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Views and Opinions

God and Miracles

Why did David Hume not advance to the point of so analysing the nature of the belief in the miraculous as to meet the affirmation of their occurrence with a direct denial of their possibility? I think for two reasons. First, because it would have involved him in a direct statement of Atheism, and for that he was not prepared; second, because of his erroneous view of the nature of causation. With regard to the first, as I have already said, the belief in miracle is not prior to the belief in a God, it follows from it. It is said with truth that miracles do not happen to an Atheist, but always to the believer in God. That is only another way of saying that the belief in miracles depends entirely upon our general view of the universe. If we believe in a God who created the universe, and whose power over the universe is absolute, and who can, therefore, manipulate the forces he has created at his pleasure, then we accept the possibility of miracles. When they happen, and where they happen, will be entirely dependent upon God's pleasure. Miracles happen because the believer in God thinks they are always possible, and in this case it is the expected, not the unexpected, that happens.

But it is certainly not meeting fairly the believer in miracles to say that in ordinary human experience miracles do not occur. The believer may assert this as loudly as the unbeliever, and to the latter's assertion as to their not being within the compass of ordinary experience, he might reply, "of course not, if they did they would not be miracles." He believes in God, and it is clearly no reply to him to say that the laws of nature are constant. His reply is that they are constant only so long as God does not interfere with their constancy. You must demolish his God in order to show the unsoundness of his belief in miracles—*unless some other form of attack is evolved.*

* * *

Causation and the Miraculous

Hume, I have said, was hampered by his theory of causation, and that not alone prevented his attacking the theist in the manner he might have done, but his

own criticism was weakened by it. He says:—

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.

But on Hume's own ground his argument from "laws of nature" is inconclusive, if not invalid.

Causation with Hume means no more than invariable sequence. In combating the primitive notion, still apparently current with many of our religious scientists, that in causation something passes from the cause to the effect, Hume argues that the only reason we have for assuming that A is the cause of B is that B is always preceded by A. He and his opponents agreed on the fact of succession, but disagreed on its significance. Hume explains at considerable length that "no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction," or, as he says elsewhere, things are conjoined but never connected. Causation is nothing more than association, and we have no logical right to say that causation exists in the world at large. Hume's argument sounded so apparently complete, and it was so triumphant against the primitive religious notion of causation that it quickly established itself in the sceptical, and in a large part of the non-sceptical, world.

But if Hume's statement of causation is correct, then a large part of his argument against miracles loses its force. If there is no necessary connexion between events, then it is granted that there is nothing in the nature of things to prevent the usual conjunction of A and B to be on one or some occasions a conjunction of A and C or A and D, or even to reverse the order of the conjunction altogether. The believer in miracles might, therefore, retort by saying, "I grant that hitherto A has been followed by B, and that the appearance of B without the previous appearance of A is outside experience *up to a certain time.* But as you have admitted that there is nothing in the known nature of a series of events that can bind them together in an unbreakable sequence, surely it follows that another new sequence may at any time occur. It is the occurrence of this logical possibility which I call a miracle."

I do not see what effective reply Hume, or anyone who believes causation to be no more than an invariable sequence, can make to this statement. It would be begging the question to call for evidence, in the legal sense, of the alleged breach of natural continuity. It is part of the case for miracles that normal evidence is not possible. Each miracle is, *ex hypothesi* a special, if not a unique interference with natural law by God, and for a special purpose. It is produced to meet a special set of circumstances, and

cannot be repeated as one repeats a scientific experiment under test conditions. One must give even the believer in miracles a "square deal." The evidence which is usually offered against miracles, that of the universality of experience, does not, therefore, apply. Neither does the unreliability of human testimony, save in the case of an account of a particular miracle, and in that instance one may easily find the believer and the unbeliever in agreement.

A miracle, says the believer, is an event due to the direct intervention of God for a special purpose, and by its nature may be a unique, or at most an occasional event. "A miracle," says the unbeliever, "is a violation of the order of nature, and I will not believe in any interruption of this order of nature unless I can see the interruption repeated under conditions which preclude the possibility of mistake or delusion." The believer cannot convince the unbeliever, the unbeliever cannot convince the believer. The question is left in the air. Each is left to follow the lines of his own prejudices or preferences.

The *modus vivendi* that is sometimes attempted by that type of Freethinker who so loves to appease the believer by saying what is either silly or wrong, is to assume an air of impartial wisdom and say, "With nature all things are possible." On any ground, religious, non-religious, or scientific that is just nonsense. Possibility is never more than an expression of ignorance. To a child a diamond may be made out of a piece of cheese, to a scientist it is an impossibility. To say that anything is possible is to say that we cannot tell what is going to happen. Possibility, as Spinoza said, narrows as knowledge grows. To complete knowledge the only thing that is possible is the thing that happens.

* * *

The Need for Restatement

It seems, then, that the argument must be restated; there appears to be an unrevealed premiss with both disputants. If we are convinced that we are living in a world in which everything that occurs is due to the operation of uncontrolled natural forces, then any alteration in the manifestations of these forces, other than that due to their combination and interaction, is impossible. There is nothing to interfere with them or to modify their action. But if there exists some being who has the power to suspend or modify the operations of natural forces, then the possibility of miracles is there, and all that is left is to discuss the credibility of particular miracles. And it should be clear that anyone who occupies the position of Hume with regard to the nature of causation, that is, that between any two events there is no *necessary connexion*, must admit the possibility of the "violation of a law of nature" by a new sequence, however it arises. To get to grips, on Hume's line, we must get back to the question of the existence of God. The issue becomes that of Atheism or Theism, and our public men have usually shown themselves ready to resort to any subterfuge rather than face the obloquy of being compelled to adopt the first of these alternatives.

So far, however, the position is clearly unsatisfactory. Hume's aim of putting miracles out of court has not been accomplished. He has merely formulated, first, the rule upon which all sensible men act when listening to "traveller's yarns," and then, owing to his statement of causation, unsuccessfully, attempts to state an equation between a miracle and an infraction of natural law, and, finally, from the two makes the suggestion, which certainly is not warranted on his grounds, that miracles are an impossibility. So the believer and the unbeliever are finally left without any point of contact. They are like

duellists fighting with daggers—at fifty paces.

Now whenever a situation such as this arises, whenever we find ourselves with either no answer possible, or where the question itself is no longer commendable to common-sense, it is as well to consider whether the question has been properly put, or whether we have asked a question that we have no logical warranty for asking. For my own part I think that if the question is properly raised it is possible, not only to rule out particular miracles, but to show that the whole idea of miracles is unwarranted. At most I think it can be shown, first, that the question "Do miracles occur?" can be asked only when we start with a preceding unwarranted hypothesis, and second, that if the conditions of a belief in miracles is clearly formulated, we have as strong grounds for saying that miracles are impossible as we have to say that fairies have no existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Pathological Pomposity

"Every one lives in his own world, and between his blinkers, whether they be wide or narrow."—Wells.

"General opinion is no proof of truth, for the majority of men are ignorant."—Clifford.

SCIENCE and religion have ever been enemies. Scientific teaching and investigation, or, indeed, any form of inquiry, has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organization of priestcraft has always been brought to bear against science on the ground that it is a solvent of faith. This resistance of the Christian Churches to the prevalent opinions of scientists has no indisputable claim to respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory, were all in turn received with disfavour, we attribute that animosity, not to the weakness of the scientists' arguments, but to the priestly dislike of knowledge itself.

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of "God," and the early chemists were regarded as agents of "the devil." Philosophy and medicine were opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were supposed to contradict the book of Genesis. Priests resented all inquiry, and preferred explaining natural phenomena by mythological invention.

After many centuries of opposition, however, an attempt was made by a lady to build a bridge between religion and science. As the lady hailed from the United States, the new evangel was not hid under a bushel. It was spread abroad in the approved methods of patent medicine advertising, and, in some places, the gospel of Mary Eddy bids fair to rival the older evangel of Christ. The newest of new Bibles, *Christian Science: A Key to the Scriptures*, the textbook of this new faith, appeared in 1866, and is now in its two-hundredth edition, whilst its churches are to be found in all the capitals of the Christian World.

This new evangel has been received by tens of thousands of half-educated men and women, reverent of learning, but unable to discriminate it from its adulterated imitation. And Ma Eddy, quite as indiscriminating as any of her readers, was equipped with a nodding acquaintance with theology, metaphysics, a pseudo-scientific vocabulary, and a tenacious memory, to give them what they longed for. Words were Ma Eddy's stock-in-trade. Her pomp of court and her priesthood were verbosity. There are five hundred pages of polysyllabic words in her book. To a reader familiar with the sober use of scientific terms, her ex-

planations and definitions are simply jargon. They are the offspring of a lively imagination playing upon resonant polysyllables. For example, here is a definition! :—

Matter, Mythology, Mortality; another name for mortal mind, illusion, intelligence, substance, and life in non-intelligence and mortality; life resulting in death, and death in life; sensation in the sensationless; mind originating in matter; the opposite of truth; the opposite of gods; that of which immortal mind takes no cognisance; that which mortal mind sees, feels, tastes, and smells in belief.

The author of this nonsense has been hailed as a teacher "second only to" Christ. Yet she regards matter, mythology, and mortality as synonymous. The crazy nature of the new evangel is shown by another sample from this American revelation :—

The metaphysics of Christian science prove the rule by inversion.

For example :—

There is no pain in truth, and there is no truth in pain.

Yet Ma Eddy, with pain, regrets that ontology receives less attention than physiology, and relates the following improving anecdote, worthy of the writers of the Christian Bible, or the mendacious Baron Munchausen, the prince of liars :—

It is related that a father, anxious to try such an experiment, plunged his infant babe, only a few hours old, into water for several minutes, and repeated this operation daily, until the child could remain under water twenty minutes, moving and playing without harm like a fish. Parents should remember this, and so learn how to develop their children properly on dry land.

"An ounce of civet, good apothecary!" This parallels the brazen impudence of the story of Jonah and the whale. What, in the name of common-sense, did Ma Eddy suppose ontology to mean? It is fitting that such a teacher should give her disciples a form of prayer and a confession which bears the same resemblance to the so-called "Lord's prayer" that margarine does to butter. The high-priestess of the new faith strutted in borrowed plumes, and charged near a hundred pounds for a dozen lessons. No armament-maker, no oil magnate, no provision profiteer, ever kept a keener eye or a tighter fist on money—the only material thing in existence which Christian Scientists allow to be real. She never allowed a shilling that had no friends to go by her. In short, Ma Eddy was a religious "boss," like Joanna Southcott, William Booth, or the trustees of Queen Anne's Bounty.

Ridicule is the most fitting weapon to use against such gross superstition. Mark Twain, the prince of jesters, with that characteristic twinkle in his eye, that irresistible drawl in his voice, that gravity of manner, tried to convince the lady-saviour's deluded devotees that they might be mistaken. This is the way Mark burlesqued the Eddy Abracadabra :—

There is an account of the restoration of perfect health in a single night of a fatally injured horse, by the application of Christian Science. I can stand a good deal, but I recognize that the ice is getting thin here. If that horse had as many as fifty claims, how could he demonstrate over them? Could he do the All Good, Good Good, Good Gracious, Liver, Bones, Truth, all down but nine, set them up on the other alley? Could the animal intone the scientific Statement of Being? Now, could he? Wouldn't it give him a relapse? Let us draw the line at horses. Horses and furniture!

This is genuine fun, and more effective than reams of prosaic argument. It never affected the enormous popularity of the Eddy evangel, because believers do

not often read criticism. When a person joins a church, he must leave his brains at home. If he should forget himself, and think but once, the by-laws provide that he shall be thrown out.

We set out in a spirit of inquiry to make a serious examination of the claims made by Ma Eddy. But this nonsensical system makes us tired; for, of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books emanating from the half-crazy brains of religious fanatics, this book is one of the most delirious. It is more incoherent than the ravings of Joanna Southcott. Beside it Joe Smith's *Book of Mormon* is a plain tale. The *Forty Coming Wonders* of the late Prophet Baxter is shrinking modesty compared with the wholesale impudence of Ma Eddy. This American Bible fairly takes the breath away and makes the head swim. No other less colloquial phrase can so aptly describe the effect of claims so far transcending sanity. One reels back from the absurdities of "Christian Science" to the simplicity of a rational system such as Secularism, suited to the requirements of the age, and freed from the absurd aberrations of ancient ignorance. Christian Science has as little to do with historic Christianity as with real science. It is, in the last analysis, no more valuable than the patter of an itinerant race-tipster, but, as it is presented with a veneer of religiosity, innocent people receive it with reverence.

MIMNERMUS.

Earth-Lore in Days of Old

UNSOPHISTICATED savages naturally regard the scene of their birth and upbringing as the earth's central station. Wandering tribes enlarge their understanding of terrestrial magnitudes; but the inception of a scientific geography resulted from the wider experiences gained by those early civilized communities who, from cupidity or curiosity, journeyed by land or water to other habitats than their own.

Nevertheless, a remarkably exact knowledge of their surroundings has been, and is possessed by peoples of the lower culture. Moreover, from prehistoric times onwards every habitable area of the globe has been the haunt of humankind.

Maps were in use in Mexico long before the Spanish invasion, and Cortes marched at least 1,000 miles through Central America with the sole assistance of a native chart. Joseph Jacobs notes that, "An Eskimo named Kalliherey, drew up from his own knowledge of the coast, between Smith Channel and Cape York, a map of it, varying only in minute details from the Admiralty chart." Captain Cook induced a native of Tahiti to sketch a map of the Pacific covering some 3,000 miles which showed the relative size and location of the leading islets in that immense stretch of sea. Again, in all the important geographical discoveries of recent times, European explorers have been greatly assisted by native guides.

Man's acquaintance with the earth's configuration was considerably extended by civilized antiquity although nearly all this knowledge was lost to Europe during the Christian Dark Ages. As early as 2,000 B.C., the Babylonians employed a cadastral survey, as their clay tablets testify. In the land of Egypt, again, pronounced progress was made when the Nile dwellers invaded, studied and annexed large tracts of country in the fourteenth century B.C., both along the upper regions of the Nile, and to the north-east, as far as the frontiers of Assyria. But, perhaps the pioneer navigators were the Phœnicians who founded Sidon as a commercial city as early as 1,400 B.C., and, somewhat later, raised Tyre to an almost equal emi-

nence. Prior to the period of Homer, these industrious and enterprising traders had explored all the surroundings of the Euxine Sea, and voyaged along the Mediterranean into the Atlantic itself.

Prof. Scott Keltie contends that the Phœnicians stand second to the Egyptians only in "the influence they exerted on the progress of human thought and civilization. Their knowledge of mechanics, their early use of weights and measures, and their employment of an alphabetical form of writing facilitated and confirmed commercial intercourse among their own numerous colonies." Moreover, their maritime expeditions were the indirect antecedents of the voyage of Columbus 2,500 years later; the subsequent discovery of Australia, as well as the Arctic and Antarctic expeditions of recent days.

The intellectual triumphs of historic Greece, so long regarded as indigenous and original, are now acknowledged as partly derivative from Egypt, Babylonia, Crete and Phœnicia. Still, the Greeks excelled all their predecessors, contemporaries and most of their modern successors in art, philosophy and letters.

The poems ascribed to Homer display a close acquaintance with Northern Greece and Cyprus; Sicily, Egypt and the Western shores of Asia Minor were also known to the poet. But, beyond these areas, all is vague and conjectural, and Homer's theory of the earth's form is pre-scientific in character. Still, he mentions a pigmy people who dwelt in Africa and, although this statement was long discredited, this dwarf race has been rediscovered by modern explorers.

Following in the footsteps of the Phœnicians, the Greeks established colonies along the Mediterranean coasts. Massilia—the modern Marseilles—became a Greek settlement about 600 B.C., and from this mother colony several others spread along the Gulf of Lyons. Grecian cities were also established in the East, and Byzantium, now Constantinople, was destined to play a prominent part in the world's history.

During the seventh and eighth centuries B.C., the Greeks greatly advanced in their knowledge of the form and extent of the globe. The Ionian evolutionist, Thales, viewed our planet as a sphere suspended in an atmosphere. His disciple Anaximander was apparently the first to utilize cartographic methods. He also corrected many mistaken assumptions, and by means of observation paved the path for future discovery.

No copy of Anaximander's map is extant, but it seems to have served as a model for the one drawn-up by his fellow-townsmen, Hecataeus, of Miletus, who was also the author of the earliest known geography, fragments of which have survived. It appears to have been composed as a mariner's guide, and, when restored by modern scholars, this ancient work is seen to embrace all that was then known of Europe, Asia and Africa, which were assumed as surrounded by an interminable ocean. Hecataeus mentions the Mediterranean, Black and Red Seas as well as the great rivers—the Nile, Danube, Tigris, Euphrates and Indus.

Herodotus, the founder of history, and the expositor of geography stands next in succession. No insular theorist, he travelled extensively in Egypt and savage Africa, Persia, Irak, and along the coast lands of the Black Sea. His native Greece he knew well and his declining years were passed in Southern Italy. Herodotus has been defamed as the father of lies, yet despite the enormous obstacles he had to surmount in securing his information, his assertions have been shown to be remarkably reliable. In his history, he usually adopts a sceptical attitude towards

the tales of marvel and mystery he had gathered in the course of his travels.

Herodotus' history dates from 444 B.C., and his studies were extended by the later expeditions of Xenophon and the campaigns of Alexander, which extended Greek geography to distant India. Hellenic science was also increased by the voyages and travels of mercantile adventurers, while the Carthaginian seaman, Hanno, sailed along the Western Coast of Africa so far south as Sierra Leone, a feat not again accomplished for 1600 years. Curiously enough, Hanno mistook the manlike apes he encountered for hirsute savages as, on his return voyage he carried with him "hairy skins, which he stated, belonged to men and women whom he had captured, and who were known to the natives by the name of Gorillas."

Nearchus, one of Alexander's naval commanders, voyaged from the Indus to the Arabian Gulf, and Hippalus, another Greek seaman discovered that by conducting his expeditions during the monsoon seasons he could sail directly to India from Arabia, thus avoiding the dangerous coasts of Persia and Beluchistan. Greek knowledge of the Far East was further increased through the embassy of Megasthenes to the Punjab court in India.

The traveller Pytheas amplified ancient acquaintance with North-Western Europe and was apparently the earliest civilized visitor to Britain, where he remained for a considerable time. Thule, that remote island, he regarded as the furthest northern station of the habitable globe.

Eratosthenes, the illustrious librarian of Alexandria, who lived from 276 to 196 B.C., accumulated all available geographical information which he presented to the ancient reading public. This philosopher is considered the real originator of scientific geography. Parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude appeared in his work, while his maps were constructed on sound mathematical principles. Assuming the sphericity of our earth, Eratosthenes endeavoured to determine its dimensions, and despite his lack of those instruments so essential to the modern investigator, his estimate was approximately correct. For he found that the earth's circumference measured 25,000 geographical miles in extent. This was certainly a remarkably near approach to the now known extent of 24,899 English miles which modern science has established. Eratosthenes' views influenced Columbus and other navigators many centuries later. He definitely stated that, but for the enormous area embraced by the Atlantic Ocean, a voyage might be safely undertaken to the eastern coasts of India.

Rome now entered into the heritage of the Greeks and Strabo incorporated in a work written about 20 B.C., the accepted geography, in addition to the increased acquaintance with the earth's exterior acquired by the Romans in the course of two centuries. With minor modifications, Strabo on the whole adhered to the system of Eratosthenes. He dismissed Thule, however, as imaginary, but acknowledged the existence of Ireland, which he quaintly located to the north of Britain.

The next outstanding geographer was the astronomer Ptolemy, and he generalized all the knowledge gained by his predecessors. But, although the leading astronomer of his age (150 A.D.), he made many serious blunders in his calculations. Still, when we remember the imperfection of his appliances, Ptolemy's labours remain a monument of untiring industry, if not positive genius. Moreover, his geography of the Old World remained the standard authority until the opening years of the eighteenth century, while his cosmic scheme was still accepted

by the populace and the priests many generations after it had been exposed and overthrown by Copernicus and Galileo. Indeed, even after Newton had completed the revolutionary labours of Copernicus and his disciples, the Ptolemaic system was still taught as scientific truth in Catholic Spain and other benighted lands.

T. F. PALMER.

James Thomson (B.V.)

(Continued from page 725)

II.

THE Good Ancients had a theory that every human born was under the more-or-less direct protection of certain Gods—the influence of some of whom was unfortunate. This theory was to degenerate, on the break-up of Paganism, into the “guardian angel” theory of Christianity; to-day, in the break-up, in its turn, of Christianity, it re-appears as the “spirit-guide” theory of the school of necromancers known as Spiritualists. The Gods of Humanity change; Nature remains.

The God-theory of the Ancients was, at least, large and dignified; James Thomson would have been “placed” by them as being, and hence suffering, under the influence of Saturn—an unfortunate and “fatal” influence that he shared with many another hapless genius, who, despite splendid gifts of heart and head, was foredoomed, so it seems, to misery. The modern astrologers, by the way, would have agreed. B.V.’s life was, in a worldly sense, a disaster.

The poet’s masterwork, *The City of Dreadful Night*, and several lesser-known of his masterpieces that are akin to it in both inspiration and expression, are nothing less than pæans in praise of Saturn; and as such they would have been hailed by the instructed Pagans, who “attributed” their art-works to their various deities.

In truth, “B.V.” was himself a Pagan; in his fine, clear and original essays on Blake and Burns, essays that go to the very hearts of his subjects, he shows his affinities. Part of his tragedy was, indeed, that he was out-of-place in our mawkish and degenerate civilization.

Marlowe, Verlaine, Poe, Gissing, were all “Children of the Dark Star”; and instinctively “B.V.” turned for consolation—to the incalculable advantage of Art—to his “melancholy brothers,” as he calls them in his *City*, Leopardi and Heine, fellow-partakers in the bitter cup that was only to pass from them with life itself.

* * *

Pessimism is an aspect of life; it is no explanation of life itself. It is an attitude only. “B.V.,” like other hapless ones, brooded for so long, and so darkly, that he came to identify life with sorrow; like his correspondent, William Maccall, Thomson unconsciously became a philosophic Buddhist. Again, like Maccall, he never consciously found the Buddhist’s consolation. That was his tragedy. From tragedy is born beauty; Nietzsche is again vindicated. “Out of his endless ill,” in Heine’s phrase, “B.V.” came to “fashion” the immortal and supreme set of songs that will probably never be surpassed as expressions of the Saturnine mood.

Thus, out of one of the world’s philosophic and historic illusions, we possess a great artist’s perfect expression—or pressing-out—of the world’s pain. From the dark grapes of sorrow the poet pressed the heavy, potent, bitter-sweet wine of beauty—the beauty of suffering. With complete approval he quotes the

great Italian saying, “Better than every victory is a beautiful suffering.”

It is idle to discuss the path that Genius takes; it is easy for the comfortable, Philistine mediocrity, who lives all his life in a mental suburb in the provinces, to tell what he “would have done in the circumstances.”

It is easy to be a connoisseur in beef and beer; it needs rarer gifts adequately to judge the man who, either for his own good or ill, is possessed by his own genius. Such a human is to be judged only by his equals; and his equals are rare. Shelley was correct in claiming the right of the poet to be judged by his peers. By this judgment B.V., in so far as he gave perfect and final form to a fundamental aspect of life, was supremely successful. And nothing else matters. The Philistines who demand conformity to their own little systems of ethics and superstitions may be “left to it.” In the Republic of Genius they have no votes, and do not count.

What matters ultimately in art, as in everything else, is happy achievement. By this exaltation of despair B.V.’s achievement, as an artist, is completely happy. “That is all we know on earth, and all we need to know.” It is, once again, an expression of the paradox that lies at the root of art.

* * *

B.V. automatically became the star-turn of any periodical wherewith he was connected for any length of time. There are five periodicals whereto his free-and-independent contributions were welcomed; *The London Investigator*, (1858-9); *The National Reformer*, (1860-75); *The Secularist*, (1876-7); *The Liberal*, (1879); *Cope’s Tobacco Plant*, (1875-81). In each case I have given the period covered by B.V.’s contributions, and not the full “life” of the periodical itself; although to *The Secularist* and *The Liberal* (both edited by Foote) B.V. was a contributor from first to last.

The poet also got occasional work on other publications; in 1882 there was printed his surpassingly-good blank verse poem, “A Voice from the Nile.” To John Morley—later Lord Morley—is due the honour of printing B.V. in *The Fortnightly Review*. For almost the first time Thomson got a poem in a first-rate, non-specialized magazine; and at about the same time he contributed a poem, “The Sleeper,” to *The Cornhill Magazine*, then edited by Leslie Stephen. The only other important contribution to an “orthodox” magazine seems to be “Sunday up the River,” which appeared in *Fraser* in 1869.

The dawns of public recognition coincided—under Saturn—with the twilight of the poet’s life. A few month’s after his appearance in *The Fortnightly* and *The Cornhill* B.V. was dead.

By an ironic fate, continued misfortunes and unhappinesses had made B.V. incapable of grasping at any chance of worldly success. His shaking hands could no longer grasp the cup of happiness; towards the end of a rue-strewn career, fame meant less to him than oblivion. Oblivion B.V. sought in minor and ignoble ways, until the greater oblivion of earthly Nirvana released him from a short, glorious, tragic immortally-echoing life of toil and sorrow. Such was the gift of Saturn to his overweighted son of Genius.

* * *

Those who, like myself, are more or less experienced in the ways of publishers, will learn without wonder—if they do not know already—that for years B.V.’s masterpiece was rejected by the book-producers of his time. *The City of Dreadful Night* appeared serially, in four instalments, in the spring of 1874, in *The National Reformer*. It was hailed as a

great and original work on its appearance, and the numbers containing it went out-of-print almost immediately. It remained unobtainable for six years, every publisher refusing to issue it, because, being "unusual," it would not "sell." This same slogan, by the way, is used to-day. Like all over-worked and widely-spread slogans, it is a fallacy. At length, in 1880, a friend who had followed B.V.'s literary career since his early *National Reformer* days contrived, in collaboration with a progressive and a live firm, Reeves and Turner, to issue a volume whereof the chief item was *The City of Dreadful Night*.

To the astonishment, no doubt, of the eternally-stupid tradesmen who deal in book-production, the volume not only paid its expenses, but yielded a few badly-needed pounds to the genius who wrote it.

The loyal, disinterested, and patient friend to whom the world owes the publication in book-form of *The City of Dreadful Night* was himself a poet; he was also a bookseller, a publisher, a bibliophile, an editor, and an essayist; and his name was Bertram Dobell, the writer of the noble and sympathetic study of the poet prefixed to his "Poetical Works," of which Dobell was also part-publisher.

Dobell, be it here recorded anew, helped B.V. in many ways; he bore with him in his often all-but-intolerable infirmities; he lent him valuable books that he never saw again; he aided him with encouragement and money; and—loyalist that he was—he tried never to lose sight of his stricken and gifted friend. There were times when this last service became extremely difficult to perform. If loyalty could have saved him, B.V. would have been saved. Dobell, it is surely superfluous to say, was a Freethinker; incidentally, he was an occasional contributor, in both prose and verse, to this journal when Foote was its editor.

If for a moment I may be autographical, I may say that I remember Bertram Dobell in his old age. He was a delightful old man; surrounded by books, piled around him on the floor and shelved; and also in heaps on the table whereat he sat and talked. His mind was a storehouse of memories of the past.

Dobell issued two more volumes of B.V.'s writings, *Vane's Story*, *Weddah and Om-El-Bonain*, and *Other Poems* (1881), and the prose *Essays and Phantasies* (1881), in his friend's life-time; and several more B.V. books after the poet's death. One of Dobell's chief interests lay in aiding the growing reputation of his dead poet-friend.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

(To be continued.)

Twenty Years Hence

In a recent issue of a well-known Sunday paper there was a competition for the best set of questions which a person would be likely to ask if he were suddenly transferred to the year 1954. Many of the questions were humorous and pertinent, but those which interested me most were the religious questions. Apparently they were of similar interest to the competition editor, for he gives quite a fair selection from the samples he received.

Since I hope to be still alive in the year when these questions are supposed to be asked, it tickled my fancy to imagine what answers I would personally like to give to them. I have a strong suspicion that most of my answers will not be borne out by the facts. But one never knows. There is nothing like hoping for the best. Readers may find both questions and answers sufficiently entertaining to suggest a new parlour game for themselves. The questions, be it remembered, are not my invention; the answers are.

(1) What has happened to the Christian religion?

There are now fifty-seven varieties, and we call it "Heinz" for short.

- (2) Why are all the churches closed on Sunday?
Because parsons couldn't hoax the empty pews.
- (3) Are the people of the world more Christian than they were twenty years ago?
Oh, certainly—more or less. The Christians more, the others less.
- (4) Has psychic research established personal immortality as a part of reality?
Of course it has, long ago. On the other hand Science has conclusively established the contrary.
- (5) Is the Influence of Christianity on civilization greater than it was twenty years ago?
That depends. Christians claim that it is so; others claim that the influence of civilization on Christianity is greater.
- (6) Have you got into touch with The Other World?
Oh, yes, and we found it quite uninhabited.
- (7) Is Christianity being given a trial at last?
Yes. And it is fully expected that the jury will bring in a verdict of "Guilty."
- (8) Has the Millenium, fixed for 1953 by the Pyramid Prophets, begun?
I hope so. At any rate that was the year when the last of the Pyramid Prophets died.

The foregoing questions were classified as dealing with "religion" in some form or other. But here are a few more of a secular kind.

- (9) Has the problem of poverty in a world of plenty been solved?
Almost. And according to the Bishop of London its solution was entirely due to Christianity.
- (10) Which of our cities still have slums?
Those which have the most churches.
- (11) Is there any truth in this Loch Ness Monster business?
We don't know. But it has started a new religion.
- (12) What on earth has that woman got on?
We call those things a dog-collar, gaiters and an apron.
- (13) Which paper has the largest circulation?
Oh, shut up! Go and buy yourself a copy of the *Freethinker*!

C. S. FRASER.

Acid Drops

Mr. J. B. Priestley wonders why the practice of passports cannot be abolished between civilized States, and suggests that Governments should "take a chance," and allow people to travel freely without so many foolish enquiries and restrictions. We think the reason is, first, that Governments are made of a crowd of officials, and the one thing that officials love to do is to fuss round on all sorts of occasions, since it is by fussing that they can display their importance, and taste that power that all true officials love. The second, perhaps the more important reason is that abolition of a regulation often requires courage, and courage in behalf of freedom, or in the cause of genuine civilization is what Governments seldom have. They will take chances in other directions—in the direction of going to war, in the direction of enquiries and restrictive laws which lead to all sorts of irritations, and which result in a far greater amount of injury than benefit. But when it comes to taking a chance in the direction of encouraging a larger measure of liberty, then the poor little, half-developed, badly-

nourished, souls of rulers tremble and shrink back upon the ancient method of the whip, or the chain, and the cultivation of suspicion between individuals and nations.

At the moment all the nations of the world are tumbling over each other to take a chance of war, when all that is needed is a greater degree of intelligence, and a little more courage to take a chance in a direction which might lead the world to peace. Anyone who is not a born idiot knows that the continuous building-up of huge armaments in the insane hope that one can remain stronger than another is a certain way to war. But the war may not happen to-morrow, or the day after, and so the poor cowardly souls of those in power take the chance of *certain* war, because they lack the courage of taking a chance which at least might lead to permanent peace. And they are supported by the clamour of military leaders—men who live in an atmosphere which can only think of outsiders in terms of fear, who prowl through civilized life with the militant cowardice of the jungle—who will protest against any chances being taken in the direction of civilized life. Their slogan is always "take no chances," in other words, risk everything on the lower level of existence, but take none on the higher ones.

Dr. Dafoe, the medical man who helped to save the famous quintuplets born in Ontario recently, is proud of the large families in his locality. "The home life," he declares, "is remarkably pure. . . race suicide is non-existent, and it is not unusual to find families of from fifteen to twenty." By "race-suicide," the worthy doctor means birth-control—it sounds worse put in that way; but it is remarkable with what complacency he refers to families of fifteen to twenty. What a pity it is that Dr. Dafoe, and men who talk like him, cannot themselves give birth to twenty children. Their stupid complacency might get a bit of a shock!

Another great figure has been added to God and Jesus as far too reverent to appear on the stage. It is that fine, truthful, and joyous character, Mrs. Baker Eddy, and the Lord Chamberlain has banned a play concerning her (we are not quite sure whether we should not say Her) entitled *Haunted Woman*. Its author, Mr. F. J. Mott, however, has published it, and so we are able to judge whether the Lord Chamberlain was right. It was from Phineas P. Quimby, the mesmerist, that Mrs. Eddy, formerly Mrs. Patterson, took her *Science and Health*. With the Quimby secrets all her own she felt great enough to form the third member of the Trinity—God, Jesus and Mrs. Eddy. As she herself says in the play:—

They won't listen to Mary Baker Eddy, the farmer's daughter, who got her ideas from Quimby, but they'll listen open-mouthed to Mary Baker Eddy, who communes with God.

Why don't we have a Lord Chamberlain with a sense of humour?

"Fights in a Church," "Villagers Swarm Round the Pulpit," "You Lying Humbug!" "Call the Police"—and many other charming headlines call attention to another of these scenes which sometimes take place in consecrated ground, and are so powerfully indicative of the well-known Christian aphorism, "God is Love." This time it is Stoke Hammond, in Bucks, which is the centre of interest, and it seems that the rector was preaching a sermon in reply to certain slanderous statements made concerning him to the bishop. This was too much for one muscular Christian, with the result that this gentleman took off his coat and did his best to get at his spiritual adviser with the shout, "You lying humbug!" He was not allowed to carry the argument further with his fists, but the rector was "booed and hissed" when he left the Church. It all makes a pretty picture of rural Christian life.

The "Free" Churches have a very peculiar idea of Democracy. In the United States the Methodist Churches were the most violent of all the sects in perse-

cuting, shooting, imprisoning and outlawing violators of the atrocious Prohibition law. Their only excuse was that "The People" condemned alcohol: even life-long imprisonment was decreed for a third sale of a half pint of "booze." Hundreds of citizens were killed by fanatical Prohibitionists. And now that America has repeated yet again its vote against the party which foisted this horror on the nation, the Rev. Albert Belden, in the *British Weekly* has the effrontery to say "The reaction against the Prohibition law in America is no condemnation of Prohibition."

Our Clergy pay a poor tribute to the League of Nations when they have to preach as on Armistice Sunday, about Bible ideas of peace. The Rev. G. W. Macpherson, of Jedburgh, eulogised the League—by dragging in the noble example of Abram's "great forward march of humanity." It is a most cruel case of inaptness. Abram was the first recorded Army General in the Bible. During the World War this bloodthirsty patriarch was actually quoted by Ministers of Christ as a glorious example of mobilization. And now, the same war history is claimed to be on all fours with the work of the Christian section of the League of Nations.

A stained-glass window is to be unveiled at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Aldershot Command. The window will exhibit, or comprise pictures of aeroplanes and tanks advancing against the enemy, infantry preparing to charge, etc. We suggest that a plan of Paschendale showing Haig directing the bombing of the land, and its consequent flooding. Then our men being killed by drowning in the pits that had been dug for them, in spite of the warnings that had been issued to the commander of the men, would make the window complete.

Some play is being made by Roman Catholic advocates on account of the stand made by the Church against what it calls the tyranny of the secular State. So far, good, although as is quite common with the Roman Catholic propagandist—or with the Christian propagandist generally—the "truth" here harbours a very dangerous falsity. The general policy of the Roman Church—as, again, it is the policy of all the Christian Churches—is to support any State that will support the Church. It is a case of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." The Church does not protest against tyranny because it is tyranny; what it protests against is a tyranny which is exercised by the State, and which does not make for the profit of the Church. Its protest in Germany, for example, is not against the brutal tyranny of the Fascist Government, it is only against an expression of it in opposition to the Church. And in Italy, it appears as a warm supporter of the brutal tyranny of the Fascist regime.

It is also very often forgotten, even when it is known, that the policy of the Roman Church was always against the existence of a State Church. The aim of the Church was to rule the State, but it could never agree to the State ruling the Church. There was thus involved in Roman Catholic policy a suspicion of the interference of the State in matters of religion, save when this interference took place in the direct interests of the Church. There was in this no expression of a belief in religious freedom, but a desire to make the State a department of the Church. Contrary to popular belief there existed no State religion in Europe until the Reformation. There was, we believe, actually no law compelling one to be a Christian. This is one of the benefits we owe to the Reformation which gave us a State Church, and under punishment, made a profession of Christian belief compulsory in many cases.

But, again, it must be pointed out, that in practice, there was not a great difference between Catholic and Protestant times. For the Church claimed universal spiritual dominion, and dictated to the secular powers in

virtue of this claim. Moreover, the Church claimed the right to discipline its own members and to protect itself against attack. And under the latter heading any criticism of the Church could be construed as an attack, and even criticism could be defined so as to cover almost anything. So that in practice the Church judged when it was being attacked, and it called upon the secular powers to carry out the sentences it passed on its spiritual subjects or spiritual enemies. It is this that furnishes the replies to many of the dishonest apologies set forth by present-day Roman Catholic defenders.

For once we are in full agreement with Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Speaking at the Catholic Truth Society's Jubilee the other day, he said, "Make no mistake, England is anti-Catholic to the core. The odd false doctrines have gone—they lasted much longer than I thought they would—but the hatred remains." It is quite good to learn from such a source that England is still anti-Catholic—in spite of the millions of Catholic Truth Society pamphlets that have been sold (mostly to already convinced Catholics, by the way). We hold no brief for the other varieties of the Christian religion, but they are, in every way, preferable to the Catholic brand. It will be a simpler task to get the rationally-minded on to our side; the others will no doubt go over, body and soul, to the Romans; and the fight will be, as has so often been predicted, between Freethought and Roman Catholicism—between reason and unreason, between Faith and Science.

Roman Catholics are very angry at the obstinacy of those in control of elementary education in Australia. As is well known, it is entirely secular, and as quite a number of Australians come from Ireland and have taken with them their superstitions in general and Roman Catholicism in particular, they are furious at having to pay for teaching their religion themselves. Mgr. Kelley declared that "Australia will never come to Christian maturity under the present system of public instruction," which is quite good to know. Who wants to come under "Christian maturity" anyway except Fundamentalists, Roman Catholics and their like? And if they do they ought to pay for it—which is the last thing they want to do. We trust the time will come very quickly when the Mother Country will follow the fine example of Australia.

Roman Catholics made a determined attack on town and city councils all over the country at the recent elections. A large number were returned, but some of the results are surprising. For instance, all the anti-Catholic candidates, were beaten in Glasgow—a stronghold, we believe, of Socialism. In fact, the anti-Catholic vote was only 7.2 per cent of the votes recorded. Catholics, of course, lost some seats, and won others just as other parties. No doubt, some Catholics can be just as good citizens, as some members of other sects; but with them, the Church is bound to come first, and few Catholics are not under the thumb of the priests. The point to note is how they are, in this age of tolerance, worming themselves into civic and social life. And this can only mean a set-back to reform. With a majority of Roman Catholics on the Council, what chance has such a vital reform as free birth-control clinics for all women who want information? We wonder whether every anti-clerical voted at this last election.

Whatever modern Biblical criticism by famous Church and other writers may lead to, we have the assurance of a Catholic editor to one of his puzzled readers, that "the Church says that both the Old and New Testaments are inspired, and infallible, and contain no error." That is the considered verdict of the Roman Catholic Church, and should be noted. There are no errors in the whole of the Bible! Every word—and dot, of course—is inspired. The whole volume is absolutely infallible and now, we hope, Modernists, Biblical critics who think otherwise, and Freethinkers can all hide their heads in shame.

We cordially agree with the *Church Times* that the employment of young boys and girls is a bad policy—bad for the children, bad for industry, bad for society as a whole. But this mode of employment is bad for personal, for social, and even for economic reasons, and these reasons should be enough for anyone. But the *Church Times* says it is "utterly unchristian," and that makes us wonder why. For child labour—very much worse than any form of employment that now exists—grew up in Christian countries when Christianity was practically unquestioned, and when it possessed a degree of power far, far beyond anything that it now has. Nothing worse than the wholesale exploitation of very young children by Christian employers has ever been known in any part of the world, or at any time than existed in Christian Britain just over a century ago. And this continued until the growth of secular social sense compelled a stop to be put to the slaughter of young children for the purpose of filling Christian pockets. Why, then, we ask the *Church Times* is the exploitation of young children "unchristian?" We do not anticipate a reply, although we should like to see one attempted.

Nowadays the revenues of the Church are partly explained as being largely due to the free gifts of pious persons. It would be rather interesting to find out how many of the "pious gifts" are from those who grew rich on child labour during the worst days of the English factory system.

The Rev. John Bevan has reached the limit of his credulity. He cannot believe the story that five thousand (or more, according to Matt. xiv. 21) people fed on a miraculously multiplied five loaves and two fishes. He says, "I find it is an utter impossibility for me to believe." Further, says Mr. Bevan, "Without the previous exercise of the reason, you can, under the power of faith, believe pretty well anything." Mr. Bevan's scathing words should be remembered: "Divorced from logical reasoning there is literally no end to the mind's credulity in the matter of miracles."

Fifty Years Ago

CANON LEFROY, in a paper read at the Liverpool Diocesan Conference, gives us the welcome news that "Infidelity," by which he means Secularism and Freethought Literature, "at the present moment is domesticated in the homes of England." The *Rock*, commenting on this, regrets the "by far the most dangerous form" which "Infidel" literature has assumed in "the leading monthly reviews." These "able publications," it continues, "find their way into the strictest homes, and yet they contain, month after month, articles attacking the foundations of our faith, differing only from such productions as those of Mr. Bradlaugh and his friends in being written in decent phraseology. It may be desirable that such neutral organs of opinion should exist, though we have our doubts of the necessity. But we are sure that they ought not to lie on the drawing-room table in the house of a Christian family. The boy or girl who takes up one of these reviews, and reads a paper advocating the blindest materialism, sandwiched, so to say, between one by a bishop of the Church of England and another by a Unitarian minister, can come to no conclusion but that the matters treated of in all alike are open questions, on which he or she may form an individual opinion unblamed. It cannot be right for parents to expose their children's faith to such a trial as this, and we believe that a great deal of the scepticism amongst well-educated young people of which we hear may be traced to it." We believe the fears entertained by the *Rock* are well founded. The only way to keep people Christians is to keep them ignorant. Knowledge of both sides of the question can only have one result.

The "Freethinker," November 23, 1884.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. H. J. HEWER writes, apropos of an item in last issue of *Freethinker*, "Please tell Mr. Beverley Nichols that you know a life-long gardener who has slammed the idea of God for over 27 years." The information has been passed on, but Mr. Nichols is not likely to be so simple as he reads. He has to consider his readers.

WILL the writer of the article, "The Horrors of Peace," be good enough to send his address to the editor.

S. ACKROYD.—We have not come across the work by F. R. Tennant, but the title reads interestingly. Pleased you have found the other articles interesting.

A. COPLAND.—When a child accepts a statement as true because a teacher has told it that the statement expresses the truth, the steps are (1) My teacher knows the truth, (2) this statement is the truth, therefore (3) I accept it. That is strictly a process of reasoning.

G. SHEPPARD.—Pleased to learn that your receipt of the *Freethinker* for four weeks has led to your becoming a regular subscriber. There are thousands of potential readers of this paper, and if our readers would bestir themselves we might soon gain a large proportion of them.

J. MARTIN.—You must not be too hard on Mr. Morton and his women of the Bible. He must write to suit his paper, and the editor knows the kind of fluffy nonsense that will help his circulation. But the article on Eve is really too rubbishy in texture for serious criticism.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

To-day (November 25) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Stratford Town Hall, on "The Fight for Freedom of Thought." This is one of the most important topics of the moment, and a good attendance is expected. Stratford Town Hall is easily reached by tram, omnibus, and train, from all parts of London. Admission is free. The chair will be taken at 7.0 sharp.

Next Sunday (December 2) Mr. Cohen is speaking in the Birmingham Town Hall at 3.0.

There was a good attendance in the Secular Hall, Leicester, on Sunday last, to listen to Mr. Cohen. The meeting lasted a little longer than usual, but the questions were many, and the interest was sustained to the end. Mr. Hassell occupied the chair, and made a very strong appeal for support for the Society. We hope that this appeal met with deserved success.

Mr. Rosetti is the lecturer at Leicester to-day (November 25) and we strongly recommend local friends to make

a point of being present, and to take a Christian friend with them. Mr. Rosetti always has something to say that is worth hearing.

Mr. George Bedborough's latest work, *Arms and the Clergy*, issued by the Secular Society, Limited, is now on sale, price one shilling in paper covers, and two shillings in cloth, gilt. We hope it will have a wide sale. Nothing can be much more interesting to Freethinkers and peace lovers than to see what clergymen of all denominations in England and America said about war during 1914-18, particularly when contrasted with what they are saying now. Mr. Bedborough has collected a large number of their utterances, fully documented, and they make piquant reading these days. If war is really "in the air" now, it should be of the greatest service to see how Christians, preaching Christianity, reacted during the great war which was to end all wars.

London Freethinkers should be interested in a meeting that is to be held in the Caxton Hall, on Tuesday, November 27, at 8 o'clock. The purpose of the meeting is to enlist public support in favour of the "Matrimonial Causes Bill" now before Parliament. There will be a number of well-known speakers present, including Mr. Francis Acland, Mrs. H. Normanton, Sir William Wayland, and Mr. John Slater. Mr. Holford Knight, who has charge of the Bill in Parliament will take the chair. Admission is free.

The West Ham Branch N.S.S. has arranged a course of three lectures to be held at Grove House, High Road, Leyton, E.10. Mr. L. Ebury will open the course on Sunday evening, December 2, and will speak on "Religion the Canker of Humanity." Mr. P. Goldman will be the speaker on December 9, and the Branch President, Mr. H. S. Wishart, will finish the course on December 16. The meetings begin at 8 o'clock, and admission is free.

Birmingham saints will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. George Bedborough, who will lecture in the Bristol Street Schools to-day (November 25) at 7 p.m., on "Prayer: An Ancient Superstition." Mr. Bedborough's matter is always good and interesting, and he has the happy knack of infusing humour in just the right place and in right proportions.

Mr. George Whitehead will be in Bradford to-day (November 25). The Tatler Cinema, Thornton Road, Bradford has been engaged, and at 7 p.m. he will speak there on "The Morality of an Atheist." Mr. Whitehead is well known in Bradford, and his friends will see that the hall is filled. Admission is free, and reserved seats may be had at sixpence, and one shilling each.

At the Annual Meeting of the Auckland Council of Christian Congregations, the Rev. W. W. Averill lamented that New Zealand was now feeling the impact of a "definite militant Atheism," which was having "a very damaging effect on Christianity." A definite militant Freethought usually has that effect; but we wonder what Mr. Averill is thinking about it?

A Californian Scientist, Dr. Robert E. Cornish, has made some remarkable experiments with what were regarded as dead dogs. He claims having "re-animated," to the extent of obtaining some "mechanical reaction to stimuli," dogs already prepared for burial. He has now asked permission to experiment on a dead body of a man; perhaps an electrocuted murderer. Every form of religious opposition has been encountered to this proposal. Ministers of the gospel, who had no objection at all to taking away a human life find Dr. Cornish's desire to restore life as "an interference with divine law," on the ground that "the soul has left the body until Judgment Day, and must not be called back till then." But if Dr. Cornish is a scientist he would probably be willing to waive all the rights to the soul if only a common ordinary human life were capable of being restored to a dead man.

Can Man Forgive God?

THE trump card of all Christian preachers and propagandists is, of course, that on which are inscribed in golden letters "God is Love." Aside from that highly disputable proposition we have to keep in view the very mixed and bemuddled ideas held as to what "Love" really means. It was in former times regarded as synonymous with "Charity" (*Caritas*). But Christian journalists and novelists have played hell with the original conception of Love in its pristine purity! There are now apparently several meanings of the term. In many minds obsessed with sex, it has only one significance, and that is as applying to the relations between a man and a woman. It is far from the writer's object or intention to belittle the real affection which so often binds human mates to one another. But it cannot be questioned that infatuation is often mistaken for love. And mere infatuation narrows the scope of altruistic feeling. It limits its concern to the particular persons attracting and attracted. It kills their capacity to develop a concern for the well-being of the *whole* of one's fellow beings—mankind at large.

This provides a peg upon which the ardent Christian believer hangs his theory of Divine love which he avers has no bounds or limitations. The love of his God is the perfect love—all human love excelling. This, of course, puts the Peter on all us benighted wretches who have never had the privilege of meeting and talking with the Christian's God, because all we can know of love has been learned from merely human sources, i.e., limited beings like ourselves.

In all the varied and confusing conceptions of Love the Freethinker is prepared to meet the Christian on his own ground; to challenge him as to the meaning and quality of the Love of God, and to demand from him satisfying historical evidences of God's care and loving concern for mankind at large. From the victims of Herculaneum and Pompeii to the victims of the "Morro Castle," the tale is one of repeated disasters to humanity. And ancient augurs and modern priests alike have done what they could when gifted sons of men (who disclaimed any connexion with the supernatural) devised schemes of self-protection for mankind to prohibit, frustrate and bring to nought all such schemes. Those of us who have never talked or walked with God can only judge his character by his earthly representatives. The Ethiopian has not changed his skin, or the leopard his spots. The impudent and self-assertive parsons who profess to stand between the divine and the human, and to reveal, explain and expound the former to the latter, are really no better than any sorcerers, soothsayers or fortune-tellers that ever existed. What common folk in former times did not know they *feared*; and they were content to accept the statements of priests who *pretended* to know. They were content to allow the priests to dictate what they were to do, say, read, and eat! They were content to allow the priests at any time to invade their privacy because these black-robed gentry declared that they held their commissions from Almighty God! Whatever their God did was right, and prompted by his eternal love, and in the furtherance of his policy towards mankind his ambassadors on earth could not therefore in any particular be wrong!

What intelligent and reasonably-educated man or woman subscribes to that view to-day? Though thousands, owing to social or economic pressure, join the Church and attend Church services, giving a lip-assent to the verities of the Faith, they privately describe the so-called revelations of Supernaturalism as

so much bunk. Humanity is not for ever to be bound within these primitive swaddling bands!

It would be more helpful if we could adopt as the effective meanings of Love—common decency; playing the game; fair dealing between man and man, and kindness towards the helpless, the weak, the sorrowful and sufferers generally. But as a preliminary one must have a general assent to what justice really is. We must insist on the enforcement of real justice; and this involves the repeal of the decrees of an unjust God. It was obedience, and not disobedience, to these decrees in the past that flung humanity into the bloody cockpit of internecine strife and fratricidal war.

Who is this Christian God that he should have the effrontery after the horrible record of his misdeeds and maltreatment of human beings to require *their* penitence and tears? Is not the boot on the other foot? When man invented God, he made an inhuman monster to destroy himself. But just because man in the days of his weakness, ignorance and foolishness made God, so he can now *unmake* him. The imposture of Supernaturalism is becoming clearer every day. The scales are falling from our eyes.

It is significant that most Governments in collaboration with fat and well-paid ecclesiastical magnates with the object of "ruling the mob and keeping it under," still outwardly profess and enjoin belief in the Supernatural. The ruling powers are backed up by an obsequious and servile press. For where the Golden Image is, there will the parasites, flunkies, lackeys and lickspittles be gathered together!

IGNOTUS

The Failure of Religion

(Concluded from page 730)

It would be as well to commence by glancing at what they are in fact doing. It appears to me that they are doing the only two things possible under the circumstances, one stubbornly reactionary and the other hopefully adaptive. The former course is being taken by the Roman and by Fundamentalist Lodges, the latter by what we call the Modern Church, commencing in the Broad Church Movement. The Roman Church stands its ground valiantly under the motto, "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." There is no nonsense about that; it is unambiguous. The Index Expurgatorius remains, keeping the intellectual blinkers tightly over the eyes of the devout. Modern tendencies such as Birth-Control are condemned in clear and unequivocal terms. Contraception among the faithless is all to the good, for it depletes their numbers; but the faithful are compelled to breed with the utmost prolificness, and the babes are early seized upon by their clerical tutors. Hell is kept stoked up to its traditional temperature, and as the priests move in and out of a million hovels, they view with satisfaction the candles and crucifixes on the bare tables, and the array of saints on the mantle-pieces. Verily the Roman Church has dug itself in and intends to fight to the last ditch the battle between the past and the present. But the Modern Church has yielded ground, and this will be its undoing. It has been an admirable gesture in homage to truth, but none the less a fatal one. Central doctrines have been permitted to come under the fire of criticism, with the result that their foundations have been shaken. This has led to pitiable attempts within the Church, to adapt religion to the new view, in the form of that sorry business known as re-interpretation. When the Bible tells us that x equals 3y,

and Science discovers that in fact x does not equal $3y$, we do not say that the original statement was wrong. We re-interpret it by saying that it was allegorical. But we do not apply this method to any but Christian mythology. If we are dealing with Red Indians or Papuan Islanders, we do not look for the deep truths underlying their childish fables, the revelations behind their allegories. We simply say that their beliefs do not represent facts, and find in their mythologies only an ethnological interest. This business of re-interpretation, however, once started, leads on to some very subtle situations. At first re-interpreting only gross fables, the Modern Church goes on to re-interpret the whole substance and import of the Christian faith, and we are presented with what is known as "True Christianity." This True Christianity would appear to differ according to the scientific equipment and moral bias of the individual interpreter, but through its many variations runs at least one common principle, and that is the tendency to drop the supernatural element and bring forward the moral. Christianity is spoken of as if it consisted of nothing more than an injunction to love people, or an exhortation to co-operate, or an example of correct living, and so on. Certain moral maxims (much more ancient than Christianity, but that is by the way) are taken from the New Testament and put forward as if they were the alpha and omega of the Christian faith. But once inside a church the man-in-the-street finds himself again in the midst of supernaturalism, singing hymns to his god, praying to him, kneeling to him and receiving his benedictions. The fact is, at all events as far as the Freethinker sees it, that this two-stringed instrument on which the Church plays her symphony of truth is a mere transitional phase (to cull a term from biology) in the decay of religion. To keep pace with modern thought, religion must veer more and more in a moral, and less and less in a supernatural, direction. But it will lose the mass of the people, even as philosophy has done, for it will have to be content, as philosophy must be, to reach them indirectly. No longer will the Church be subsidized, any more than Science is subsidized, by what Dr. Downey called the pennies of the poor, for the poor do not contribute pennies to an ideal as they do to a god. I see the Church of the Future ploughing a lone furrow if her development takes this line, but graced for the first time with real nobility. To-day, in the Modern Church, are countless men of high aspirations and fine character, whose interest is truly focussed on the happiness of their fellow men. I know many of these ministers personally, and to speak otherwise of them would be to fall in with the insincere taunts of the mere propagandist. Many of them must feel keenly the biting into their flesh of the fetters that bind them to outworn traditions and an obsolete outlook on life. The Church of the Future, then, I envisage as one of two diametrically opposite types: either a crude, reactionary Church on Roman lines, once again "holding up" civilization as she did in the Dark Ages, or a small, somewhat forlorn, but brave Church, composed of a handful of earnest and high-minded men, divested of every shred of supernaturalism, and hardly meriting the name of church at all, teaching modern knowledge and cultivating the best in human character—a Church at last completely humanized. The latter, I think, would be the end product of religious development if left to a natural evolution. It would follow a course similar to that followed by Man himself. Once crude and brutish, low-browed, prognathous and hirsute, he has gradually lost one after another of his primitive features. The anatomist is able to demonstrate the vestigial structures that give a mute but vivid account of his history. That

is on the physical side. But the same principles apply to the history of ideas, except that in this sphere Man's progress has not kept pace with his physical evolution. We can still discern the prognathous in his ideology, and many of his beliefs are still shaggy with the hair of antiquity. The anatomist of ideas shows us everywhere the vestiges of earlier forms, and in some places demonstrates these actually functioning in full vigour. To the up-to-date Freethinker religion constitutes a set of ideas persisting from an early culture stage, in the Modern Church becoming vestigial, but elsewhere retaining their primitive vitality and making the possibility of regression an ever-present menace. Because they are out of touch with modern thought, it does not say they are abandoned by the generality of men. Society is too heterogeneous for that. One of the striking differences between the human individual and the group lies in the fact that the individual is more closely knit together than the group, and his several parts therefore keep more nearly side by side in the course of development. The group is more diffuse, more loosely held together; there is a greater latitude of movement between parts, a greater degree of what the engineer calls "play," and so we find at one and the same time vastly different culture levels existing in the same social organism. We should be much surprised and shocked by the birth of a monster having the head of a man and the feet of an ape; yet, culturally speaking, society shows precisely this difference between its apex and its base. There is still a considerable, perhaps the most considerable, section of society susceptible to the superstitious ideology, and the reactionary Church is not slow to recognize and exploit this. She aims at cultivating an ape from the feet upwards, instead of a man from the head downwards.

Returning, then, to the two possible lines to be taken by the Church in the attempt to face the challenge of modern thought, a reversion to Rome would appear to the enlightened evolutionist as a simple case of regression, a sad but not at all unknown process. On the other hand, if evolution takes a forward course with the Church, it must entail the atrophy of one after another of the primitive features of religion, till they become truly vestigial and finally absent altogether. Ultimately, if not subjected to a sudden violence such as convulsed Russia, religion would quietly but steadily lose its entire supernatural content, and we should be left with an army of men who, if they still existed under the greatly changed circumstances, would simply devote their lives to the cause of human happiness, teaching and working in and around buildings once called churches, but in the name not of God but of Man. Religion as such would have disappeared, but in its place would be a nobler thing, because a truer. Mankind, a Sinbad of the future, would have thrown from his shoulders the Old Man of the Sea, his God. Only then would he fully realize that this burden had been a creature of his own fancy, the fear of whom had held him in thrall since the dawn of history. With this ghost laid at last, Man would be free to stride forward by the power of a knowledge self-won and a character self-made, to resolve by his own brain and heart the problems of human life. And he would do it by inspiration drawn from this world and this life, not by the promises or threats, the hopes or fears of a ghost-world beyond.

MEDICUS.

Who shoots at the midday sun, though he be sure he shall never hit the mark, yet as sure he is that he shall shoot higher than he who aims at but a bush.

Sir P. Sidney.

Christian Slogans

THE Chestertonian "paradox," "Christianity has never been tried," has caught on. Since it was broadcast in the B.B.C. Grand Good Night, it has appeared in many quarters, including Dean Inge's Book, *Things New and Old*, and also in a sermon by Professor Percy Dearmer—though in the latter case in reference to international affairs only.

Comparable and equally true slogans are "Christianity freed the slaves," and "Christianity gave the world schools." Dr Dearmer, in the sermon referred to, supported the former of these in his statement that "The abolition of slavery had been prepared for by religion, and was achieved by no other motive." Mr. Chesterton's egregious pronouncement is, of course, too wild to call for serious refutation, as everybody knows that powerful, wealthy, organized Christian churches have been in existence for 1,500 years, and sees plainly that they have failed to effect what is now supposed by some of their adherents to be their chief function, viz., the complete moralization of the people who have been and are under their influence. But in the cases of slavery and education somewhat more historical knowledge is needed to rebut the slogans.

One wonders whether Professor Dearmer knows that slavery was not denounced by medieval church leaders until four or five centuries after the establishment of Christianity; that after a long period of modified slavery—serfdom or villeinage—chattel slavery, with slave raiding, broke out in the vilest possible form in Christendom; that in 1760 there were 80,000 negro slaves in London; that the emancipation movement was long and seriously opposed by churchmen and other religionists; that slavery continued in British colonies until 1834; and that in ultra-pious (Czarist) Russia serfdom continued until 1861.

Breasted, in his *Ancient Times*—which is still probably the best general work on the ancient history of the West and near East—furnishes us with some useful points on this topic. Following references to slavery among earlier peoples, such as the Egyptians and Babylonians, to the adoption and growth of the practice in Greece and its enormous extension in Rome (largely as a result of the enslavement of war captives), we are informed that during the first two centuries B.C., before Christianity had become of much, if any, importance, the conditions of slavery improved, the slaves gained the protection of the law, and there was a growing practice of freeing them. And we can hardly doubt that slavery would have died out in normal circumstances as a result of increasing humanitarianism associated with economic influences. But unfortunately the trouble with the barbarians brought about confusion, while the new religion established a mode of thought which was powerfully inimical to intellectual and social progress. (The Bible contained all the knowledge and ideas that were necessary and desirable, the end of the world was approaching, the one thing needful was to secure salvation, so why should people trouble themselves about the improvement of this world?)

As regards the influence of Christianity on slavery and the emancipation movement, we may invite attention to the following statement of Dr. Reich, a Protestant historian: "It is an historical fact, supported by the most positive evidence, that slavery in the Roman Empire was mitigated by the noble philosophy of the Stoics, and not by the teaching of the Church Fathers, who never thought of recommending the abolition of slavery." And as regards the recrudescence of Christian slave-holding and slave-

piracy, we may quote the following from Ingram's *Slavery and Serfdom*: "The Christian Churches in the slave States (of America) scandalously violated their most sacred duty, and used their influence in the maintenance of slavery, the ministers of religion declaring it to be sanctioned by Scripture, and sometimes even encouraging the atrocities resorted to in defence of the system."

The case of education is equally clear. Having dealt with the ancient Roman system of schools, Dr. Boyd, one of our best historians of education, concludes as follows: "All that can be said with certainty about them is that they were flourishing in the fourth century . . . and that with few exceptions they had disappeared by the sixth century." He adds that the turn of events had made a large section of the people distrustful of the schools and little disposed to avert their ruin. Of course, the "section" was composed of Christian priests and their followers. Tertullian had pronounced that education was a "robbery of God"—because, of course, the only available educational material was "pagan learning"; and Pope Gregory followed the same line when (about 600 A.D.) he attacked a bishop in Gaul for teaching "grammar," that is to say, Greek and Roman learning. And though by the time just mentioned the medieval church had become very wealthy and powerful, the schools for ordinary citizens were not replaced, and the people remained in a state of dense ignorance for 1,000 years.

As regards the vaunted education carried on by the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages—for ecclesiastical purposes—its limitation is significantly indicated by another historian of education, Professor Compayré, who shows in his *History of Pedagogy*, that in the thirteenth century, the "Flower of the Middle Ages," not one monk in the greatest monastery of France, St. Gaul, could read or write. Similarly, the paucity of the boasted education brought about by Protestants (in order to enable people to read the Bible) is clearly evidenced by the fact that in this Protestant country at the beginning of the nineteenth century, nineteen people out of every twenty were doubtless unable to read and write. This means that the medieval percentage of illiteracy, which was probably 99 (for 1,000 years), had only been reduced by about four in the following three hundred years. In church-ridden (Czarist) Russia, however, the percentage of illiteracy as late as 1840, according to Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics*, was still 98.

If we were to go in for slogan-making we should add to the list, "Education has never been tried." This, if taken in the simple way as the Chestertonian one has been absorbed, is, of course, untrue. But it may be said to contain an element of truth inasmuch as education has never, like religion, been equally and fully applied to a whole population. Hence largely the irrationality which prompts religionists, who are in other respects more or less able thinkers, to originate, to support and to get people to swallow statements which are evidently and even absurdly untrue.

J. REEVES.

WAR

For the American Indians, War alone was the avenue to glory. All other employment seemed unworthy of human dignity; in warfare against the brute creation, but still more against man, they sought liberty, happiness and renown; thus was gained an honourable appellation, while the mean and obscure among them had not even a name.—*Bancroft*.

A "Cross" Word Puzzle

IF I believed in the "Meritorious Cross and Passion," which the Prayer Book says is to be celebrated by a "most comfortable sacrament," I should never jest on the agonized words of a crucified man or god, even if their strange expressions constituted in themselves a genuine puzzle to the bereaved mourners.

To the intelligent student there is neither mystery nor puzzlement in the accretions of yarn upon yarn, which make up what Mr. W. T. Stead may not be wholly wrong in describing as "The Story that transformed the World"—with the accent on the word "Story." If not fiction it is essentially fictitious. Sadness and sympathy are misplaced when we devote them to persons who never lived, or to events which never happened. We might still weep effectual tears over ten million Sons of Man recently slain, but that is another story.

The Words of Christ upon the Cross have been the puzzle of the ages, merely because men imagined that some peculiar sanctity and inner meaning must of necessity be found when God Himself spoke in the person of the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," but especially about A.D. 30.

Some of the trouble surely arises because the story tends to duplication when we find the "Last" Supper, for instance, is followed by another Supper which Jesus attends AFTER his resurrection. His Last Words on the Cross are superseded by many more "Words" of a post-mortem date. "It is finished" was about as true as Harry Lauder's final, last, "Farewell" performance.

The most intriguing of all the "Cross" words of Jesus were "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani." There have been endless "Solutions" offered to explain why God Incarnate cried with a loud voice, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me."

The Freethought (and even the Unitarian) explanation has always been that these words at least dispose of the possibility of Jesus being God. It is simply ridiculous to imagine God forsaking God, and absurd in the extreme to think of God telling God that God has forsaken himself. It is the commonsense "solution" which has never puzzled the commonsense reader.

To the Freethinker, it of course settles other problems too. The Rev. Dr. H. D. Major, the Modernist scholar, a man of great culture, and—for a Christian—a gentleman of very considerable courage, admits that "the Secularist derives from this incident formidable proof for his secularist interpretation of the universe." He means, of course, that in these few words, Christ surrendered all pretence to Divinity, and declared his whole mission to be a failure.

Dr. Dibelius, a German writer on New Testament interpretation, says that the words referred to were a commonplace utterance, conventionally "the thing" (as we should say) for Jewish martyrs to exclaim with their dying breath. Jews would have been shocked to hear told the story of a martyrdom wherein these words had been omitted. It apparently bore the same relationship to fact, as the widespread belief still current that all English burglars when caught remark to their captor: "It's a fair cop, guv'nor"; and that all American detectives invite an arrested suspect to "Come clean." In other words, whether the story of Jesus is fact or fiction it had to fit into a ready-made mould. In that case it is idle to weigh what Jesus is said to have said.

A more far-fetched theory is frequently met with, which however explains nothing at all. It is simply that Jesus was repeating with his last breath the WHOLE of Psalm 22, but that the reporters "cut out" all except the first verse, containing the words, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani" of that most lugubrious of all psalms.

It is most unlikely that a man suffering the pains of crucifixion would choose so aimless a recitation at such a moment. As however the long psalm includes the "problem" words, this "solution" makes the puzzle more puzzling. Believers would have to explain further: why, for instance, the God Incarnate had to say, "I am a worm" (verse 6). Actually too, verses 9 and 10, if a part of the "confession" of Jesus, distinctly or implicitly deny his divine or Holy Ghostly parentage.

A more ingenious theory and not so improbable, is that Jesus was delirious and was not responsible for ANYTHING He said. Such a "solution" at least clears the air, and absolves us from worrying any more about what He meant; we can recommend this explanation to cover many other sayings, sermons and speeches of the Saviour. His anger with the barren fig-tree was not the deliberation of a God. It was the commonplace senselessness of a disappointed man. Such explanations are the natural allowances we make when we consider human frailty: they do not fit Divinities.

Mr. Middleton Murry (in his *Life of Jesus*) accepts the view that these words were really "one great despairing cry . . . it may be that that despairing song had been throbbing through His soul while he hung in pain and ignominy, but the voice of utter despair is ever the same." A much more orthodox writer, Professor J. A. Findlay, writing in the orthodox *British Weekly*, regards all other explanations as "unnatural." He frankly confesses that "the faith and hope by which I live and preach is inextricably bound up with this most straightforward explanation," namely, "that Jesus did actually for a moment lose the consciousness of His Father's presence, and in that moment His heart was broken."

Freethinkers may then welcome this admission of their long contention. Prof. Findlay finds, with Von Hugel, an end to the Tennysonian "Strong Son of God," who "went to the Cross as if it were to a throne."

Findlay and others imagine that in some mysterious way this breakdown, and confession of lack of confidence in God by "His Holy Son," can be said to add to the certainty of His Divinity. To "prove" this, some Christian apologists have the audacity to quote the alleged saying of the centurion (Mark xv. 39), "Truly this was the Son of God," as if a man became a God by the mere fact of his being deserted by God. But Matt. xxvii. 54 makes the centurion's remark fit into the very remarkable miracles of unhistorical earthquakes and most unheard-of wholesale resurrections—a much more artistic bit of fiction to accompany the centurion's remarkable testimonial.

We must not ignore the theory often offered in discussion at Freethought lectures that the Bible MUST be true or it would surely never have allowed these strange words to appear as part of the sacred text. As thus put it suggests that no Christian scribe would have invented an admission so damning; no Trinitarian could have passed a statement suggesting that the Second Person of the Trinity was deserted by the First Person thereof. All this is beside the point. Christianity, as we know it, is full of illogicalities, and the Bible contradicts itself continuously. Other sayings on the Cross (e.g., "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise") are completely incompatible with the Christian theories of Christ's resurrection chronology.

Calvin imagined that Christ's "Eloi, Eloi" utterance meant that He had to experience EVERY human pang and pain. Just as "He descended into Hell," like any damned soul, so also He experienced the despair of the deserted human wretch, and, as Calvin says: "realized to the uttermost the terrible experience of all that the sense of sin inflicts." Naturally, in that case, there could be no end to His "human" experiences, and it makes one think of Jesus as a married man, as an unsuccessful author, or as a curate discovered kissing the vicar's wife. Calvin's imagination did not carry him far enough.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

ANCIENT GREECE

During the time of Solon there were none who asked for alms in Athens. "In those days," says Isocrates, "there was no citizen that died of want, or begged in the streets, to the dishonour of the community." This was owing to the laws against idleness and prodigality, and the care which the Areopagus took that every man should have a visible livelihood.—*Langhorne*.

Correspondence

ATHEISM AND LIFE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The Rev. Walter Wynn, in his letter to you published in a recent issue, would "be glad to know why Atheists cling on to life, things being so risky, and God—if there is one—being so fast asleep."

Veteran Freethinkers may only smile indulgently at such seemingly feigned perplexity, but, as a comparatively newcomer to their ranks from the "established" fold, may I be allowed to answer what I know to be genuine question of Christian bewilderment?

To contend without thought of reward, to live without hope of future "bliss," to "fight the good fight" for world progress for the sake of humanity alone: these are purposes outreaching the credibility of the "faithful." (And that the "fearful" Christian cannot be convinced of an Atheist's death unaccompanied by craven appeals and blood-curdling horror, is common knowledge).

However, let me be direct in assuring Mr. Wynn how an Atheist can "cling on to life." After half-a-century of orthodox religious conformity, I died. Yes—died as truly as Mr. Wynn's son to whom he refers, lives. Searching for truth, I had learned religion to be truth's complete antithesis. The appalling loss of precious years in the chimerical pursuit of "God," when I might, and could, have been pre-eminently useful to humanity, was the culminating shock which prompted me to write "Finis" to my career.

But, "as in Adam all die, even so in . . ." Freethought was I made alive. Its literature resolved my difficulties, and I was "born again." Historical records proved what my natural sanity had (timorously inoculated as I had been with the virulent poison of creed) assumed: that religion is merely (1) a cult of cowardice, (2) a despairing hope of the degraded and ignorant, and (3) the cause of humanity's greatest ills. As for clericalism, my direct contacts and personal experiences had already confirmed it to be mainly an apotheosis of the shirker, the sponger and the hypocrite. I grant that some of the clergy are sincere: some, in their delusions, and others whose fear of the effect of facts upon their "faith," keeps them from the knowledge of truth.

Following upon my discoveries, I discarded all supernatural ideas and "faith," to focus all my attention upon the world. Thence came a peace which did *not* pass understanding: the peace of an unfettered mind, the poise of balanced thought. Resuming possession of a courage I had formerly assigned to "God," I now meet life's "risks" solus and fearless, nor run to fall upon my knees in cowardly abandonment when the naughty world misuses me. Where once I veiled my eyes in prayer, where once I did service to a "being so fast asleep," I now look upon Life and find it good. I try to serve a world awake—anticipating a finale to the dance of death performed before church altars.

In conclusion: Freethought may not have solved all my problems, considering the economic loss attendant on past *disinterested* adherence to the "faith of my fathers," but even should that loss result in non-recovery of wasted strength, I would count it gain to die as a penurious Atheist rather than live as a "prince of the church"—for which my abilities, but not my finer principles might well have fitted me.

D.

THE EMERGING GOD

SIR,—Allow me to express my thanks that you have done so much to conquer the belief in *miracles*, such as the stories of the virgin-birth, or of the resurrection of Jesus. After many years of study in the British Museum and elsewhere, I still hold there was no *man* Jesus. Jesus means "Jehovah as Saviour," and the story is clearly built on the Old Testament, such as Isaiah vii. 14 (Septuagint Version): xxxv. 5, 6 (*miracles*): 53 (giving details of the "death" of the Saviour of the Jewish *people*, really): Zech. ix. 9:

(entry into Jerusalem on an "ass and colt"): Psalms 2 and 22.

No life of a real man could be the fulfilling of a score or two of old predictions or descriptions of God. So there was no *man* Jesus.

But what men felt, and we now can feel, is the Eternal God, not an Onlooking Father (that is but picture-theology, of course), but the One Creative Mind-energy, (1) *exhausted* (or "crucified") by weaving stars; (2) *emergent* by evolution here; (3) and now *expressed* in and by all aspiring souls. It—I prefer "It" (with a capital letter) to He—is not in a heaven, but in the *souls* of all men who dare to aspire. It aspires in and by such men: and is not an *Onlooking* God. You truly express that last point.

"There can only be one Infinite"—as Dr. A. M. Fairbairn (Oxford), used to say. It is the Creative, Exhausted, but now emergent Verve of Life-by-giving-life: in some men felt, now, I add.

You help to clear away the *old* theology; and so you really are aiding the work of the One Infinite Life, without knowing it! So, with Matthew Arnold, I would cry forth—let us now move, "On, to the bound of the waste: On to the City of God."

GILBERT SADLER, M.A. (Oxon),
B.A., LL.B. (Lond.).

Obituary

WILLIAM THOMAS NASH

THE remains of one of the "Old Guard" were cremated at Woking Crematorium, on Thursday, November 15. William Thomas Nash had a long record of useful work in the Freethought movement, going back to the days of Charles Bradlaugh's struggle. He was proud of the part he played in those stirring times, and would recall events and experiences with all the enthusiasm of an old warrior. He was eighty-one years of age when death came. The last rites at the picturesque Crematorium at Woking was simple in detail, and before a gathering of near relatives and friends a Secular Address was delivered by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Collins, Gee and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park Gates and literature to order.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. C. S. McKelvey (President, British Israel World Federation)—"Why I Believe in God."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Henry W. Nevinson—"The Holy Spirit."

STUDY CIRCLE (68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, November 26, Mr. P. Goldman—"Free Will and Responsibility."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Conway Hall, 49 Theobalds Road, W.C.): 7.0, Mr. J. W. Graham Peace (Editor *Commonweal*)—"Economic Recovery."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Hall, Stratford, London, E.): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"The Fight for Freedom of Thought."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, D. Har Dayal—"East and West. A Comparison and Contrast."

(Continued on page 751)

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(Continued from page 750)

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead, opposite Scala Theatre, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, E. Biddle (Chester)—"New Thought—Fact and Fancy."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. George Bedborough—"Prayer: An Ancient Superstition."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street): Blackburn): 7.30, Mr. Hargreaves—"Astronomy." Discussion Classes held every Thursday, at 7.30.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.45, Monday, November 26, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (The Tatler Cinema, Thornton Road, Bradford): 7.0, Mr. George Whitehead (London)—"The Morality of an Atheist."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Some Modern Religious Apologetics."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Debate—*Affir.*: The University Theological Society (Two Speakers). *Neg.*: The Glasgow Secular Society, Mr. R. Buntin and Mr. R. T. White—"That Religion is essential to full life."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Jesus, Fascism and Free-thought."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, F. C. Moore, M.A.—"Religion and Fascism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Clarion Cafe, Market Street, Manchester): 7.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren (London)—"Signs of the Times: A Freethinkers' Interpretations."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. McClusky—"Bradlaugh and Plymouth."

READ (The Ambulance Hall): 8.0, Sunday, November 25, Mr. J. Clayton. A lecture.

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