

WHAT DO PARSONS BELIEVE?

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Views and Opinions.

What Do Parsons Believe?

THE other day I was talking to a parson, who told me that he often read my "Views and Opinions"; and, said he, "I think you are very hard on parsons." By way of explanation I replied I was not harder than many of them deserved. But he countered, "We are not all bad." That I admitted, but retorted that they pretended to be all good, and that was where the mischief came in. If parsons made it quite clear to their congregations that they were no different from other men, that they had no better source of knowledge than other men, that their opinions on anything, including religion, were of no greater weight than other men's—other conditions equal—one could deal with the opinions of parsons in the same impersonal way that one deals with the opinions of other men. But the parson will not rank as other men. He will not dress as do other men; he will not in a large number of instances even talk as do other men. He claims to have an authority for what he says and for what he does that is not given to other men. He pretends to a superior sanctity to that possessed by other men. He pretends to be incapable of using a healthy, manly cuss-word when occasion demands it. Substantially he continues the tradition of the primitive medicine-man, he strives for all the advantages of the medicine-man, and he ought not to complain if in a civilized society he is handled as one would handle his Kaffir brother in the spirit who set up business in Oxford Street. If the parson will dress, speak, live as an ordinary man, there will be no need for anyone to emphasize the fact that he is an ordinary man—a *very* ordinary man.

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Playing for Safety.

In the *Daily Herald* for April 10, Canon Elliott, of St. Paul's, asks the question "What Do the Parsons Believe?" Canon Elliott does not tell us what they

believe, although their beliefs are settled for them in terms of the doctrines of the congregations to which they belong. But I take it that most intelligent people are quite convinced that all parsons do not believe the things they are supposed to believe, and which they are paid to teach. Every now and then a parson here and there creates a sensation by saying that he does not believe in the story of the garden of Eden, or in the actual resurrection of the body, or in the virgin birth, things that any intelligent person ought to be ashamed of people thinking that he believed. But every one knows that for one who speaks there are a score that remain silent. Sometimes their silence is dictated by that intellectual laxity which Christianity breeds; sometimes it is due to the inability of the man to face semi-starvation for himself and family, which would be the consequence of his outspokenness. What we can always be certain of is that a large number of clergymen would confess to a considerable degree of disbelief in Christian doctrines if they could do so with safety. That this is so is seen by the fact that when someone like Bishop Barnes—who confessed that he did not make public his own disbeliefs until he found himself facing a congregation that had little belief in orthodox tenets—announces his heresies, a number of other parsons make known theirs. No one can believe that these men only discovered their disbelief when Bishop Barnes disclosed his; it was simply that until someone in position led the way, the others went on professing a faith they had ceased to possess. I do not say that this is true of even the majority of parsons; that would be to pay their intelligence too high a compliment. The vast majority probably believe what they are expected to believe. That is about the worst thing one can say about them.

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Religion and Science.

Canon Elliott is distressed because when young people are told one thing by one parson and another thing by another parson, when they find that things are false which they were told is true, they are apt to drift away from religion altogether. He wishes that things were different, that men and women would give to theology the same latitude they give to science. The teachings of scientists undergo alteration, why should not the teachings of religion undergo the same change, and why should men and women, when this change takes place give up their religion, any more than they give up science under similar conditions.

The answer to this is very simple. Scientists do not come before the people with a revelation of the truth direct from God Almighty, with threats of pains and punishments in the next world if it is not accepted as truth. A scientific statement is given as based upon the best knowledge available at the time the statement is made, but with the proviso that

future and better knowledge may either confirm or disprove or modify what is said. The method of correction of any possible error is given at the same time that the information is imparted. The duty of searching for truth, and of vigorously and diligently testing every statement made in the name of science is always emphasized. To search for truth outside the lines marked down by the Church, to reject the teaching given, are deadly sins for which the largest Church in Christendom has no extenuation, and which most other churches warmly condemn. It is artful, but not very straightforward, therefore, for Canon Elliott to argue that there must be the same latitude permitted for change in Christianity that exists in science. I wonder whether Canon Elliott, if he really believes what he says, would dare to tell a congregation in St. Paul's that the teachings of his Church are only tentative, that what it has to tell them about God and the soul, and revelation, should be tested by the most rigorous scientific rules, and that the knowledge of to-morrow may render obsolete the whole of the theological teaching of to-day? I very much doubt whether he would dare do any such thing. He says there should be a "willingness to give tolerance to others whose points of view are essentially different from our own." But something more than this is required. The day is past when a patronizing toleration of men who have rejected Christian teaching is enough. If Canon Elliott is sincere in attempting to put the teaching of religion on the same level as the teaching of science, he must teach his congregation that religious teachings have no authority higher than secular teachings, and everyone must be encouraged to reject them so soon as they find them in conflict with what they know to be true in other directions. But I doubt whether he or any other liberal parson will do anything of the kind.

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Christian Truth.

Canon Elliott is always the parson; even in his defence he reverts to the old tortuous plea that we must remember our "mental limitations," and warns us that "Truth that has endured majestically down the ages is not lightly to be discarded." What is the truth that has endured majestically down the ages? The stories of virgin born, miracle working, resurrected saviour gods have endured only for those whose minds are not enlightened enough to reject them. On that basis witchcraft, omens, charms, and the whole gamut of ignorant superstitions might claim our respect on the ground of their majestic endurance down the ages. The Christian Church taught a certain theory of the origin of the world, another of the origin of languages, it had a special theory of human nature, of the special creation of all animals including man, with whom his only relation was that of master.

Are these the truths that have endured majestically? Canon Elliott must know that there is not a single thing which has been taught definitely by the Church, and which could be submitted to the test of general experience, that has survived.

At the close of an article which is meant to impose upon his readers as a plea for intellectual honesty, he comes back to the old parsonic equivocations. Some of us, he says, may be too eager to show people the Bible in this new light. If that means anything, it means parsons must keep on telling the people the old falsehoods so long as they will believe them, in the hope that something may turn up to save the situation. He points out that if we (the parsons) are too slow they will lose the younger generation; if they are too quick they will lose the older one. What is the poor parson to do? It never seems to strike

Canon Elliott that the only sound advice would be to tell the truth as we know it to both young and old, and face the consequences. It never strikes him that when he insists on the need for translating the Bible in terms of modern thought the only necessity for doing this is because it is a parson's book, and by hook or by crook—more by crook than by hook—it must be made to appear to contain stupendous truth which we never understood until these truths came to us from non-biblical and non-religious sources. But if we have to look beyond the Bible to get the truth, why bother about the Bible at all? If we must look for truth apart from religion, where is the sense or honesty of afterwards interpreting religion so as to make it square with the truth that has been independently gained?

And now after having read Canon Elliott's article, I am as much in the dark what doctrines they are that parson's believe. All that I am certain about, on the basis of Canon Elliott's article, is that they still believe in hanging on to the old teaching until they are found out. Then, as a last resource they will admit some of the truth, while still trying to twist it to the service of the old falsities. Medicine-men do not change.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Greasing the Fat Sow.

"It is indeed in Britain only that a Labour Party is not irreligious, but in fact markedly religious."

Rev. Percy Dearmer.

"This mystery of sending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."—Swift.

PRIESTS like people to think that their religion is without money and without price; that it is entirely disassociated from commercialism. "God" and "Mammon," they say, using the patter of their sorry profession, are as the poles asunder. Yet the blunt fact remains that there is plenty of money in religion, although the man in the street is kept ignorant of the huge amount. This is true of all sects and denominations, from the Salvation Army to the State Church. Even the itinerant evangelist, who seeks to convert the world with a portable organ and the help of six girl friends, finds the game well worth the outlay. A recent law-suit revealed the pleasing fact that the property of the Salvation Army, a purely fancy religion, was worth millions of money. The worst case, however, is that of the State Church, for this has the sanction of Parliament, and, by a polite legal fiction, all citizens are presumed to be members, unless they express their dissent.

Yet how many persons realize the extent of this State Church's wealth. The public is scarcely to be blamed for this innocence, for the Anglican bishops always foster the idea of the extreme poverty of the clergy. The Bishop of London, for instance, is always lamenting the hardships of the Anglican priests, but his own share of "poverty" has been the dreadful experience of existing on the beggarly stipend of £10,000 yearly, with a palace and a town house thrown in. Other ecclesiastics are no nearer the poverty line, for forty bishops and archbishops secure £182,700 annually, to say nothing of the palatial residences and other emoluments.

Some of the finances of this State Church are controlled by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and, according to the latest annual report, the income for the past year was £3,150,300. This included £1,426,000 from rentals of estates, and £1,346,700 from dividends and interest. And these figures are likely to be doubled in the near future, because rents are going up all over the country. Ground rents

are expanding with building developments; and rentals are being substantially increased on the renewals of leases, large numbers of which are falling in.

"Queen Anne's Bounty" deals with another fruitful source of revenue of this State Church, and the controllers are pleased to report that tithe was satisfactorily gathered in last year. How many ordinary citizens realize that agricultural land paid nearly £3,000,000 in ecclesiastical tithe to this Anglican Church in the past year. This tithe has been paid for many centuries, and the grand total of money received from the source by this single Church is staggering. In the Ages of Faith this robbery may have been understandable, but in these days, when only one person in twenty of the population is interested in this Anglican Church, the matter is simply an act of belated tyranny.

And what can be said in the matter of mining royalties, from which this State Church derives tens of thousands of pounds yearly. So-called Labour leaders exhaust the language of vituperation when these royalties are pocketed by a duke, or other aristocratic landowner. Why are they dumb when the royalties go to replenish the coffers of purse-proud ecclesiastics? Why should it be left to the Freethinkers to point out that priests and peers are both tarred with the same brush.

No reform of this Anglican Church is needed. It should be disestablished and disendowed, and then allowed to reform itself like any other society. And why has the disestablishment and disendowment of this State Church been dropped out of the Democratic programme? This Established Church simply absorbs so many millions of money, and so many offices and dignities, and is an ecclesiastical branch of the Primrose League, an organization founded to perpetuate the memory of the most Machiavellian of modern statesmen.

Elsewhere one knows what a Church stands for. You say this obeys implicitly Papa at Rome and the College of Cardinals; that is faithful to the Westminster Confession. Yet another yields homage to the Eastern Patriarchs, venerable men with birds' nests in their whiskers. But ask what this Parliamentary Church of England stands for, and who can tell you? One priest points to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, while another smiles in his dainty lawn sleeves at the simplicity of the ordinary citizen.

This business of the Parliamentary Church of England concerns us all, for the legal theory of this country makes us all parties to the constitution of this Church. If it were in the United States or the British Colonies, where no such thing as a State Church exists, we need not care what humbug went on in a particular church, for it would be none of our affair. But the legislation of Parliament makes us all partners in this Church of England, and compels us to be, as it were, privy to its chicanery and dishonesty. How much longer is this country to submit to the tyranny of the tithe, and how much longer is a purely sectarian Church to possess national property worth one hundred and twenty millions of money? And how much longer will our innocent Democrats regard this State Church as a Red-Riding Hood when, in reality, she is nothing but a greedy wolf?

MIMNERMUS.

It is at all times the individual, and not the age, that preaches the truth. It was the age that gave Socrates his hemlock. It was the age that burnt Huss. The age is always the same.—Goethe.

Archæology and the Deluge.

OUR readers will remember how, some months ago, the newspapers came out with the startling news, in large type headings, "Confirmation of the Bible Account of the Flood." "Babylonian Excavations Prove the Truth of the Deluge." And so forth.

The Fundamentalists, the old-fashioned Bible believers and Salvationists, were filled with jubilation by this unexpected confirmation of Holy Writ; and went about with cuttings out of the papers describing the event, just like the Member of Parliament (the late Mr. Newdigate, if we remember rightly) who used to carry a sample of an ancient Egyptian brick about with him, "made without straw," as a proof of the Israelitish bondage in Egypt.

There has just been published a book by Mr. Harold Peake, dealing with this subject, entitled *The Flood* (Kegan Paul, 5s.). Mr. Peake is an M.A., and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries; and, what makes his work more authoritative and valuable, both Mr. Woolley and Professor Langdon, who made the discoveries, respectively at Ur and Kish, have given Mr. Peake every assistance and placed their materials and reports at his disposal. There are also eleven illustrations of mythological figures, tablets, pottery, and geological sections of the strata of the earth showing the deposits left by the different floods, both at Ur and at Kish. There are chapters dealing with the various legends of the Flood. On the Hebrew version. On the Babylonian version. On the archæological evidence. On the latest discoveries, and finally. The cause of the Flood. The book, which consists of only 124 pages, is a clear, compact, and complete account of the subject, and bespeaks the possession by the author of a clear and orderly mind, and the reader can rise from its perusal feeling that he knows all that there is to be known on the subject up to the present time.

In a Preface to his book, Mr. Peake observes, that up to the middle of the nineteenth century it was taught that the Old Testament contained an exact historical account of the early ages of the world (the present writer was brought up in that belief) but since then it has been realized, by the majority of ministers and teachers, that these early books of the Bible are not historical. This change has taken place gradually and has not yet reached its full effect, says Mr. Peake:—

Thus there are many, not only among the old and middle-aged, who have been brought up to believe that the Flood covered the whole world and destroyed all living things, save those that escaped with Noah in his Ark. Most of these, in spite of their early teaching, cherish doubts as to the truth of this belief, and are puzzled when they meet with the more modern view, since they have had no time or opportunity to examine the evidence on which this view has been based. The author hopes that this little volume will be helpful to such as these.

That the Bible account of the Deluge, and the Babylonian account are related cannot be disputed. In both there is the resolution to destroy mankind by a Great Flood, and the communication of this resolution to one man, with instructions to build a great boat in which to save himself and all animal life. In both accounts the Flood is caused by heavy rain. In both the raven and the dove are sent out, only the dove returning, while in both the vessel comes to rest on a mountain and the hero offers a sacrifice, the sweet savour of which is much appreciated by the gods.

As to which is the older story, there is no doubt whatever. "We may consider," says Mr. Peake, "that

this [Bible] account was written, substantially as it has come down to us, at some date between 900 and 700 B.C." (p. 29). Many scholars would put it much later than this, but let it pass. That the Hebrew and Babylonian account of the Flood are one and the same story, says Mr. Peake, "there can be no reasonable doubt. Nor can we hesitate to believe that the Babylonian account is the older, since we have fragments of a Sumerian version that must date from before 2000 B.C." And further, we are told of Gilgamesh, who plays a leading part in the Babylonian story: "there is reason to believe that Gilgamesh was actually a King of Erech, at a date not far from 4000 B.C., we may surmise that the Flood took place before that time." (p. 47).

It was clear that at some time there had been a great inundation in Mesopotamia, which had left a deep impression on the minds of the people, but positive evidence of it was lacking. It was Mr. Woolley, during his excavations at Ur, who found the evidence. In a communication to *The Times* (March 16, 1929), he announced that after causing a deep shaft to be sunk through an ancient rubbish heap, passing through many layers of pottery, an enormous mass of rubbish, the accumulation of many centuries, at last the level of the surrounding plain was reached, a clean water-laid clay. The workmen believed that they had reached the bottom and virgin soil, but Woolley was not satisfied, and had the pit carried down deeper. Passing through eight feet of clean clay he came upon a stratum rich in fragments of pottery, both plain and painted. "then fragments of a new painted ware not met with before, and at the very bottom a burnt brick of a totally new type. Lastly, when they had dug down to a few feet above the present level of the Persian Gulf, they came to the clean river silt of the original island, and were satisfied that they had reached virgin soil. Here, it appeared, was direct proof of the existence of The Flood, and that the painted ware, as had been suspected, was of antediluvian date." (p. 97.)

Scarcely had the announcement been made when news came of a similar discovery at Kish. "Two days later, on March 18, in a communication to the *Times*, Professor Langdon made known that the excavators at Kish had found evidence of The Flood, in a layer which he was inclined to date at about 3400 B.C.; more than that they had found two thin deposits, lying at a considerably greater depth, both of which seemed to have been laid down by floods, which he dated tentatively at 4000 and 4200 B.C." (p. 97.) In conclusion, then, Mr. Peake finds:—

The Flood, then, was one of those normal inundations, which are apt to occur from time to time in the lower reaches of the valleys of large rivers, such as the Mississippi, the Indus or the Hoang-ho. It was probably not so extensive, or even so destructive, as the great Mississippi flood of a few years ago, or the great inundation of the Hoang-ho in China, which is said to have been rectified by Yu about 2260 B.C. Unless The Flood, that deposited the clay at Ur, was greater than that which laid down stratum D at Kish, the river did not rise more than twenty feet, or extend very far on either side of its normal channel.

Early in May, 1929, the Tigris rose abnormally, and made many breaches in its banks; this had happened before during the winter of 1925-6. In May, 1929, it was followed, at an interval of less than a fortnight, by an unusual rise in the Euphrates, and by May 19 the plain of Mesopotamia was a vast inland sea, extending to the horizon as far as the eye could see from east to west. Out of this the railway line, which is slightly raised above the level of the desert, stood up in bold relief. It is clear from this that floods of considerable magnitude are no uncommon features in the land between the rivers. (pp. 114-115.)

It is not, therefore, surprising, says Mr. Peake, "that there should have been a flood about 4200 B.C., and that this should have wiped out a population, living in reed huts by the river margin . . . During the following seven centuries, from 4200 to 3500 B.C., or later there occurred at least three floods that have left behind them traces at Kish, and there may have been others of less extent."

This new evidence disposes, once for all, of the Bible story of a Flood that covered the whole earth to the highest mountains.

W. MANN.

Unrepentent Sinners.

A SHORT time ago a series of articles entitled "The Seven Sins of Society," was started in the *Sunday Graphic*, and on Sunday, March 30, the Rector of St. Anne's, Soho, the Rev. G. B. Bouchier, M.A., contributed the third articles of the series, entitled No. 3: "Irreligion." Like most clerical gentlemen who contribute articles to the newspapers, the Rev. G. B. Bouchier does not take the trouble to define precisely what he means by the term "Irreligion," consequently he leaves the reader to conclude that under this heading he includes everybody who fails to attend Church, or observes some form of religious worship—whether that person be a Nothingarian, a Deist, a Spiritualist, a Free Lance Freethinker, or a pronounced Secularist—in fact he bags the whole lot in his net. Mr. Bouchier observes that "the savage is an ignorant fellow. But as a rule his creed, however pregnant it may be with fallacy, is unadulterated and it is faithfully observed. He exhibits a loyalty to his beliefs which should shame many a quasi-religious man of the present day." Quite so; the savage is loyal to his beliefs because he is ignorant and sincere, and does not realize how absurd they are, but as soon as men become intelligent and begin to exercise their reason, then doubts enter their minds, and they begin to reject one after the other, all the old and absurd beliefs of their childhood.

Mr. Bouchier seems to realize this fact in a way, but he makes one reservation. "Intellectuality," he says, "has been denounced as the arch-enemy of Faith. I would not go quite so far as that. The development of the intellect is a desideratum and an obvious duty, but excessive and premature development in this direction can lead to many serious results, particularly when, as is so often the case, there is no corresponding growth in spiritual stature." But what is this "spiritual growth" that intellectual men fail to acquire, and that generally characterize only those with more piety and less reason? It is again, something that the clergy cannot define?

Mr. Bouchier then goes on to ascribe the general state of unbelief to what he calls "the spurious intellectuality on the part of the average man." But if this were true it would be an easy matter for Mr. Bouchier and his clerical colleagues to cure this malady by demonstrating their superior power in answering all the critical questions of these poor benighted unbelievers and thus dispel "their spurious intellectuality." But do they do it? do they ever attempt to do it, and if so, with what success?

Mr. Bouchier admits to-day "that every suburban home, compared with yesterday, is a miniature University. The ordinary man, by virtue of his vastly improved and State-aided education (of course, Mr. Bouchier's superior education was not "State aided"; his parents were wealthy enough to pay for it; which advantage, of course, was no fault of his,

or merit either) and by reason subsequently of his access to such things as wireless, encyclopædic works and the rest has a rapidly deepening fund of knowledge." But that "State-aided education" has really been the undoing of the rising generation according to Mr. Bouchier. Listen to this: "Though untutored in the academic sense, he is nevertheless versed in certain of the frontier elements of science and philosophy, and there is a strong probability that he will be saturated, in part or in whole, with various cants, creeds, and the mumbumbo of the quack psychologist."

Oh the pity of it! To think that all these young students should fall into such dreadful errors, simply because they had received "State-aided" education, and remained "untutored in the 'academic sense.'" And so, according to the Rev. G. B. Bouchier, M.A., as the result of this "State-aided" education, "men have become too clever." "The smug complacency of over-intellectualism has penetrated to the soul, and they have leapt to the capital error of believing that they can dispense with God." "That is the whole trouble to-day, and the root cause of many of the sins of every kind of society."

It is perfectly true that thousands of young men of to-day have given up their belief in God, but not on account of any "excessive intellectuality," but rather from common sense reasoning on the grim facts of life. When they observe that among all forms of life, from the lowest to the highest, there is a constant struggle for existence, the strong mercilessly destroying the weak; that in this great struggle "nature is red in tooth and claw," they cannot believe that a good kind god is behind all this, who sees what is going on day by day and hour by hour, who has the power to prevent it and yet will not; they cannot believe in such a God; and a God who was good, but not all powerful, would only be worthy of their commiseration. So they gradually reject the belief in God altogether, especially as they find that among the various priests and parsons of Christendom they are all at loggerheads in regard to their beliefs in God. Some of them still cling to the old Anthropomorphic conception of the Old Testament Deity—Jehovah—while others talk of God as being a spirit—and yet the father of an earthly son—Jesus. When they find these flagrant differences among the beliefs of the chosen servants of God, can anyone wonder that the rising generation has the tendency to reject these old and conflicting beliefs altogether?

Moreover, these young students find that the gods men believe in to-day are absolutely useless—they do nothing; they do not answer the prayers of the starving, they do not help the oppressed who are struggling to be free, they still allow the strong to tyrannize over the weak; and therefore these young men despise the gods, and turn to their fellow men, and by their assistance, and co-operation, they hope to remedy many of the evils they find in the world.

Mr. Bouchier admits that though the people are becoming more and more irreligious, they are nevertheless becoming more moral. "Crimes of violence," he says, "are on the decrease, bigamy and forgery are held in check, adultery is not noticeably more rampant to-day than yesterday. Yes, we are better in some respects. Our bodies are cleaner, we can check epidemics, stamp out diseases, clear the slums, decrease armaments, reform discharged prisoners, provide for the halt, the blind, the aged and the infirm." Yes, says Mr. Bouchier, "we can do these things—towards a better order—but not as regards religion." No; man is undoubtedly giving up his religious beliefs; and is turning his back upon all the gods. That is the opinion of all competent authori-

ties. And if to give up belief in God or gods is a sin; the sinners deny the allegation, and they go on their way rejoicing. They feel that they have thrown off an incubus. In the memorable and beautiful language of the famous Col. Ingersoll, they exclaim:—

"Let the Gods go. Let them cover their eyeless sockets, with their fleshless hands and fade for ever out of the minds of men." But the rising generation is not without its theory of life and a practical philosophy. Many of them are not only Atheists—but they are also Secularists. They say with the late George Jacob Holyoake: "We too prefer a creed as definite as science and as flexible as progress—a creed that must have its deepest roots in the human heart, and count as its highest victory—the permanent well-being of the people." And such a creed I contend is superior to any or all of the creeds that are based on Supernaturalism.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Seeking After God.

It is amazing to think of the time and labour spent in this particular paper-chase. For it does seem as if it were a kind of hide and seek game. Mankind, through the centuries, every now and then, have fancied they detected some tiny proof of God's existence, and have redoubled their efforts, only to find a kind of far-off echo of their vain imaginings.

Taking the Book for it, they had little difficulty in their hunt in the olden time. Every rock and tree and flower and moving shadow, bore incontestable evidence. The untutored savage in those far-off days, with the aid of the "medicine-man," had little difficulty in finding God. The snag then was rather, how to get rid of him.

For, to have too many Gods must have been as inconvenient as to have too few. When they popped up behind every bush it must have been disconcerting. Our early progenitors must have had a busy time. Perhaps that is why the industrial revolution was delayed so long.

Seeking after God is rather a distracting game. Sometimes you fancy you have caught a glimpse of him as he walks in a garden in the cool of the day. Again, you think you have him when he disrupts the Bricklayers Union at the building of a tower. Then we get a glimpse, or think we have, when he enters into a conference with our first great shipbuilder, and helps him to decide on that naval experiment. In those days Noah cared nothing for the Five-Powers.

Jews have always been great God-chasers. They were never content except they had one of some sort in their possession. If they couldn't have a mystical "still small voice," they set up a substantial specimen in the form of a calf. If Jehovah fobbed them off, they were willing to rely on Baal, or, at a pinch, Ashtoreth. One of some sort they must have.

Their great leader, Moses, was a man who specialized in interviewing the Deity. Moses often had a lively time, directing swarms of lice, and arranging for the production of boils. He must have worked day and night before he managed to get that picturesque army safely through the Red Sea. Moses was the only man for the job. When the need arises—Behold the Man!

To Moses belongs the credit of having had a personal interview with the Deity. It was a remarkable occasion. There were no witnesses present, and even Moses himself could not be quite sure about his interlocutor. It was a very imperfect profile he saw on that mountain. Indeed, as Moses was so excited at the time it may have been an Israelitish nymph who had followed the great leader up those rocky heights.

Job asked the question, "Who can by searching find out God?" yet the detectives have been on his track ever since. Paul rebuked the ignorant Athenians for raising an altar to the Unknown God, affirming that he himself had caught him. He suggested that the Greeks had engaged in the hunt, with imperfect equipment. They had sought the Lord "if haply they might feel after him and find him," at the same time remarking, he was not

far from every one of us. This would give the old Greeks on Mars Hill something to ponder over. They must have thought there was a catch somewhere.

Salvationists and the baser sort of Fundamentalists, have, of course, found God many times. They are continually rounding him up, and now they are on the most familiar terms. One might almost think he was on the kerbstone, or going round with the tambourine. This is sheer illusion, for God cannot be caught by the clinking of cymbals. Job knew better. He was persuaded it was a big job..

Sometimes we are recommended to work hard in this search after the Infinite. A book recently published goes as far as to say that all our older methods are quite wrong. It is only by a severe mental tussle that we can come up with him. Hard, patient, effort, added to a cultivation of certain mystical qualities, and, you may run this interesting quarry to ground.

Evangelicals, on the other hand, allege it is quite an easy matter to get into touch with this elusive personality. All you have to do is to wait—wait patiently for him, and he will surprise you by coming round the corner. This kind of search suits the lymphatic. They are too lazy to follow the paper-chase. In fact they say:—

“Jesus did it, did it all
Long, Long ago.”

When one considers the amount of time and energy that have been devoted to following this celebrated hunt, it is with a kind of shock, we receive the news that there is nothing to hunt after all. Jones, in the dead of night, bravely stepping down-stairs in search of Bill Sikes, feels himself defrauded when he only finds a cat in the pantry. So poor humanity, after manufacturing all manner of Gods from the great clockmaker, through the Lord Shaftesburys, down to the tiny gods formed by man's fevered imagination, find out, through the teaching of the New Materialism, that “there aint no sich person”; that there never was such a person, well, we have been defrauded, that's all.

ALAN TYNDAL.

Science and Religion.

As a student of Science, I have had my attention drawn to a letter written by one calling himself “Iconclast,” to the effect that in a broadcast address, Sir Henry Newbolt had declared that the conclusion of modern science had shattered the materialistic theories of a generation ago, and that these conclusions point to design in the Universe, suggesting that there is a mind working to a definite end.

To Sir Henry Newbolt's assertion the denial direct may be given. Modern science suggests nothing of the kind, and it may be laid down as an axiomatic proposition that religion is always at the basis of these strained and inaccurate statements made by a few scientific men and philosophers. Sir Henry Newbolt is not science, and his ideas are peculiar to himself. We may remember that Lord Kelvin, the distinguished scientist, said something very much the same twenty years ago. He declared that “modern biologists were coming once more to the acceptance of something, and that was a vital principle.” The leading authorities of the time went dead against him. One of them, the late Sir E. Ray Lankester, replied that he “did not know of any-one of admitted leadership among modern biologists who showed signs of coming to a belief in the existence of a vital principle.” Sir E. Ray Lankester did not believe that there was something, a mind, an “elan vital,” working out a definite design in the Universe, and he would have said the same to Sir Henry Newbolt, Prof. A Thomson, Prof. Osborn, Prof. Millikan, and all the other pious folk who profess to believe that their public utterances in favour of religion light up obscure processes in science. It is not science they are giving us, but ideas peculiar to themselves.

Now, as such, science is not concerned with religion, but there is a deadly conflict between the two, because science tells us of a large number of truths which, in the opinion of all educated people clash with the belief in

God and the soul. If science can give us a plausible interpretation of reality then the religious interpretation is superfluous. But, say the religious scientists—the Millikins, Lodges and Osborns—the order and beauty of surrounding nature suggest obvious design, and the interpretation by science of this order and beauty is merely the revelation of a mind-God behind the Universe, and that therefore science is the grand vindication of religion. The intelligent, informed person will at once see the grotesque one-sidedness of this proof of God's existence; for there is as much ugliness in nature as beauty, as much brutality and bestiality as mutual aid. Our Newbolts and Lodges never seem to have heard of the germs of cholera and typhus, syphilis and gonorrhoea, so unscientific are they in their intention of bolstering up a bankrupt creed; once though man in his stupidity and ignorance habitually makes rich breeding grounds for these deadly parasites, we are irresistibly driven to the conclusion, inimical to all religious pretensions, that what is responsible for all the beauty in nature is equally responsible for all the ugliness.

However, science has explained all this for us. Nature knows nothing of order and disorder, or beauty and ugliness. It evolves without a plan, and man, probably as part of his sex-life, develops a sense of beauty, and the rose or the orchid appeals to it. The order of the Universe, mainly found in the heavens fifty or a hundred years ago, is adequately explained by astronomical science. We know to-day, not only that there is a tremendous amount of *disorder* among the stars, gigantic catastrophes or conflagrations occurring frequently, but that evolution explains what order there is. No leading astronomer in the world now traces the “finger of God” in the heaven, and I should say that astronomers ought to know best.

No, the argument for a Designer of the Universe is as dead as New Zealand mutton; as dead, in fact, as the petrified argument for a First Cause, a Creator, a Prime Mover, or a Supreme Legislator of the laws of nature.

H. SANGER.

Acid Drops.

Mr. James Douglas having unloaded on the readers of the *Daily Express* some columns of the most horribly sentimentally idiotic religious slush that was ever printed in a newspaper, some of his readers have retorted by pulling his leg with a vengeance. Mr. Douglas asked whether Jesus had ever appeared since the crucifixion. The advertisement as to whether anybody had seen Jesus has been answered, just as a police advertisement whether anyone had seen a man with a black hat and a red nose on the evening of—is certain to meet with a response. So a number of readers reply in the affirmative. Jesus has visited them. In one case he simply looked at them and smiled with the kind of beaming love that comes from Mr. Douglas's own articles. In another case he came to the cow-house while the owner was working there. He did not see Jesus, but he knew he was there because the cows remained silent. In other cases he was just a “Presence,” it was felt much as one might feel a mouse the other side of the skirting. We fancy that at the game of leg-pulling the Mr. Douglas's readers have scored.

The peculiar thing about the remarks Jesus made to those he visited is that ever since his resurrection he has never learned to speak in modern English. He talks in the language of the authorized version—perhaps he has never come across some of the more recent translations. But as this was not the language he spoke on his first visit, it is rather a pity that he has not accustomed himself to the vernacular. Another curious feature is that he never says anything new on these occasions. All he does is to say the things he said some 1900 years ago. It is all very well for an author to read his old speeches now and again, but to confine his conversation to quotations from his own speeches shows a very restricted range of reading, if it does not argue a very profound egotism. Mr. Douglas and his correspondents are decidedly amusing.

In a world shot through with mystery, says the *Methodist Times*, there is no secrecy concerning God's purpose. Quite true. There are hundreds of religions in the world, and they all declare what is God's purpose. The trouble is that the various "purposes" are so distinctively different that one comes to suspect God of playing a subtle joke on the various peoples of the earth. The best of it is that Freethinkers are the only persons to be in a position to enjoy the joke with God.

A solemn contemporary says that beyond the presence on the wall of a text or two, and a family Bible doing duty in the window to stand a flower-pot on, there is no sign of Christianity at all in many homes. "Let us banish from our homes this blank indifference to the religious education of children." Taking things altogether, that coming revival of religion would appear to be hardly ripe for blossoming at present. Still, there be seers in the pulpits who have already smelt it—they have the advantage of being blessed with divinely inspired noses.

In a daily paper, a reader asserts that Roman Catholics are not bored by their religion. For they let nothing but serious illness prevent them from going to mass, not because it is an obligation, but because they love to go. We think that a better explanation runs thus: (1) the theatrical bunkum called "Mass" appeals to primitive intelligences; (2) the "faithful" are taught to fear a real hell-fire, and if they omit to perform regularly their religious exercises, they believe they will get it.

Spare a kind wish for Sister Aimee MacPherson, the American evangelist. She has decided to do the English a good turn. She declares: "I am never going to set foot in that ungodly, unsympathetic England again!"

Sir James Jeans thinks that "there's nothing except ourselves to prevent our making Earth a paradise." The Christian philosopher will appreciate how wonderfully the Creator planned the Earth, so that making it a paradise is a devilishly hard and painful process for man. Added to this is the fact that man was placed on the Earth lamentably ignorant, and was so designed as to be able to acquire a small degree of intelligence after tens of thousands of years.

A thousand Scandinavian fishermen, says a brigadier-general, were blown up by mines during the war. Presumably, God was too busy giving the Allies a victory to trouble about protecting neutral fishermen.

Gipsy Smith has held mission services in various parts of Great Britain, and a religious paper estimates that about 200,000 people have probably attended the meetings. Apparently, the meetings have done little or nothing towards converting the "outsider." For we are told: "Not drunkards, gamblers, wastrels, but for the most part Christians, many of whom have got just a little slack, wanted cheering on, brightening up, wanted new impulsive power; good folk who would attract the bad folk as they reconsecrated themselves and exhibited to the world more of the beauty of Jesus." In other words, the Gipsy has been very busy converting Christians to Christianity, and giving them large doses of the emotional slop they love so much. Meanwhile, the "outsider" leaves these missions severely alone. Even the beautiful sermons of Mr. James Douglas don't send him there.

Despite the decreased interest in organized religion, says a pious weekly, it is a debatable point whether true religion has not a firmer hold on the majority of the people than ever; in fact, many leading ministers declare that it has. Great is true religion! The majority of the people do not worship God in the churches. They use Sunday for amusement. They do not pray or read the Bible. They ignore the advice and scoldings of God's commercial travellers. In fact, they omit to do what exponents of God's truth say they should do, and they do almost everything they are told they ought not to do. And then they are suspected—should it be accused?—of believing and practising "true religion!"

Well, assuming they do understand true religion and are practising it, why the frantic efforts to bring them back to the churches, and why all those open-air and indoor missions to convert them? We wish some organized religionist would shed light on this puzzle.

In *Everybody's Weekly*, Mr. Harrison Mays declares that if religion is to be a living force, it "must keep abreast of modern times." The tendency still is, he says, for religion to frown upon every advance of modernity, such as short skirts, new dances, one-piece bathing costumes, mixed bathing, and the freedom of youth. "In fact the leaders of religion have been disposed to identify themselves with the ethics of killjoyism." How remarkable! With a creed like Christianity, how could Mr. Mays expect otherwise? What seems to have escaped Mr. Mays is that the Christian religion always has been behind the advanced thought of every age. It opposes it as long as possible, and then assimilates the ideas it can no longer oppose. That is how the Christian religion makes "progress."

Mr. Mays is delighted to see that the Archbishop of Canterbury is "essentially modern in spirit." His Grace, it appears, has pleaded that youth should be freed from the pious conspiracy of silence about sex which was imposed so rigidly in the past. Daringly, the Archbishop adds: "I would rather have all the risks that come from free discussion than the greater risks which are run by a conspiracy of silence." Brave fellow! He approves of to-day what Freethinkers were scurrilously condemned for advocating fifty years ago. There ought to be a special medal for bishops who do that. Still, although the Archbishop is a whale for free discussion on sex, he objects strongly to unfettered discussion on religion. His speeches against the Blasphemy (Repeal) Bill reveal that. Freedom for all opinions is far too risky a principle for an Archbishop to approve of. Where his religion is concerned, he sees that lesser risks are run when there is a conspiracy of silence.

At a civic welcome in London to Dr. Mott, an American missionary, the good man told the notables assembled to meet him that:—

The forces of Christianity are facing an absolutely unprecedented situation . . . There is, however, a rising tide and a growing interest in religion everywhere. The Christward movement is increasing in volume and momentum. There are unparalleled dangers. The oncoming generation is throwing off the old restraints.

No doubt the notables, including an Archbishop, were duly impressed by this pious optimism. But we should say that the growing interest in religion and the rising tide Christward are more of a hope than a fact. We gather that the oncoming generation, whose crime seems to be that of refusing to listen to priests and parsons, is not likely to be in vain where the Christward movement is concerned. Nevertheless, all true missionaries assume the virtue of optimism in public, even if they have it not in private.

A certain minister, so a religious weekly says, recently preached "the Gospel of Christ without any trimmings." Not in these days, surely. Christ believed that mankind inherited the curse of Original sin; that the Fall of Man was an actual fact; that there is a real and powerful personage called a Devil who tempts men to "sin"; that unrepentant sinners are condemned to everlasting torment in a real hell-fire; and that the Old Testament is the literal Word of God. All these beliefs are the foundation of "the Gospel of Christ without any trimmings." And we can hardly credit a modern parson telling a modern congregation these facts. He would realize that he would merely excite smiles, instead of that fear which leads to a desire for "salvation."

The centenary of Hickman, "the father of English anaesthetics," falls this year. And a woman writer in a Methodist weekly mentions that, although the "upper-classes" have long made use of anaesthetics in child-birth, yet it is not until the year of Hickman's centenary "that any real efforts have been

made to secure for poor mothers a share of one of the greatest blessings of the age." The same writer remarks that it has "taken a long time for the idea to sink in that the saving of pain is a Christly attribute." The good lady need not be surprised at the delay. The chief opposition to the use of anæsthetics in child-birth came from religious people. We are glad to know that the saving of pain is a Christly attribute. We presume that, conversely, it was a Godly attribute to so plan the function of motherhood that pain was inevitable, and to withhold the knowledge for thousands of years that pain could be prevented by anæsthetics. One thinking man of the Hickman type, working to mitigate the cruelty of God, is of more value to suffering mankind than are a thousand Jesus Christs.

The continued trade-depression in South Wales is affecting the churches. Many congregations cannot support ministers. And the *Welsh Outlook* says the poverty of the churches is an "obvious and pressing danger to the soul of the people." This puts God in rather a dilemma. If he sends material success and plenty of money to the people of South Wales, they may become "materialized" and forget God and the Churches. On the other hand, if he does not, the soul of the people is in danger of perishing. Now Christians commonly use prayer to save thinking out solutions to problems. Let us hope for the sake of the people of South Wales that God does not employ the same process for the same purpose.

A schoolmistress has written a small text-book about the religions of mankind. According to a review in a religious journal, the book maintains the supremacy of Christian truth, while showing what each of the other religious systems, from animism and simple nature-worship upwards, has contributed to the further understanding of God. We gather that God established these various systems of religion, and gradually doled out bits of understanding of himself, so that Christians would be able to appreciate by contrast the great supremacy of Christian truth. This may seem a crazy way of doing things. But it seems quite sensible to Christian intelligence.

Christians in South Africa are divided between those who can swallow the whale and Jonah and those who cannot. Professor Duplessis, of the Stellenbosch College, has been dismissed from his post because he refused to believe that a whale swallowed Jonah. He has now issued a summons against the Synod of his Church for dismissing him, and the issue will be gravely debated in the courts. There are very many Christians in this country who will also say that a man who is lecturing in a theological college ought to be able to swallow anything. We see that nearly 400 judges questioned him on his damnable heresy. For our own part, if a man can believe in a God we see no reason why he cannot believe anything.

Hollywood, it is said, is engaged in an attempt at putting its house in order. A regulation is to the effect that no ministers of religion are to be used as comic characters or villains. God must feel flattered that his ministers are to be put in the category of a "sheltered trade."

The death has occurred of Mr. W. H. Withycombe, farmer and innkeeper of College Road, Bromley, Kent. During the war, we are informed, he ploughed up his land and allowed it to be used as allotments, free of charge. Our thousands of exempted clergy might envy this record.

In her book, *Diaries and Letters*, Mary Gladstone (Mrs. Drew) tells us that Tennyson used very vehement language in talking and didn't seem much of a Christian. There is ample evidence in *Rizpah* and *The Northern Cobbler*, that Tennyson was not whole-hearted in his belief in the Christian faith, but respectability had to be observed.

The Rev. F. E. Coope, of the Church of St. Richard,

Haywards Heath, Sussex, makes a hobby of mending dolls. It is certainly a useful pastime, and one might be tempted to congratulate a clergyman on doing something more useful than that of following his profession.

Apropos of the Freedom of the City of Manchester being bestowed on Mr. C. P. Scott, of the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily News* remarks: "His courage and devotion to principles have made his newspaper what it is to-day." And one infers that the lack of courage and of devotion to principle have made all other newspapers what they are to-day. After all, one does appreciate what is good by contrasting it with what is indifferent or bad.

The *Daily Mail* joined in the chorus about persecution in Russia, and that, having fallen flat, we are now informed of the stupidity of Free Trade England for being the only country that will take the Soviet's wheat, timber, textiles, oil, coal, electrical appliances and matches. If the Soviet is a seller, there must be a buyer in England, and £25,000,000 worth of trade with Russia would surely be worth one sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the public cost for the services of a "Jix." We note nothing is said about petrol. The Soviet oil is in the Combine.

The death sentence on Russia has been passed by the *Daily Mail*. It says that Russia cannot kill the idea of God, but the idea of God will kill Bolshevism. So now there is nothing left for some 8,000,000 square miles to do but go and hang itself. Russia's religious ideas, will wipe that country out says the *Daily Mail*, but one copy per quire from the news vendor will make the Associated Newspapers endure for ever. Pass the lysol.

Colonel Erskine Murray suggests that the name of the War Office be changed. And that of the army chaplain too? Perhaps "guides to pacifism" would do, though the ribald might convert the initials into "God's parrots."

By the grace of God, the white ant destroys 20,000 telegraph and telephone poles every year in Australia. This is a case for prayer and thanksgiving unto the Lord. For the destruction is an ingenious device of God's to solve the unemployment problem. We present this happy thought to our Christian Evidence friends for use in emergency.

The Marquis of Dufferin declares there's no greater waste of breath than to try to give advice to the younger generation. The noble marquis should try his hand at pulpitering. If only he could learn to ring the changes on his lament, as do the parsons, he would be quite a popular preacher.

According to an advertising expert, the cheapest and quickest way to get trade is through the newspapers. Apparently there is an exception to this rule. For during the past two or three years, the Churches have been receiving free advertisement for their goods in the shape of thousands of articles on religion. But there's no sign of better sale for the religious commodity, and no more customers visit the parsons and their houses of business. Perhaps this confirms the advertising dictum that people can't be induced to buy what they know is useless. Still, perhaps the Churches' last hope—the wireless—may overcome that unreasonable prejudice.

It is a scientific fact, says Sir James Jeans, that both physical and mental qualities are inherited. This being the case then, it is inferior breeding which is responsible for the mentality exhibited by our Salvationists. And apparently there's small hope of improvement, since they persist in inter-breeding one with another.

On the authority of a religious weekly, we learn that the Churches are certainly not, as a rule, going from strength to strength as a result of a constant stream of recruits coming in to membership from the Sunday schools. This, unwittingly, is a pretty compliment to the intelligence of the scholars.

National Secular Society

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

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Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. A. REID.—It is good news that you have secured another six subscribers for the *Freethinker*. If a thousand of our readers would do the same we should be in quite easy waters. And it could be done if only enough energy is given to the task.

J. D. MACKOONA (Mauritius).—We are always pleased to receive articles from readers abroad, particularly when they deal with Freethought in their locality.

T. MOSLEY.—As others have discovered, you will find that Christians—where their religious interests are concerned, do not improve on acquaintance.

J. B. ODDY.—Thanks for suggestion. Copies are being sent.

E. BOTT.—Don't bother. You are quite welcome.

W. P. BUDGE.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. HARRIS.—We said all we had to say on the subject in our last conversation.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

This is real blasphemy, and we seriously call the attention of Mr. Clynes to the matter. The passage is taken from *The Show Girl*, by J. P. McEvoy, and can be bought of any bookseller. The Blasphemy Law used to be terrible. It is rapidly becoming farcical.

Your pious prayer that I get buck teeth and bow-legs duly received and forwarded to Heavenly Headquarters. A lot of my own have gone up that way recently and judging from the results, God must be in conference and left word not to be disturbed. I can see a lot of these snooty angels sorting His mail and messages in the morning and coming across one of mine saying, "Please help me to get a good job in the Follies." And then Private Secretary Angel Number One saying, "The Follies? Why the Boss hasn't had anything to do with that for years. We've never had anyone up here from the Follies." And then Angel Number Two, "Oh yes, Bert Williams." And then Angel Number One, "I mean the girls." And then Angel Number Two, "I don't blame 'em. Kinda dull up her with these same old harp players doing the same old voh-doh-dee-o through all the ages. I'm for putting in a couple of good loud-speakers and getting Whiteman or Ben Bernie once in a while." "A fat chance," says the other Angel, "with all these old conservatives running things. What this place needs is some young blood!"

Those who recall the very fine articles on Marcus Aurelius, which appeared in these columns, by Mr. C. C. Dove, will welcome their reappearance as part of a full length biography of the great Roman philosopher-Emperor. There are numerous essays in English on Marcus Aurelius, but we do not recall any that are quite as comprehensive as is this one. It is a work that no one interested in a truly great character can afford to miss. The work is well documented, and is published by Messrs. Watts & Co., at 3s. 6d.

Romford, about sixteen miles from London, is one of the many places sadly in need of Freethought, and Mr. Fruitnight, of 8 Fernden Way, Romford, Essex, will be pleased to hear from any local Freethinker willing to assist in the holding of meetings and the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti brought the Birmingham Branch's indoor season to a close with a very successful meeting last Sunday. The subject "Christianity and Christians in Russia," appeared to grip the audience, and the speaker received many personal congratulations after the lecture.

We continue to get good reports of Mr. J. Clayton, who has been carrying on a steady lecturing campaign around the Burnley district with the support of the Executive of the N.S.S. There is any amount of room for work in this part of the country, and Mr. Clayton's meetings should lead to the formation of several branches of the N.S.S.

Pioneers.

THEIR hands all gnarled with labour,
Their brows all dank with sweat:
They boast no rich regalia,
No jewelled Orders . . . yet.

A straight backbone for sceptre,
That seeks nor smile nor frown;
For seal a fearless Credo,
And honesty for crown!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Nigeria.

Evolution of a Psychologist of Religion.

In the days of our naive agnosticism we are prone to assume that any belief in any religion is mere ignorance. Then the elimination of religion is thought of as being solely a matter of education. But, now it is known to modern psychologists that a most enthusiastic profession of agnosticism, or of atheism, is no guarantee whatever, that such a professing person is free from the worst characteristics of a morbid religious temperament. At this latter stage of our development, we come to think of the distinctive features of religion as being its inner or subjective experience, variously interpreted. Some genetic psychologists find this experience to be quite exclusively sexual, both in origin and nature; whether we view religion in its racial origin and development, or as a personal and present temperamental need, or as the ecstatic "transcendental" experience which answers to that need.

From this point of view, religion is not a sublimation of sex, but a delusional apotheosis of sex. The primitive man quite consciously worshipped the reproductive mechanism. In modern times the apotheosis of sex is usually unconscious, and is applied mainly to so-called religious experiences, which in essence are the psychologic aspect of a sexual ecstasy. Thus "God is love," or love is made the essence of religion.

From such an attitude it follows that mere creedal profession indicates little as to the intelligence or the intellectual methods of the professing person. We must get behind the dialectics, and view the mental content, in order to discover the psychologic how and why of the dialectics that were used. Now, instead of presenting an issue of wisdom or of truth, the religious experience and its interpreting profession are thought of as presenting mainly issues of relative healthy-mindedness.

This essay is written to tell you *how* such ideas were developed. If anyone wishes a detailed duplicate of that mental picture, or if one wishes to judge fairly of its merits as a claim of approximate truth, it will require much more reading than my two score of essays in religious psychology.¹ Here, only a suggestive and very much compressed outline can be given. It is hoped that this will reflect something of a scientific temperament and method.

Before my interest in religious psychology, I was already a confirmed, but naive agnostic. As to religious origins in the race, or the present conditions which pre-dispose individuals to religiosity, no theory have yet been accepted or even considered. From this naive agnosticism, the first step was taken a few years after establishing a residence in Salt Lake City, Utah. There, at the centre of Mormondom, agnostic curiosity impelled me to a thorough study of the history and theology of "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." Two surprising convictions were impressed upon me. Here was an important church, built upon a one hundred per cent conscious fraud in its founder,² yet with a thoroughly religious temperament and sincerity in most of his converts. For the present purpose, however, the other conviction is more important, viz.: *All the many theological peculiarities of the founders of Mormonism had a sexual cause for being just as they were.* My find-

ings upon the sexual practices and theology of the Mormons, were published in several essays. With the decline of the mad enthusiasms of the early converts there came the abandonment of polygamy and a change from the theology of the founders.

My desire to know something more than the obvious conclusion drawn from the sexual theology, led to the reading of many books on normal and abnormal sexual psychology. At that time, Freudian psychoanalysis was hardly discovered and had not yet reached America. Therefore my reading was limited to books in the class of descriptive psychopathia sexualis, descriptive psychiatry, hypnotism, suggestive therapeutics, etc. Thus it was found that many others had preceded me in discovering a psychologic correlation between religion and sex. These opinions came chiefly from historians and psychiatrists. Many such opinions were compiled and published, as giving nourishment to a *general* theory that was just then budding in my mind. These opinions contained no discussion of the mental mechanisms by means of which the needs of sexual origin became converted into the delusional claim of a "transcendental" experience of an ultimate essence, the absolute, an administrator of the universe, or something superhuman, that is often called God. These authors were only making logical inferences instead of describing psychologic processes and their conditioning factors. Soon after this, my intellectual interest was diverted for a time into other channels.

In the meantime, however, a book on Mormonism was still in contemplation. Such a book seemed to need a special stage setting, for the presentation of the sexual sources of Mormon theology. To obtain this setting my previous studies in sexual psychology were supplemented with much reading on the history of Christian sects. Here was found considerable material pointing to the correlation of religious and sexual enthusiasm. So came a growing interest in this subject and much more reading. The convictions thereby induced could not be adequately justified, except by an impossible republication of vast and scattered fragmentary material. However, it is relatively easy to state the general impression produced by that reading. It appeared as if every intense, widespread revival of religious zeal had resulted: (1) in increased sexual irregularity; (2) in an increased morbidity of zeal in support of sexual orthodoxy; (3) frequently there resulted some organized effort to establish, in the name of God, some change in sexual customs; or conversely, every organized effort to secure social approval for some form of sexual irregularity or abnormality had its origin in religious enthusiasms or experience. In one sense this general reading on the history of "heretical" Christian sects had another important effect. The quite obvious and quite general concurrence of religious and sexual enthusiasm resulted in a generalization of my findings upon the sexual sources of Mormonism, so as to extend the sexual hypothesis to all Christendom, and later to all religions.

None of the general histories had enough detail to furnish a precise picture of the psychologic processes that are involved in the religious or mystical experience. This condition necessitated the making of logical inferences about casual relations, rather than having a first-hand *emphatic* insight and understanding of the psychologic *how* and *why* of the mental processes that are involved in such "supernatural" experiences. In many cases, little more was preserved by the historian than the bare evidence of the concomitance of sexual and "spiritual" zeal. Only in a few cases was there even a little psychologic detail. The cases first studied never supplied enough information to show how a natural human experience

¹ One who is different, to which is now added a bibliography of Theodore Schroeder on the Psychology of Religion. *Coss., Cob., Conn., December, 1927.*

² *Origin of the Book of Mormon, by Theodore Schroeder.*

could be converted into a delusion of the superhuman or supernatural causation. Concerning a still smaller number of extinct heretical enthusiasts, it was possible to collect some rare pamphlets. In some cases, where enough information was acquired, a statement of the recorded facts was compiled. These were published in a half dozen essays dealing with Montanists; Matthias the Prophet; Wildesbuch Crucified Saint; Mother Ann Lee of Shaker fame; also, "Ida C."; Mrs. Eddy and Christian Science; John Lacy and his theistic group; with some account of the bundling practice, and "spirituality." Other reading was done, about the Mahomedans, and numerous Russian sects of enthusiasts. Quite a few sects were studied beyond the Christian borderland, and extending well into the field of eastern mysticism.

While pondering these problems, another question came to consciousness. Rather late, but seriously, I asked myself: What is religion? If one intended to discuss generally the psychology of religion, he must first define the differential essence of religiosity, and this seemed a difficult task. Several hundred definitions of religion were easily found, with little agreement among them. Therefore, it became necessary to undertake a little personal study of religiosity. A method of progressive elimination was adopted. From this came the conclusion that the one common distinguishing feature of all religions is the mystical experience. That is generally regarded as transcending ordinary human limitations, and as guaranteeing the existence of something claimed to be superhuman or supernatural. Nearly always that something is talked of as an ultimate reality, or an alleged "absolute" under various names. Of course this is mysticism viewed in its loose, non-sectarian sense.

Too often the definitions of religion were only rather empty sectarian dialectics, offered in explanation of some "extraordinary" subjective experience. These inner experiences are of varied intensities, varied outward manifestations, and have various metaphysical or theological explanations. Yet in common, all of these subjective experiences are ecstatic in nature and are labelled "religious," that is, as relating one in a new way to a newly discovered transcendental "reality." According to various details in the experience, and varying degrees of cultural acquisition, they are explained in terms of varying sectarian dialectics, for that which agnostics call the "unknowable." By this means there have arisen an extraordinary number of transcendental, philosophical, metaphysical or theological systems of dialectics. Every experience which falls short of being any kind of mystical experience, and yet could in some sense be called religious, now seemed to present only varying degrees of lesser emotional need and lesser preparedness for achieving the mystical experience of something which is often called God. That experience is the most thorough religiosity. The result of this search for the essence of religion is sufficiently reflected in two essays.

While the conscious need for greater insight was developing, Freud was discovered. I proceeded to read *about* psychoanalysis, but a considerable study failed to bring the desired light. It is now understood that this was to be expected, so long as one has not learned how to read Freudian literature *emphatically*. Furthermore, it became doubtful that such capacity could be acquired adequately, without submitting to a psychoanalytic discipline. Accordingly that discipline was submitted to, with the result that my mental attitude toward all human problems became revolutionized. By the use of the new technique for psychogenetic research my re-education was begun. Much of my past research now appeared

ever more inadequate, and religious experience presented many new problems.

It was becoming increasingly evident that there was great need for a more intimate knowledge of the mental mechanisms, and the conditioning factors of religiosity, as these are involved in the so-called "religious experiences." To achieve this knowledge of the religious psychologic processes and of their conditioning factors, it appeared necessary to study some living mystics of varying theological peculiarities. Naturally those most accessible were the irregular mystics; that is to say, those mystics who theorize about their mystical experiences in terms of heretical metaphysics, or heretical theologies. Usually these persons are judged morbid. In such matters, however, many equally morbid persons often escape detection only because their symptoms consist chiefly in the very excess of their zeal for orthodoxy, and for conventionality. Again, the more morbid ones are apt to be the most useful subjects for study, because in them quite ordinary psychologic mechanisms can be seen in grossly exaggerated expression. This exaggeration adds much to the clarity of such mechanisms. So the observation of living mystics served to elaborate, as well as to check and correct, the prior logical inferences. Several detailed studies of this sort have also been published.

THEODORE SCHROEDER.

(To be concluded.)

The Liars of Lambeth.

I SAW—January 16, 1930—with my own eyes, an autograph letter from the Anglican Primate of Australia, Archbishop Wright, refusing to license the Reverend Charles Walker Chandler to preach, or to hold services in the diocese of Sydney.

Normally, that would seem to be a small matter. But I also saw, some few weeks later, before it was posted, a letter from the said Rev. Chas. W. Chandler to the same Archbishop, asking to be so licensed; and asking also, please note, that he "be given the hardest and most difficult parish in the diocese, without any salary or stipend whatsoever," and offering to work and maintain the same free gratis.

A little later, this holy Primate of the Anglican Church left, per first saloon, to attend a conference of fellow bishops, and other professional play-actors, at the Palace of Lambeth in London. It would seem, therefore, to be a fit and proper thing that some certificate of the high moral worth and Christian probity (sic) of this former Dean of Manchester should also go to London, for the enlightenment of Freethinkers, along with him. It may help, in part, to convince the people of Great Britain how vile and how miserable a fraud is this holy and most sacred Anglican lie-factory, which gathers its bishops together, periodically, from the ends of the earth; not to do anything genuine and practical in support of the ideas of their alleged "Master," Jesus Christ; but simply in order to reassure themselves of the fact that, for bishops and similar comedians, this is—as Dr. Pangloss would say—the "best of all possible worlds."

Now, the book of the Christian play—i.e., the Bible—assures us very definitely, that Jesus of Nazareth was two unique things. He was, first of all, the son of a Jewish carpenter, with a genealogy reaching away back to that eminent all-round Hebrew bandit of a David; and secondly, nevertheless, he was the Son of God, who hired or bribed the Holy Ghost to slip down a rainbow and personally supervise the angelic and entirely manless fecundation of that much-

discussed Jewish female, the so-called "Virgin" Mary.

How these two totally distinct arrangements of the conception of Jesus are to be tied, logically, together, I do not pretend to know. I only know that the field of religion is one, apparently, in which the greater the size and the larger the assortment of the lies that you tell, the better. Civilization is a mask. It is, in fact, simply a very thin sheet of sticky and cheap and gaudily bepainted paper. Beneath that mask or veneer lie filth, hunger, venereal disease, poverty, crushed ambition, crippled minds, twisted limbs, dying economic martyrs to the sacred cause of drapers' profits, and all manner of loathsome and most unspeakable villainy. Yet, nevertheless, there are still almost countless millions of pathetic, English-speaking human—or ex-human—creatures, in this world, who still believe in the virtues of that 2,000 year-old Jewish miracle-play, or parsons' fraud, called Christianity; and who are prepared, even yet, to swallow, like babes, every God-astounding lie—that is, assuming that there is such a Person as God, anywhere, available to be shocked—within the two covers of the Bible.

Now, thanks to the existence of this world-wide audience of poor fools, trusting women and congenital imbeciles, it is still possible for the Church of England to take hold of some penny balloon of a Low-Church Dean of Manchester, and to inflate him, dramatically, into a perfectly nice and spherical Primate of Australia.

This aforesaid penny balloon of a blown-up or distracted Dean of Manchester, mark you, is then duly handed over to the cracked and crazy Anglicans of Australia with as much pomp and solemnity as if he were at least seven sizes larger, in that purely hypothetical God's esteem, than Jesus Christ. And the said insane, worm-eaten Anglicans in Sydney and the adjoining parts lay hold, forthwith, of their archiepiscopal penny balloon, with great awe and reverence. They proceed, instantly, to instal this sacred circular fetish into a local Lambeth Palace called Bishops Court; they pay him sundry thousands of unearned pounds per year; they go without, themselves; and then, having performed the whole of these silly and unspeakable Asiatic grovellings, and many more, they quietly and severally get sick and die, whilst the said Primatical balloon goes on being circular and empty for twenty years or more; interspersed, for sheer boredom's sake, with regular jaunts to that clown's paradise, Green Room Club, where the holy actors foregather, at Lambeth.

Enter now, at Sydney, in his rich and priest-cursed State of New South Wales, a little man from New Zealand. He is an Englishman-born; produced, from his father's loins, and his mother's womb—entirely without any rainbow-riding hocus-pocus upon the part of the Holy Ghost—and anxious to follow out and execute the social ideas of the aforesaid Jewish Hamlet of a Jesus. Having served at home, in his youth, in the House of Newnes, and having seen the Northcliffes of this world go by, he comes to Australia and carries his "swag" or bundle, like a veritable peripatetic philosopher in the wilderness. Painfully, and with vast effort, he fights his way, through great poverty into the sacred priesthood of the Anglican Church; is constantly called, upon his sheer reputation as a fearless man, to Auckland; and ministers there, most successfully, in the largest city in New Zealand.

Returning, now, to Sydney with a sheaf of the very finest testimonials from all sorts and conditions of men, including one, which I have personally seen, from Archbishop Averill, the Primate or religious "boss-cocky" of that Dominion, he volunteers, as I

have said, for Christian service, without pay, in the hardest and most difficult Anglican parish that can be found—and that is saying something—in this ultra-heathen diocese of Sydney. Does he get it? No. As I have already said, he gets the icy glare, the archiepiscopal cold hand, and the frozen mitt—as the pugilists would say—in *toto*. He must not hang out the official "shingle" of the Anglican faith, in any diseased and dirty parish of this crime-filled, raucous, half-Yankee city of Sydney. Charles Walker Chandler, in brief, is given to understand that, at Bishops Court, his name is Mud; and that this holy, inflated balloon from Manchester will have nothing to do with him, on any terms, whatever.

What, then, it will be asked by all unprejudiced, discerning men, are this man Chandler's faults? Is he a wine-bibber, and one given over, alas, to the heinous priestly sin of drunkenness? No. Upon the contrary, he is an irrevocable and cast-iron teetotaler. I am, myself, as I have confessed before, a sort of Appian Way for beer, and as strong as Jesus upon the merits of wine as a miracle-worthy liquid; but the Rev. Chas. Walker Chandler, whenever he has supped with me in the Winter Garden at the Hotel Australia, has refused all spirituous or fermented fluids; and has cleaved, instead, into tea and coffee and the like Mahommedan sherbets.

Does the man, then, steal forth by night, privily, and consort with the daughters of Rahab or the like Loestrygonian harlots? Nay. He has a wife of his own; lives with his Methodist mother-in-law, up the holy and ultra-respectable North Shore line, where the suburban high priests and regular, three-ply archangels dwelt, and in all things, this Chandler, as I know him, with a knowledge extending over years, is a working man of social, financial and ecclesiastical probity.

What, therefore, in the Devil's name, is this man's sin? Why, look you, he still dares, with an almost grotesque sincerity, to insist that this holy snake-yarn of a Christian religion shall be put into practice. He still believes (a) that the meek should inherit the earth, as well as poverty, venereal disease, and the like "blessings" of civilization; he thinks (b) that Jesus was in absolute earnest when He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," etc; and he is mad enough to imagine (d) that God, whatever His address, has not designed Heaven to be a sort of select Killara golf-club, where millionaires shall play, but that it shall be a true haven, likewise, for all the faithful common people.

That, in brief, is the real "sin," and the base and damnable guilt, of the Rev. C. W. Chandler. He will not take this thing as a sort of holy play, and a highly profitable social "confidence trick." He will not join, convivially, with the Dean of Sydney and this Beerholm Tree or George Edwardes of an Archbishop Wright in "producing" Christianity as if it were a sort of a leg-show or a pantomime, to be "put over," i.e., sold, for good hard cash, to the diseased and stupified, dunderheaded masses.

There is no forgiveness for that sin. Judas Iscariot—the only one of the original Apostles who really believed in Jesus—has been lied about consistently, and abused for nearly 2,000 years, simply because he took the kingdom in earnest, and thought that Jesus was utterly and absolutely genuine. Peter, that infamous, cowardly liar who deserted and—actually denied, in the bitterest pre-crucifixional hour, that he ever knew Jesus—him, of course, the holy actors of Lambeth and their theatrical predecessors regard as a saint and sheer foundation-Pope. Truly, the wages of virtue is death. And so, here in Sydney, after the said 2,000 years of Christian fraudulence and holy lying, we find Annas Wright and Caiaphas Talbot,

Dean of Sydney, determined to put this pestilent fellow Chandler to death—*i.e.*, determined, solemnly, and in the name of God, the Holy Ghost and Jesus, not to mention the Virgin Mary, to deprive him of the right to earn his priestly living!

Will they succeed? Who knows? If Caiaphas and Annas, of yore, had "pull" enough, in the days of Herod and Pilate, to murder that legendary poor Jewish Hamlet of a Jesus, what may not these distended penny balloons of London and Manchester, and other parts, succeed in doing to this little man, Chandler, here and now? The whole thing is a gamble. But, for my part, I have this day advised the Rev. and estimable gentleman as to how he should act.

"These things that call themselves Primates and Deans," I have said to him, "are not men, but are simply balloons." They may be most beautifully circular indeed, in their general depositions, and may seem, when they sit around in their carved archiepiscopal chairs, and in their official long rags and flummery, to be most impressive and solid; but they are all made, essentially, out of the cheapest india-rubber, and they are not genuine cannon balls at all, not in any way solid, at the core.

"Stick pens into them, man, and let out their wind! You have been meek and modest, and you have offered them, as it were, upon your bended knees, the salve. Now dare to be a modern name-maker for yourself. Be a remorseless and a logical Machiavelli; and, if you really believe in the ideas of your cranky Hamlet of a Jesus Christ, you must prick the whole of these pretentious liars of Lambeth to death with the sharp edge of the pen—which is journalism's sword.

JOHN MCCRASHAN.

Melbourne.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
FREETHOUGHT PIONEERS.

SIR,—Mr. Cutner is to be thanked for his defence of the brave pioneers of Freethought.

It is easy for us, who can speak our minds without jeopardising our daily bread, to criticize them, but it is, to say the least, ungracious, considering it is to their self-sacrifice and bravery that we owe our present liberty.

I am shocked that a man of Sir Leslie Stephen's standing should have been so unfair.

For the rest, it seems to me that Freethinkers can be as intolerant and small-minded as Christians, which makes one wonder whether these two objectionable characteristics are the outcome of religious training, or are they only human nature.

E. S. DANIELS.

[Human nature, accentuated, perpetuated, and moralized by Christian training.—Ed.]

DEAN SWIFT.

SIR,—Our friend Mr. Stickells thinks that I have been unjust to Swift in attributing to him a hatred of mankind—by the way, I was not "repeating some critic's assertion," the assertion was my own—and thinks that Swift was an idealist who endeavoured to excite disgust of the brutal and base, and admiration for the better part of human nature.

To do him justice, for he was not a hypocrite, Swift never pretended to anything of the kind. He really believed that human beings were, as described in the voyage to Brobdingag, as "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin, that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

But it is in the last tale in *Gulliver's Travels*, the

journey to the Houhnymns, that Swift puts forth the full fury of his contempt and hatred of mankind. In my opinion, this is the most revolting story in the English language. It is calculated to make any decent man physically sick. In the country of the Houhnymns, the rulers are not the men, but the horses; who are endowed with the highest and most noble attributes, and rule over the human beings, the Yahoos, who are represented as more vile and bestial than the lowest savages, or the anthropoid apes! As Mr. Aldous Huxley observes, in his last book: "For Swift, the charm of the country of the Houhnymns consisted, not in the beauty and virtue of the horses, but in foulness of the degraded men." "He could not forgive them, in a word, for actually existing." (A. Huxley: *Do What You Will*. p. 100.)

Sir Leslie Stephen, in his monograph on Swift says: "The Yahoo is the embodiment of the bestial element in man; and Swift in his wrath takes the bestial for the predominating element. The hideous, filthy, lustful monster yet asserts its relationship to him in the most humiliating fashion." And again: "The full wrath of Swift against his species shows itself in this ghastly caricature." (Stephen: *Swift*. pp. 181-182.) Swift himself never claimed to be the idealist that Mr. Stickells suggests, and would have warmly repudiated the suggestion. Mr. Craik, in his *Life of Swift*, tells us:—

Swift made no secret of his motive. He wrote *Gulliver*, as he says, "to vex the world, rather than to divert it." He "hated and detested that animal called man." . . . Bitter against mankind, he could neither confine, nor master, his hatred. Thus upon the "foundation of misanthropy," to use Swift's own words, the "whole building of his *Travels* was erected." (pp. 119-120.)

The only excuse that can be made for Swift is that his mind must have been diseased when he caricatured mankind as a race of loathsome and disgusting Yahoos.

W. MANN.

THE RESURRECTION.

SIR,—The comments aroused by my article on the Resurrection are both useful and interesting. May I point out that Freethinkers should not take my theories too seriously, my chief purpose being to point out to those in the habit of so doing that the story as it stands proves nothing at all for Christian Theology. It is admitted that the record is "crazy," so far as proving either theory—certainly the theory of the Supernaturalists.

"Up to a certain point" the story seems plausible to C. Bentley, but walking "sixty furlongs" two days after being nailed to the cross is too much for his imagination. He has himself undergone several operations. I sympathize. This much may be said, however, and confirmed by any good encyclopaedia: Under Roman Crucifixion the body was first tied firmly on the cross, and finally nails were driven through the hands, but not always through the feet. There was a block under the buttock to take off the body-weight and prevent the hands from tearing out. The object was to keep the sufferer alive a long time as a warning to wrong doers. The wound in the side need not be considered important. We know nothing about it except as noted. It oozed serum, if it oozed anything, indicating a superficial wound on a *live* body. We get most of our ideas from descriptions and pictures having no authority whatsoever, and Freethinkers have as hard a time as any to get away from these conventions.

As for Paul, we find that the epistles purported to have been written by other disciples—Peter, James, John, Jude, etc., are little more than faint echos of Paul's peculiar theories about the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul quarrelled with them, to be sure, but upon minor and unimportant matters from the modern viewpoint.

I am of the opinion that some unusual event led to the myth of Jesus and his resurrection, which led finally to the conversion of Paul, and thus to the founding of Christianity. It is not difficult for me to admit with Mr. Joseph McCabe, for instance, that Jesus may have lived and furnished a basis for the myth in the New Testament. So that some of the story as related is true.

If by a sort of fate or accident he "rose from the dead" in a manner consistent with natural law—thought at the time to be supernatural—we have all we need to explain the psychology of Paul and the early Christians. But I would not be dogmatic.

It is hard for me to believe that myths originate of themselves or are invented by designing priests to deceive the people. They rather originate in the minds of ignorant but imaginative people over some real event. The priests *lacking* imagination weld them into creeds.

WILLIAM W. HARVEY.

Boston, U.S.A.

PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA.

SIR,—I do not know why Thomas Paine's rebuke to those who denounced the horrors of the French Revolution should be addressed to me. Having advocated freedom of thought as well as Freethought for nearly thirty years, I can hardly be pilloried as Satan rebuking sin. As a Freethinker I loathe the oppression of a religious man on account of his creed as strongly as I loathe the oppression of an Atheist. Those orthodox critics of Bolshevism who are "supporting in principle" the same intolerant policy that in Russia is directed against the adherents of organized religion are *persecutors* in principle, and I will apply the same ugly name to both parties in this dog-and-wolf fight.

My views about Russia are not based on *Pravda*, or snippets from *Pravda* in the *Morning Post* or other Conservative papers. I have read over a score of books on Bolshevik Russia, some of a eulogistic character, and I have conversed with Russians and other who have lived under the Soviet régime. While remaining critical of many stories and reports, I cannot reasonably doubt that Russia is ruled by despots as ruthless as the Tzarist bureaucracy, though less corrupt, and that Communism is a religion with all the vices that religion breeds. That is why I say that Bolshevism is the worst enemy of Freethought our age has produced; it is striving to create an Orthodoxy, and it is utterly intolerant of critics. I do not know of an argument that is used to justify the Bolshevik policy which wouldn't equally justify the Inquisition. Heretics like the Albigenes and the Lollards can be plausibly represented as "counter-revolutionaries," and the maintenance of medieval society with its two chief pillars, Pope and Emperor, seemed as important to the mind of the thirteenth century as the maintenance of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" seems to a Russian Communist.

The Bolsheviks have not closed every Church nor murdered every priest. But they have created a system of legislation which presses severely on all those who take their religion seriously; and when we remember that only the Communist has any power in Russia, and that they are to a man, bitterly hostile to all religious teachers and propagandists as "counter-revolutionary," it would be marvellous indeed if they did not often abuse their power.

The "touching and child-like" belief attributed to me is a very hasty inference from what I wrote. I know that revolutions cannot be carried on with rose-water, and that the activities of the Churches have to be watched and sometimes curbed; but the Bolsheviks had other ends in view than the protection of public order or social betterment when they passed their drastic code of April 8, 1929, some of the clauses of which (*e.g.*, the one forbidding religious groups to hold Bible classes) are as cruel and contemptible as our Blasphemy Laws.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

Obituary

CATHERINE DOBSON.

ON Wednesday, April 9, the remains of Catherine Dobson—wife of the veteran J. G. Dobson—were cremated at Birmingham. The cause of death was Cancer, and for the best part of a year she bore much suffering with remarkable fortitude. Her death, at the age of seventy-nine, will leave an ever open breach in the home where she was wife, mother, and comrade.

It was a loyal and sorrowing family gathering, with a few close friends, which assembled at the Crematorium to pay a last farewell. A secular service was conducted by R. H. Rosetti.

MR. W. L. COOK.

I HAVE to record, with regret, that it was my duty to read at the graveside, Garden Cemetery, Dunston, a burial service over the remains of an old friend and co-worker, Mr. W. L. Cook, formerly an active member in the ranks of the South Shields Branch. During the most prosperous days of the Tyneside campaign, Mr. Cook, often assisted by his family, was always ready for a revival anywhere at any time. In addition, he also did some solid work for his Trade Union, the Railway Union, before removing to the up-river coaling station at Dunston. He leaves a widow, two sons and three daughters.—F. Chapman.

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.

INDOOR.

HAMPSHIRE ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): No Service.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Everett Reid, F.R.G.S., F.R.S.A.—"Slavery and Forced Labour."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): No service.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Ruston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate—"Is the Christian Doctrine of 'Free Will' Rational?"; *Affir.*: Mr. H. G. Everitt; *Neg.*: Mr. T. P. Palmer. April 24, Social and Dance at 101 Tottenham Court Road, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Kennington Road, outside Kennington Theatre): 11.30 a.m., Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Clapham Road (Stonhouse Street): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Mr. James Hart, A Lecture; 3.15, Messrs. B. Betts and C. E. Wood; 6.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and B. A. Le Maine and A. H. Hyatt. Freethought meetings every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and J. Hart; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* may be obtained during our meetings outside the Park Gates, Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

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