Dr. Stanton-Coit in this country, were objectionable to that go-ahead country of Spain. Catholicism might enjoy a better odour if it had no history. It might also be regarded seriously as a religion if the quality of its followers conformed with its quantity.

The Rev. T. P. Stevens, Vicar of St. Matthew's Church, New Kent Road, is going to publicly name women "scandalmongers" from the pulpit. This gentleman might read with advantage George Moore's novel, entitled, *The Lake*. Let brotherly and sisterly love continue.

We all know the absorbing interest which the Harmsworth and Beaverbrook Press takes in the Christian religion, and the effect it has on leading both firms to publish nothing but the most truthful and the most elevating of news. But we may gently suggest that some of its leading writers do require to know a little more about religion. For example, in a leading article on the Ancient Custom of Wassailing the Apples, the *Evening News* starts a paragraph in a leading article with "Our rude forefathers were pantheists. To any object of sufficient importance they ascribed a tutelary deity," etc. It will certainly come as news to, say, Sir James Frazer, that our rude ancestors were pantheists. We would humbly suggest to the *Evening News* that pantheism and polytheism are not synonymous terms. We have often said that the only difference between these journalistic scribblers and the man in the street, when dealing with subjects beyond the chronicling of mere news, is that the one is articulate and the other is inarticulate. And if the latter class merged into the former, we do not know that the world would be much the worse.

The British-Israel World Federation specialises in Bible prophecy. From one of its tracts we learn that British-Israel teaching establishes the identity of the

Anglo-Celto-Saxon race with Israel (not the Jews), that it clears up mysteries and makes the Bible a new book, and that it proves the inspiration of the Scriptures. It does many other wonderful things, too; it silences infidelity and shames the scorner; it has brought thousands (no less) of Atheists into the Christian fold. Fancy that, now, fancy that! Yet we had not noticed any marked decline of Atheists in the country. Indeed, we had thought there were more about than ever before. Strange, is it not, how this hallucination should cling to us? Maybe, though, British-Israel is misinformed, or merely indulging in the usual Christian prophecy that never gets fulfilled.

Birmingham University has invited the Rev. Carey Bonner to deliver lectures on "The Romance of the English Bible." We respectfully suggest to the University authorities, that some lectures by us on the "Truth about the English Bible" would, for the undergraduates, be more fruitfully educational.

Dr. Dimsdale Young says the supernatural birth of Christ is not a stumbling block to him. It is philosophically justifiable. If Jesus had not been born supernaturally, that would have been a stumbling block. He was a miracle in himself, and it therefore followed that he was born miraculously. The Doctor's quite inescapable logic stops the flow of ink in our critical pen, and we hurl it into the waste-paper basket.

The Bishop of Sodor and Man has had no holiday for two years, and has now been ordered by his doctor to go to the South of France for a month. Lucky man. He can manage to get a holiday more often than the Editor of a Freethought journal.

Prebendary Carlile, of the Church Army, intends tramping the country to get 1,000 men and women for missionary work at home and abroad. With the present unemployment figures standing so high, we should say he will get all the workers he needs. There are a good many harder jobs of earning a living than preaching.

Professor Peake has been nominated for the Presidency of the National Free Church Council. He is what is called a Modernist. The suggestion to place a Modernist at the head of the Free Churches is, says a contemporary, viewed with alarm by people who believe in the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God. The Christian sects do get some alarms in these days. One gang is affrighted at the growth of ritualism; another can't sleep o' nights because modernism is increasing. And all the various gangs are collectively appalled at the spread of unbelief. The Christian claims that his creed enables him to cast out all fear, nevertheless he seems always to be in a terrible funk about something or other. It seems a very sad world for the followers of the Prince of Peace.

Evangelicals who object to the proposed alteration of the Prayer-book told the bishops, "Your Lordships are in the dilemma of trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, because you and your predecessors have evaded your solemn obligation of taking measures for discouraging and penalising the teaching of Roman Catholic and Rationalistic error." By the tone of this protest one gathers that the kind of brotherhood the Christian creed engenders among its adherents, is a kind that the world can very well do without. God help the nations if it should become universal!

The Rev. Arthur Hallack, of the Congregational Union, recently invited some church workers to say what had brought them into "the service of the Master," and kept them there. Without exception, says a pious contemporary, it was the personal touch every time. One worker said that of two ministers who had influenced him, one would be ready to play cricket with

the boys at six o'clock in the mornings, and the other had corresponded with him throughout his life. Another worker stressed the fact that her old Sunday-school teacher had never lost touch with her. A minister said his desire to become a parson could be traced to a literary society and to the friendships he developed there. In every case the same story was told, namely, that the gregarious instinct of the young people had been exploited by the Church, to attract them into the fold and to keep them there. Our contemporary doesn't put the matter quite like that, but that is the plain truth of it. The young people have a natural desire for the company of their fellows, and they get it in the Churches. What the Churches do is merely to cover up the nature of this purely social instinct with a lot of slop about Christian brotherhood, and what not. The game, however, is not so easily worked with the new generation. It finds that it can get all the friendship and social intercourse it needs outside the Churches. That is one reason why the Churches are getting the cold shoulder.

Religion cannot be learned over the wireless, declares Dr. Hewlett Johnson. Certainly not! The leaders of the Churches who pushed the wireless service on to the B.B.C. are well aware of that. The service is there mainly as propaganda. It is concerned with advertising religion, with keeping the name of "the old firm" before the public. What the parsons are seeking to do is to arouse public interest, to create desire, and to get the apathetic man-in-the-street to sample the Churches' wonderful wares. They also hope to revive certain habits of thinking established in the uncritical years of childhood, but which so many adults have happily outgrown. This clerical publicity doesn't, we fancy, achieve what the propagandists hope for. For one thing, the wireless service affects the collection-plate adversely; for those who can listen to a sermon at home, in comfort don't see any point in trudging to church and paying for what they can get at home for nothing. In any case, the wireless parson is preaching to the converted, for those who listen are usually pious already. Again, those whom the parsons are most anxious to reach, the indifferent, don't listen. And so the results of our godly friend's activity can well be summed up as "love's labour lost." What a pity!

Dean Inge, having replied to some critics who had reproached him for engaging in journalism, the *Daily Mirror* gives the Dean a little bantering advice:—"Never apologise, never answer criticism!" Good old maxims, these, for any man engaged in public work—politics, journalism, or anything else of the kind. We are not so sure the Dean needs to go to a newspaper for such advice, when it is written so plainly in his Church's history. We rather fancy the Church was the originator of the good old maxims. Anyway, she has always acted upon them; and the politician and the journalist have snapped them up with avidity, having noted how usefully they have served the Bride of Christ.

Mr. Arthur Mee, the pious super-office boy of the Harmsworth Press, wants to save Sunday for the children. According to him the English Sunday has been the greatest single factor in shaping the character of the race. "It has given us time to think and time to rest." Fancy that, now! Apparently the "time to think" hasn't been sufficiently long enough for any really useful reflection to be done. For instance, the pious Englishmen of former generations never found time to think that slums could be dispensed with, that the workers' hours could be shortened and his working conditions improved, that wars were not necessary, and that various other things—crying evils—could be swept away. Before such notions as these entered the pious Englishman's head he had to dump a lot of his piety and cease doing his thinking inside a church or chapel. What is significant is this, that such social improvements as have been effected and such quickening of the public conscience as can be noted to-day, have come

about in an age when the majority of our leading thinkers, as well as of the people, no longer use the house of God for thinking in. If the results one can note are results directly attributable to deterioration of racial character (as Mr. Mee views it), we hope that character will continue deteriorating on the same lines.

The attitude of Christendom to the Jews, says a Methodist writer, has wavered between active hatred and passive contempt—the pogrom and the ghetto—since the famous Edict of Constantine in the fourth century. The weight of the Christian Church has been thrown into the scales on the side of persecution; and even in tolerant England the struggle of the Jews into freedom, religious and civic, was not completely successful until the latter half of the nineteenth century. We hope the Methodist reader took particular note of these statements. By themselves, however, they are not particularly illuminating to a Christian. What needs adding to them is, that the Christian creed it was that urged men to bloody persecution of the Jews, to segregate them into the ghetto, and to deny them civic justice. When one knows that fact, one can rightly estimate the noisy Christian claims made as to the wonderful benefits Christianity has given to the world. For sixteen hundred years the Christian has been slobbering about the Brotherhood of Man. For sixteen hundred years the Christian has malignantly persecuted the Jews. What a comment that is on the creed that is to save the world and bring in a Reign of Peace! And it was the creed that prompted the persecution—Christians should not be allowed to forget that.

Mr. Aldous Huxley, the novelist, has written a travel book, entitled *Jesting Pilate*; and his comments on India are not altogether a bouquet for India. "If I were an Indian millionaire," he writes, "I should leave all my money for the endowment of an Atheist Mission. . . One is all for religion until one visits a really religious country. Then one is all for drains, machinery, and the minimum wage." He has a very light touch for big matters; but perhaps Buddha's reputation will weather the storm of his remark that Ford seems a greater man than the founder of Buddhism. With all its defects, this philosophy has never identified itself with killing, under whatever pretext it may be done. In this respect all other religions might take a lesson.

In 1927, it is possible to read the following statement: "If the Christian Church is to be powerful throughout the world it must be confident that it has a message." This is the brave music of the distant drum; must we conclude that there has been an element of doubt in the message whose exponents disposed of objectors at Smithfield? And is there really room in the strident, forbidding and autocratic voice of authority for that little word "if"? Perish the thought! It must be a printer's error.

For those readers who are tired of cross-word puzzles, here is a counter attraction. An extract from *Religion in the Making*, a book by Alfred North Whitehead, runs as follows:—

The present type of order in the world has arisen from an unimaginable past, and it will find its grave in an unimaginable future. There remain the inexhaustible realm of abstract forms, and creativity, with its shifting character ever determined afresh by its own creatures, and God, upon whose wisdom all forms of order depend.

Compared with this a piece of coal, a slice of cake, an old hat, or a bent nail would be highly metaphysical. Lady Astor should be advised that there are other forms of excess in the country which howl for Prohibition—and probably Freethinkers would be the first to oppose it.

When we have stripped off a lot of the high-sounding words in connection with evolution and look about for proof it may be found in strange places. The late

Mrs. Agnes Moir Turnbull, wife of Sir Edward Hulton, left instructions that her funeral should be as simple and inexpensive as possible, with "a plain white wood coffin, no shell, no brass or silver handles—all these things I hate and look on as a remnant of barbarism." Meredith, when he wrote that woman would be the last creature to be civilized, would have to revise his opinion if he were alive now, and the savage in our midst is not likely to disappear in large numbers so long as 50,000 professional priests are on a pay-roll for the propagation of mumbo-jumboism—or is it mumbo jingoism?

When Sir Oliver Lodge waxes eloquent over the nebular hypothesis of theology, many people are annoyed and disappointed. When he keeps on his beat, like a good policeman, he is in the atmosphere of friendliness and familiarity. Writing of the coming solar eclipse in the *Daily News*, he states "It is impressive even to see an event arriving so accurately at the time predicted, and gives them some idea of the extreme accuracy of modern astronomy." Perhaps, when the distinguished scientist has time, he will try to assess in tangible terms the contribution of religions, plain and fancy, to modern astronomy.

Dean Inge, who is a few centuries less behind the times than his colleagues is to invite a medical officer to speak from the pulpit of St. Paul's, in October. May we suggest as a subject the discovery of chloroform and the brilliant opposition to its use by the clergy?

The Baptist Union, in its official report, states that there is a decrease of 283 Sunday-school Scholars, and also that there is a big drop in the number of teachers. This seems very unfortunate, particularly as everybody is so interested in religion, according to the papers, and the consequent revival—which will also be according to the papers.

The Rev. T. Hamilton, Vicar of Skellingthorpe, near Lincoln, is a brave fellow. Speaking at the annual dinner of the Lincoln and District Victuallers' Association, he declared that the association had done more for him in providing him with such a good feed than the whole bench of bishops had done all through his life. The spiritual sustenance dispensed by bishops will neither fatten nor fill, and is about as nourishing as the east wind, but the Rev. T. Hamilton, who, according to the *Church Times*, is not like other men, being endowed with ghostly powers, ought not to give attention to the claims of the body, nor raise public-house keepers above the level of bishops. It is not done in the best circles.

"I do not believe that Solomon was a good father, for the most diabolical proverb is the lying one which tells parents that to spare the rod is to spoil the child," says James Douglas, in the *Sunday Express*. James would be surprised to know three things—First, that "Proverbs", (xiii., 24), says nothing about "spoiling the child"; second, that Solomon was no more the author of "The Book of Proverbs" than Charlie Chaplin; and third, that, in any case, it doesn't matter what Solomon or "Proverbs," says.

A clergyman threatens to name backbiters and scandal-mongers in the pulpit, but why only those who are "in the pulpit?" Does that clergyman think that the list of backbiters and scandal-mongers in the pulpit is so big that he would have no time to name those backbiters and scandal-mongers who are not in the pulpit?

Michael Temple is not always attacking Secularism and sensible amusements; he appears, at present, in the guise of a book-reviewer. In a Sunday contemporary he quotes, without censure: "Like the servant's baby, it is only a little one." Mr. Temple had better be careful. He has established a reputation for piety; and

editors will not expect to be let down like this by so fastidious a Puritan.

With kind and gentle forbearance a writer in the *Daily News* points out that soft hats adopted by Bishops symbolise those humanising influences that mark the modern Bishop. This is keeping criticism within a safe area; and, perhaps, it is indicative of the level of seriousness that is being extended to those who are at present enjoying the limelight.

A Reuter press telegram reports that Chinese monks and nuns have formed a Trade-union; and have gone out on strike, demanding increased wages for prayers. Some two thousand of them paraded the streets with a view to letting the public know that the rates for prayers had gone up! Probably the public may retort by adopting the plan of payment by results. And that is a policy that would upset the men of God, whether in Britain, China, or Timbuctoo.

A lot is taken for granted by D. T. R. Glover in the *Daily News*. He states, of the Gospels, that they have the sheer humanity that makes them everybody's book. With the exception of many millions of Buddhists, Mahommedans, Confucians, Zoroastrians, and others too numerous to mention, the learned Doctor's statement is correct; or, at least, near enough for a daily paper.

The Rev. J. D. Jones, who writes, in the *Daily News*, about his "Jaunt Round the World," makes the alarming and highly original statement that there is nothing like travel for broadening a man's mind, and freeing him from insular prejudices. We agree. If the founder of Christianity or his immediate followers had had the same facilities for travel as are now offered, the doleful creed might have caused less trouble in the world.

The Birmingham Watch Committee, immortalised by the Houston Sisters on the Music-hall, ought to be warned about the drapers' advertisements now appearing in what are, euphemistically, called "newspapers." It is not so many centuries ago that a gift of a pair of silk stockings was indignantly refused by a Queen; their acceptance would have been an admission that she had legs.

An advertisement in a daily paper reads as follows: "If Old Common Sense ruled unchallenged, what a wonderful world this would be to be sure!" The advertisers need not be alarmed; it will not happen this year, or next. We are doing our best; but there are many active representatives of the middle ages in our midst.

The influence of Christianity in breeding a sweet and truthful type of character is well known to Freethinkers. So we are the more surprised to find no less a personage than Dean Inge saying that, "for sheer malice and misrepresentation the Anglo-Catholic papers took the cake." That is a splendid example of the purifying influence of Christian belief. And, even if Dean Inge is wrong, it only puts the boot on the other foot.

A woman told Mr. Justice Greer, at the Liverpool Assizes, that she didn't think she had been properly married because the ceremony had been performed at a Registry Office; and "there were no prayers, or anything." Mr. Justice Greer said it was difficult to fathom the state of ignorance in which some people in a civilized community might be. We advise Mr. Justice Greer to state his opinion on the ignorance, or malice, of those clergymen who are saying exactly the same kind of thing from the pulpit. We should, also, have liked Justice Greer to have pointed out that the civil marriage is the only marriage; and that when the marriage is performed by a parson it derives its legality from the fact that the parson is licensed by the civil power to perform marriages. Apart from this, the religious ceremony which accompanies marriage, even in a place of worship, is of no greater importance than jumping over a broomstick.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

WE are slowly making headway, although this week's list would look poor but for the handsome donation from Mr. Bamford. There will be a few more weeks before this special appeal closes, and we then shall remain silent until we make the final effort next autumn. But, during the few weeks that remain, we should like to see the total increased by another three or four hundred, which would leave us about the same sum to gather next year that has been gathered this. And then we should be able to claim, on behalf of the Trust, the £1,450 promised.

"J. Marshall, 5s," should have been acknowledged two or three weeks ago. It was left in the shop for us, but in the confusion and stress of the past month, was overlooked.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO DATE.

Previously acknowledged, £887 10s. 2d. P. G. Bamford (2nd sub.), £80; P. Terry, £1; J. Ekins, 5s.; V. H. S. (7th sub.), 5s.; W. Howells, £2 2s.; An Islay reader, 5s.; E. J. Rowland, 10s.; M. Cooper (2nd sub.), 10s.; Dinah, 2s. 6d.; R. W. Voss (S.A.), 5s.; Anon., £5; A. D. Corrick, £2; F. Watson, £1; W. Wearing, 10s.; J. Marshall, 5s. Total, £981 9s. 8d.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, and addressed to me at 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Every contribution will be acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*.
CHAPMAN COHEN.

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.

W. HOWELL.—We are obliged for contribution to Fund. Pleased to know that you so much enjoy the "feast" provided by the *Freethinker*.

S. COLEMAN.—We never said we are in doubt as to the existence of a God. Neither are we in doubt as to the existence of the Phoenix, or of Jack the Giant-Killer. We fancy we got rid of doubts about both at nearly the same age.

T. RAWLINSON.—When God did speak to people his communications appear to have been just about as valuable as the messages which spirits give to Spiritualists. In the case of God, he seems to have been chiefly interested in talking about himself. In a human being that kind of thing is called egotism.

J. E. SMEDLEY.—We agree with you that it is time much of the nonsense talked about Jesus was dropped. Sir R. A. Gregory's remarks on religion and science come under the same category—nonsense, sheer nonsense.

MRS. E. COOPER.—Pleased to welcome a prospective reader. We trust your acquaintance with the *Freethinker* will be a lengthy and a happy one.

W. WEARING.—We, too, would like to see Freethinkers more ready to publicly avow their opinions on religion. It is largely a matter of innate courage. A timid man will remain silent, a courageous one will speak at any cost—and there are more timid than bold folk about. That seems the philosophy of the subject. Still, we thoroughly appreciate what you say on the matter.

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 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd.," Clerkenwell Branch.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be the speaker at the Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, Birmingham, to-day (February 6). His subject will be: "What we pay for the Religion we Get," and the chair will be taken at 7 o'clock. We trust that local saints will make it a point to bring a Christian along with them.

Next Sunday (February 13), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Spinners' Hall, Bolton. He is taking for his subject: "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" And in view of the many newspaper articles on the subject the lecture should prove interesting.

At the Bromley Public Hall, to-day (February 6), at 7 o'clock, Mr. George Whitehead will give the first of a series of lectures arranged by the West Ham Branch. His subject is: "How Man Made God." Bromley Public Hall is in Bow Road, and trams and omnibuses from all parts of London pass the door. Admission is free.

We heard the other day from Mrs. G. W. Foote, who is living near her son, at Yeoville, Johannesburg, that she, too, has been suffering from the prevailing complaint of influenza. Happily she has now recovered. She adds that she would like to make the acquaintance of Freethinkers who live in or near Yeoville. This will, perhaps, meet their eye.

We regret that want of space compels us to hold over until next week the concluding portion of Mr. Mann's article, "The Descent into the Dark Ages."

The Rev. D. Morse-Boycott tells, in the *Referee*, how Knutsford Prison became a training centre for "ordinands" (which seems to be a word to describe men who are to be ordained to start in business on their own as clergymen). It appears that, since the war, Knutsford Prison has trained 400 young men for ordination. Doesn't Browning somewhere speak of

The pig-of-lead-like pressure

Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity?

But a prison that leads up towards the stars of cosy rectories, fat deaneries, and even to "the fatal opulence of bishops," must indeed be what Raleigh called "a golden prison."

The Pagan Setting of Early Christianity.

(Continued from page 77.)

The cult of the Emperor, which continued right down to the time of Constantine, had an organization like that of the Christian Church of later times. All over the Empire colleges or guilds of priests were founded to carry it on. They were graded according to the size of the area where they were stationed.

It was the cult of the Emperor that brought primitive Christianity into conflict with the Roman State. The Jews were privileged dissenters. The Emperors, with the exception of the mad Caligula, were content that this peculiar nation should offer a sacrifice to the God of Israel on their behalf. But the Christians, drawn as they were from every part of the Empire, and consequently unable to plead the bias of a long tradition, were liable to be persecuted as rebels. The sprinkling of a little incense on the altar of Rome and Augustus was deemed a decisive test of loyalty by many a Roman magistrate, and the refusal to obey convinced such that Christianity was but a veiled sedition, which could not be safely tolerated. Nevertheless, the test was not universally applied. Only two persecutions, those under Decius and Diocletian, affected the whole of the Church.

What the Church thought of the worship of the Emperor can be read in the Book of Revelation. The seven-headed beast of the thirteenth chapter, who is seen rising from the sea, is undoubtedly, meant for the Imperial power of Rome, and more especially for Nero, whose names, "Neron Kesar," in Hebrew, have the numerical value 666. To this beast the dragon (the Devil) gives "his power and his throne and great authority.....and the whole world wondered after the beast, and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying: "Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him? and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies."

Let us now turn from the official religion to those Mystery Cults which were changing the whole current of religious feeling and aspiration, and bore so many resemblances to Christianity, for whose triumph they prepared the way.

We have been so accustomed to look on Paganism as utterly alien to Christianity, something that Christianity sought to destroy, root and branch, not to assimilate, that the suggestion that the Christian Christ had anything in common with Osiris or Mithra must seem at first blush little short of a blasphemy. And yet such is the truth. One of the foremost Biblical critics, Professor Bacon, in his little book on *The Making of the New Testament*, speaking of the Pauline Christology, says that "whether Paul himself so conceived it or not, the Gentile world had no other moulds of thought wherein to formulate such a Christology than the current mythology of the Redeemer gods.....The influential religions of the time were those of personal redemption by mystic union with a dying and resurrected 'Saint-god,' with an Osiris, an Adonis, an Attis, a Mithra. Religions of this type were everywhere displacing the old national faiths."

All over the Roman Empire guilds and confraternities of every kind were springing up, some definitely religious, and others with professedly secular aims, though, in every case, carrying on their business under religious auspices. Of the secular class of guilds some, like the Greek *eranoi*, were free loan societies, but the majority appear to have been formed for providing their members with decent

burial or cremation. All or most of these organizations, whether secular or religious, established common meals or made arrangements for mutual hospitality. On a certain day in each month a special meeting was held—"The Lord's Assembly" (*agora kyria*)—in honour of the divine patron, to whom a hymn was sung. Some of these societies baptised members on admission, and required a confession of moral and other fitness.

The enlarged pantheon created by the Roman conquests supplied every variety of god for every variety of taste, so that the guilds had a wide range of choice. Many of the divinities worshipped by them belong to the class of Saviour Gods I have mentioned—beings who were believed to have undergone a mystical death and resurrection, and thereby to have guaranteed immortality to all who entered into communion with them. This class of gods had long been known in Egypt and the Nearer East. Rites of a vividly dramatic character set forth their agony and death, which were liturgically bewailed; thereafter songs of joy hailed their complete victory over the powers of darkness and the grave.

The myth of the suffering and resurrected Redeemer took a variety of forms, and his names were no less various. Adonis, the chief seat of whose worship was Northern Syria, was slain by a boar on Mount Lebanon. His death was mourned by his lover, the Goddess Aphrodite. At last she was able to obtain for him a return from the nether regions for a period of six months in every year, the rest of which he was compelled to spend below. He recalls the Babylonian Tammuz, whose departure to the ghost world was a theme for lamentation from an immemorial past. Ishtar, the Babylonian Aphrodite, revived her lover by pouring water over his corpse. Attis, who hailed from Phrygia, perished by self-castration, which provoked the bitter grief of Cybele, the great Mother of the Gods. But he, too, like Adonis and Tammuz, experienced a resurrection, and henceforth became Lord of the Underworld and Judge of the Dead. Osiris, whose cult went back to the dim beginnings of Egyptian civilization, was enticed by his wicked brother Set into a coffin, which the latter enclosed in a hollow tree. Isis, the divine wife and sister of Osiris, found and buried the body. But Set afterwards dismembered it. The scattered limbs of Osiris were then recovered by Isis, who gave each of them a separate grave. But Osiris triumphed over death, and, like several other Egyptian deities, begot himself as his own son, Horus, who avenged the death of his sire upon his dreadful foe. Osiris, like Attis, then became the Judge of the Dead in the underworld. The Greek Zagreus was torn to pieces in the shape of a young bull by his enemies the Titans, but was reborn as Dionysus of the virgin Semele, and afterwards ascended to heaven with his mother.

The dying and reviving Saviour-God stood originally for certain cosmic processes of a rythmical nature, which were conceived as bodying forth the conflict of superhuman persons with implacable foes, over whom they proved at last the victors. Gods of this type fall into two classes:—(1) Spirits of vegetation, and (2) Solar deities. Sir James Frazer, in his great work, *The Golden Bough*, has collected from all parts of the world a large number of instances of peasant magic connected with the sowing and reaping of the crops, whose purpose is the reviving of the waning powers of Nature. Cases are cited where the "Corn Spirit" is thought to be temporarily incarnate in an animal or human organism, which is slain and dismembered, part of it serving as food for the slayers, and the rest being buried in the fields, by way of securing fertility both to man and to the soil

he tills. The progress of civilization substitutes a symbolic for a literal killing. When this happens flesh is no longer eaten, but a dough image, or perhaps only a loaf of bread or some ears of wheat.

Death and resurrection are also associated in the primitive imagination with the course of the sun. The shortening of the days arouses the fear lest the source of light and life shall be finally extinguished by the powers of darkness, which seem to be gaining upon him. When the days begin to lengthen again hope is renewed. At the summer solstice (June 21), the daylight reaches its longest term, and the final triumph of the sun over the forces of the underworld is hailed by the anxious recipients of his blessings. This is his resurrection or rebirth. The form of the myth varies. Frequently the god is represented as descending to the lower regions, there to wrestle with death and his hosts; but after a severe conflict he "leads captivity captive," and returns in glory to his bright home in the sky. This drama of death and resurrection continually repeats itself, and barbarous and semi-barbarous communities seek to assist the sun and coerce his foe by magical ceremonies, just as they do in the case of agricultural processes.

Religion in the earlier stages of its development is largely, though not exclusively, concerned with the needs of the community. The stress laid on the worth of the individual and his happiness, present and future, is a gain and, in some respects, possibly a loss, which results from the breaking up of the more primitive social groupings, and from the greater complication of relations that is involved in the change. Spiritual values now emerge. Mysticism, which voices a craving to heal the rupture between the self and the non-self brought about by human evolution, now becomes the dominant religious note. Old rites are re-interpreted, and the language of bodily life is made to point to a life that is wholly transcendental. The god who from ancient times was held to die and to rise again, year by year, as the impersonation of the buried seed which flowers in due season, or of the sun overcoming the powers of darkness, now stands forth as the promise and pledge of immortality; and the ceremonies that once ensured a fruitful soil and a teeming womb now assist the soul on its journey through the gates of death, and fortify it against demons as it struggles to reach the regions of eternal light. As the god has proved victorious over his foes so shall the worshipper who has been mystically united with him share the divine victory, since the same life flows through both, making them a single essence.

The spiritual note is struck by all the Mystery Cults. The mystical language used in connection with the worship of the Saviour-Gods is often remarkably Christian in form as well as substance. "As surely as Osiris lives he too shall live; as surely as Osiris is not dead he too shall not die; as surely as Osiris is not annihilated he too shall not be annihilated." "I am become a divine being by the side of the birth-chamber of Osiris; I am brought forth with him; I renew my life." "Thou art in my heart; no one knows thee like thy son; thou hast initiated him in thy thought and power." "May I be merged in thy holy figure, have power through thy name; may thy saving influence flow through me; and may I now return home in possession of a divine nature." In the Egyptian Hermes Mystery two stages of initiation are distinguished. In the first the "old man" dies, and the candidate is thereby "justified through the absence of unrighteousness," while the second stage, that of "divinisation," is characterised by the birth of the "new man."

"Justified," "old man" and "new man" are familiar terms in Pauline theology.

By "mystery" (*mysterion*) as qualifying religions of this class is meant a divine secret revealed to certain persons under special conditions, the conditions including the performance of prescribed rites, and the utterance of sacred words of the nature of spells; the promise of better moral conduct in the future might or might not be exacted. The first stage of initiation into the Mysteries was generally a baptism. Removal of guilt and a new birth were believed to accrue from this rite. "Sea waves wash away sin," writes Euripides, alluding to the Eleusinian Mysteries.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH, B.A.

(To be Continued.)

Strange Tales.

THE patriarchs must have been tough old fellows when the world was young, for Lamech was 182 years old when he begat little Noah. After the young shipwright was weaned his father managed to survive for nearly 595 years, still peopling the land with numerous sons and daughters. The record states that all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died. Just what one might expect.

Young Noah was 500 years old when he began to father a family. No one can say that his wisdom-teeth were not cut by this time. He was careful not to be rushed into matrimony. He pondered the matter for five centuries—then arrived in quick succession Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Noah will always be remembered as the first great shipbuilder. Dug-outs and canoes of sorts may have been tried on the Euphrates before this, but Noah was the pioneer on a large scale. He worked under special instruction for the measurements were supplied by omnipotence. Noah laid the keel by infallible direction, and his crew and his cargo were at the behest of infinity. Never before or since has a captain of industry had such chances.

Really, I fancy, the sons of God were primarily responsible. On their frequent visits they found the ladies were fair to look upon. They fell in love—and weddings were celebrated. This annoyed Yahveh, for he confided to Noah his disgust with the whole population. He declared a desire to clear the "brod," wash the slate clean, and make a new start.

Noah was fortunate in being the favourite of the Almighty. During the 500 years of his youth, he must have refrained from those peccadilloes common to young men. The reward of his abstention is seen to-day. He and his omniscient adviser furnished plans for all the Caleb Plummers, and the Christmas toy-makers for numberless generations.

They measured by cubits in those days, and the dimensions were 300 × 50 × 30. It contained three stories, and there was one window for ventilation. As Ingersoll said: "If there was one hobby of Noah's, it was ventilation."

Noah never hurried himself in his craftsmanship. If a thing was worth doing, it would be done well. Shem and Ham would cut the gopher-wood, and little Japheth would help his father with the pitch—inside and out. The vessel was made watertight, for they expected wet weather.

And it did come down sure enough. After the pairs of specimens of all the known animals, birds, and insects, clean and unclean, had been marshalled, after the sons' wives had bidden good-bye to their depraved neighbours, after the gallant captain had

taken his stand on the bridge on the top storey, amid the fluttering of "hankies" and the hoarse bellows of the frontisaurus, the good ship rose on the tide, and the eight humans were off on their long voyage.

St. Swithin must have had charge of the weather, for it rained as never before—nor since—for six weeks. The water-supply of the universe was directed on our shameful planet. The windows of heaven were opened, and the heedless surplus population was wiped out. But Noah and his family were snug and secure, the caterpillars and the Polar bear enjoyed the twelvemonth cruise, for the Lord himself had fastened the door.

Then we have the subsidence, the sending forth of the raven and the dove, the gradual sinking, and our good ship grates on top of Mount Ararat. We know the ship rested on Ararat, for stones have been brought from that region. Noah was very pleased to be on dry-land once more, and celebrated the event taking a "drop o' the cratur." The spectacle was too much for Ham, who favoured the Rechabites. But Ham received his due reward for he was compelled to be the progenitor of all our Christy Minstrels. The pact was sealed by a display of all the colours of the first rainbow. Rainbows have been common ever since.

On the occasion of a flood in the Upper Thames Valley, a London editor wired a country correspondent to send details. "You will find them in Genesis" was the laconic reply. This must also be my answer to any doubting Thomas.

ALAN TYNDAL.

Correspondence.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Another Gospel has been discovered! It is alleged to have been written by one, "Joseph of Jerusalem," who claims to have been in association with Christ as an Apostle. It is asserted that the MS. constitutes the principal source from which the four Gospels were derived. This is as it may be. Until the experts have had a "go" at it, perhaps it might be premature to hazard an opinion. But it is about time that some new support were found for the discredited credentials of the Christian religion. We know that the priests of Christendom were past masters in the art of pious forgery; but certain of the llamas of Tibet have them badly beaten in this respect! These llamas are called Nyingmapa, or "the old ones" of the unreformed school. In order to support their claims as against the Gelugpa, or reformed school, they pretended to discover scriptures which they called the "Terma," or hidden revelations, in caves and other secret places. The number of these "Terma" was oracularly fixed at 108, of which about 30 have been produced so far, thus leaving a handsome margin against future contingencies. Verily, the ways of priestcraft are the same all the world over!

E. J. LAMEL.

FREETHOUGHT AND FREEMASONRY.

SIR,—It is quite obvious that neither of your correspondents, "Omega" and Harold Scudder, knows anything of the character or the work of the Freemasonry of the Grand Orient of France.

However, I thank Omega for having made plain to the readers of the *Freethinker* the interpretation of the word "Freemasonry," accepted by the Grand Lodge of England in contradistinction to that accepted by the Grand Orient of France. Who is right? Up to now Grand Lodge has always refused to attend any international Masonic congress; while at Geneva nearly all

the Masonic bodies outside the Anglo-Saxon lodges have decided to adopt a version, nearly word for word, of the definition of Freemasonry as given in my first letter. This, for the very good reason that it is the faithful, modern rendering of Anderson's Constitution of 1717. I will not, however, abuse the hospitality of the *Freethinker* by starting a polemic on the subject. It is sufficient for us that "Omega" has shown that people who have a horror of dogmas cannot join English lodges while they may easily join us.

As to the title of Freemason we are not likely to drop it, as we base our right to it on historical facts. I should like to mention, that if "Omega" challenges our right to the title, his Grand Lodge has not always been so particular, seeing that only recently it accepted *en bloc*, bag and baggage, a dissident French lodge in Wales that used to work under the Grand Orient of France, all the members of which had been made and constituted Masons under its charter.

The Grand Orient of France knows nothing and cares nothing about "Omega's" Great Architect of the Universe. It has not time to waste on such trivialities and such humbug; it has more important work to do.

As to our being half-hearted Freethinkers, I wonder if "Omega" calls Voltaire half-hearted. Voltaire, let me inform him, was a Freemason. So we are in good company.

With regard to Harold Scudder's letter, let me repeat that he is talking about English Freemasonry, whereas my letter referred to the Freemasonry of the Grand Orient of France—an entirely different proposition. If he will make enquiries he will find that the two things are as poles apart.

In the meantime, I hasten to say that I am, in spirit, in thorough agreement with him.

1. It is admitted that English Freemasonry is an expensive business. Such expense justifies his criticism that Freemasonry is not free economically, and I quite agree with him. If, however, he will make enquiries of the Secretary of the Lodge of the Grand Orient of France established in London, he will learn that the fees are not expensive. The annual subscription is at present thirty shillings.

2. Regarding sincerity in taking the oath of which he speaks, his experience relates only to English Freemasonry. I ask him, before condemning all Freemasonry, to make further enquiries.

3. The Freemasonry of the Grand Orient of France knows nothing and cares nothing about the Great Architect of the Universe.

It resolutely opposes such anti-social arrangements as "pushing people into office against candidates of superior merit in every respect that bears upon the actual duties to be performed."

4. Calling Freemasonry a "secret society" is a crafty, jesuitical trick and a sheer fabrication of the enemy (*le cléricalisme, c'est l'ennemi*), and it was on account of this that in my first letter I used advisedly the words "what are known as secret societies." For there is, let me assure him, very little of importance that is "secret." If he will take the trouble to make further enquiries he will find out that in this respect, also, he is once more absolutely "off the map."

ALPHA.

GREETINGS.

SIR,—The letter from Mr. Hands, in your issue of the 23rd inst., was a pleasant assurance that one's fears were unfounded.

His long absence from the *Freethinker* was in a measure understood, yet, under the circumstances, it was not ruled out that he might play one of his funny jokes by taking his ectoplasmic body to the second plane with the intention, after a little education, of visiting the *Freethinker* office:—"Cohen! behold the ghost of a heretic!"

Unfortunately for the *Freethinker* he will take his cap and bells with him, and, with a harp of Thought, sing "On with the Motley"; or with Omar, philosophize, "Make game of that which makes as much of Thee."

A. S. E. PANTOR.

BURNS AND THE DORIC.

SIR,—I read, first thing, last week, Mimmernus' spirited remarks on Robert Burns—what a name and fame to conjure with, to inspire even the Southern pen! We can, however, have too much of that "hiccupping Highlander." It seems to me the chief contribution of the Highlands to the Lowlands is that of parsons and policemen. The simple piety and superstition of the shieling give us the first; the rude fare and rude health of the bens and glens give us the stalwart officers we know. Many of the latter retain their faith to the last, but with most, perhaps—like our doctors—learning the intimate and matter-of-fact of life, in crime and disease, sophistication sets in, and they become Freethinkers, if unawaged; keeping their counsel, and doing their duty with outward conformity—the fate of so many in other walks of life! One quiet, zealous sergeant I know said to me: The next world is "just a myth; death is the end."

Now, with regard to Burns and the Doric: it would be simply impossible to render the delicious flavour, superb sarcasm, and quaint humour of, say, *Death and Doctor Hornbook* in the English tongue. Even "A fond kiss and then we sever" is a Doric line. In "A farewell, alas, for ever" the valedictory word is sounded and sensed as "fareweel"; so with other nuances. Burns *could* write prettily in pure English, but his more delicious—there is no word to express it—note is in the Doric.

ANDREW MILLAR.

A REQUEST.

SIR,—May I crave space in your columns to inform all whom it may interest that I am no longer associated with the Non-Political Metropolitan Secular Society, of which I have hitherto been Treasurer and Organizing Secretary?

B. A. LEMAINÉ.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING, HELD ON JANUARY 27.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

The attendance was small in consequence of the present epidemic of influenza; but there were present: Messrs. Coles, Moss, Rosetti and Wood, Mrs. Quinton and Miss Kough. The Secretary, Miss Vance, was still absent on account of indisposition.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for Birmingham, South London and West Ham Branches and the Parent Society.

The business of the evening was chiefly the receiving of reports on various matters, amongst these being the refusal of the Kensington officials to let the local Town Hall again for the Society's lectures.

Birmingham Branch reported a successful meeting on the occasion of Mr. Ratcliffe's visit.

Instructions were given for the preliminary arrangements for Mr. Whitehead's summer tour on the lines of former years.

It was further reported that the Annual Dinner, although the attendance was smaller, had been one of the most successful ever held.

The Executive learned, with regret, of the death of an esteemed member of the Society, Mr. Samuel Holman, of Porth, and tendered their sympathy to his family.

A Donation of £2 2s. was voted to the Society for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, and the meeting adjourned.

K. B. K.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

In spite of the handicap of a severe cold, Mr. Ratcliffe bravely tackled his subject last Sunday, and gave us a most interesting and discussion-provoking address on the subject of "Freedom."

It was pointed out by the Hon. Secretary that very excellent notices of Mr. Bedborough's recent lecture

had been given in two of the St. Pancras papers, thus showing that these meetings were creating an impression on the local inhabitants; and Mr. Ratcliffe kindly promised to try and get reports of the North London meetings into the same papers for the rest of the session.

K. B. K.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Monday, January 24, Mr. Fred Mann, Secretary of the Glasgow Branch, lectured to the Glasgow Ethical Society on "The Meaning of Materialism." Mr. Mann's lecture was an outline of the articles on Materialism, by Mr. Cohen, printed in the *Freethinker*, in 1926. Considerable time was devoted to discussion.

The number of members and friends at the meetings of the Branch on Sunday last testified to Mr. Whitehead's popularity. Glasgow had suffered very severely from the gale, which swept over the country on Thursday night and Friday; and on Sunday "the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth." But, in spite of all Jehovah could do, Mr. Whitehead had attentive and enthusiastic audiences. An amusing incident occurred during the discussion following; Mr. Whitehead's lecture at the evening meeting. A Spiritualist asserted that the spirits had raised a piano from the ground at his request. Mr. Whitehead pointed to the piano in the hall, and invited the Spiritualist to request his "spooky" friends to play with it. Amid loud laughter, the Spiritualist decided that the "conditions" were not quite "right."

On Sunday (February 6), there will be a public discussion on "Should We Believe in a Personal God?" The debates will be, affirmative—Mr. J. Grant (Christian Theist); negative—Mr. Fred Mann. Admission is free.

F. M.

Obituary.

It is, with sincere regret, that we have to record the death of Mr. Samuel Holman, of Porth. Mr. Holman had been a loyal soldier of Freethought all his life, and was well known in the part of South Wales in which he lived. He was even tempered, persistent, outspoken, and well informed on most of the subjects at issue between Freethinkers and Christians. He was fond of saying that he delighted to have a conversation with an intelligent Christian, but whimsically added, that one seldom came his way.

He stood high in the estimation of all who knew him, and was beloved by the members of his family. His son, in the letter which brings the news of his death, bears strong testimony to his behaviour as a parent, and from what we know, we can well believe the tribute deserved. One of his last requests was to have the current issue of the *Freethinker* read to him, after which he said he would sleep awhile. He awakened once more and then fell asleep again, during which peaceful end came. His death removes a notable figure from the ranks of Welsh Freethinkers, but his life leaves a memory which may well incite others to tread the same path.

"You'll be a baby again—a bald, red-faced little animal; and then you'll go through it all again. There'll be millions of others like you—all with their mouths open, squalling for food. And then, when you get a little older, you'll begin to learn things—and you'll learn all the wrong things; and learn them all in the wrong way. You'll eat the wrong food, and wear the wrong clothes; and you'll live in swarming dens, where there's no light, and no air. You'll learn to be a liar, and a bully, and a braggart, and a coward, and a sneak. You'll learn to fear the sunlight; and to hate beauty. By that time, you'll be ready for school. There, they'll tell you the truth about a great many things that you don't give a damn about; and they'll tell you lies about all the things you ought to know; and, about all the things you want to know, they'll tell you nothing at all."—Lieutenant Charles to Mr. Zerl, in the *Adding Machine*. By Elmer L. Rice. Heinemann (1923).

An Eminent Exegetist.

THE *Morning Post* discussion on religion is fizzling out. "Fizzling" is the correct word; for it has been a very damp squib indeed; and far from having been, as it was intended to be, a stimulus for Christian thought. All that it seems to have accomplished is to have involved the *Morning Post* in a squabble with the *Catholic Herald*, which was of opinion that the Catholics were not given a fair show; though they had as good an innings as anyone else. Here I must make a slight correction of what I said last week to the effect that sceptics were barred out. One mild, extremely mild, letter of an anti-, or rather, non-religious flavouring was admitted. This much, at any rate, stands to the credit of the Correspondence Editor of the *Morning Post*.

For the rest, the only letter of outstanding interest was that in which Professor H. L. Goudge summed up the whole correspondence on January 15.

The Rev. Henry Leighton Goudge, M.A., D.D., is a Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, and Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. He is described as an "eminent exegetist"; that is to say, one skilled in the interpretation of the Scriptures. He should, therefore, be an authority within his own province, and know what he is writing about in respect of the Christian superstition.

Professor Goudge imagines that an educated Frenchman, if he knew nothing of England, would be profoundly surprised. "He would expect a discussion upon religion to resolve itself at once into a battle royal between those who accept the teaching of the Church, and those who are violently opposed to religion of every kind. . . He would expect both sides quickly to get to grips on the fundamental issues." "But he would find nothing that he expected." Of course, he wouldn't! But when he discovered that there was a tacit understanding between the Church and the Press that the opponents of religious superstition should not be allowed to "get to grips," and that the fundamental issues should not be discussed, he would be surprised no longer; unless it were at the cowardice and hypocrisy of the newspaper proprietors and their editors.

Professor Goudge says of the muzzled opponents of Christianity, that "they lack the intellectual basis which Christianity provides." We deny that Christianity provides an intellectual basis, or that it possesses any! Here is a fundamental issue to start with, which, we may be perfectly sure, will not be taken up in the Press at large, and certainly not in the columns of the *Freethinker*.

Professor Goudge offers several suggestions. Orthodoxy, he says, should never be either attacked or defended without an explanation as to what is understood by it. We are not concerned with the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of the various Christian sects. We challenge the whole teaching of each and every one of them about "God," Jesus Christ, the human "soul," "salvation," heaven and hell, and post-mortem existence. We declare that they know nothing whatever about these things; and that their statements concerning them are baseless assumptions.

We go further, and say that the "divinity" of which Professor Goudge is an exponent is no more a genuine science than was the inspection of entrails by the Roman augurs. In this view we are strengthened by Professor Goudge's statement that "modern scientific and critical inquiry has rendered it impossible to believe in the infallibility of Scripture or in the historical character of the story of the Fall." Quite so! The books of the Bible are just a

collection of human documents, with no more claim to "divine inspiration" than the Buddhist Pitakas; and the story of Jesus Christ is just as mythical as that of the Hindu Krishna. If the "Fall" never took place, it is perfectly clear that there was no necessity for an "Atonement"; and so the whole, elaborate superstructure of Christian hocus-pocus comes down with a crash. If it had any "intellectual basis" before, it has none now!

The Professor asks: "Can we believe that God is love?" Certainly not! We cannot believe in what no-one knows anything about. He continues: "If anyone will read the First Epistle of St. John he will find that the assertion that God is Love is based wholly upon the Incarnation and the Cross; not upon the world as at first we view it, but upon what God has done to alter it, and our experience of the reality of His redemptive activity." Now, what in the name of sanity does this mean?

John tells us that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"—which is just as much as a sun-worshipper might have said. ". . . and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,"—which might refer equally to the blood-bath of a human sacrifice. We are also told that there were many "anti-Christ" about, namely, those who did not see eye to eye with John and his friends; and they are described as "liars" in the loving way characteristic of Christians since the beginning of their history. There are, at the opening of the fourth chapter, several verses of interest to Spiritualists, to the effect that the only reliable "spirits" are Christian. In the same chapter God is defined as love. For the rest, apart from certain moral aphorisms of a general nature, we are somewhat at a loss to know what John is driving at; that is, if we take his epistle as it stands, by itself. In the light of the remainder of the New Testament legend it becomes more clear. The world had got, apparently, into such an infernal mess (if not through the "Fall," how then?) that God had to do something to put it right; "to alter it," as Professor Goudge says. We can imagine the dilemma the poor, old gentleman was in. Having created a world, or caused it to evolve or something, the damned thing went all wrong! Being always partial to the blood of animals as a propitiation, this god would now have the blood of a human being. And the manner of his death should not be different from that suffered by many thousands of others at that time, namely, a somewhat painful one upon a cross. Surely a "loving" god might have devised something less drastic! God is love, says the Professor, quoting John. There is no evidence of it here. Anyway, we are told, it was done; but the human sacrifice, so we are further told, was none other than the god himself! Then lo! and behold! there arise a lot of "anti-Christ"; the world, to judge from its subsequent history, is no better than it was before; and the vast mass of the human race continues to go to hell!

Is not this the veriest balderdash of nonsense? It is not even sane.

It will not do, Professor Goudge! These stories passed muster in a less civilized age; they were accepted in the ignorant, credulous centuries that are past; but they will not stand the test of ordinary common-sense to-day. They do not belong to modern times. They are anachronisms. In the form in which the Churches still persist in putting them forward, they are an affront to our intelligence. They are a reproach to modern civilization. We know better; and, what makes it worse, the more educated of the clergy also know better; as Professor Goudge's admissions illustrate.

Yet we find the Bishop of London writing a letter to the *Times* of January 17 on "The Future of Japan," in which he says the Japanese "are clever enough to know that our civilization has been built up for 1,600 years" on the Christian Faith. I am sufficiently well acquainted with the Japanese to be certain that they are clever enough to know that this is the very reverse of the truth; and, though I am not acquainted with him at all, I suspect "A. F. London" to have written that characteristic bit of clerical clap-trap with his tongue in his cheek.

The Japanese are as well aware as we are of the fact—which the Chinese are beginning to realize also—that modern civilization is founded, not upon the conclusions of "divines" as to the meaning of certain ancient writings of unknown authorship, handed down from a pre-scientific age, but upon the achievements of its finest intellects operating in the ever-extending fields of scientific research, in face of the bitterest opposition from the Christian Faith.

The truth is, we are advancing into the Age of Secularism, when men will no longer waste their time in fruitless discussions about *nothing*—for this is what "God" really amounts to. We look forward to the time—though we of this generation will not see it—when the voice of the priest will no longer be heard in the land, darkening counsel; but when men shall devote themselves, not to the service of a mythical God, in the hope of an imaginary hereafter, but to the betterment of the world they live in. Then, with one-tenth of the effort expended in trying to solve the insoluble, humanity will indeed be "saved"—from the ignorance, stupidity, superstition and barbarism which make it rather more like the Christian "hell" than the "heaven" it otherwise might be.

Will the "free" Press of this still priest- and parson-ridden country allow these questions thus to be discussed in its "impartial" columns? It will not. And so Professor Goudge's hypothetical Frenchman will continue to be surprised that no forthright reply is forthcoming—unless he reads the *Freethinker*!

R. J. LAMEL.

Omar Khayyam.

(Added Verses).

AND wherefore, then, should you and I be sad
Because to Life no Wisdom we can add?
This is true Wisdom as it seems to me,
Grief cannot change the World, therefore be glad.
Not always shall this Prison wall us in,
So cease to preach that Wine and Love are sin.
How long shall old Creeds fetter us, or new?
When We are gone, then let he mad World spin.
Out of the Dark has been our journeying,
Life is a Bead for no-one knows what String.
It is the Darkness in Man's Soul that speaks,
The Light, remains, a secret, hidden Thing.
So drink! for this blue, sullen Vault of Sky
Hates our White Souls, and waits to watch us die.
Rest on the soft, green Grass, my Love, for soon
We shall be Dust together, you and I.

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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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster, S.W.1): 3.30, Lecture in French, by Monsieur Maurice Thiéry, B. ès L.Ph., on "Les Idées de Jean-Jacques Rousseau sur L'Éducation." All invited.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.45, a Lecture, by Mr. F. C. Saphin, "Serpent Worship."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Dr. Stella Churchill, L.C.C., "Social Service: its Use and Abuse."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W.): 7, Mr. E. Baker, "Modern Psychology."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.5): 7.30, Mr. George Saville, "Dope."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., "The Psychology of Dreams."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bromley Public Hall), February 6, Mr. G. Whitehead, "How Man Made God," at 7 p.m. Collection.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.

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BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street, S.E.): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, of London, "What We Pay for the Religion We Get." Questions and discussion invited.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Public Debate, "Should We Believe in a Personal God?" Affirmative, Mr. J. Grant; negative, Mr. Fred Mann. Questions. Silver Collection.

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