

WITCH DOCTORS IN LONDON.

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Views and Opinions.

Witch Doctors in London.

SOMEWHERE about forty years ago, just before I started work in connection with the National Secular Society, I recall scandalizing the more respectable members of an institution with which I was then connected, by opening a discussion with the proposition that all forms of religious belief, no matter how "purified" or refined, embodied in their essential elements pure savagery. At that time I was fresh from the study of Tylor and Spencer, and similar writers, and the proposition seemed to me to be self-evident, once the facts were known and understood. I recall also the strong and indignant protests that were raised, and rank these among my earliest lessons in the difficulty of making the unready mind recognise the obvious. Since that time I have, in one form or another, repeated that proposition very many times, and in the whole course of my reading have never found a single fact that would lead me to withdraw, or even modify it. Of course there is a way of defining religion so as to make this proposition untrue. If you define religion without regard either to its origin or history, if you leave out of sight all that people have always meant by the essentials of religion, and put on one side also all that the overwhelming majority still understand by it, and if you make religion consist in something that is not religion at all, and never will be religion, then you can say that it is not of necessity a form of savagery projected into civilized times. And if you count on the mental haziness of the average man and woman, and their disinclination to break with the established respectabilities of their time, you may safely reckon upon receiving considerable support. But then you must not be troubled with an ever-present perception of the meaning and extent of historical and anthropological research. A sense of truth, and of the nature of "true" religion, is a terrible obstacle in the way of these easy-going generalisations.

Africa in London.

Now, there is no exception to the rule that among savages the universal theory of disease is that it is caused by some evil spirit, and is to be cured by some form of magic. Any standard work on anthropology will provide numerous illustrations, the main outlines being as follow. The precise nature of the illness being determined, the next thing is to discover the kind of evil spirit that has produced it, and the kind of helpful one that will provide the cure. To find this out the medicine man is called in, and he, after prayer, or incantation, or divination, or a mixture of the three, effects the cure. With many savage tribes there is a sort of general clearing-house for disease, once a year, when certain spirits are then invoked to help to drive out any disease that may exist, and to prevent any illness affecting the village during the ensuing twelve months. North, South, East and West, primitive life, past and present, display these general features. Whatever variations there are refer to form, not to substance. Now, instead of taking a tribe in Central Africa, or the customs traced by digging into the life of primitive humanity elsewhere, I want my readers to imagine themselves in the Church of St. Etheldreda, Ely Place, London, on February 3, 1927. According to the *Daily Express*, the church on that day was so crowded that the crypt had to be opened to accommodate the overflow. There were "elderly business men, poor charwomen, male and female clerks, school-children, well-dressed women," all kinds were represented. People who had any kind of a sore throat, or feared having a sore throat, were there in force. It was the festival of St. Blaise, and St. Blaise is the patron saint of those so afflicted. So, after the presiding medicine man had gone through an incantation, the people knelt and repeated, with the London witch doctor, the following prayer:—

O Glorious St. Blaise, who, with a short prayer, did restore to perfect safety a child at the point of death from a fish-bone fixed in its throat, grant that we may all feel the power of thy patronage in every malady of the throat.

And then the priest held two candles in the form of a cross, and touched the throats of the kneeling suppliants, saying to each, "May the Lord deliver you from the Evil of the Throat and from every other evil." So, in some way or the other, St. Blaise having, so runs the truthful Christian tradition, miraculously removed a fish-bone from the throat of a suffocating child, is expected to use his influence with the "Lord," and get him to protect his people from the "Evil of the Throat." Central Africa thus shakes hands with Ely Place. The African witch-doctor embraces, in spirit, the incumbent of St. Etheldreda. If Nora O'Grady and the Colonel's lady are the same under the skin, who shall deny the kinship of the African and the English parson?

The Englishman gets a bigger salary, he performs in a more elaborate building, he and his patrons wear more clothes than is the fashion in the African forest, but, in their mental outlook, in their state of "spiritual" development, they are identical.

* * *

Unity in Ignorance.

Could one wish for a clearer illustration of the truth that religion, whether found in uncivilized Africa, or in civilized England, is substantially the same? Suppose one were to read an account in the papers that a society of coloured people had established itself in this country, and at one of their meetings a fowl had been sacrificed for the purpose of scaring away sickness. One can imagine the leading articles that would be written, and the morals that would be drawn. Are the proceedings at St. Etheldreda's a whit more rational or defensible? Have we any reason to feel less ashamed of the one than of the other? And then, let us remember, that this is not an obscure or foreign sect. St. Etheldreda's is part of the Church established by law. The King is, by law, the head of the Church. It levies tithes from all sorts of people for the maintenance of its services, its representatives sit in the House of Lords, and claim to have a dominating voice in the training of the young. There is no doubting the sincerity of those people who met to invite the aid of a dead and gone "Saint" to cure their sore throats. They were far more genuine in their religion than are the numerous apologists and preachers, who try to make religion mean what it never has meant and never can honestly mean. Theirs is genuine religion. Such scenes as those described by the *Daily Express* help us to understand what religion really means. It helps us to appreciate the truth of the proposition that religion is savagery, no matter how elaborate the ceremonial, or how refined the language used by the professors.

* * *

Real Christianity.

Let us also bear in mind that this is a specimen of genuine, undiluted Christianity. It is found in the Old Testament and in the New. "Our Lord" treated disease in substantially the same manner as did the witch-doctor at St. Etheldreda's, with his crossed candles and pious incantation. The Catholic Church sells its charms to cure diseases, and places reliance on the relics of saints and in prayers offered to them. The Church of England provides a set form by which the priest shall drive away disease, and gives the authoritative assurance that, no matter what the complaint may be, the one sure thing is that it is "God's visitation." Healing missions up and down the country repeat the scenes of the African forest, differing only in the language used. And it was in virtue of this that the Christian Church did what it could to destroy the medical science of antiquity, and to hand the care of the sick over to dirty, half-maniacal monks and priests. The great Origen said that it was demons that produced famine, pestilence and disease. St. Augustine said that all diseases of Christians were to be attributed to demons. The priest of St. Etheldreda, with his crowd of mentally undeveloped believers, trying to cure a sore throat with an incantation and a couple of crossed candles, excites attention to-day only because a more civilized thought has left this kind of Christian pharmacopœia in a nutshell; and this, with the Christian neglect of sanitation and cleanliness, helps us to understand why, during the Christian ages of the world, plagues and pestilences were such frequent and such deadly visitors.

The Survival of the Savage.

After all, St. Etheldreda's is only an example of the general thesis. The other day the *Church Times* was wrath with someone who had related the case of a woman who had taken home a crumb or two of the Holy Sacrament and "adored" it in her own room. In some strange way it was felt that this was stupid and unforgivable. But was there really anything substantially different in the the savage who goes through his rain-making dance and the present-day Christian who prays to his deity to send rain on a particular locality? Is there any difference between a savage chief, who, before going to war, leads his men to some "sacred" spot and asks his tribal Joss to give him victory, and a modern prelate, offering up prayers for our success in war, or blessing battleships, or consecrating battle flags? Deeper still, is there any substantial difference between the savage who pictures the world as controlled by a number of huge magnified men, and the modern believer who reduces the many to one, and then divests the surviving figure of its most obvious human characteristics, retaining the less grossly material ones of personality and intelligence? The one is derived from the other. It is the savage who is the parent of them all, and in the end it is to the more primitive forms of human intelligence that religion appeals. That is the one consideration which gives the proceedings of St. Etheldreda and its witch-doctor significance.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Grant Allen's Masterpiece.

Who loveth not his brother at his side,
How can he love a dim dream deified?

—James Thomson.

They lie at the lips of the priest.—Swinburne.

GRANT ALLEN deserved well of his generation; for his finest and most suggestive work was that of a populariser of science. He fell, early, under the domination of the master-minds of Darwin and Spencer; and he never tired of bringing their teaching before popular readers. Grant Allen was not a specialist; but he had an excellent acquaintance with science; and he had a most attractive gift of interpretation. "The Saint Paul of Darwinism," someone dubbed him; and, certainly, his power of popularising the great scientist's teaching was remarkable.

Unlike most scholars, Grant Allen knew, not only the world of books, but also, the book of the world; a distinction with a great difference. The variety of his early experience was extraordinary. Before he was twenty-five, he knew Canada, England, and the West Indies. He was educated in America, in Dieppe, in Birmingham, and at Oxford. He also had experience in the Indian Statistical Department.

All this varied experience, of men and affairs, was turned to account in his writings. His papers on biology, philosophy, evolution, botany, and kindred subjects, were bright and readable; even, at times, amusing. As a rule, when scientists try to be humorous, the result is, "too deep for tears." This racy gift of Allen's made him suspect in some dull scientific circles. Serious pedants professed to scorn his scientific journalism. They despised the star-gossip of Richard Proctor; on the same grounds, preferring, presumably, the turgid terminology of the lamented Dionysius Lardner; whose chaste and unreadable volumes used to cumber booksellers' four-penny boxes, alongside such similar light reading as Zimmerman *On Solitude*, and Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*.

Whether the scientists felt that, having gained their knowledge by years of hard work, it was prodigal to give it away so easily; or, whether the old clerical spirit had found a new lodgment, may be open to question. Nothing appeared to irritate some of the authors of ponderous monographs so much as having their life-work made intelligible to their countrymen. But Grant Allen "hoisted the engineers with their own"—gunpowder. He opened up a new universe to tens of thousands; with a charm all its own.

Who, that came, fresh, to the study of science, could say an ungrateful word of the author of *Carving a Coconut*, *The Æsthetic Analysis of an Egyptian Obelisk*, *The Romance of a Wayside Weed*, *The Daisy's Pedigree*, or of scores of other delightful and informative papers? He awakened a new interest; and, unconsciously, led the unsuspecting reader through a scientific course. In entrancing chapters, Grant Allen led the large reading public to understand the mysteries, which, expressed in the esoteric language of specialists, else had remained comparatively unknown.

Now, thanks to Grant Allen, and, later, to Sir E. Ray Lankester, the ordinary reader has a clear idea of the labours of the scientists; and, it may be, sees the tendency of those movements, more clearly than those who, with technical knowledge, dissect the old faiths, whilst still worshipping the goddess Grundy.

Grant Allen carried his weight of learning gracefully. Though prejudiced against the classics, he produced a translation, with an anthropological introduction, of Catullus's most famous poem. From the lofty region of thought and scholarship, it is a sharp curve to turn to Grant Allen, the novelist. In the days of threadbare plots, it was a pleasure to find Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Kipling, rivalled, in their romances, by facts from the laboratory; and by problems from the researches of scientists.

Towards the end of his career, Allen wrote certain "hill-top" novels, penned purely for didactic purposes. *The Woman Who Did* and *The British Barbarians* caused a huge sensation; but, owing to clerical influence, the sale of Allen's other novels dropped. The Irish booksellers, living in a priest-ridden country, refused to sell these books; and Allen found, to his cost, that propagating advanced opinions was not "roses all the way."

Theology has always met strange bed-fellows; and one is not surprised to find versatile Grant Allen among the theologians. He was justly proud of being one of the first to apply seriously evolutionary theories to the belief in deity. In his preface to his masterpiece, *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, he said:—

It contains, I believe, the first extended effort, that has yet been made, to trace the genesis of the belief in God from its earliest origin in the mind of primitive man up to its fullest development in advanced, and etherealised, Christian theology.

It was an honest attempt to explain a big matter; and Allen had his reward. The book made a deep impression; and Herbert Spencer wrote:—

I congratulate you on its achievement. I had no idea you had been devoting such an immensity of labour and research to the subject. The bringing together of the evidence in a coherent form, and showing its bearing on the current creed, can scarcely fail to have a great effect.

The master's tribute was deserved.

In Allen's powerful book, the whole theistic question is reduced to the limits of a nutshell. He

shows quite clearly that the Christian idea of deity is but a residuum. The attenuated deity is what is left when the other gods of the Pantheon are broken to pieces, and ground to powder. A bubble is blown with real soapsuds, but it grows ever thinner, and more transparent; and is most beautiful when it is at the point of breaking. The attractiveness does not save it; it breaks and disappears.

Allen met with great opposition on account of his book, which was the finest iconoclastic work since Paine's *Age of Reason*. Publishers, who were simply money-making tradesmen, feared to offend their customers; and would not allow him to give full expression to his advanced ideas. Science, pure and simple, did not pay; and never has paid. Novel-writing, to which he was forced to turn, had to be carried on within absurd and galling restrictions. Publishers wanted "smooth tales, generally of love."

The last kind of work, in which Allen exercised his versatile pen, was art criticism, and guide-book writing. His papers on Italian art are as valuable as they are interesting; and, in his series of *Historic Cities*, he showed what a guide-book should be.

No religious ceremony was permitted at his funeral. It would have been an outrage on his life, and teaching, if any theological invocation had been intoned over his dead body. His life was a battle against creeds and conventions; he lived free of such bonds; and he died free of them.

It is something to have helped the people to grasp the teachings of science.

Allen called himself a disciple of the great scientists of his generation; but, in popularising the work of these specialists, he made an enviable reputation; and what writer desires more?

MIMNERMUS.

"The Disparagement of Theology."

SUCH is the title of the leading article in the *British Weekly* of February 3, written by Professor J. G. McKenzie, M.A., B.D., of Paton College, Nottingham.

Naturally, Professor McKenzie deploras the growing neglect of theology. It is a great grief to him that the "Queen of the Sciences has fallen on evil days." Curiously enough, the chief objection to theology comes from popular preachers; and yet, every sermon which they preach is based on theology; apart from which there is no Gospel to preach. Hating theology as we do, we must, still, agree with Professor McKenzie, when he holds that "the preacher who has no theology has simply nothing to say; and is likely to take a long time in saying it; he is like the hack journalist, at the mercy of passing events for his topics; he must wait for somebody to say something before he can have anything to say."

God and Christ are theological concepts; and to talk about them at all is to talk theology. Then our essayist adds:—

Instead of deriding and ridiculing theology, some of us see, in the want of theology, the tragedy of the Church to-day. Let any one turn to the last chapter in Graham Wallas's *Our Social Heritage*; and the confused babblings of the preachers, which he has culled from sermons and articles in our religious weeklies, will help him to understand why the Church, or rather the preacher, is failing to grip our intelligent youth and middle age, when the storm and stress of adolescence has passed. He will find, moreover, that the cause is—not a theology that hides Jesus, but the lack of one that will present Jesus as a living, dynamic, vitalizing interpre-

tation of ultimate Reality—the one sure guarantee that we are not in an orphaned universe nor a pathless universe, but in one shot through with meaning.

Mr. McKenzie has already made himself responsible for statements which are absolutely incapable of verification. What earnest thinker ever described the universe as either "orphaned" or "pathless"? but Christians call it both for all who have not given their hearts to Christ, and taken his yoke upon them. We are told that "there is no necessity for theology to rationalize Jesus. Its function is to make him reasonable."

Theology cannot really perform miracles; and yet the mightiest of miracles must have taken place in the creation of a Divine-human person, of two distinct natures; one Divine, and the other human. Yet, believing in such an irrational and impossible being, Mr. McKenzie says:—

Our faith is a reasonable faith, our Christ is an intelligible Christ.

We maintain, without fear of intelligent contradiction, that the Christian creed is essentially anti-natural; and immoral. There is no Christ of history; for he has never lived at all except in the belief of his disciples. At this point Mr. McKenzie breaks new ground:—

All religious experience has an objective reference, that is to say it implies an object—God, Christ, Brahm, Allah. Is that object real? Is the Christ of History a possible object of experience to-day? That is a fundamental question for the preacher. Psychology can help us to understand what the subjective experience of Christ is; it can guarantee that the experience is real for the individual; but it has no means of passing judgment as to whether our experience is an outcome of contact with a real objective Christ, or God. Dreams are real experiences; but they have no objective reference. Theology, alone, can help the preacher here; its subject matter is our religious experience, looked at from the side of God. Theology, alone, can tell us what kind of God our experience in Christ implies; and it thus becomes, or may become, the truest expression of our religious life.

In reality, no evidence whatever is offered of the objective existence of the God with whom Christians claim to enjoy closest fellowship in prayer. The experience may be perfectly sincere; but, at best, the communion is with persons believed, but not *known*, to exist.

Mr. McKenzie tries to show that the man, who enjoys what he believes to be communion with God, is superior in ripeness and sublimity of character to the man who does not. Theologians have, recently, often indulged in the delicate comparison. Mr. McKenzie does it very gently:—

Men *have felt* as well as believed that, somehow, that central figure (Christ) made them one with God; gave them a new meaning and value to life. As Professor Pratt has finely put it: "When one compares the deeply religious and spiritual person with the best and bravest of those who are not religious, one sees, it must be confessed, that the former possesses something which the others lack. . . . He has a confidence in the universe, and an inner joy which the other does not know."

Of course, such a comparison is grossly unfair, for it is made by representatives of one side only. To be fair, it would have to be conducted on purely scientific lines, by fairly selected representatives of both sides.

Mr. McKenzie makes frequent references to Psychology, but our readers are aware that religion is treated as a department of Abnormal Psychology; and that the great Psychologists do not believe in the

soul. This is specially true of Professor McDougall, one of the greatest Psychologists the world has yet seen. Mr. McKenzie does not quote from Psychology, nor does he mention a single Psychologist by name.

Mr. McKenzie is a professional theologian, whose duty it is to make an attempt to train young people for the Christian ministry; and no doubt the training concentrates on theology. He says:—

Theology may be the preacher's best friend. Its task to-day is what the preacher is waiting for—the task of validating our experience in Christ; and, thus, giving authoritative conviction to the preacher; the task of showing that our experience of Christ does make a contribution to our understanding of God, the Soul, the World. Life demands, from the humblest of us, toil, labour, sacrifice, renunciation; and we cannot help asking ourselves whether it is worth the toil and labour. If the Church's experience of Christ can be validated, if God is eternally what Christ was, then the word may be preached again with power.

One may ask the preacher a few pertinent questions. How does he know what Jesus was like, since the accounts of him in the Gospels are so vague, contradictory, and misleading? As he knows well, many scholars are convinced that he never lived at all; others aver that the documents are so full of legends, that it is utterly impossible to be sure what he was like. With all this uncertainty, to say the least, about Jesus, how can anybody learn anything about God through him?

Mr. McKenzie speaks of God in terms of such intimacy as to lead one to take it for granted that God and he are next-door neighbours. As a matter of simple fact, however, Mr. McKenzie and ourselves are in the same boat of complete ignorance; and we boldly defy him to prove to the world that we are wrong. We candidly admit his sincerity in imagining that he does possess knowledge; but the misfortune is, that he does not discern that faith and knowledge are, by no means, synonymous terms.

Millions *believe* in God; but not one knows him. Not one has ever seen his form; not one has ever heard his voice.

It follows, inevitably, that rejection of God leads to renunciation of the Christian religion; and all other religions whatsoever. That is why the churches are emptying. Belief in God and Christ is, slowly but surely, dying out; that explains, fully, the indifference, of the crowds to all religious matters.

When the People's sense of duty to God has disappeared, their sense of duty to themselves will awaken, and become imperatively active; and urge them to tackle, and solve, the problems which now lie between them and Paradise. J. T. LLOYD.

ORIGINALITY AND ASCETICISM.

.....If we study the history of asceticism we shall not find many of its pages illuminated by the evidences of brilliant originality; rather the reverse. The main function of the religious celibate was to preserve, as pure and undefiled as possible, the truths discovered or revealed by others—a habit of mind which in itself was not calculated to promote independent thinking, unless it had the stimulus of comparison and contrast, either Platonic or Aristotelean. The monks who moved the world in which they lived were those who either cut themselves adrift from ascetic policy or very lightly identified themselves with it: Luther, Loyola, Rabelais, Charron. True, St. Francis and Savonarola exercised a deep influence in their day, but the former, like St. Augustine, had already lived the life of the senses; besides, their contribution to thought has nothing very striking in it; both were moral rather than intellectual forces.—*T. Sharper Knowlson* ("Originality").

The Descent into the Dark Ages.

(Continued from p. 75).

In spite of all its terrible crimes and cruelties the age was profoundly religious. As Sir Samuel Dill observes:—

The deepest, most urgent interest of this brief life was to ensure the soul's safety from the terrors of the eternal; and that could be done only through the sacraments and intercessions of the Church and the saints. The most terrible fate that could befall any man was to forfeit communion with that Divine society in whose hands lay the issues of life and death. The most criminal and abandoned sinner believed and trembled, even in the act of crime. He might be destitute even of a germ of conscience; he might be without pity or natural remorse for the greatest enormities; but he never ceased to cling to the Church and to believe in the necessity of her sacramental acts and prayers, and absolution; and in the efficacy of relics and miracles. Dill. *Roman Society in Gaul in the Merovingian Age.* (p. 477.)

Between us and the early Middle Ages, says Sir Samuel, "there is a gulf which the most supple imagination can hardly hope to pass." (p. 397.) And again: "No modern man, perhaps hardly even the most devout Catholic of the present day, can ever put himself in the attitude of that submissive yet creative faith." (p. 416.) "To anyone," continues the historian, "with reverence for a historic faith, it is painful to dwell on what seems a degradation of the religious sentiment. . . The future life was imaged in the strongest, coarsest, colours of the senses. To secure its bliss, or to escape its eternal torments, became the deepest concern of man here below."

To be cut off from the Church was, therefore, the most awful fate that could befall a man; a fate dreaded by the most hardened sinner, who would give up anything to be reconciled with her, except his sins. And the Church, never unmerciful to human nature, was ready to be reconciled by penitence and, above all, by lavish donations. The amount of such gifts in the sixth and seventh centuries, known to us by documents still extant, is stupendous. And the motive, often boldly and expressly avowed, is to save the soul from punishment; or to purchase happiness in the next world.

. . . In making such lavish benefactions, the donor felt perfectly assured that he was covering a multitude of sins. (p. 425.)

And yet, although religion was the mainspring and guiding principle of life, and believed in with a passionate intensity compared with which our present day faith presents but a pale and shadowy phosphorescence, never has the world witnessed such an age of utter wickedness, of such savage and triumphant cruelty, of such utter lack of regard for truth and honour, or of such contempt for all rules of morality and good government. As our historian observes: "Worldly ambition, greed, violence, and vice are seen side by side with humble piety, with mystical devotion, or with an almost inhuman asceticism," (p. 278.) All those who read this volume, will agree with him that "the moral picture of the Merovingian age is often truly appalling." (p. 279.)

After relating some of the abominable sexual crimes perpetuated by these pious Merovingians, the historian observes:—

The reckless impulse of sensuality, however, does not excite so much surprise as the perfidy and unblushing perjury of that age of religious awe. Perjury is common enough in some of our own courts of law; but the perjurer now only fears

prosecution before an earthly judge, with a possible temporal penalty. In the sixth century men were taught that the false oath was constantly and immediately punished by God or by His saints with the most terrible bodily afflictions in this world; and would certainly incur far more awful punishment in the world to come. Every famous altar or martyr's shrine had its tales of supernatural vengeance for the desecrated oath. . . Men, the most depraved, believed these things and trembled. And yet, from the King on the throne to the meanest peasant, we find men constantly braving all these terrors as they raised their hands above the holy relics in an oath which they meant to violate. The inference is, not that their faith was weak, but that greed was stronger than faith, and braved even the final sentence of exclusion from Divine Grace. (pp. 291-292.)

After citing several flagrant instances of perjury, Sir Samuel remarks: "It would be tedious to go through the long list of perjuries committed by the kings and their great subjects in this age. It would seem that oaths were often taken only to deceive and to be broken. The most binding, sworn obligations were constantly disowned and flung to the winds. . . The Divine Judge and Avenger was more distant than the earthly revengeful foe." (pp. 293-294.) "There is another reason for this flagrant disregard of truth and honour, which our historian has forgotten to mention, in this connection, although he mentions it in connection with the growth of the wealth of the Church. That is, the belief, sedulously inculcated by the priests, in the power of the Church to obtain remission of sins:

The reverence for the ascetic life, and the belief that, by lavish gifts, sin could be wiped out, and happiness purchased in the world to come, if they did not create, fortified and enriched many a religious house, so that, in the fifteenth century, the orders which were vowed to poverty had become the largest landlords in Europe. (p. 364.)

And, again:—

To purchase "remissio peccatorum" (pardon for sin), and a "merces futura" was the confessed inspiration of many a bequest by pious, or by guilty, souls. Charters of donations and many a passage in Gregory of Tours, Fortunatus, and the Lives of the Saints record this motive of pious gifts. The Frank kings and queens, Clovis and Childebert I., Guntram, Clothilde, Bathilde, and Dagobert, endowed many shrines of saints with wide domains all over Gaul. . . Such churches as those of S. Denys and Le Mans, S. Julian's of Auvergne, and S. Martin's of Tours, must, as time went on, have become possessors of estates that might surpass the measure of the largest lay fortune. There was probably some justification for the complaint of Chilperic I., that, in his day, the public treasury was impoverished; all wealth had passed into the hands of the Church. (pp. 440-441.)

Sir Samuel gives details of the wealth and magnificence of some of the churches. "Nothing is clearer," he says, "in our authorities than that the churches of that time were sumptuously decorated," and "the movable wealth of an important church was often very great for those days." (pp. 448-449.) "In making such lavish benefactions the donor felt perfectly assured that he was covering a multitude of sins." (p. 425.)

And what was the condition of the people at this time? According to Catholic historians, the people were never so prosperous, contented and happy as they were during the Middle Ages, when the Church was supreme. Our historian has another tale to tell. He tells us:—

The common people of Merovingian times were of small account in the eyes of the kings and their

great officers and nobles. The fragmentary chronicles of the time are chiefly concerned with nobles and kings. Yet, carefully examined, they yield, now and then, some glimpses of the life of the common mass; its tragedies, its grinding poverty and diseases; its perils by road and river, its trading life in country towns. The most penetrating imagination, with the fullest learning, could never wake to life that dim, sunken mass of people who dragged out their lives in servitude and indigence, with no hope, and probably no desire, of any change. (p. 235.)

And again: "The poverty of that age seems to have been appalling. The most lavish rhetoric could hardly exaggerate the pinching want which afflicted an immense mass of the population. It meets our eyes on nearly every page of the saints' lives; and in the Acts of the Councils of the Church. Incessant wars, devastating vast regions, must have reduced to begging the humbler country folk, or thrown them into captivity." (p. 254.) "And yet no stern moralist points the contrast between the dissolute luxury of the court and the miseries of the common people. No sense of responsibility for their subjects' welfare seems to have stirred in the minds of the new rulers of Europe." (p. 298.) As he laments: "The 'Roman peace,' which gave the world almost unexampled calm and prosperity has vanished. . . The long tranquility of the Roman sway ended in the violence and darkness of the Middle Age." (pp. 306-307.) And that age was an age of Faith and Religion.

W. MANN.

Acid Drops.

It will be remembered that some weeks ago we called attention to the way in which the extra-territorial rights of the English and others in China were made use of by the missionaries. In that connection the following, paragraph 7, of the proposals to China, just issued by the Government, will be of interest:—

7. His Majesty's Government are prepared to accept the principle that British missionaries should no longer claim the right to purchase land in the interior, that Chinese converts should look to Chinese law and not to treaties for protection, and that missionary educational and medical institutions will conform to Chinese laws and regulations applying to similar Chinese institutions.

In plain English this means that the British missionaries may no longer acquire land in any part of the Empire, against the wishes of the Chinese authorities, that the institutions owned by the missionary societies may no longer hold themselves above the Chinese regulations concerning inspection, etc., and that Chinese who become converts may no longer be held as outside Chinese law. As it stands, the different missionary stations and institutions owe no obligations to Chinese law; they cannot be brought before a Chinese court for anything they do, and any Chinese who has broken the law need only become converted to Christianity to set it at defiance. All things considered, and seeing the advantage that any native blackguard gains by proclaiming himself a Christian, seeing also the eager way in which Christian Evangelists snap at any "bad egg" in order to make their reports attractive, bearing in mind these things it says something for the Chinese character that so few of them have embraced Christianity.

It is of some little interest to learn that "The First Supreme Convocation of Buddhists" has just been held in Moscow. The purpose is said to be to draw up a constitution for forming rules to govern a body of priests who shall practise "pure Buddhism." Buddhism, in its pure form is a completely Atheistic system. It knows nothing of a God, and denies individual immortality. It is as far above Christianity, intellectually, as the philosophy of evolution is above the ranting of a

Methodist parson. And it has always had an attraction for a number of the more intellectual Europeans. Something of a similar movement was contemplated in this country, but nothing appears to have come of it—at least, nothing of a public character.

According to the President of the Baptist Union, Baptists in Rumania are denied equality before the law; the denomination and its local churches are not recognised by the Government. Baptist preachers are forbidden to preach; and those who ignore the ministerial edict have been subjected to fines, imprisonment and flogging. Evidently, the Christians of Rumania are exhibiting the same degree of love for one another, and the same species of tolerance, that have, everywhere, been marked characteristics of Christianity in practice. Now if Christians persecute their brother Christians in this fashion, what sort of treatment do they reserve for Freethinkers in Rumania? We should greatly like an answer to this question. But we can guess pretty well what it would be likely to be. For we know the Christian animal and the kind of love he has for free speech.

Having settled so many other things, Mussolini has now turned his attention to religion. He says, "I do not believe that science can manage to explain the wherefore of phenomena. I believe there will always remain a region of mystery, before which the human mind must bow, and on which it must write this word, God." Our Italian Bolshevist might have found something, more original than this, to say. It is only what all the Churches have said age after age. What he is saying is, in plain English that, *if* there is a region of impenetrable mystery, and, if there is an admitted region concerning which we must confess complete and irremovable ignorance, then, over that region, we must write the word "God." But, as we are not living in Italy, it may be permitted to us to say that he is only telling us what the Atheist has always told the world; namely, that "God" has never stood for anything else than human ignorance.

Miss Christabel Pankhurst says that she goes about with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. The lady has evidently developed a taste for fiction, but we are not aware that the kind of fiction she prefers is of public interest.

There is nothing more peculiar than Christian notions of what constitutes evidence. We have become so used to Christians citing themselves as evidence of their own excellence that very few appear to notice it. Thus, quite recently, a report was published in the English papers of processions of Chinese Christians asking for the complete withdrawal of European control over Chinese territory. For fear this would diminish the income of the missionary societies—which is about the one tender spot with these bodies—The London Missionary Society cabled to its chief agent asking all about it. The reply was, naturally, just what was wanted. The posters published were prepared by Christians, but they have no relation to the China National Christian Council. So the dupes at home may continue to subscribe in comfort.

It never appears to strike those for whom this information is published, that the testimony to be of any value should have come from an independent source. We agree that if one wants a really good testimonial it is better to write it oneself, but all the outside testimony is rather important. And, anyway, the testimony is suicidal. If the Chinese are not able to look after themselves the uplifting effects of Christianity are not very evident. If they are, the resentment of foreign control is only what one may expect. Perhaps some little good might be done if the missionaries were all, by some miracle, made honest and intelligent for a few years, and could get their followers out of the stupid condition of assuming that all people, who do not talk as we do, dress as we do, and think as we do, are not necessarily savages. The prevalence of this impression is one of the indications of the reaction of Christianity upon sociology.

Verily, the Church has fallen upon evil times. There was never a time when evidences on behalf of Christianity were so badly needed as they are at present; and never was there a time when it was so difficult to foist them on the public. The latest failure in this direction is the discovery, announced some time ago, of a primitive fifth gospel by "Joseph of Jerusalem"; which was said to be the basis of our existing gospels. An Italian, named Moccio, was the owner of this wonderful work. And now we see that the owner of the MS. is charged with forging it; and runs some danger of being arrested. What a change from the times when this kind of thing was manufactured as it was needed, and accepted without question! That was indeed the golden age of Christianity.

A Methodist writer says that Christ has given him insight that enables him to see the truth in many things he once called heresy; and to find inspiration in what he used to call profane literature. We fancy the good man is mistaken. What has happened is that he has shed some of his narrow Methodist pietism; and can now view things with a broader mind. He has shed one of his Christian blinkers; and can just begin, timidly, to see clearly a part of the world around him. Perhaps, if he tries hard enough, he may manage to dislodge the blinker on his other eye.

"It Fits All Souls," runs a British and Foreign Bible Society's advertisement of the Bible. We must have an "outsize" in souls; for we would never manage to make it fit, even with the aid of a shoe-horn. And, judging by the groans that the pious are giving vent to over the growth of unbelief, there must be several millions of our fellow-countrymen in like difficulty.

When John Wesley made one of the notes of his Societies, "We think and let think," says the Editor of the *Methodist Recorder*, he put himself in line with the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, who contended for the right of private judgment. We don't agree. If Wesley took "we think and let think" for his motto, he, emphatically, didn't walk in step with the Protestant Reformers. They were not, in the least, concerned with letting others think. Their motto was, "We think; and we persecute all who dare think otherwise." Anyway, if they didn't formulate such a motto in words, they certainly acted on some such principle. The Editor gives us an inkling of why they acted thus. He says that the right the Reformers claimed was not some childish claim to think as you please. No one can establish a right to think otherwise than according to truth. And, in religion, there was common ground of appeal in the Scriptures; the Scriptures had a revelation for all. The right of private judgment was to listen to the voice of God which is heard there. This is another way of saying that the Reformers would tolerate only those who would hear the same "voice of God" as they heard. They denied to any other man the right to think otherwise than according to what they thought was truth. That is, exactly, how all the murdering brood of religious fanatics have argued. True freedom of thought never had any meaning for them; and, judging by this Methodist editor's further statements, we should say it has no meaning for the Reformers' modern descendants.

The Archbishop of Canterbury must have a pretty sense of humour. He says that the Church Mission to the Jews "is an act of reparation, before God, for the treatment of the Jews in this country, in the East, and in some parts of Europe, even in the present day." Now that is, really, funny! As a means of making up to the Jews of the present, for the tortures and ill-usage, by Christians, of Jews, in the past, the Archbishop offers to give them the religion which led to their ill-treatment. That is humour; even though it be of the sardonic variety. For our part, we are inclined to agree with

Heine that the Jews took a terrible revenge, in anticipation of all they were to suffer, when they gave to the Christians the Jewish God. If one were to assume that the mediæval Christians were reflecting persons, Heine's theory might well account for the persecution of the Jews. And the Christians, when they saw the sort of God that the Jews had given them, might well accuse them of beginning the attack.

The *Church Times* is not satisfied with the League of Nations. The fault is that "it is not definitely Christian." That is the best thing that has been said of it. The *Church Times* also says, "nothing will save mankind from the ravages of war, unless it gets the sanction of religion." Well; seeing that nearly all wars have, up to the present, received the sanction of religion, and that many have been directly inspired by it, and merely made worse when religion has entered into them, we beg to offer our humble compliments to our contemporary on its superb and unapproachable cheek.

The Church of England, we learn, has a Prayer Circle of 120,000 members, pledged to pray daily for a religious revival in England. Poor God! Have these Anglicans no pity? How would they like to be forced to listen to forty-three million prayers, and all on one topic, in the course of a year? We shouldn't be surprised if, in exasperation, God sends another half-crazy Redeemer to scatter the wits of his faithful people, just to avert the awful torrent of petition and to get a little peace for a while.

The time when Christians will form one beautiful brotherhood seems a long way off. Protestant Evangelicals are organizing a Protestant Parsons' Pilgrimage in nearly one hundred principal towns and cities in England, in order to voice their opposition to the Church of England's proposed alterations to the Prayer-book. One would imagine that even the dullest of Christians ought to begin to wonder if there is something radically wrong with the fundamentals of their Creed, since it produces so many antagonistic and warring groups. But perhaps, after all, this protesting is a part of the Divine scheme for giving Christians happiness. The Christian wouldn't be happy unless he had something to protest against.

The infidelity of one generation becomes the orthodoxy of the next. Our Modernists are experts at adopting former infidel contentions; of course, without making due acknowledgment as to their source. For instance, Dr. T. R. Glover says, of the New Testament writers, that "they wrote as well as they knew how." Again, Professor W. F. Howard says that "the New Testament is a number of books in which men, whose hearts had been touched, tried to write down the truth as they understood it." Utterances such as these completely flout the former Christian claim that the Bible is an inspired book; and depose its authority. For saying no more than this, Freethinkers have been heavily fined, as well as imprisoned. But, nowadays, Modernist preachers get well paid for acting as echo to the unspeakable Freethinker. What the *Freethinker* says to-day, the Modernist incorporates in his expository books to-morrow. As proof of this, we find that, in certain local preachers' examinations, candidates are required to study a work in which the author informs the world that "the Bible is full of human imperfections"; that "it is not infallible"; that "the death of Christ on the Cross as a sacrifice for human sin is a heathen conception which no intelligent Christian should believe." But if a Christian applies intelligence to his religion, he will soon cease to believe any of it.

Of Dr. T. R. Glover, a *Daily News* writer says: "He serves the noble ideal of 'making righteousness readable.'" So that is what he is trying to do, is it? We had always imagined that he was spending his energies on attempting to squeeze a quart of modern thought into a Christian pint bottle.

The London Corporation attended divine service, at a church next the Guildhall, prior to its first meeting after re-election. This is the first time in the Corporation's record of eight centuries. The service was held, at the suggestion of the Lord Mayor, "in order to invoke the help and guidance of God in their deliberations during the year." Now we ought to see the Corporation achieve wonderful things; but, we suspect results will be about the same as usual. Other Corporations have had God Almighty as adviser; but, we have never noted any marked increase in the intelligence of the Councillors; or any noticeable improvement in methods of doing municipal business—except in the very important matter of Sabbatarian prohibition of Sunday games.

That wonderful revival of religion, which the clerical and lay prophets in the Press have told us is due at any moment now, appears to have got mislaid—or, should we say, overlain? The *Baptist Times* says, soulfully, that there must be a large number of Churches where no additions to membership have been made during the past year. It adds: Would it not be well, prayerfully, to consider the reason? Yea, verily! In a number of cases, we are told, the explanation is simple; in others, it might be a shock to those concerned. Being of an obliging disposition, we gladly furnish our contemporary with an explanation that is both simple and shocking. This is, that, everywhere, people are ceasing to believe (1) in the truth of religion; and (2), in its value as guide and consoler in the affairs of life. Here, we believe, is a completely satisfactory explanation of there being no additions to membership; and, also, of decline in membership. We don't suppose our Baptist contemporary will accept the reason we give; for, it trots out the moth-eaten, old tale about there being multitudes, of men and women and young people, hungrily longing for what the Churches have to offer. The supreme need of our time, we are told, is that "the Christian community shall give voice to its evangel." Anyone might think by this that there were not howling hymn-singing mobs at the street-corners of every town in the land; that there were not thousands of sermons preached every Sunday; that articles on religion were not appearing in the Press, and that the B.B.C. had ceased advertising the Churches' dope. Oh, yes! the Churches are voicing their evangel all right. The trouble is that the people, whom they wish to hear it, have most curiously become evangel-deaf. It is disheartening. And we are hanged if we can suggest a good remedy.

We have been dealing of late with the mental twist which belief in Christianity manages to give to the average preacher; and Canon Peter Green, in an article in the *Manchester Guardian*, on the "Problem of Evil," asks "Is there any way, consistent with modern scientific teaching, by which we may save the Fall?" But, when a man puts a question in that form, his reply is certain to be worthless. It is the attitude of a lawyer who says to his client, "Never mind whether you are guilty or not; the question is, how can we persuade the jury that you are innocent?" A genuine truth-seeker does not ask, "how can we save a belief?" but, "is it true?" That appears to be a secondary question with Canon Green. He wishes to "save the Fall," only because it is part of the religion he preaches. And, when a man sets out in that spirit, one need not be surprised to find, as a result, the tricks and evasions, the suppressions and inventions, which are such an outstanding feature of the Christian apologist.

The London Drapers' Chamber of Trade has been protesting to the Council of the Free Churches against the holding of bazaars. The drapers appear to hold the view that these money-making enterprises of the churches constitute unfair competition. There's no doubt that the bazaars hit the small trader especially hard. At Christmastide, having laid in an extra stock to make a bit of extra cash to tide him over the slack season, he often finds half his stock left on his hands because the parsons have been holding some bazaar; and he is faced with a

serious loss, through unfair competition. The parsons, then, add insult to injury, by coming round and cadging from him to support some church fund. We are glad the Chamber of Trade is protesting. The churches are, thereby, given a gentle hint to stick to soul-saving, instead of attending to money-making.

The will of the late Rev. Charles Spurgeon has been proved for £7,266. That amount is rather too large a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle. We hope the Rev. Charles had a good excuse ready. If not, he is likely, if the Bible speaks truly, to spend his bit of eternity in calling fruitlessly on Abraham for a glass of water.

In connection with the Duke of York's visit to Sydney, arrangements are being made to have a gigantic street procession. Every class of vehicle will parade, accompanied by people dressed in costumes to represent the period in which the vehicles were in use. There is, we understand, no truth in the rumour that parsons, in full regalia, will be there to represent the cave-man period.

The Housing Problem shows healthy signs of being solved, according to the Birth-rate Statistics. The year 1926 only slightly varied from the low record during 1918, which was 17.7 per thousand. For those who are interested in the idyllic conditions in mining villages, the record of 35.06 per thousand for Conisborough presents an interesting problem.

The Archbishop of York assures us that there never has been, in the history of the Church, so much brotherly union, among bishops, as there was over the alterations in the Prayer Book. We can quite believe it; for the element of self-preservation has always been well developed in professors of Christianity; and the present move over words is merely an adaptation to a changed environment, in order that the Church shall live. Therefore, we do not see anything wonderful in ecclesiastical concord; others may, who cannot see the drift of events.

With a good instance of man's refusal to grow up, and his love for living in the past, we are provided in the Anglo-Catholics attitude towards the Prayer Book alterations. Men fight over shadows; and the dispute reminds us of the sale of an ass, recorded by an old Greek writer. It was a hot day, and the owner was sitting in the shadow of his animal, to escape the glare of the sun. A buyer came along; the purchase was made; but the late owner would not allow the purchaser to take the animal away, as he had not bought and paid for, the shadow as well. We trust that Anglo-Catholics and Churchmen will both win.

When writing for the *Radio Times*, we presume it is necessary to remember that the paper, for favours received, has the blessing of the Church. It would, therefore, appear to be important to speak well of an organization which was reduced to compromising with the wireless; and, before anyone had thought about it, there was an embargo on certain hours of the Sunday night programme in order to admit church matters. Those who wanted Church services could of course get them by going to Church; but this, being commonsense, was not what the Church wanted. If it were not in evidence on Sunday night there would be grave risk that the Church would be forgotten. Miss Rose Macaulay, in an article entitled, "The Arm-chair Millennium," in the *Radio Times*, does not exactly bring the Balm of Gilead to the question, when she writes:—

Nor need Sunday evening services any more be attended in person, for those of us who have a fancy for these can join in prayers, hymns, psalms and sermons sitting on our own sofas. It would require a Bateman to depict the joy on a parson's face after counting up a wireless collection; and, we must leave the subject at this point, as it becomes excessively complicated.

To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

S. PULMAN.—"Damned nonsense" is a very good description. But what can we expect of defences set up on behalf of a nonsensical creed?

W. A. ROGERSON (Vancouver).—Certainly, we have not all the religious lunatics, in England. In fact, they appear to flourish quite readily in both Canada and the United States. But, we have quite a good supply here, and you will observe that we are able to export some. We should like to see someone manage to organize the Freethinkers of Vancouver

C. JEFFERY.—The tract is out of print.

A. McINTYRE.—Thanks. Hope to use so soon as we can find a corner.

SINE CERE.—Very interesting. It is curious that in spite of the evidence of everyday life the superstition as to the beneficial influence of religion on character should still obtain.

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

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Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 13), Mr. Cohen will lecture, at 7.30, in the Spinners' Hall, St. Georges Road, Bolton. His subject will be "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" We are expecting a good muster of Freethinkers from round about; and we trust they will bring along some of their Christian friends.

Next Sunday (February 20), Mr. Cohen commences an eight days' "Mission" in Scotland. On the 20th, he will lecture in Hamilton. On the 21st, at the request of the Cowlairs Co-operative Society, he will speak in their hall, 27 Angus Street, Springburn, on "Freethought and Social Reform." On the 24th and 27th, he will lecture in the City Hall, Glasgow; and, on one of the other dates during the week, at Shotts, where a new Branch of the N.S.S. has just been formed. These meetings, together with another that may be arranged, and his work on the paper, will keep him busy for the week.

As it is not easy to edit the *Freethinker* at a distance of 400 miles from the office, we would ask Secretaries and all those who have anything special for insertion in the issues of the *Freethinker*, dated February 27 and March 6, to be good enough to let us have it at the office by the first post on February 19 and 26. We go to press with the one issue on February 22, and the other on March 1.

A letter has been received by the N.S.S. from the Counsel engaged in the Toronto Blasphemy case asking for the help of the Society. That letter will come before the Executive in due course, and be dealt with. Meanwhile, Mr. Cohen has instructed the Secretary, Miss

Vance, to reply, assuring the defence of the support of the N.S.S., but asking for particulars concerning the case and the estimated costs. The National Secular Society is never backward in helping to repel a charge of blasphemy, but it is essential that it should know some of the details so that its action may be adequate and effective. In the absence of that information any financial help given might either be too small or too large, and there is no desire to err in either direction. That there was a blasphemy case we knew from the Canadian papers, and the request for help adds nothing to the information there given. But there need be no doubt as to the willingness of the National Secular Society to do all in its power to help.

Since writing the above, we have received a letter from Mr. Sterry, and also copies of Toronto papers, containing a report of the proceedings before the lower court. The usual case was made out for the Crown, and Mr. Sterry's counsel raised no issue on this hearing. He submitted that, in view of the importance of the case, it was well that it should go before a jury. Mr. Sterry was accordingly committed for trial. We understand that the case may be taken in March.

The *Christian World*, we see, refers to the paper edited by Mr. Sterry, the gentleman charged with blasphemy, as a Christian paper. This is a mistake, and the *Christian World* has probably been misled by the title. Mr. Sterry is an avowed Atheist, and a leading member of the Rationalist Society of Canada, of which Society the *Christian Inquirer* appears to be the organ. Incidentally, we may note that the prosecution bears out our opinion, often expressed, concerning those who think that by adopting a name, such as "Rationalist," the *Christian World* is disarmed. So soon as anything is said or done that threatens the security of the Christian Churches they are "up in arms." Christians are not such fools, where their sectarian interests are concerned, as to mistake an enemy for a friend merely because he wears a friendly label. The *Freethinker* will be let alone, and counted as among the "respectables," just so long as he does little to injure the Christian superstition. Once he does that, he will be fought, even though he call himself the Son of God.

The West Ham Branch made a good start with its lectures, at the Bromley Public Hall, on Sunday last. Mr. Whitehead gave a much appreciated lecture to a good audience, and there were some excellent questions following the address. To-day (February 13), the lecturer will be Mr. Saphin, who will speak on "Phallic Worship." Bromley Public Hall is in Bow Road, and can be reached by bus or tramcar from most parts of London.

The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

The present position of this Fund is as follows:—Previously acknowledged, £981 9s. 8d.; F. G. Gubbins, 15s.; F. A. H., 10s.; A. J. Cooper, 3s.; Athos Zeno, 10s.; G. J. B., 5s.; Mrs. A. Lee (2nd sub.), £1; J. Wearing (7th sub.), 10s.; D. Walton (2nd sub.), £2 2s.; J. C. M. Glasgow, £1 6s.; E. I. Hirst, 4s.; V. H. Smith (3th sub.), 5s. Total, £988 19s. 8d.

GRAND TOTAL, 1925-6 £4,890 4s. 6d.

Amount yet to be raised in order to secure the £1,450 promised £1,659 15s. 6d.

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.

The Pagan Roots of the Christian Creed.

(Continued from page 86).

PART III.

THEOSOPHY.

Lastly, let us trace to its roots the Christian theosophy ; that is, its theory of origins and ends, and man's nature and destiny. For the Gnostics, who were the true authors of Christian theosophy, presumed to know the future as well as the past ; and it must be admitted that their cogitations upon the unborn future were not a whit more fantastic than were those of the buried past. Their eschatology, with its crack of doom, last judgment, the earth's conflagration, and its heaven and hell, are no more sadly amusing than are its pentateuch cosmology and history, with its Eden, apple, and snake.

I need hardly say that the final Christian creed—a growth of some six hundred years—would not be found in other contemporary cults. What we look for are the elements—the raw materials—out of which the creed was built. Each religion moulded its clay into forms peculiar to itself, though often the final products bear striking resemblances.

All its explanatory theories are correctly classed as Theosophy. Every state and condition of mankind—its weal and its woe—would, so it is claimed, become plain and intelligible, would be easily understood, if we only possessed a complete knowledge of the gods and their subordinate spirits, good and bad. In other words, a perfect theosophy would explain all—how this wicked world came into being ; how man became caught in the toils of evil ; and consequently, how best he could disentangle himself from it. The one supreme concern of theosophy was "the salvation or rescue of the individual soul" from the power and domination of the Devil and his legions, or, as tersely expressed in the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from the Evil One." This they believed they could do if only they possessed an intimate knowledge of the occupants of the alleged unseen world—their power, their dignity, their order and rank, and their character. Now theory, like myth, is later than rite and practice, and its object is to explain them ; so the rite or observance may be the same, while the theory accounting for it may be quite different. The sacramental meal or rite observed by the early Christians may be of the same order as that celebrated in Mithraism or any of its contemporary cults, yet the theory framed to account for the observance may be altogether different owing to a change in the current views and opinions in respect to man's origin, nature, and destiny. Such, indeed, was the case. Gnosticism, which was the after-glow of Greek culture, had shifted man's life-concern from his *body* to his *soul* ; from the attainment of some measure of well-being and happiness in this life to the escape from perdition in an imaginary next one ; in short, from worldliness to other-worldliness. The frantic pursuit of this crazy life-object is the keynote of the new Evangel ; it resounds in every chapter and verse of the New Testament. In consequence of this change or volte face in mundane outlook the *raison d'être* of its saviour-god underwent a similar change. It was to be a totally new type of salvation. Instead of saving mankind from physical death, from a failure of the harvests (due to a failure of the earth awakening into life and fertility in Spring), we have a saving of the soul from an everlasting woe in an alleged hereafter. According to the teaching of the new cult, bodily suffering and death were of little or no significance, if the soul was rescued from the thrall of Satanic powers.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" was the alarming battle-cry of Gnostic and Christian wherever they went.

To warn of impending peril, however, is of no avail, if you provide no way of escape ; and that is just what Pauline Christianity presumes to do, by making its dying-god the saviour of the soul, and not of the body. Pauline Christianity was an amalgam of Judaism and Gnostic lore. It accepted the current ideas of the latter, in respect to the emergence of evil, the nature of man, and his subjection to the power and will of evil spirits. It then provided a redeemer-god from Judaic sources. Those, who were more consistently Gnostic than he, were denounced as heretics ; and those, who were less heretical in their tenets than he was himself, were denounced, with equal intolerance, as Judaizers. This amalgamation of Judaism and Gnostic lore was effected by identifying some of their most cardinal ideas ; and, by way of example, I will refer briefly to three, only, of their basic dogmas.

1. The first is the dogma of the Fall. It is the most fundamental of all. Indeed, it is the very foundation of the entire Christian creed, and the one that gives meaning to its proffered salvation. Although the notion belongs to the period of human childhood, yet upon it the entire gospel rests. Take that away, and the whole fabric tumbles to pieces.

Now, the idea of a fall occupied a foremost place in Gnostic thought. In their fantastic manner of reasoning, this conjecture enabled them to account for the entrance of evil into the World ; the origin of which was, to the Gnostic mind, the riddle of riddles ; to be solved, of course, only by true theosophy. To give but a brief summary of the wild speculations propounded by these metaphysical dreamers would fill a fair-sized volume ; but, into all of them entered the idea of a fall, or emanation.

In one form the Godhead himself, and in another primal man, had fallen into the world of matter—an event which started evil on its everlasting, cursed career. It was then axiomatic (and reverberations of the dogma are audible to-day) that matter was essentially evil ; and spirit essentially good ; though their ideas of matter and spirit were as crude as barbaric ignorance could possibly make them. This idea of a fall was an attempt to account for the antithesis between matter and spirit without postulating two opposing Principles (one good and one bad) ; or between Light and Darkness, as was taught in the Mazdean religion, the cult from which Mithraism sprang.

Now, a variant of this imaginary event is the fantastic story of the fall in Genesis ; Paul, or the Pauline School, identified this primitive legend of Judaism with the primitive tenet of Gnostic lore ; and thereby laid the credal foundation of his new cult.

2. In the second place, he identified Jahveh with the Godhead in Gnostic theosophy. The Gnostics distinguished between gods with proper names and the nameless Supreme Deity, or Godhead, who was not a national or tribal deity to any particular people, place, or time. The Godhead was simply the source of all existence, and the embodiment of all perfection and goodness ; whereas, gods with names were mere functionaries ; heads of states, or departments, like our Cabinet Ministers. It was the Christian Church, with its intolerant spirit, that degraded these deities into demons ; so as to keep up its arrogant and spurious claim of pure monotheism.

Now, Paul or his school, in his anxiety not to break with the Judaism altogether, identified this Supreme Being of the Gnostics with the God of the Jews. This proved a stone of real stumbling to the early Christians. The Hellenists, or dispersed Jews,

approved of this identification; as it flattered their rational vanity. The Gentile converts, on the other hand, would not admit the God of the Old Testament to the status of the Supreme Being. This dissension gave rise to angry quarrels, bitter feuds, and rival sections. The most prominent of the Gnostic Christians regarded Jahveh's immoral and brutal character as an absolute barrier to his worship as a Supreme Being—the embodiment of all perfection.

3. One other identification made is of such cardinal importance that it must be referred to; and this was made, not by Paul, but by the writer of the Fourth Gospel. It was the identification of the Gnostic Logos with the Jewish Messiah, or Christ. It is very possible that Paul, himself, would have denounced this assimilation as a wicked heresy. By "Logos" was meant human, or divine, reason. As we know nothing of reason, however, except as it is embodied and expressed in man's most characteristic attribute—viz., speech—it naturally, has the alternative meaning of "word"; as words are the prime elements of speech; and, as such, it is translated in the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." To see how such a fantastic notion arose, one must be familiar with the mode, and type, of mental gymnastics, so pathetically indulged in at the time when Christianity came into being. It was a phenomenal instance of "learned ignorance," masquerading as true knowledge; it was a rare exhibition of adult "child-play"; the learned Gnostics being the children; and the gods and spirits served as the dolls and toys. They (the Gnostics) tossed them about, with the same indignity and indifference as are displayed by a girl for her dolls. In the most literal sense, Gnosticism was but a theosophy; with the "salvation of the soul" as its practical object. Let me give one instance how the unbridled imagination, so characteristic of the time, performed its antics. In the system of the celebrated Basilides we are taught that "The Unbegotten produces from himself, Nous or Mind: which produces Logos or Reason which produces Phronesis or Judgment; which produces Sophia and Dunamis, or Wisdom and Power; and these last, in turn, produce the Angels, who in turn produce others down to the 365th grade."

In the Scheme of Valentinus this was further complicated, until it became a hopeless imbroglio of fantastic offsprings—of begetting and begotten. Now, out of this vast brood of "folly without father bred" two became famous—viz., Logos and Sophia; that is, Reason and Wisdom. The Logos became pre-eminently noted, through the Alexandrian Jew, Philo; who adopted it, and made it a part of his system of Jewish theosophy. Its admission into the Christian creed was now an easy step; especially by that section which was still in sympathy with Judaism; and which accepted, or claimed, the Old Testament as its sacred book. In the Fourth Gospel, therefore, the Logos is identified with the saviour-god.

As Paul had identified the Gnostic "Fall" with the mythical event in Genesis, and Jahveh with the Godhead, so the writer of the Fourth Gospel identifies the Gnostic Logos, or Word, with its crucified Christ. Upon these three identifications, or Pagan roots, the whole Christian Theosophy was laid and reared. A host of other identifications followed; but, most of them were made after the close of the Canon.

We have now examined the Christian religion in respect of its (1) Deity; (2) its rites and myths; (3) its theosophy, and we have seen that, in each respect, it had adopted, or imitated, Pagan cults. Its special deity was a suffering, dying, and a re-arising God. Its peculiar religious ceremony was of the nature of

"mysteries"; the central rite of which consisted in god-eating. Lastly, I have shown that its theosophy was an amalgam of Gnostic lore and Judaism as embodied in its sacred books. Should anyone desire to make himself acquainted with those roots in their ramifications, let him consult such books as Robertson's *Pagan Christs*, or his *Christianity and Mythology*.

KERIDON.

A History of Witchcraft and Demonology.

HOWEVER jolly it is "to be a ridiculous fool for Christ's sake," it is far more jolly to come across a real whole-believing Christian. When I meet with one, I am so overjoyed that I should like to take him to my bosom and weep tears of sheer happiness. I have got tired of your modernism. What can you do with a chap who tells you "Jesus is undoubtedly the son of God—just as we all are sons of God"? or says "Of course there's a Heaven—only it's within you,"; or, "Hell is quite obviously a reality—each of us makes it for himself"; or, "there can be no doubt whatever about the truth of miracles—are we not all living miracles?" You know this kind of thing which is spouted by the yard by the "intellectuals" within the Church—or, perhaps, I should say, within some Churches. For to be quite fair, this is not the kind of argument ever used by the faithful, whose spiritual home is in Rome, and whose spiritual head is the Pope.

Here we have the Rev. Montague Summers, who has just published a *History of Witchcraft and Demonology*; and a more delightful exposition of true Christianity and the personal opinions of an author could not be found.

Mr. Summers has a well-deserved reputation as the editor of Congreve and Wycherley, and Mrs. Aphra Behu; and I have no hesitation in saying that his editions of these authors leave nothing to be desired.

But in this latest book of his, we get him on religion; and the melancholy example of Messrs. Chesterton and Belloc (who, directly they deal with religion, seem unable, for the most part, to write anything but balderdash) has had no influence on him whatever. Here is a work purporting to be history, but showing throughout, superstition, credulity and bitter bias, all of which one would have thought impossible in the year 1927—even from a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Summers believes *everything*; and by everything I mean what the word implies in this connection. He defines a sorcerer as "one who, by commerce with the Devil, has a full intention of attaining his own ends." I have carefully read the book, and claim that nowhere does the author *prove* that either sorcerers or witches ever had "commerce" with the Devil. But Mr. Summers believes not merely in the Devil, like a good Christian, but actually claims it has been thoroughly proved that witches had complete intercourse (sexually and otherwise) with the dear old gentleman. It is amazing! And I honestly ask those "reverent" Rationalists and Agnostics whether it is true we are "flogging a dead horse" if Mr. Summers can produce (I quote the *Universe* figures) over, 330,000,000 brothers who believe in the same idiotic superstition?

He believes that witches also flew to their meeting places, if not on broomsticks, on things which were suspiciously like broomsticks, or on nothing at all; and he quotes the "undoubted" authenticity of cases of levitation retailed by the score by spiritualists. Everything—materialisations, ectoplasm, levitation and all the other spiritualistic paraphernalia—is cited by Mr. Summers in proof that the witches and

warlocks and wizards were actually in communication with the evil denizens of the infernal regions, and therefore they fully deserved all they got from the Holy Catholic Church—both Roman and English. I repeat, it is simply amazing. But he goes further. He talks about what is known as the "blood" accusation against the Jews (that is, the ritual murder of a Christian boy, at Easter), as if it were as true as the eating of Passover cakes! Now, here, we have a definite issue! Roman Catholics, all over the world, are making desperate efforts to vindicate themselves against the charges of the unspeakable savagery which they used against all those unfortunate people who happened to differ from the silly beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church when it was in power. Thus, the dreadful tortures and auto-da-fés of the Inquisition have been highly exaggerated! or, the number of victims of the massacres of St. Bartholomew, or the Albigenses, or the Dutch, were really only about a tenth of the number given by Protestants! and, anyway, all the victims fully deserved what they got! Moreover, it was never the church, as a church, which carried out the burnings, or tortures, or massacres! it was always the "secular" arm! And, naturally, in a Christian country, it ought to be permitted to libel, foully, the dreadful Jews who put the Saviour to death—though, how the Son of God could have saved the world otherwise is never very manifest. The "blood" ritual at Easter is simply an insolent lie; and was promulgated by fanatical priests, who found it a splendid method of popularising the church whenever things were a bit slack in those jolly centuries so ably championed by Mr. Chesterton and his like.

Another charge against the Jews, which Mr. Summers implicitly believes, is that members of the chosen race would steal the "consecrated" Host and stab it repeatedly with a knife, thus causing *blood to gush out in torrents*. Really, I doubt, even in my most imaginative moments, if I could think of sillier credulity. Here was an alien race, living amongst the foulest of superstitious savages, who were ready to burn, massacre and torture them at the slightest incentive; and yet we are asked to believe that a Jew would bring upon his wife, his neighbours, upon his children and theirs, indescribable mutilations for the mere pleasure of stabbing a bit of bread! And the idea of this bit of bread spouting blood just because a priest had previously repeated a Latin formula over it. It seems unthinkable that this kind of unmitigated nonsense could ever be taken seriously! Mr. Summers believes that a Catholic priest had (and has) power to exorcise the unclean spirits; in fact, I think it would be difficult to find something that he does not believe. All the silly babblings of the saints, their visions and dreams, are taken for actual experiences; though it can be irrefutably demonstrated that nearly all the revered saints are mere pathological cases, religion gone utterly mad. The way in which Mr. Summers hangs, reverently, on every word they utter, whether as opinions or obvious ravings, is one of the most amusing things in this amusing book.

Naturally, he is severe on sceptics, and especially, on those in his own Church; for, after all, even for Roman Catholics, there is a limit to credulity. Lecky and Charles Mackay, who had no doubt whatever about the illusions of Witchcraft, are, according to Mr. Summers, "prejudiced and inefficient." Dr. Henry C. Lea's standard works on the *Inquisition*, laboriously compiled from the Spanish archives themselves, "must be used with the utmost caution and need to be continually corrected. They are insecure and bitterly biased." This is funny, in all conscience; but how about this? "Writers of the

temper of Messrs. Edward Dodd, Joseph McCabe, J. M. Robertson must, of course, be expected to condemn spiritism, without knowing the facts, or weighing the evidence, as an obvious absurdity, which calls for no serious refutation. . . The superstitious dogmatism of the materialist is gravely discredited nowadays. . . We should expect tenth-rate ideas, which could only emanate from a lack of understanding, a total want of imagination and no training in metaphysics or philosophy to have a direct appeal to the immature intelligences, the uneducated vulgar and the blatant, yet presumptuous ignorance, which alone are eager for this kind of outmoded fare." For unadulterated claptrap, this kind of writing would be hard to beat, especially as it is directed against a scholar like Mr. Robertson for whom, notwithstanding his Atheism, no man of letters can possibly have anything but the most profound respect. As for Mr. McCabe, he was, while in the Church, actually a professor of the kind of philosophy in which Mr. Summers so profoundly believes; but most of it he had to shed when once out of Catholic clutches. However, it is merely waste of time to answer Mr. Summers on such points. He has been answered by the great minds in the world.

Nothing would please me better than to go through some of the utterly preposterous *History*. For example, "heretics" (that is, witches, wizards and warlocks) could always be distinguished by their "unsupportable stench!" "Blessed Dominica of Paradise passing a soldier in the street, knew by the foul smell that he had abandoned the faith, to which her fervid exhortation and prayers eventually restored him." "St. Bridget of Sweden was well nigh suffocated by the fetor of a notorious sinner, who addressed her." This is turning the tables with a vengeance!

Some of us, not entirely ignorant of the ways of the saints, male and female, in the Ages of Faith, would have thought that the sinner, coming from a bath condemned as impious by the Church, would smell sweeter than the Catholic ladies, whose proud boast was that they never, in their lives, washed again after they had found Jesus; and sweeter than those gentlemen who used to preach from surroundings, which present-day Sanitary Inspectors would view with disapproval. But one never knows! According to Mr. Summers, "the saints themselves have diffused sweetest fragrances and actually the 'odour of sanctity' is more than a phrase." This is history as taught by Catholics.

I must admit, however, that I never knew how often the saints "levitated." We get, from Mr. Summers, quite a crowd of names of saints capable of flying, unsupported, in the air, as proof of the aerial flights of witches.

I think, all the same, we owe Mr. Summers a debt of gratitude. Firstly, we have a fine bibliography on *Demonology* in particular; and on Occultism in general; and next we have many citations conveniently grouped to show the kind of evidence on which hundreds of thousands of poor old women were hounded to the most terrible of deaths. We get their "confessions," dragged from them while on the racks; and we get the cynical observations of a modern educated Catholic, upholding their foul murder.

"The witch," he tells us, "is revealed in her true colours as a social pest; the devotee of an obscene creed; an adept at creeping crimes; a blasphemous, charlatan, bawd, and abortionist." Well, it is true that a few old women in all ages could be truly painted thus. Whether they deserved death for these things, it is not for me to judge. But the

vast majority were simply lonely and harmless old women, who may have looked like the conventional hags. And for this sole reason, or perhaps also because they loved some poor black cat or dog at the same time, they were hounded to death with indescribable ferocity by Mr. Summer's brothers in Christ.

These terrible scenes deserved to be recorded. The burning of witches, one of the foulest chapters in Christian history, is here defended and justified. I am glad it was a true-believing Christian who wrote this book.

G. H. CUTNER.

The Whitewashers.

BEFORE, during, or after the deluge, one feels that a little protest should be uttered to mingle with the torrent of perfervid eulogy of the outstanding national poet. We cannot praise our Robert Burns too much, or condemn him too little; we say of him as of Shakespeare: "Others abide our question, thou art free." But praise or blame must not be allowed to make him other than he was, than he is. Well-meaning, good, respectable people would whitewash Burns out of all semblance to the actual man—perhaps in the unconscious egotism of making him morally worthy of the esteem they cannot withhold, and of their own select society! Others insist on the Poet's unique immorality! Both are beside the point, both are impertinences. Out of all this implied Sunday-school perfection and imperfection we have the real fame of Burns, a mountain peak among the stars, eternal as the constellations. Fit for your admiration, for your company? No, no, for neither, for "he is sitting, there, where you dare not soar." But this Burns was of the earth, earthy; human, all too human; alike in this in wine and woman; and no exemplar was he for the chaste and temperate. But the genius in all ages has transcended the man; it is intelligence more than morals that rules the world. In Burns, love ruled everything, love tyrannous, irresistible; yet the love that was his greatness, the source of all his inspiration; his wines were but the cruder accompaniment of this "diviner intoxication." The raptures he sang of so rapturously, and so perfectly, were few of them legitimate in law, but sovran in the nature of a man like Burns:—

For prond, and fiery, and swift, and bold,
Wine of life from heart of gold;
The tide of his heathen manhood rolled
Full billowed through his veins.

Nor does this excuse him, but this was Burns, in his habit as he lived. How sweet that remembered rapture:
Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine
The gowden locks o' Anna.

We know the fruit of these "merry dints" came home to the wedded Jean, who magnanimously took it to her arms! Magnanimously! is that the best our language can do? We ourselves have seen the same magnanimity in obscurist life when the incontinent husband's illegitimate was brought home to his wife. Burns, also, was often "fu" oftener than we know. Nor can we separate the poet, or even the poetry, from the sinner. Base and pyramid are there, the material and the spiritual, light and shade, foundations in the earth and pinnacle amongst the stars, all necessary to all.

Whitewashers, the "awkward squad," and the unco guid, forbear! Yet do not make this Burns your moral exemplar. However high you soar in power and glory those earth shadows will pursue thee. Therefore do not excuse thyself.

"'Cause ye're sae gifted":

The stain of sin upon the soul is never lifted.

Nor yet by sacrificial atonements, nor purgatorial fires.
"Blessed are the pure in heart!"

But, "Ae spark o' Nature's fire," said our Poet modestly. Verily, verily, a spark, at long and length of many million years, struck from Nature's breast into a peasant's heart and brain, a spark that lights the world, if as yet but with the faint dawn of a glorious illumination yet to be.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

FREEMASONRY.

SIR,—Replying to Mr. Harold Scudder's letter in your issue of 30th inst., why is it that we decry, and attack, that which we do not know, or understand?

Would it not be a better course to learn the facts first and comprehend them?

On dit, "tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner."

Mr. Scudder says "the term Freemason is thoroughly contradictory and a 'misnomer,' as Freemasonry is 'free,' neither economically nor intellectually."

Is he not confusing the various meanings of the adjective 'free'?

Where can he get anything of value, free of cost?

We used to say, "free as air"; but now, the Postmaster-General is charging a licence fee for the use of that.

The *Freethinker* is the free-est (and most intelligent) periodical extant; but the mercenary publisher demands 3d. for it.

Only in Isaiah's time could one receive an invitation to "buy wine and milk without money and without price."

The Freemason of to-day knows that the Connaught Rooms are not run on this principle; and if Mr. Scudder were not, as he says, "an outsider," he would know it too; and would "think it worth while," as he acknowledges the Freemason does.

The *Free-mason* was, originally, an operative mason who had achieved, by his apprenticeship, and by his fellowship of the craft, such a degree of excellence as entitled him to the freedom of his craft, and of his future. Thenceforward, he was free to offer himself to any master; or to work for himself, if he chose to establish himself as a *Master* man. He was free to travel; and was entitled to be received, as an equal, among men, of whatever nationality, who had obtained a similar degree of proficiency.

To-day, the "operative" element is overshadowed by the "speculative"; and the tools, which were formerly used in the trade, are now directed to be, symbolically, applied to the morals. If they were so applied, in fact, it would be of great advantage to the members, as well as to the Order.

Freemasonry, as an Institution, is intensely altruistic; and we must not depreciate the beauty of the structure because of the physical weakness of some of its component parts.

Every candidate swears, when he joins the Society, that he does so, uninfluenced by mercenary or other unworthy motive; and that he is animated by a sincere wish to render himself more extensively serviceable to his fellow creatures.

Any solicitation of an outsider by a member is declared to be "improper"; and the first thing an initiate does is to give his formal adhesion to this very declaration.

If any man, who joins in these circumstances fails, afterwards, to keep his solemn obligation, seriously declared upon his honour, who is to blame—the Institution or the perjurer?

As to Mr. Scudder's complaint that "very sinister accounts are 'heard' of the perversion of justice arising through this fellowship with the Great Architect of the Universe," these accounts should be classified, with certain other allegations—such as the birth of Jesus—as "mere rumour"; very difficult of proof; and impossible—as a negative—of positive disproof.

Masons are not "pledged to secretly bolster each other up" in any way whatsoever; either "solely because of their joint membership" or for any other reason or cause. The allegation is simply untrue.

Even if Mr. Scudder's complaint of favouritism were well founded, it could not justify an indictment against the collectivity of Freemasonry; it would only demonstrate the unworthiness of the behaviour of certain Freemasons, on certain occasions.

As Freethinkers—or, preferably, clear thinkers—we should be fair thinkers; and we should perhaps do well to avoid the Christians' habit, of adoption and repetition of "beliefs"; especially in relation to matters in respect of which we are, confessedly, "outsiders"; and, therefore, "know" nothing.

OMEGA.

THE PARSON AND THE WHALE.

SIR,—This topic dies hard, and I am sorely tempted to reply to F. E. M. Macaulay. I will not, in this connection, however, except to say that it is strange to be rebuked by a Freethinker for blasphemy against God. I see no irreverence in believing that the Son of God, when He became man, accepted, as part of his human nature, the limitation of knowledge, common to man. He must have done so, for we know that he increased in wisdom as well as in stature. Whether, therefore, He chose to use, for illustration, a story which was commonly believed, or whether He believed it Himself as literal fact, I do not know or care. He came to save, not to criticise ancient stories.

As to the dryness which Christians frequently experience, I, who once lost my faith for a year, can testify that it is as nothing to the misery which I then endured. Indeed, when rightly used, it becomes the means of offering oneself to God in the spirit of pure love, since the senses no longer woo devotion and impart sweetness. But I have always found that great joy precedes and follows these periods of dereliction.

DESMOND MORSE-BOYCOTT.

"AN INTERESTING HYPOTHESIS."

SIR,—In his latest *Drama and Dramatists*, Mr. Repton says:—

"An interesting hypothesis put forward is, that the Trinity is now appearing in the form of three eminent men in the world of psychology—Freud, Adler and Jung; and a very good case could be put up on its behalf; and an equally good one against it. (*Italics mine.*)

Mr. Repton adumbrated this hypothesis (not his own, I hasten to add) when he visited me in my isolation some time ago; and it, really, is the most egregious nonsense. Why not Freeman, Hardy and Willis? or Pip, Squeak and Wilfred?

I agree that the matured Freethinker should be a man with multifarious interests; but I think this old world is capable of sustaining them, without resort to absurdities, of this kind; which are much better left to the intellectual eunuchs who write unintelligible jargon for the *New Age*.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

A very interesting discussion took place upon the subject of "Dope," opened in thoughtful fashion, by Mr. George Saville, who dealt with it, more particularly, in relation to mental dope as applied to the present imperfect system of educating children. Many members took part; and certain visitors contributed their views.

The discussion was summarised by Mr. Ratcliffe, with his usual ability; and the meeting was closed in a general consensus of opinion that an evening had been very profitably spent.

W. P. C. E.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.5): 7.30, Mr. A. Lombardi, "Where Capitalism Fails."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W.): 7, Mr. Ebury, "Force or Pacifism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "Substitutes for Morals."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Harry Snell, M.P., On "China."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.45, a Lecture, by Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, "The Atonement." Thursday, February 17, 7.45, Social. Tickets 1s.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bromley Public Hall): 7, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "Phallic Worship." Collection.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. J. Hart, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting at the Empire Café, 30 Smallbrook Street, 7 p.m., Sunday, February 13.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Large Spinners' Hall, St. Georges Road): 7.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?" Tickets, 6d. and 1s.

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

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints): 3, Mr. F. E. Monks; 6.30, Mr. S. Cohen.

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