

Notes & Queries.

ANSWERS.

CHRISHNA AND CHRIST.

A close resemblance has been found between the life and mythology of Chrishna and of Christ. For instance, Chrishna was born in a stable, escaped from a massacre of infants, was nourished by shepherds, crucified with a wound in his side, had a virgin mother, used the words—"I am in them, and they in me." The legends and dogmas of Buddhism and Brahminism were disseminated in Western Asia by Indian missionaries, and thus became mingled into Jewish doctrine among the Essenes of Palestine—a sect to which both John the Baptist and Jesus belonged.

ROBESPIERRE AND MARAT.

In answer to A., I may state that Robespierre was in theology a disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau (i.e., a deist of a sentimental type.) He believed in the existence of a just and merciful God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments, but not in any authoritative supernatural revelation. He had a considerable sympathy for the priesthood, and the greatest abhorrence of Atheism. As to Marat, I cannot say positively what his religious convictions were; but it is reported that his favorite books were Rousseau's "Confessions" and the four Gospels. Many Agnostics could say the same for the latter, but the partiality for Rousseau probably implies Deism.—AGNOSTIC.

In reply to A.: Robespierre was a Deist. In 1794, the Convention upon a report of Robespierre proclaimed the recognition of deity and the immortality of the soul. The following extract from Robespierre's speech on the occasion of the decree being adopted (1840, Floreal, [May 7th]) will show what the theological opinions of the "sea-green incorruptible" were:—"What is there in common between priests and the deity? Priests are to ethics what charlatans are to medicine. How infinitely is the god of nature different from the god of priests! I know nothing so much resembling Atheism as the religions they have fabricated. By degrading the Supreme Being, they have annihilated him as much as in them lay; they have made him sometimes a ball of fire, sometimes an ox, sometimes a tree, sometimes a man, sometimes a king. Priests have created a God after their own likeness; they have made him jealous, capricious, covetous, cruel, and implacable. They have treated him as in times past the mayors of the palace treated the descendants of Clovis, in order that they might reign in his name and usurp his place; they have chained him in Heaven as in a palace, and have called him on earth only to demand for their own profit titles, lands, honours, luxury, and power. The veritable temple of the Supreme Being is the universe; his creed, virtue; his worship, the gladness of a multitude assembled before him to strengthen the bands of universal brotherhood, and to offer him the homage of pure and sensitive hearts." I cannot find any authority on Marat's theological views. His parents were Calvinists.—W.H.T.

GODS BORN OF VIRGINS.

Through a work presented to the Wanganui Freethought Association by our generous donor "Blue Pencil," I am enabled to answer "Pan's" query as to some "Gods born of virgins." Ancient and mythological history abounds with such events. It once became so common in Greece that a king issued an edict decreeing the death of all young women who should offer such an insult to deity as to claim such paternity for their children. The virgin Alceus claimed God as the father of the divine Redeemer Alcides, 1280 B.C. Ceres, the virgin mother of Osiris, was said to be the child of "the father of all the Gods." Mayence, virgin mother of the god-sired Hesus, of the Druids. Tien and Chang-ti were worshipped by the Chinese as Gods born of virgins more than 2500 years ago. Maia, mother of Sakia; Yasoda, mother of Chrishna; Celestine, mother of the crucified Zulis; Chimalman, mother of Quexalcote; Semele, mother of the Egyptian Bacchus; Prudence, mother of Hercules; Alceaus, mother of Alcides; and Shing-Mou, mother of Yu,—were all believed to be pure, holy and chaste virgins, their offspring divinely begotten Saviours and sin-atoning mediators, just as Mary and Jesus are credited by Christians. Any standard dictionary of mythology

will furnish more particulars, and Davies' "Universal Etymology," Auguste Nichol's "Philosophical Essays on Christianity," Guigne's "History of the Huns," and Riquord's "Theology of the Ancient Gauls," are good authorities. As to "Pan's" further query anent the origin of the word Christ, I cannot do better than quote Mr. Kersey Graves: "The Christian writer Elsley, in his 'Annotations of the Gospels' (vol. i., p. 25), spells the word Christ as *Chrest*. The people of Loretto had a black Saviour, called *Chrest* or Christ. Lucien, in his 'Philopatris,' admits the ancient Gentiles had the name of Christ, which shows it was a heathen title. The Chaldeans had their *Chris*, the Hindoos their *Chrishna*, the Greeks their *Chrest*, and the Christians their Christ, all, doubtless, derived from the same original root."—Y.

THE MAORI ATUA.

Reply to the Query respecting the Maori Atua in No. 3 of the REVIEW:—The conception of the New Zealander with regard to the future state after death would seem to be very vague. They supposed there were many gods, but there were only two or three of them of any recognised importance, such as Maru, Tu, and Tauhaki. After the death of anyone, his spirit proceeded rapidly to a cliff near the North Cape and sprang off, disappearing into the sea and re-appearing again in the Reinga, the abode of disembodied spirits; here they all assembled, the good, bad, and the indifferent. They carried on their contentions here as they used when they formerly inhabited the human form when on earth. They fought, they loved, and died again, but after this second death no one seems to be able to tell what became of them—even their tohungas do not pretend to say, except they became Ngaronoiho, viz., disappeared. Maru, Tu, and Tauhaki ruled the destinies of man on earth, but it does not appear that they had anything to do with the Reinga, and flitted about from place to place, appearing only to the seers and tohungas (priests). These deities were, on the whole, antagonistic to mankind, but if propitiated through their priests would permit the tribe to be successful in war or in any tribal undertakings. Then they would assist individuals in their pursuits. If a tribe was going to war they would make presents to propitiate the gods through the priests, who would place a number of reeds in the ground, and then retiring a short distance, pronounce an incantation, and then send short clubs whirling amongst the reeds, and judge by the way they fell whether the gods would crown the expedition with victory. If a man caught an unusually large and fat eel, it was expected he would give, if not the whole, at least a portion; of it to the priest as a present for Maru or Tauhaki, and thus secure a continuance of good fortune. Woe betide the unhappy person who should steal Maru's presents; certain death would follow such a transaction. There was no hope of reward hereafter or punishment for good or bad conduct during the life upon earth. Opinions differ as to the food eaten by the spirits in the Reinga. Some say they live on large kumaras; other priests say they catch flies and insects and subsist on these, over which they quarrel and fight. On my return once to Wanganui from the North, I happened to mention that I had been to the Rerenga Wairau (Spirit's Flight)—the cliff. An old man drew near me, and asked me if I had noticed any spirits leap off into the sea. I told him that they came so rapidly one after the other, that the noise made by the splashing as they jumped into the water made quite a noise. "Ah," he replied, "Then it is true. I thought it was so, and what the missionaries have told us is wrong."—T. McD.

MASONIC.

In answer to M.—(1.) General Assemblies of the Craft are spoken of as being held as early as the fourth century of the Christian era, at which a Grand Master was annually chosen. But the first record of a Grand Lodge meeting, when the constitution and charges were framed and adopted, is said to have met at York in the reign of Athelstane, A.D. 926. (2.) The history of Speculative or Free-Masonry shows that it was grafted on to Operative Masonry, and we do not learn from the transactions of any of the guilds that women were admitted to participate in their labors. The construction of material Temples by our ancient operative brethren are idealized by their descendants of to-day in the construction of the Temple of the Mind, and as our operative brethren required a male as an apprentice,