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Views and Opinions

Another Convert

I HAVE been reading the self-told story of a convert to Christianity. This class of stories is not the most cheerful of reading, for to the discerning reader they put human nature in a very unpleasant, sometimes a very depressing light. They are seldom more than detailed accounts of thinly disguised selfishness, even when, so far as the narrators are concerned, they are truthful accounts. But in most cases they are not even that. The close similarity of all these tales suggests that they are mostly dramatised accounts of the way in which the convert thinks he ought to feel, and the worse the character of the man the more important he feels in his salvation. There is, therefore, nearly always a mere statement of what the convert thinks suits the occasion. He is seldom as bad as he paints himself in his pre-conversion stage; he is decidedly not so good as he believes he is in the post-conversion one.

But the intense selfishness is always there. Take, for instance, that Christian classic, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. There are few books that have attained fame which are so completely selfish in their outlook. The pilgrim is concerned with but one thing, the salvation of his own soul. There is no recognition of the elevating nature of family life, nor in the civilizing influence of social intercourse. The book is selfish in the narrowest and worst sense. There is no recognition of even what one may call the wider selfishness which finds in the betterment of others the betterment of oneself.

That idea is foreign to genuine Christian literature. If it were otherwise a sane sociology might have developed generations ago. Always the real teaching, sometimes put with frank brutality, at other times wrapped in sophisticated language, has been: "If there be no future life, if there is no reward after death for goodness and no punishment for evil, then let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

The teaching is not usually put in this plain manner, for absurdities that are manifestly such, run great risk

of exposure, and extreme selfishness, if it is obvious, is apt to disgust even those who practise it. Paradoxically, it takes a man of strong moral fibre to deliberately, consciously and continuously act in a mean or selfish manner. He must find some justification for his conduct. Analyse historic Christianity and it will be found that much of its success depends upon this capacity for disguising the nature of a man's motives from himself. If he is a liar, the lie is covered with the mantle of working for the greater glory of God. If he is intolerant, his intolerance is justified as zeal for truth—religious truth. If he has a strong vein of sadism in his nature, that may be gratified by gloating upon the tortures of hell that await "sinners." There is no other religion with which I am acquainted that can compete with Christianity for satisfying mean motives under cover of moral ideals.

* * *

The Old, Old Story!

I was set going on this theme by reading the story of the conversion of one, Philip Leon, as, told by himself in the form of a sermon delivered at a church in Eastbourne, and published in the *Church of England Newspaper*, dated April 26. One feature of interest to me in Mr. Leon's case is the age of his conversion. The large majority of these cases of conversion occur during the period of adolescence. The age explains the majority of the cases that are genuine, as is well recognized by modern scientific psychologists. Mr. Leon's age is 45, which alone casts some doubt as to the accuracy of the story he tells—not that this means he is deliberately mis-stating, only that he needs explaining to himself. I have read so many of the kind of statement given by Mr. Leon that I could well have written a substantial outline of what he has to say without ever reading his story. Another feature is that Mr. Leon holds, or has held, a position in the University College, Leicester, besides being a contributor to several well-known magazines. I cannot give any opinion as to Mr. Leon's value as a "catch" for the Church. I have never read any of his writings, and the sermon itself does not tempt me to investigate further.

The story, as readers will observe, follows the stereotyped line. There is the youth forsaking his religion, for the usual reasons, and then recovering it with the same reflections on the new capture made by God. As a child, says Mr. Leon, he was acquainted with two religions. There was the Jewish, in which he was reared, and the Christian which he met at school. Mr. Leon lacked the critical ability to check one with the other, and so at the age of nine he remembers "having a great longing for God." If God had satisfied this longing in the child, we should never have heard of his conversion. But God "missed the bus." Or did he? If he had satisfied the nine-year-old longings (it is a pity Mr. Leon shows such a pitiful want of knowledge of the mechanism of these

things) there would have been no after conversion, and God would have missed the advertisement. As it was God took no notice of Leon, and Leon took no heed of God. I cannot say which was the loser. But Mr. Leon appears to have got over this boyish longing for spiritual lollipops, and he provides us with the customary narrative of wickedness in order to pave the way for the glorious salvation that was to come. Salvation Army and revival meetings will provide us with scores of similar cases. There is a mere change of dates and names, that is all.

At the age of about fourteen I fell in with a set which was definitely anti-religious. The factors which made us reject religion were: (1) intellectual snobbery (religion and intelligence or knowledge, we were convinced, could not go together); (2) social revolt (we regarded religion, especially institutional religion, as capitalist dope meant to keep the working classes content with their lot); (3) the absence of the dynamic and supernatural element in the religion about us; (4) the desire for freedom in impurity, which freedom we identified with emancipation.

One has to picture this terrible gang of fourteen-year-old voluptuaries, in revolt against religion for the reasons given. And the influence was so great that for twenty-five years it held Mr. Leon in its grip. All the same, if I had been in Mr. Leon's place I would have put the whole story in a little better manner. But there is a fashion in these things, and Mr. Leon appears to have lacked the individuality that might have enabled him to strike a new line.

* * *

The Pomp of Piety

Now let us look at Mr. Leon's story. There is, of course, such a thing as intellectual snobbery, and it is well to the front in Mr. Leon's confession, as it is with most religious converts. The feeling that "I have been selected by God for salvation" is an illustration of it. There was probably more mental snobbery in the coarse gown of the sanctified monk than in the silken dress of the fashionable courtier. That intelligence and knowledge cannot go with religion is just nonsense. If Mr. Leon believed this when he was fourteen his mental development must have been very slow for him not to have discovered his error until he was over forty. Intelligence may be as strong in a wrong direction as in a right. Cardinal Newman's intelligence was as good as that of many of the leading men of his time, but it was put to the service of wrong ideas. Knowledge, too, is not the monopoly of particular convictions. It is the use made of knowledge, in other words, the kind of appreciation and the special application of knowledge that marks the great thinker.

The absence of "dynamic" in the religious world twenty-nine years ago is just cant. Dynamic has become a "blessed word" which preachers use to lend distinction to their inanities. "Dynamic" means energy or force in motion. And when was it that religion lacked this with those who believed in it? Mr. Leon is obviously not a student of science or philosophy, but he might at least have remembered that there has always been a "dynamic" aspect of religion, and those who manifested it were always lamenting that enough people were not affected by it. Mr. Leon marks the low-water mark of the cheap convert, and the height of religious vulgarity when he says that one of the bonds uniting this gang of youngsters was the desire for freedom in impurity. That is pure cant. Really, really, something better might have been expected from a teacher and from one who has contributed to several journals of standing. The person who will not believe in God because he wishes to have a free hand in vice is a figure which the

majority of even religious teachers have outgrown. A man may believe in a God, or he may not, but a man who says "I will not believe in a God because I wish to indulge in impurity," is a fantastic absurdity which can have reality only in the clumsy lying of Christian evangelists.

* * *

The Quality of a Convert

There are several other things mentioned by this newly baptised convert to the Christian Church which are interesting only so far as they illustrate the mentality of the speaker. Mr. Leon says that until he came in contact with the Oxford Group he kept in touch with religion through the medium of Latin and Greek literature which are "permeated through and through with the feeling of the supernatural." This is worth citing because it is such an excellent example of misunderstanding. Of course, there is plenty of the supernatural in Greek and Roman writings. So there is in the *Freethinker*. But the great feature of Greek and Roman life was that emerging from peoples who had really been saturated in the supernatural there was with both a steady drive to limit and even to wipe it out of their life. Roman statecraft and Roman ethics (save for a formal acknowledgment in the case of the former) simply left the supernatural outside. And the Greeks made the first, and a very bold attack on the idea of the supernatural in their politics, the drama, and philosophy. The man who does not see this must have a peculiar facility for misunderstanding things. But a man who is capable of believing that one does not believe in a God because he wishes to indulge in impurity is capable of anything.

There is one other comment in Mr. Leon's sermon which I select, again for its illustrative value. He says he is "sure that the present war, which is a war made by the people of my generation, is the final eruption of those nether powers which have been so long at work in the imagination of this generation." That may be called good "case-book" material for a psychologist, or for a sociologist. How can a single generation create a world war? It is all very well, while a war is on, to blame one country for a war because that country committed the act which sets the world ablaze. But no historian worthy of the name would ever follow that line. He would recognize that this war with its frightful destruction of life, and lowering of ideals, and brutalizing of feeling, is a consequence not a cause—save so far as every consequence becomes a cause in its turn. If La Place's ideal scientific data were available it would be possible for one to take the state of the world, say, a hundred and fifty years ago, and show how step by step events have led inevitably to the present conflict. That is how the scientific mind would read history, and how the truly philosophic one would explain it. But I am afraid that Mr. Leon will not follow me here.

I remember writing somewhere recently that the problem of the fool and the problem of the genius is at bottom one. If and when science can explain the one it will be able to explain both. But it will never be able to explain either the genius or the fool alone. That must be my apology for taking up so much of my space and reader's time with Mr. Leon. He is an interesting case.

CHAPMAN COHEN

This fact cannot be put too baldly. The churches are fighting for adherents, for sources of revenue. None of them dares to trust to the process of persuading grown men and women.—J. M. Robertson.

The Lesson of Loreto

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse.—*Shakespeare.*

Religion, which began as fear, culminated as superstition. That is the history of creeds.—*Edgar Saltus.*

It used to be the fashion with travelling waxwork shows to keep up-to-date by redressing the old models. With the aid of a new wig, fresh clothes, and another label, it was quite possible, overnight, to transform Gladstone into a new cardinal, or an old-world general into a war-time hero. Priests are far cleverer at this sort of thing than ordinary showmen, because they have had greater experience, and have been at the game longer. And thereby hangs a tale.

When it was realized that aviation had come to stay, the smart Roman Catholic ecclesiastics wished to take the new thing under the wing of the Church. Accordingly, the "Virgin of Loreto" was proclaimed "the Madonna of the Airmen." Doubtless, they hoped, by this clever ruse, to give additional popularity to a very famous and very profitable shrine. And the way of it is worth recording.

The riddle of the "Virgin of Loreto" is easily read by all but Roman Catholics. The faithful are politely invited to believe that the house in which the Virgin Mary brought up her family at Nazareth remained there for thirteen hundred years. This, even in an age innocent of jerry-building is a positively astounding story, but religious faith is capable of an even greater stress and strain. The sacred story continues that the Celestial Authorities became alarmed for the safety of the old homestead, and intervened. One fine day the house vanished, leaving not a brick behind. Angels had carried it right across the Mediterranean to the coast of Dalmatia, where it remained for three years, whilst the angels rested. Then the angels again pulled together and took the house on its final journey across the Gulf of Adriatic to Loreto, where it was fixed without a brick being out of place.

Of course, Loreto possessed not only the Virgin's house, but an image of the lady herself, which was reputed to be almost as old as the building. The story goes that the image was carved by an old friend of the family, better known as "Saint Luke," the reputed author of one of the gospels.

Its shrine was one of the religious show-places of the Christian world. Among other adornments the image had a gold crown with over three hundred diamonds, and eighty-eight rubies, the gift of the pious Queen Christina of Sweden. During the French Revolutionary wars the shrine was sacked, and the valuable image taken away. This time there was no celestial or angelic intervention. The image was restored when Napoleon made terms with the Roman Pontiff. A few years ago the revenues of this shrine were estimated at £12,000 a year. The Loreto image has been credited with similar "miracles" to those of Lourdes and many other popular shrines, which marvels can be easily explained by those who have made a study of psychology. All miracle-workers, however, it will be noted, whether Roman Catholic, or otherwise, stop short at the restoration of an amputated limb.

Much has been written of the mentality of Medieval man, but what is to be said of the unbounded superstition of people living in this twentieth century who profess to believe such utter rubbish? Such childlike credulity is passing wonderful in grown men and women. To study it in detail is to essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd, and a very ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake on this particular point. Roman Catholics are mainly ignorant folk. They are not allowed to read any books or periodical

publications criticising their religion. They are told that by doing so they are in danger of hell fire and eternal damnation. Even the priests themselves are ignorant men, for they know very little beyond the patter of their sorry profession. Their attitude towards knowledge is that the world's clock struck at Jerusalem two thousand years ago, and has never moved since. "Semper Idem" (always the same) is their motto; and they will not allow any criticism. Even colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are insulted and ill-treated in Roman Catholic countries, for a zealous Papist will no more read a Protestant version of the Christian Bible than he would read the works of Voltaire.

No Catholic may even become a Freemason, because priests object to all secret societies other than their own. If a Catholic young man attends a Free-thought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he committed a murder.

Is it not plain that such a distorted view of things is directly fostered by the clerical control of education? Children are taught that priests are the representatives of "God," and to render simple obedience to their pastors and masters. In the susceptible years of adolescence, children believe the fairy tales of religion, and ever afterwards these stories, even if half believed, have a familiar ring about them. Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than this of possessing a very powerful priestly caste in its midst that saps the very mainspring of morality, that permits mental confusion, and that always hinders the wheels of progress. The word "reverend" in such association is pure, unadulterated humbug. To apply it to the common priest, or to the aristocratic prelate, is as absurd as to apply the term to an African "medicine-man."

But the question remains: Why are so many men such simpletons as to believe, or profess to believe, such rubbish? Why are men riddled with superstitions that, self imposed, limit their freedom and their happiness? The answer carries the mind back to the very twilight of history, to the Polynesia of four thousand years ago, or the frozen North before ever the Vikings came. For early faiths had nothing to do with ethics, but arose simply from primeval fear, and nothing else. And modern religions are but savage survivals, promoted and fostered by an avaricious Priestcraft, greedy of pelf and power. Propitiation of the gods of the harvest, fear that the harvest, the means of life, should fail, was the mainspring of the first religious stirrings in primitive man. Fear is still the mainspring of religion, fear of the fires of hell and of everlasting damnation. That is still the lever of the priests in the twentieth century. He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be doomed to the everlasting bonfire. This is not only instilled into children, but real knowledge is kept from them. When they grow up they are scared from reading books which explain that such teaching is barbaric, and but a survival of a primitive past.

How is this fear of the unknown to be eliminated? By spreading knowledge, which really means altering the chemical composition of the cultural air that men breathe; just as Darwin and Freud helped to change men's minds by explaining natural phenomena, bringing to a humanity still in bondage freedom from the superstitions that enslaved them. Not one man in a thousand has read the *Origin of Species*, but all educated men to-day are, more or less, Darwinians, regarding man as a product of evolution. Not one man in ten thousand has read Freud's books, but all cultured people realize that this scientist has enlarged our knowledge of the human brain. These men, together with the foremost Freethinkers, have scotched, but not slain, superstition by exposing it to the fierce light of

science, and left knowledge strengthened by the excision of the fungus of ancient ignorance. It is the most weighty service that can be rendered to humanity. For our methods of education for the young are founded on authority, and priestly authority at that, although the advance of civilization actually depends on science, which is, in the last analysis, ordered knowledge.

MIMNERMUS

Peter the Rock

THERE have been few more heated controversies in the Christian Church than the one dealing with what is meant exactly by Matthew xvi, 18:—"Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." It is, indeed, a most instructive experience to read up the various commentaries by acknowledged experts on this verse especially when one remembers the Christian boast that the religion of Jesus is all so very simple and can even be easily understood by a child.

This particular verse is one about which Catholics and Protestants have been wrangling for centuries. Nobody knows exactly what is meant, for a very simple reason. If it was ever spoken, the language used must have been Aramaic, and the words in that language have not come down to us. I say "must" have been in Aramaic, but even there nobody knows. The consensus of opinion is that Aramaic was the language spoken by the Jews at the time of Jesus, and a great deal of evidence can be brought forward in support of this; at the same time, there are many authorities who insist that Jesus spoke in Greek, and that we have his exact words reported in the Gospels. Otherwise, if he spoke in Aramaic, somebody must have translated his discourses, and the Gospels show little signs of translation.

And there is another consideration. If, for instance, Matthew the "publican" did write the Gospel which bears his name, he must not only have taken great care in recording the words of Jesus in Aramaic, but must have known Greek very well to have made a competent translation. Actually, the Greek copies which we have of the Gospels are of a later date than some of the "old Latin" translations. It would, of course, be the rankest heresy on my part to suggest from this fact that whatever was the earliest Gospel—say the one which is called the "Q" document—it might have been originally written in Latin. I am not saying that there ever was a "Q" original, it is a theory put forward by the great modern theologians, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, if it ever existed, it was written in Latin, and that our canonical Gospels are variants written in Greek—or translations of the "old Latin" manuscripts. But I do not expect that any New Testament critic would agree.

The difficulty with the text in question is to find out who or what is meant by "this rock." It may mean *you* are Peter, and on *this* rock, that is, a rock which is *not* Peter, is built the Church; or the rock and Peter may mean precisely the same thing.

Cephas, like Peter means "a rock" or a "stone." In Aramaic, the text would be, "You are Cephas and upon this Cephas I will build my Church." But as the Roman Catholic Bible expert, Fr. Hugh Pope, says: "In Greek you must have Petros for the man, and Petra for the rock." And the same in Latin; while in French it is the same word, "Tu est Pierre et sur cette pierre . . ." If this is so, then Peter is the rock, and Roman Catholics can claim the text as proof that Jesus built his Church upon Peter—who is

made thus to be the first Pope, and who can thus hand the "keys" down to the other Popes in a direct line of succession. This is the Roman claim, but it is very hotly disputed by Protestants.

Firstly, it is denied that Peter was ever Pope, and even whether he was ever at Rome. And, secondly, the Protestants dispute to the utmost that Peter was ever given preference over the other apostles.

As a tenet of the Roman creed is that the Bible must be interpreted according to the unanimous consent of the Church Fathers, it is quite amusing to find these same Church Fathers at loggerheads among themselves as to what particular texts mean. How do they interpret the "rock" text?

Well, many of them say the rock is really the *faith* or *confession* made by Peter. In *Essays on Romanism*, a reply made to Cardinal Wiseman's *Lectures*, the author says:—

Launoy and Dupin reckon forty-four fathers and Popish authors who maintain this opinion, among whom are Augustine, Chrysostom, Cyril, Gregory, Ambrose, and Hilary; and the same interpretation was decreed in the general councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Constance, and Basil.

But though this is so, there are still other meanings given to the rock. Cyprian, for example, says "Christ himself is the rock." Origin denies that the whole Church is built by God upon Peter only. "What will you say," he asks, "of John and of each of the apostles? Shall we dare to say that the gates of Hell were not to prevail against Peter in particular, and that they should prevail against the rest of the apostles?" While Augustine, like Cyprian, says, "Jesus said not, Thou art the *rock*, but, Thou art Peter. The *rock* was Christ, whom Peter confessed."

But Fr. Pope throws overboard all these authorities of his Church, though he admits that "Peter the rock presupposes Christ the Rock." Here it will be noticed that a small r is given to the rock when it is Peter, and a capital R when it is Jesus; but apart from that, the learned Father never disguises the fact that "Christ is the only head and the sole foundation of the entire Church on earth and in heaven," while "Peter is the foundation of the Church on earth as the Vicar of Christ." Here again it will be noticed how carefully Fr. Pope shows that when Peter is a rock he only gets a small r, while when he is the Vicar of Christ he gets a capital V.

I have not the Douay version by me at the moment, but I notice how fond Fr. Pope is of using capitals though they are not in the Authorised or Revised Versions. As an example, he gives the famous text as, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." The m and the c are not capitals in the A.V. or the R.V., but of course I can quite understand him, as a faithful follower of Roman Catholicism, doing homage in this way to his faith. However, he simply will not have the word rock to mean Jesus. He says:—

You might answer "The rock is Christ Himself." But let us put this as simply as we can, and let us, with all reverence, suppose that I am the Christ, and that here is the Apostle Peter. Can you imagine Christ saying: "Blessed art thou Simon, son of John, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father in Heaven. Because of this stupendous revelation I say now to thee, thou art Peter, but upon *this* rock (pointing to Himself) I will build My Church, and don't you forget it!"?

But why not? Surely the glorification of himself according to the recorded statements of his own apostles and friends stands glaringly out in the Gospels? Did not Jesus say, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers"? And, "I am

the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."—and many similar texts? Whatever the rock may or may not mean, it could easily mean Jesus, and it was quite in the nature of things for Jesus to claim that he and he alone was the Rock—small or capital R notwithstanding.

One could go on interminably in this discussion—as for that matter it has gone on, and is still going on. But it is very instructive to see what one of the latest Commentaries of the Bible says about the text. In that edited by such renowned theologians as Gore, Goudge, and Guillaume, and published by such an unblemished orthodox firm as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the writer of the long article on Peter says that the Jewish parallels which he cites for his support "seem to make it clear that the rock, on which the Church is to rise, is Peter himself, and not our Lord." But, the Roman claims which make this interpretation admit the supremacy of either Peter or the Popes, are dismissed with contempt. As thus:—

The promise to Peter is a personal promise. Our Lord is not creating an office, which can be held by either Peter or Alexander VI; the NT knows of no office in the Church higher than that of an apostle. (I Cor. xii, 28; Eph. iv. 11). He is foretelling the place which Peter by his faith will occupy in the extension of the Church after Pentecost, and the way in which as the man of faith others will rest upon him. (Luke xxii, 32.)

It is all very intriguing, particularly as that fount of holiness, Alexander VI, is so carefully chosen as a representative Pope by the Protestant writer. But whether anyone is now the wiser as to what the word rock in the famous text now means I leave the reader to decide. I do not know myself.

H. CUTNER

Scientific History and Christianity

IV.

NEEDLESS to say, miracles formed a very prominent feature of Christian propoganda; and these included not only those of deity and of religionaries, but also those of the devil and his disciples.

To examples of the former kind two may be added:

(1) From the lips of Brother Elias, a venerable man, I learned that when certain heretics were scattering the virulent seeds of error in part of Burgundy . . . they were finally taken by the magistrate of the district. He sent them to the stake as they merited. Quantities of wood having been supplied in plenty to feed the flames, suddenly a toad of wonderful size appeared and, without being driven, betook itself of its own accord into the midst of the flames. One of the heretics, who was reported to be their bishop, had fallen on his back in the fire. The toad took its place on the man's face and in the sight of all ate out the heretic's tongue. By the next day his whole body, except the bones, had been turned into disgusting toads. (From *Luke, Bishop of Tuy*, 13 century.)

(2) I have heard that a certain rustic, wishing to become wealthy and having many hives of bees, asked certain evil men how he could get rich and increase the number of his bees. He was told . . . that if he retained the sacred host on Easter and placed it in one of his hives, he would entice away all his neighbour's bees . . . which would come to the place where the body of our Lord was and there make honey. So he did this. Then all the bees came to the hive where the body of Christ was, and

just as if they felt sorrow for the irreverence done to it, by their labour they began to construct a little church, and to erect the foundations, and bases, and columns, and an altar; then with the greatest reverence they placed the body of our Lord upon the altar. And within their little beehive they formed a little church with wonderful and beautiful workmanship. The bees of the vicinity, leaving their hives, came to that one; and over that work they sang in their own manner certain wonderful melodies like hymns.

The rustic, hearing this, marvelled. But waiting for the fitting time for collecting the honey, he found nothing in his hives. . . . But when he approached, just as if they wished to vindicate the insult to our Saviour, the bees rushed upon the rustic and stung him so severely that he escaped with difficulty and in great agony.

The priest, by the advice of the bishop collected his parishioners and made a procession to the place. Then the bees, leaving the hive, rose in the air, making sweet melody. Raising the hive, they found inside the noble structure of that little church and the body of our Lord placed upon the altar. . . . (From *Stephen of Bourbon*.)

The devil and his ministers held conferences, at which the sins of clergymen were recorded:—

. . . Once when a certain holy father was engaged with the brethren in some work, he forgot to recite the *nones* at the right time, on account of his occupation. Afterwards he saw the devil passing before him, bearing on his shoulders a very large book, in the shape of a roll, which looked as large as a tower; and he adjured the devil in the name of the Lord to drop the book. When the monk unrolled the book, he found written on one page that he himself had not said the *nones* on the day and at the hour when he ought. Whereupon, prostrating himself at once at the feet of his companions, he confessed his negligence and immediately, looking at the devil's roll, he found that what had been written there was crased, and thereby he knew the efficacy of confession. (From *Stephen of Bourbon*.)

In another case the Virgin Mary appears and defeats two demons:—

A virtuous and pious matron came frequently to the church and served God most devoutly day and night. There also came a certain monk, the guardian and treasurer of the monastery, who had a great reputation for piety, and truly devout he was. When, however, the two frequently conversed together in the church concerning religious matters, the devil, envying their virtue and reputation, tempted them very sorely, so that the spiritual love was changed to carnal. Accordingly, they fixed upon a night when the monk was to leave his monastery, and the matron her home, with a sum of money which she should steal from her husband.

After they had fled, the monks, on rising in the morning, saw that the chest had been broken open and the treasures of the church stolen; and not finding the monk, they quickly pursued him; likewise the husband his wife. . . . They brought them back and threw them into prison.

Then the monk, restored to his senses, began with many tears to pray to the blessed Virgin, whom from infancy he had always served, and never before has such a misfortune happened to him. Likewise the said matron began urgently to implore the aid of the blessed Virgin, whom regularly, day and night, she had been accustomed to salute and kneel in prayer before her image. At length the blessed Virgin, very angry, appeared, and after she had sorely upbraided them . . . overcome by their prayers, summoned the demons who had caused the deed and enjoined upon them that, as they had caused the scandal to religion, they must bring it to an end. As they were unable to resist her commands, after much anxiety and various conferences, they found a way to remove the infamy. In the

night they placed the monk in his church, and, repairing the broken receptacle as it was before, they placed the treasure in it. Also, after replacing the money in it they locked the chest which the matron had opened. And they set the woman in her room and in the place where she was accustomed to pray by night.

When the monks found the treasure of their monastery, and their brother praying to God just as he had been accustomed to do, and the husband saw his wife, . . . Rushing to the prison, they saw the monk and the woman in fetters just as they had left them; for one of the demons was seen by them transformed into the likeness of a monk and another into the likeness of a woman. When everybody in the whole city had come together to see the miracle, the demons said in the hearing of all, "Let us go, for sufficiently have we deluded these people by causing them to think evil of religious persons." And saying this they suddenly disappeared. Then all threw themselves at the feet of the monk and of the woman and demanded pardon. (From *Jacques de Vitry*.)

Another interesting case is the following:—

Two men, simply clad, but not without guile, not sheep but ravening wolves, came to Besancon, feigning the greatest piety. Moreover, they were pale and thin, they went about barefooted and fasted daily, they did not miss a single morning the matins in the cathedral, nor did they accept anything from anyone except a little food. When by this hypocrisy they had attracted the attention of everyone, they began to vomit forth their hidden poison and to preach to the ignorant unheard-of heresies. In order, moreover, that the people might believe their teachings, they ordered meal to be sifted on the sidewalks and walked on it without leaving a trace of a footprint. Likewise, walking upon the water they did not sink; also they had little huts burned over their heads, and after the huts had been burned to ashes, they came out uninjured. After this they said to the people, "If you do not believe our words, believe our miracles." . . .

The bishop, seeing that his words were of no avail, and that the people intrusted to his charge were being seduced from the faith by the devil's agents, summoned a certain clerk that he knew, who was very well versed in necromancy, and said: "Certain men in my city are doing so and so, I ask you to find out from the devil, by your art, who they are, whence they come, and by what means they work so many and such wonderful miracles. . . ."

The clerk, obeying the bishop, summoned the devil, and, when asked why he had called him, responded, "I am sorry to have deserted you [the man had said that he had renounced necromancy]. And because I desire to be more obedient to you than in the past, I ask you to tell me who these men are, what they teach, and by what means they work so great miracles." The devil replied: "They are mine and are sent by me, and they preach what I have placed in their mouths." The clerk responded, "How is it they cannot be injured, or sunk in water, or burned by fire?" The demon replied again, "They have under their armpits, sewed between the skin and the flesh, my compacts, in which the homage done by them to me is written; and it is by virtue of these that they work such miracles and cannot be injured by anyone." Then the clerk said, "What if those should be taken away from them?" The devil replied, "Then they would be weak, just like other men." . . .

He then went to the bishop and related these things in due order. . . . The heretics were summoned. The bishop was present. A fire was kindled in the midst of the city. However, before the heretics entered it, they were secretly summoned by the bishop. He said to them, "I want to see if you have anything evil about you." Hearing this they stripped quickly and said with great confidence, "Search our bodies and our garments carefully." The soldiers, however, following the in-

structions of the bishop, raised the men's arms, and noting under the armpits some scars that were healed up, cut them open with their knives and extracted from them little scrolls that had been sewed in.

Having received these, the bishop went forth with the heretics to the people, and, having commanded silence, cried out with a loud voice, "Now shall your prophets enter the fire, and if they are not injured I will believe in them." The wretched men trembled and said, "We are not able to enter the fire now." Then the bishop told the people of the evil that had been detected, and showed the compacts. Then all were furious and hurled the devil's ministers into the fire which had been prepared, to be tortured with the devil in eternal flames. And thus, through the grace of God and the zeal of the bishop, the growing heresy was extinguished, and the people who had been seduced and corrupted were cleansed by penance. (From the *Dialogues* of Caesar of Heitsersbach.)

J. REEVES

(To be continued)

Book Notes

MR. LOUIS GOLDING'S new sixpenny, *Hitler Through the Ages*, is a comprehensive summary of the history of anti-Semitism. Considering the wide area of his survey, and the complicated issues sometimes involved (political, local, economic and religious), Mr. Golding has done good work and we recommend it as a valuable record as well as a story of absorbing interest.

In his chapter on the Inquisition, Mr. Golding naturally, but not quite accurately, stresses the anti-semitic character of the ghastly wickedness of Torquemada. The Inquisition was undoubtedly a cruel and large-scale persecution of Jews, but essentially it was a persecution of *Heretics*. Its victims were all kinds of heretics who refused to conform to the Catholic creed. The wealth of many Jewish heretics was certainly an inducement, an incentive, an inspiration and a reward, but heresy was the dividing line between the persecutors and their victims.

A reprint of Viscount Samuel's *Belief and Action*, which has been praised by three distinguished Freethinkers: Einstein, Gilbert Murray and General Smuts, has been issued as a "sixpenny." The author is a liberal of wide sympathies, the keynote of whose Modernist views seems to be the call for what he calls "conscious evolution." He, however, finds room for what Chapman Cohen would call a "ghost of a god." He admits that God is "reticent," but he feels himself able—on the same page (209)—to speak of "a world charged with the grandeur of God."

It is, however, pretty clear that neither the "grandeur" nor the "reticence" of this "God" contributes anything at all to man's reformatory work in a world which would be in a far more pitiable condition than it is even now were we to rely on a "grand," a "reticent" or any other god.

The author agrees that "wherever the theologians have been dominant, life has been retrospective" (p. 210). We should have put it far more vigorously, and we refuse to accept his advice not "to identify religion with religious history." We wonder what the great Liberal leader would say if anybody claimed that Conservatism must not be identified with the history of Conservative administrations? The basis of Christianity is the claim that its ethics—being the Very Word of the Governor of the World—must necessarily be superior to purely human morality. Religious believers must candidly repudiate many parts of the so-called Word of God if they wish their religion to be free from the condemnation inseparable from the "identification" which Viscount Samuel dislikes.

We often sigh for a writer so thoughtful and so experienced as the late Mrs. Ettie Hornibrook. Her famous

Two Years in Paris and her constant plea for the scientific treatment instead of the religio-sentimentalism usually applied to sexual disease and its prevention, make us read with growing sadness and shame such trumpery works as *Sex Problems in War Time*, by C. L. Russell, M.B. (S.C.M. Press). This book is published for the Church of England Moral Welfare Council. Naturally his imitation of Henry Varley's horrible attitude to sexual disease is praised by the *Church Times*, which says:—

Russell provides sensible and reasoned criticism of the policy of providing prophylactic "packets" against risk of venereal disease for members of the fighting forces who wish to use them. In his opinion the offer of such a packet is likely to suggest to inexperienced youth that authority anticipates, if it does not condone, misconduct on his part, and may put temptation in his way.

Even the editor of the literary if pious journal mentioned enters a caveat when the author chosen by the C.E.M.W.C. has the ignorant effrontery to quote from "Miss Ikin, the distinguished psychologist"!

The name of George A. Birmingham on the title-page of a story used to mean that one was sure of being interested always and usually amused as well. His present "latest" is called *God's Iron* and turns out to be—as the sub-title indicates—*A Life of the Prophet Jeremiah*. We admit that a novelist of genius can give us a fascinating story with a famous "prophet" as its hero. George Eliot made "Savonarola" live and interest us. But it is not easy to make a "good story" out of a book whose fictional value is unacknowledged. Mr. Birmingham in his capacity of priest can only repeat what his book (the Book of God) tells him to say. So we lose a work of art and gain—a parcel of nonsense which we already possessed. Mr. Birmingham loses, indeed, a chance one might use with little or no sacrifice of verisimilitude. Jeremiah had fewer opportunities perhaps than Hitler, but he had somewhat the same inspiration, the same unwarranted belief* that God intended him to be the Leader and Deliverer of his country.

Mr. Birmingham claims for his hero the gift of poetry. He most courageously prints many "poems" by this great poet whom he compares with Shakespeare, Wordsworth and William Morris. We are afraid the specimens quoted leave us cold although even as they stand they are a bit "polished-up" by Mr. Birmingham, who confesses:—

The reader will notice . . . that there are not only verbal changes, but that certain passages have been omitted altogether.

We imagine that reputations for great poetry ought not to be made like that!

Even as a "prophet" Jeremiah seems to run short of merit—as indeed our author says about all prophets, "The boiling-over of the pot came, though not as and when Jeremiah expected it. Jeremiah was not the only prophet to be mistaken in the details of his predictions." Yes, we agree, but a "prediction" which does not come "as and when" predicted is singularly worthless—as all predictions are, of course.

Mr. Birmingham is often a genuine humorist in his many admirable works. The only trace of that virtue in the present volume is perhaps in his reference (p. 21) to the High Places. "Worship at 'High Places,'" he says, "was discouraged by religious leaders, often apparently with very good reason. The purity of the monotheism of these shrines was suspect." The humour will be appreciated by all who remember the murderous methods by which these High Places were—we like Mr. Birmingham's word—"discouraged." Then again these queer "shrines" (!) were "suspected"—to put it mildly—of impurity, but it is not exact to say that it was the impurity of their monotheism only that subjected these High Places to a devastating persecution. Jeremiah him-

* "The word of the Lord came unto me saying . . . 'a Prophet unto the nations have I made thee.'" (Jeremiah, i. 5); and,

"Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me 'Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.'" (Jeremiah i. 7.)

self often refers to the crimes of these High Places as including human sacrifices (Jeremiah vii. 31 and xix. 3), and as the *Encyclopædia* says, they were regarded as places for "the licentious intercourse of men and women to which the priests and the consecrated women (i.e., religious prostitutes) set the example—a rite hallowed by sacrifice."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

The Prejudice of Religion

[Harmless as the following short book review may seem to readers of this journal, the writer of it—a local London journalist—could not get it published in the paper on which he works and for which he wrote it. The Editor of this particular paper is himself an agnostic, but obviously feared the effects of the article. Thus, the appalling censorship of the national Press and the B.B.C. stretches out its superstitious cloak over the comparatively free local papers.]

More nonsense is talked about religion than perhaps any other subject. More varied interpretations are put upon the word itself than perhaps upon any other word. By stretching its meaning to breaking point, the Dean of Canterbury can write, unashamed, in his recent book, that Atheists are not necessarily irreligious. It is necessary, then, to find out what the Society for the study of Religions means by what it is they study, before any criticism or otherwise can be made of their publication, *Religions*. We think we can safely say that it does not study the beliefs of Atheists.

There is at the moment a religious offensive, which is trying to make capital for the churches out of the war (everything good is called religion; everything bad, Atheism); and the latest issue of *Religions* has, under the heading "Which Is It To Be?" authoritative statements on behalf of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam—which only shows how difficult it is all going to be. Federal Unionists prate glibly about Western Civilization, and political leaders tell us that we are fighting for Christianity, so the least these articles can do is to remind them (and others) that a large part of the Empire regards both Western Civilization and Christianity with justifiable hostility.

Within its limits, this journal, which is edited by Mr. F. Victor Fisher, is as impartial as it can be, and, as we have said before, it is of absorbing interest. In the current issue, however, there is a glaring falsehood: a learned Indian gentleman suggests that Stalin, like Hitler, professes to be in touch with God and carrying out His Will. Whatever one thinks about Stalin, he has been, and is, a materialist.

Mr. Fisher dilates at length on the shortcomings of civilization without religion, but we would remind him that it was religion that stood in the way of analgesia, birth control, votes for women in Quebec—without reminding him of Galileo! Is there no place in a better world for those who echo the words of Feuerbach: "To place anything in God, or to derive anything from God, is nothing more than to withdraw it from the test of reason, to institute it as indubitable, unassailable, sacred, without rendering an account why? Hence self-delusion, if not wicked, insidious design, is at the root of all efforts to establish morality on theology. Where we are in earnest about the right, we need no incitement or support from above."

B. C. J.

So we pass, with a gusto and a heartiness that to an on-looker would seem almost pathetic, from one droll devotion to another misshapen passion; and who shall dare to play Rhadamanthus, to appraise the record, and to decide how much of it is solid achievement, and how much the merest child's play?

"The Golden Age," Kenneth Grahame

Aoid Drops

The Bishop of Bradford is disturbed at information he has received from chaplains to the forces. One chaplain complains that at a huge depôt the Church of England "commendations" of one's soul to God averages one out of 570. Another chaplain could only bag one out of 2,000. The Bishop says that "It looks as if the clergy are not giving sufficient trouble to the important matter of commendation." Probably the cause of this is that not one soldier out of fifty ever troubles whether his soul is in danger or not. And if he does he may not see much good in bothering God about it. But that will not weaken the desire of the Church to be well represented in the army as official representatives of God with an officer's salary paid for by the British taxpayer. Nor will it prevent their having soldiers marched to church to take part in a service to which only a small minority would go on their own accord.

The following is well worth reprinting, not because of the value the writer placed upon it, but because of the light it throws on modern Christian psychology. It is taken from the *Methodist Recorder* of April 25. Bradlaugh, runs the story, was lecturing on the Bible at Blackburn. He "poured special ridicule on the New Testament story of the Gadarene swine." After the story a man arose in the audience and said that one of his own pigs escaped from the sty and ran away with the owner pursuing him. The pig ran for nine miles before he was captured. So, this representative of a well-known type of believer wished to put a question. "If a pig would run for nine miles with only a man behind him, how far would he run with the devil behind him?" And then comes the moral. "He received no answer." That throws some light on the mentality of some of the readers of the *Methodist Recorder*, and also upon that of at least one of its regular writers.

The way "saints" are made can be judged from the particulars given of the life of an Italian girl, Gemma Galgani, who is shortly to be canonized. It appears that "even as a tiny child she gave herself entirely to our Lord." In fact at 13, she had "already surmounted the heights of virtue that others are scarcely able to reach after long years of assiduous labour." From 12 to 13 she had experienced "inner martyrdom"—the sort of thing medical men would have diagnosed at once as the growing pains of youth, but in the Roman Church is called "spiritual desolation." Later, poor Gemma was "intensely pained" when an army officer took to following her, especially as having given herself entirely to "our Lord," she would not allow even her father to caress her. However, she began to be ill and starved for 60 days during which "the evil spirit disturbed her imagination." In fact, whenever food was placed before her "the fiend caused it to appear covered with disgusting insects," while "horrid and fetid animals came into her bed."

The result of all this holy balderdash was that she soon died, and the archiepiscopal court of Lucca instituted an enquiry into the truth of her reputation for sanctity, with the result that the Pope solemnly declared her "Blessed"; and now seven years afterwards, the poor creature is to be canonized. The history of most of the saints is quite on a par with this trumpery story, except that some of them were wont to boast that they never washed in their lives. But this is the kind of nonsense which modern Roman Catholics like Mr. Hilaire Belloc loudly trumpet as a proof that their Church comes directly from Jesus. Is it possible to imagine anything more akin to lunacy?

Mr. P. F. Anson gives some reasons why, in spite of intense and determined efforts, Roman Catholic propaganda has made so little progress in Sweden. Actually, in a

population of over six millions there are only 15 priests. In proportion, in this country there are over 1,000, so the Church is very doleful when it considers the "pagan" state of most Swedes. Their religion is really Lutheran, but as "divorce, birth-control, and other forms of laxity in morals, have taken deep root in Scandinavia," there seems but a hopeless prospect of establishing Roman Catholicism there. Which is very good news. But Mr. Anson has thought of one help towards the conversion of Sweden. It is that English Roman Catholics should join "the Association of Prayer for the Conversion of the Northern Nations," and regularly pray like—well, as much as possible. This is the last word in unadulterated hopelessness for the Church.

The way in which Roman Catholics like Fr. Knox and Mr. Belloc will bluster of their readiness to debate their Oriental religion with any opponent "worthy of their steel," and then run away when their challenge is accepted is well known to Freethinkers. Fr. Knox recently offered to discuss his beliefs if an opponent worthy of his steel could be found, and Dr. G. G. Coulton promptly put forward 15 perfectly simple propositions. Result—the *Catholic Herald* had to apologize for the gallant Father refusing to debate as he was too "hard-worked." The journal suggested, however, that the Jesuit Bellarmine Society would do the needful. Needless to say the Bellarmine Society hastily withdrew as soon as its experts discovered what the propositions were. Dr. Coulton has published the facts, the propositions, and the correspondence in a small pamphlet entitled *Jesuit Truth*. It is only fair to add, however, that Freethinkers have never been under any delusion as to Jesuits, or as to Jesuits and truth.

Our recent "Views and Opinions" article on Man and Morals emphasized the social basis—the recognition of which is essential for a proper understanding—of morality. The writer of a letter in the *Tribune* (whose editor does not agree with his correspondent) finds moral good in the atrocious Nazi regime. He says:—

One thing it has done, as letters in the *Daily Telegraph* have shown, is to clear out the degraded "sexually free" people who disgraced Berlin. This sort of freedom has nothing to do with us, and we ought to have the strength to put it down. There are a great number of American magazines allowed to be sold which ought to be burnt.

We are by no means convinced—even by letters to the *Telegraph*—that there has been any great interference with certain forms of sexual abnormality—which is, we imagine, what these people are driving at—since Germany has been governed by a number of admittedly sexual perverts. What we have a right to condemn is Nazi social activities which have included imprisonment, torture, violent attacks on helpless individuals, and murder of inoffensive Jews and others. The Nazis are the most immoral government ever known.

According to *Calvacade*, a Chicago baby, Mary Ellen Reardon, aged four, has slept for two years. The child is said to be suffering from Measles Encephalitis, and its entire bodily growth has been retarded so that it has still all the appearances of being two years old. Its Catholic parents have the sympathies of everyone. The Chicago Catholics have arranged for a "novena"—a nine-days-prayer-meeting to ask God to restore the baby to normality. Seeing that the doctors have given up hoping for a cure (doctors are not always right), we can understand highly superstitious friends imagining that a God could and would—if enough human beings prayed hard enough—put things right in this pathetic case. But what a queer God this must be to plague and torture a baby for years, and only cease when human beings get excited about it? And if God had no power to prevent the illness, how on earth can anyone suppose He has power to cure it?

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—W. J. Russell, 5s.

J. NEIL.—Pleased to hear from another old reader, one who has been a subscriber for fifty years. In sending out specimen copies, some of them are certain to get into the hands of those who are already subscribers, but they can be passed on.

C. N. THOMAS.—We appreciate the compliment. The task of piloting a paper such as this through two world wars is not likely to happen again to any one person, and the difficulties this time promise to be greater than in 1914. Still we have confidence in our friends, and we have every confidence in being still on the scene when peace arrives. Thanks for the new subscriber.

H. G. SMITH.—Letter received. Sorry we cannot publish until next issue.

J. PRICE.—We will take whatever occasion arises to deal with the subject you suggest, although we think we have already dealt with it in past "Views and Opinions."

VINCENT HILL.—Thanks, but regret we are unable to use article.

J. SWIFT.—Rather too long after the decease of the subject. Might be adapted to others.

C. J. SEYMOUR.—The book has not yet reached us.

T. BAYARD SIMMONS and E. C. HUGHES.—Thanks for sending extra postage for your subscriptions; very much appreciate the gesture.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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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, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

Sugar Plums

We must apologize for the shortage of the paragraph department this week, but the editor has been very busy in other directions connected with the movement, and readers will bear that in mind.

To-day the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society meets in Manchester. The Conference will meet at the Victoria Hotel, Deansgate, in the morning at 10.30 and in the afternoon at 2.30. Members will please bring with them the current card of membership. Those who are without it should apply to the Secretary. A luncheon in the Victoria Hotel will be provided at one o'clock.

There will be a reception of members at the Victoria Hotel, on Saturday evening at 7 o'clock, accompanied by a little music, etc., and light refreshments will be provided.

On Sunday evening, May 12, there is to be a public meeting in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester, at 7 o'clock. Mr. Cohen will occupy the chair, and there will be a number of other speakers. Full particulars are to be found on the back page of this issue of the *Freethinker*.

By the time this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of readers Mr. Cohen's new book will be on sale. The title is *Almost an Autobiography: The Confessions of a Freethinker*. It will contain a new portrait by Howard Coster, with four other plates. The book extends to about 280 pages; it is printed on good paper, and well bound. The price is 6s., by post 5d. extra. It is a rather unusual kind of an autobiography, but it is a true picture of the writer, and free from the idle personal chatter which disfigures so many books of this character. For once it may be truly said that this book has been written in response to requests from many quarters at home and abroad. Those who have already ordered copies should receive them within a very few days. We hope to publish a review of the book in an early issue of the *Freethinker*.

With regard to letters dealing with the agitation for more religion in the schools which we have received, we suggest that a wide circulation of the series *Pamphlets for the People—The Church's Fight for the Child*, and *Freethought and the Child* might do good. They contain a plea for the liberty of the child and an indictment of the present situation which should arouse interest. They are each published at one penny, and many of our readers might well invest in a supply for distribution.

Two inscriptions, with flowers placed by British women on the graves of the German airmen who died in the terrible disaster at Clacton-on-Sea:—

Just a few flowers knowing that you have left someone dear to you.

With heartfelt sympathy from a mother.

Two bright features in a disaster the very existence of which is an impeachment of the quality of our civilization.

A Christian Pioneer

MR. LESLIE WEATHERHEAD is a brave pioneer—in Church circles. He is even original. He does not believe that Peter denied Jesus. This will be good news to the Catholics. There is precious little said in the gospels in favour of this queer fisherman to whom Jesus inexplicably gave the "keys" of Heaven and Hell. But we doubt if the Pope—or anyone else—can swallow Mr. Weatherhead's fatuous justification of Peter's denying Christ "before the cock crew twice." But the extraordinary "explanation" is quite entertaining. And the City Temple's pastor is just as plausible as the gospels. Instead of Jesus making the well known remark about Peter and the Cock, what really happened was:

Peter has impulsively said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Can we not imagine Jesus, with His hand on Peter's shoulder, and a smile upon His face, saying very tenderly, "My dear fellow, I should not be surprised if, before the dawn, you had done it half-a-dozen times."

And Peter's reaction was to say to himself:

"He knows I am impulsive and a bit of a wobbler. I will prove to Him that I am the bravest of the band."

Then, to prove Peter's courage and fidelity, he disguised himself, and entered the Judgment Hall like a spy, and acquitted himself boldly and courageously as entirely in the interests of Jesus Himself; and when he was challenged he lied like a trooper.

"A nose of wax," indeed, as Martin Luther said of the scriptures. We now await the "true" interpretation of the rôles of Judas and the Devil, both, no doubt, excellent friends of Jesus acting entirely in His interests.

G.B.

Highways and Byways in English History

VII.—INDUSTRIALISM AND ENCLOSURE

Already in the seventeenth century invention was in the air. In 1698 Thomas Savery, an army engineer, took out a patent for a rudimentary steam-engine for pumping water out of mines. In 1705 this was superseded by the improved steam-engine of Thomas Newcomen, an ironmonger, who was in touch with Savery and had also corresponded with a Fellow of the Royal Society, Robert Hooke. Coal was already replacing wood as fuel for domestic and industrial purposes, and making possible the development of the iron industry without undue consumption of timber. New processes were being introduced in textile and glass manufacture, sugar refining, tobacco cutting, and distilling. Textile manufacture was still conducted mainly under the domestic system. But the introduction of swivel-ooms from Holland about 1724, and the invention of the fly-shuttle by John Kay, of Bury, in 1733, increased the weaver's output and necessitated corresponding improvements in spinning. The roller-spinning invention of Wyatt and Paul, of Birmingham, patented in 1738, led thirty years later to the spinning jenny of Hargreaves, and that in turn to the spinning frame of Arkwright, worked by water power. In 1769 James Watt patented an improved steam engine, which led to the extension of steam power to industry generally.

Science was also applied to agriculture. But this could not be done unless the petty cultivation which had survived from the Middle Ages gave place to farming on a larger scale. The first two Enclosure Acts were passed under Anne. Sixteen followed in the reign of George I; and the movement gathered pace, acquiring its maximum tempo in the second half of the century. Seven hundred Enclosure Acts were rushed through Parliament between 1760 and 1774. The price of progress was the rapid disappearance of the yeomanry as a class, and their forcible conversion into landless labourers, factory hands, or paupers. Here and there they violently resisted, and paid for their temerity on the gallows, under the ferocious criminal code which in the interests of property punished no less than two hundred different kinds of offence with death.

The rising tide of pauperism threw on the rates a large number of destitute children, of whom magistrates and parish overseers had to dispose somehow. Some were apprenticed to small masters in various trades, especially chimney sweeps. But the new cotton mills came as a boon and a blessing to parish authorities. Children who were too young to learn a handicraft could mind a machine; and millowners welcomed a supply of cheap and docile labour which could be exploited to the limits of physical endurance without fear of reprisals. Pauper children were consigned to factories by the cartload. This appalling white slavery in the mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire helped to make England the workshop of the world.

The common law treated all combinations of work-people as illegal. Notwithstanding this, workers in several parts of England began in the eighteenth century to form unions and organize strikes, and as the industrial revolution proceeded, to destroy the new machinery, in which they saw the immediate cause of their distress. Growing social discontent was met by severe repression. In 1788 a man was whipped through the streets of Edinburgh for taking part in a combination of Glasgow hand-loom weavers to resist a reduction in wages.

Since the Revolution the Church of England had

been in a state of comfortable coma. The rapidly increasing wealth of the ruling classes, based on commerce and invention, vindicated the Copernican astronomy and Newtonian mechanics which had led to their enrichment, and afforded a practical sanction for Freethought. Deistic Premiers filled the sees of the Establishment with easy-going and easy-living men of the world, "foes," as the epitaph of one them says, "to all pretence and enthusiasm."² Philosophers proclaimed experiment the only test of truth and happiness the only criterion of good. But it was not to be expected that in a society riven by class struggle this outlook should go unchallenged. Freethought could not permanently be confined to the ruling classes. Thomas Chubb, the son of a maltster, regarded by Voltaire and others as among the most logical of the Deistic writers, was a living proof to the contrary. The impotence of the Church of England to provide an opium strong enough for the growing proletariat was the reason for the unauthorized evangelism of Wesley and Whitefield, the founders of Methodism.

Meanwhile, on the Continent, in the hands of the French Encyclopedists, Deism passed into full-blooded Materialism and became a revolutionary theory. In France the economic and political changes, which in England had been effected by the Reformation and Revolution, had still to be carried out. There the clergy and aristocracy were still in the saddle; and the French bourgeoisie, in their struggle with those classes, found in Deism and Materialism intellectual weapons ready to their hand. We shall see how, under the impact of the French Revolution, the complacency of the British ruling class turned to panic, and plunged Britain into a furious flood of political and religious reaction.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

(To be continued)

² George Lavington, buried at Exeter Cathedral.

Stalin as a Philosopher

A BOOK on philosophy by Stalin appears to be about as intrinsically valuable as one on education by the average Minister thereof. After reading his *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1939) I have charitably reflected that his talent must be very great in other directions.

I select the following pieces of philosophical criticism (*ibid.*):—

Contrary to metaphysics, Dialectics does not regard nature as an accidental agglomeration of things, of phenomena, unconnected with, isolated from, and independent of, each other, but as a connected and integral whole . . . no phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself, isolated from surrounding phenomena.

Contrary to metaphysics, Dialectics holds that nature is not a state of rest and immobility, but a state of continuous movement and change, of continuous renewal and development.

Contrary to metaphysics, Dialectics does not regard the process of development as a simple process of growth, where quantitative changes do not lead to qualitative changes.

We are thus told by Stalin that metaphysics involves the following: (1) isolated phenomena; (2) which never change; (3) and which therefore never produce anything new.

But in the first place metaphysical theory starts with noumena, not phenomena; moreover, the metaphysical conception of noumenon entails that phenomena spring

from a common ground and so cannot be isolated. And to cover the second and third depositions, no metaphysician has yet presented us with the theory of a world in which nothing happens.

The entire history of philosophy gives the lie to all three statements. (To quote just one particular instance, let the second statement be applied to Bergson.)

The following statement is exactly on a par with Stalin's: "Contrary to Freethought, Christianity holds kindness is better than cruelty."

One sympathetic to Communism writes: "There is no metaphysical basis of Communism. So at least many Communists would own. But what is meant is that they are metempirical realists and reject a transcendent spiritual reality lying behind the world as known to experience. But this is metaphysics." He is amply borne out by quotation from Dialectics. For instance, "Matter is primary and fundamental," it is "the base of phenomena" (Adoratsky, *Dialectical Materialism*). Levisky is one of the few with Communist attachments who have recognized the vaguely metaphysical character of Marxist pronouncements. As to what Stalin understands by metaphysics we have just seen.

We may now carry the criticism of Stalin a step further. This is, that it is quite obvious that his blows are aimed at what the Dialectics like to call mechanical materialism. The substitution of the phrase "mechanical materialism" for "metaphysics" would bring Stalin's pronouncements right into line with the usual dialectical criticism. This no Marxist will deny.

But the word "metaphysics," thrice occurring is no accident, for it is apparent that Stalin has followed Engels, who says, "Darwin dealt a severe blow to the metaphysical conception of nature by proving that the organic world of to-day . . . is all a product of a process of development."

Moreover, Stalin's criticism is repeated in the *C.P.S.U. (Bolsheviks)* (1939).

I think it is thus indisputable that Stalin has simply thrown metaphysics and mechanical materialism into the same mental pigeon-hole as though they were interchangeable terms. But, this is the act of one the boldness of whose philosophy is only equalled by the profundity of his ignorance. Add to this the plain fact that in any case his criticisms are lamentably irrelevant and one is driven to search for an explanation of such philosophical naïveté.

Now I think it can be said with some certainty that the explanation is as follows. The only outside interest shown by Marxist philosophy, apart from Hegelianism as used by Marx, is to proclaim to the world that "mechanical materialism" is a danger to the progress of thought. One waits with extreme patience for the day when some Marxist will explore the development of materialist philosophy in American Critical Realism.

That is, the philosophical constructions which might be placed on the speculations of eighteenth century materialists like La Mettrie, Cabanis, Diderot and v. Holbach would conceivably fall within the scope of Dialectical criticism. But these writers were replaced in the materialist line by such as Moleschott, Tyndall, Mach, Büchner, Clifford and Vogt. And in the present century these give way to Russell, Broad, Moore, Dewey, Santayana, Montague, Sellars, Dotterer, and, on the scientific side, Huxley, Hogben, Morgan, Bell, Chalmers Mitchell and Jennings.

Since the Dialectical Materialists acknowledge development in all things, why cannot they see the development in materialist thought which is non-

Marxist? Let me hear what some Marxist can make of the following pronouncements:—

All that was essential about the old materialism would seem to be retained in the new theory" (Prof. Pratt, *Adventures in Philosophy and Religion*.)

The repudiation of materialism generally means the repudiation of the now old-fashioned atomic materialism. [The modern view] avoids the earlier crudities. (Prof. McDougall, *Modern Materialism*.)

Materialism in its old form is long since dead, but its place has been taken by other philosophies with a virtually equivalent outlook. (Eddington, *Nature of the Physical World*.)

This list could be trebled. None of the writers is a materialist, and none is referring to Dialectics. They are speaking of those developments in materialist thought, of which Dialectics appears sublimely unconscious. Even Eddington, not primarily a philosopher, has apparently a vision more eclectic than the Dialectics.

Professor J. B. S. Haldane, who for two or three years has been preaching Marxism with all the ardour of the convert, approvingly quotes² Lenin in the denunciation of what the latter misleadingly calls the immutable substance of things, which "is not materialism, but is metaphysical, anti-dialectical materialism."³ In other words, it is not an elephant, because it is a white elephant. But let us assume this is not one of the samples of remarkably clear thinking which Haldane asks us to admire in Marxism.

In regard to the narrowness of the Marxian outlook then, I have not been complaining, but explaining. In Levy and Haldane the Dialectics have just these two men of philosophical penetrative power. What the rank and file are fed on I am not quite clear. I understand that for a small consideration you can buy a pig in a bag every month or so, the particular pig to be selected for you by a Triumvirate of Superior Beings, whose philosophical breadth is unquestioned.

Will the average Marxist take the slightest note of the non-Marxist solution of former philosophical difficulties (I think best represented in the Americans)? It is hardly likely, for there is something of a religious fixity about Marxism, noted by several writers, such as J. Langdon-Davies (*Science and Common Sense*) and C. E. M. Joad (*Liberty To-day*). Will Marxism become a religion characterized by a god-worship (Lenin), a Holy Scripture (*Das Kapital*; Lenin's *Works* and so on), an inquisition ("Ogpu"), heretics (Trotsky and other kinds of deviator), a church (the C.P.), and a dogma (Dialectical Materialism)?

There are, indeed, signs of a *rapprochement* between Communism and Christianity, a main theme for the symposium *Christianity and the Social Revolution* (Canon Raven, Rev. C. Noel, J. M. Murry, John Macmurray, J. B. Needham, Julius Hecker, etc.). We read therein that Christian theology is "the grandmother of Bolshevism," that "it cannot be a coincidence that Marxian morality grew up in the bosom of Christianity after eighteen Christian centuries. The phoenix of the kingdom is rising from the ashes of the church's failure." That mere secularism is barren and Communism is a religion, the "heir to the Christian tradition," with Marx, the "Great Mystic," and the "symbol of the Cross" denoting our highest aspirations. And we are given the following almost as a syllogism: Fascism opposes Christianity: Communism opposes Fascism: therefore Christianity and Communism are not irreconcilable.

Another Marxist, Alexeyev, in his contribution to *The Christian Understanding of Man* (1938) seeks to bring points of contact between Communism and

¹ *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences* (1938).

² *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism*.

³ Ivan Levisky, *Christianity and the Social Revolution*.

Christianity. The incidence of Communistic parsons is well known.

To sum up, it is a sad general criticism of Marxists to-day, sad but apparently most warranted, that their philosophical range is narrow, that they cannot appreciate the possibilities of a development from an ultra-mechanist view on non-Marxist lines, that they are unacquainted with successful contemporary attempts to remedy past defects in naturalistic epistemology and to provide materialism with a valid theory of knowing, that they equate with Fatalism any materialism other than their own, that in "historical materialism" they construct a Bed of Procrustes utterly unsuited to the rugged, unteleological processes which feature the entire "cosmography," and that they admit of Christian pollution.

G. H. TAYLOR

Defend the Right

IN theory the correct thing to do, constantly and always, is to defend the right, but life is not quite so easy and plain-sailing as that. Our sense of duty to some particular person or group of people may, on occasion, conflict with our sense of duty in the abstract, and then it is that we find our general theory upset.

Take an imaginary case of a woman whose husband has done some wrong and who is brought to account for his crime. She is, we will assume, an intelligent woman, with a highly developed sense of social justice, and she therefore knows that it is quite right and proper—*legally* right and proper, that is—that he should be arrested and charged, and, if proved guilty, made to pay the penalty for his misdemeanour. But her love for her husband causes her to throw all her pet theories to the wind and to defend him through thick and thin; she may go so far as to sell practically everything which she possesses—even, figuratively speaking, the very clothes on her back—in her endeavour to "get him off," to defeat the law to put it plainly. In this instance the woman's love for her husband will conflict with her theory of social propriety in the abstract, and who, in such a case, will deny that in saying in effect: "Society go hang; my husband comes first!" she has done wrong? In his distress she is loyal to him, and she puts first things first. . . .

Put the shoe on the other foot. Suppose the wife has, to the husband's knowledge, made a social slip: who that is worthy of his salt wouldn't go to the ends of the earth to save her from the "long arm of the law," we talk so much about in our cosy corners? One can imagine a man in such a position—withstanding his copy-book ideas and convictions of what is right and what is wrong—saying: "Your theories as to the sanctity of the social contract be damned! My wife means more to me than anything else in the world!" And there are very few—if any—who wouldn't applaud him for his stand. Indeed, if he stood back and did nothing—or worse still, left her in the lurch—he would be howled down as a worthless creature.

At different times in our lives we are all put to this test of having to choose between precept and practice in respect of something or someone and there is little doubt in the minds of the majority as to what course to adopt. For instance: only in a few very isolated cases was there the slightest doubt as to what we ought to do when the present war broke out. The vast majority of the people of this country, including those who are, theoretically, opposed to brute force and bloodshed, and who are prepared to go a long,

long way to avoid taking the life of a fellow-man, knew quite well that, under the prevailing international conditions, there was only one thing to do, namely: to sink any differences of opinion that may exist, pull together as a united nation and fight with all our might for our very existence; because, when we get down to fundamentals, this is what it really means: this is a war between civilized people and barbarians, and such being the case—however regrettable and detestable it may be—we must kill or be killed. Of that there is not the shadow of a doubt.

But it is not always thus. There are occasions when some members of a community—perhaps a good many of them—may have grave misgivings as to the justice of a proposed course of action—they may, in fact, be diametrically and sincerely opposed to it on principle—but even so they may feel bound, as members of the community, to support, by every means in their power, the men in the field—no matter what they may think of the politicians who are responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. Once a country is at war the people at home cannot start quarrelling amongst themselves and thereby shoot their own army in the back, as it were, or contribute to its defeat by the enemy. A private exchange of opinion during the course of events, and some plain public speaking when the affair is over, may be justified, but, at the time the show is on—no! A house divided sharply against itself is a house doomed to failure.

That, put shortly, is the difference between theory and practice as applied to many—if not most—human affairs. As individuals we may cherish the most admirable theories imaginable and we may tell ourselves, when we are toasting our toes by the fire and blowing huge clouds of smoke from a well-filled, favourite pipe, that, come blow come snow, we will stick to 'em at all costs, see if we don't. But when we leave our fireside, and get out and about and mix with people who have other ideas as to what should be done in certain circumstances, we find we cannot be quite so dogmatic. The realization of that fact may bring us tumbling down from the clouds and hurt our pride, but the fall will not be quite so hurtful as it might otherwise be if we face the further fact that this is a far-from-perfect world, and one in which we have to adjust ourselves daily to things as they are and not as we sometimes imagine them (and often wish them!) to be.

We can, of course, if we are so disposed, shout our philosophy from the housetops and do all in our power, in season and out of season, to level things to our liking, but that is another matter and requires some understanding of the working of the human mind and what constitutes human nature. . . .

G. B. LISSENDEN

Correspondence

OSCAR WILDE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—It is unfortunate for Mr. Syers that Oscar Wilde and I, on the numerous occasions when we lunched or dined together at the Cafe Royal never sat downstairs in the cafe, "opposite the bar," among the "marble-topped tables and the plush-covered settees" to which Mr. Syers refers. We invariably went to the restaurant upstairs on the first floor where there were no marble-topped tables, no bar and no plush-covered settees.

As to my father's threats to thrash Wilde, it is not disputed that he made them, but I have already pointed out in my book and in your columns, that they were nothing but crazy vapourings treated by Wilde with contempt; and

as my father never made the slightest attempt to carry them out I fail to see what object Mr. Syers can have in recalling them. Mr. Syers is apparently unable to see that a man who continually makes threats of violence and entirely fails to carry them out, even with the assistance of professional prize-fighters or "powerful heavy-weight" amateurs, does not cut a very heroic figure even when his feats on the late-Victorian tennis courts are taken into additional consideration.

As to Mr. Frank Cobbet (who in later years was a good friend of mine) he was neither a cad nor a bully, and if he consented to accompany my father on his alleged Wilde-stalking expeditions it can surely only have been with the intention of standing by to see fair play. Or does Mr. Syers suggest that Frank Cobbet was to join Queensberry in making a violent and unprovoked assault on a peaceful citizen? I entirely refuse to believe that Frank Cobbet would have behaved in such a cowardly and brutal way. What would have happened if he had done so is a purely hypothetical question and has no real bearing on the present discussion.

ALFRED DOUGLAS

THE ROBERTS-BRADLAUGH DEBATE

SIR,—Will you kindly allow me to offer you the greetings of a very old man who has been a reader of the *Freethinker* since its commencement in 1881, and to thank you for all the great work you have done for the Cause for so many years? It was a great grief to me that my financial means prevented me from subscribing to your Jubilee Fund, but I was most interested to find you had not been forgotten by those more able than myself to help in such a worthy recognition.

I was very interested in the *Freethinker* (April 28) this week to notice the paragraph taken from the *Birmingham Daily Mail* in reference to the debate between Mr. Robert Roberts and Mr. Bradlaugh. The debate took place at the Temperance Hall and went on for five nights and was attended by large crowds, and those who attended had a great treat. I have heard Mr. Bradlaugh many times, but he was really superb on this occasion, and Mr. Roberts was no match for Charlie. I know, because I was there, and saw the incident mentioned in the paragraph. It was no trouble to Mr. B. to find the reference and hand it to Roberts—to everybody's amazement.

CHAS. DRYLAND.

THE EFFECTS OF SEX EXPRESSION

SIR,—In your issue of April 21 Mr. T. F. Palmer, reviewing a book by Dr. Unwin, comes to the following conclusion:—

"It seems reasonable to conclude that, bearing in mind the fact that the potential powers of the animal organism are limited, it follows by logical necessity that the costly expenditure of nervous energy in unrestrained sexual activity tends to weaken if not inhibit mental and physical power."

That may be true, but the fallacy lies in supposing that the expenditure of nervous energy on sex is greatest in polygamous or promiscuous societies. That is now known to be the very reverse of the truth. A large number of mass questionnaires during the past twenty years have proved that the expenditure of sexual energy is probably greatest among persons who are nominally celibate, and least among those who are nominally promiscuous.

In 1933 Professor Taylor, of Smith College, Massachusetts, addressed a questionnaire to forty young unmarried men of good intellect and character, and every one of them admitted that he "experienced some types of direct sex expression." I fear I cannot ask you to print the details, but you will find them in *The Science of Human Reproduction*, by H. M. Parschley (Allen & Unwin, 1933). Suffice it to say that in the great majority of cases the mode of sex expression was not the natural one.

Abundance of similar facts about both sexes can be found in *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-Two Hundred Women*, by Dr. Katherine B. Davis. All the evidence points to the conclusion that genuine sexual abstinence hardly exists at all. Havelock Ellis says:—

"All careful investigation shows that the proportion of persons, even among physicians, who really live continuously in true sexual abstinence, that is without any manifestations of sexual activity, is really very small." (*Psychology of Sex* (1933), p. 224).

If the above facts are correct, then it is obvious that the least puritanical community is the most continent. The natural relation of the sexes is strictly limited by nature herself, and serious excess by the male is a physical impossibility. When sex runs into underground channels there is no such limitation, and it is therefore fairly certain that the most puritanical communities are those in which there is the most excess.

R. B. KERR.

SWEDENBORG AND METEMPSYCHOSIS

SIR,—May I, in Mr. Chadwick's absence, reply to the letter of Mr. George Wallace in your issue of April 28, 1940.

It is true that Swedenborg very rarely ate meat in later years. The reason was that he had a weak stomach, due to his sedentary habits, and not to a belief in transmigration of souls.

The value of Mr. Wallace's corroboration from the *Newcastle Chronicle Encyclopædia Dictionary* and its reference to *True Christian Religion* No. 13 is nil. That paragraph has the caption, "Unless God were one, the universe could not have been created and preserved." The part of the paragraph and the only part bearing on food is: "Every wise man, taking this broad view of the world, may discern that the Creator of the universe is one, and that His essence is love and wisdom; consequently, there is not a single thing existing in it that does not contain some hidden use, more or less remote, for the service of man; his food from the fruits of the earth, and also from animals, and his clothing from the same sources."

Again, what sort of proof is afforded by a reference such as Mr. Wallace's, "I think Mr. Chadwick will find this stated in one of the eight volumes of his *Arcana Coelestia*?" The English edition is in 12 volumes with Index Vol. making 13. The original Latin was published in 16 volumes. One cannot place reliance on such proofs nor on comparatively obscure Encyclopedias.

I simply repeat, having been a modest student of Swedenborg's writings for 50 years, that so far I have never found a single passage which could legitimately be used to countenance the doctrine of metempsychosis. On the contrary, the whole of his teachings are to the effect that man is born into the material world, lives and prepares for eternal life in heaven or hell. When he passes from this world his preparation is continued in the world of spirits until he is ready to take up his permanent abode.

HAROLD GOYDER SMITH.

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—What I said was that Levy presented his Dialectical Materialism "in more systematic fashion than hitherto," which is a fact relative to his previous writings, and not the same as saying he undertook a set exposition.

I did not deal with social developments because, if D.M. is invalid at lower levels (e.g., physics), its sociological extensions fall like the top bricks of a column whose foundations have given way. The whole scheme is so fatefully interconnected that you have only to puncture it at one point and the whole thing explodes. Thus, all that is needed, apparently, to reject revolution, etc., is to show that where quantity passes into quality, though the configurational behaviour of the pattern represents a change, yet the homogeneous atomic units remain the same (a basic conservatism at the root of existence), and it would be tedious here to reiterate the authoritative scientific support I have before adduced. Strangely enough, I do not use Marx, Engels and Lenin as first-hand authorities on physics!

The statement that Levy's materialism is non-dialectical is inaccurate, but it is rather interesting because I have suggested to him personally that he is not quite orthodox. Levy, however, rejected this view.

For the rest, the word "milestones," quoted from Lenin, is highly significant. Milestones to where?—if not to homogeneous particles.

G. H. TAYLOR

Obituary

WILLIAM ARTHUR BAKER

THE Freethought movement has lost a very loyal worker and supporter by the passing of William Arthur Baker, of Portsmouth, who died on the 21st April, in his 46th year. He was a member of the N.S.S., and a reader of the *Freethinker* of very long standing, retaining his keen interest in both until his death.

He was always ready by conversation, discussion, or work to help the cause he loved. Many Freethinkers will remember his useful work as treasurer of the Portsmouth Branch.

His remains were buried at Milton Cemetery on April 26. To his widow we offer our condolence in her loss.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MAY 2, 1940

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Bryant, Preece, Seibert, Ebury, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to North London, Manchester and the Parent Society. The Executive's Annual Report was read and adopted. Mr. T. H. Elstob's decision not to stand for nomination on the new Executive was received with general expression of regret at the loss of an esteemed member. Details in connexion with the Annual Conference were announced. Correspondence from Portsmouth, Southend-on-Sea, Birkenhead, Bethnal Green, and the World Union of Freethinkers was dealt with, and the Secretary instructed. The Chairman announced that the first meeting of the new Executive elected at the Annual Conference would be called in due course, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Freethinkers and the War

ALL men entering the Army, Navy or Air Force must answer a question as to their religion. *The official in charge is legally bound to record the answer as given*—Atheist, Agnostic, Freethinker, Rationalist or whatever the recruit may choose to call himself. Questioning by the official in charge is gratuitous, and unauthorized. The recruit should refuse to sign any document where his reply to the question of "Religion" is not accurately recorded. Those members of the forces who have been wrongly entered as belonging to some Church, or where they have changed their opinions since entering one of the Services, have the legal right to have the record altered in accordance with their views.

If any difficulty is experienced in securing recognition of these legal rights, the National Secular Society, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, should be communicated with.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. W. G. Frazer.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 6.30, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 7.30, Friday. A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.0, Mr. F. A. Ridley.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Wednesday, Mrs. Buxton. Thursday, Mr. Saphin. Friday, Mr. Barnes. Sunday, 3.0, until dusk various speakers.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

HIGHAM: 7.30, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

READ: 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SOUTHEND BRANCH N.S.S. (Marine Parade): Sunday afternoon, Mr. G. Taylor will speak

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