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Views and Opinions

A Religious Fifth Column

WHAT a blessed word is religion! It means anything, everything, and so ends in meaning nothing. It covers primitive man worshipping the rudely carved figure he has made, right up to his opposite numbers celebrating high mass in Westminster Cathedral, or going through a command performance in St. Paul's. Religion has come to embrace all from the crude belief in a celestial commander-in-chief issuing commands to nature, to those harmless preachers of morals who endow ethical teaching with some of the miraculous power they once ascribed to the god whom they formerly denied.

Yet this vagueness has a real value—to current religion. For there exists in the British press a kind of religious "fifth column" which seldom misses an opportunity of praising religion, or insinuating that the main faults of society spring from a neglect of religion. This fifth column seldom says what it means by religion, whether it is the Mohammedan, the Jewish, the Christian religion, or just Voodooism. To be definite would be dangerous. It would set the supporters of this thinly disguised religious propaganda at loggerheads. The aim is to keep "religion" if not pure at least undefined, as something of supreme value. When the spoils in the shape of a public susceptibility to religion in general have been got, then will come the share-out—and a devil of a row. It is really the policy of Hitler applied to religion—no, it is the policy of the Christian Church which was adopted and elaborated by Hitler. Keep on repeating to the public a definite "slogan" and the continuous repetition will create a state of mind that will be taken as conviction.

* * *

Literature and Religion

An illustration of this is supplied by Mr. Robert Lynd in a recent article published in *John O'London's Weekly*. In it he says:—

Religion, as everyone will admit has made an enormous contribution to literature and, indeed, to all the other arts. There has, I believe, been a religious background in the imagination of mankind in the greatest ages of literature. It is possible to believe this, however, and yet to protest against the theory that all literature should be religious or subservient to the purposes of the organized religion. . . . The great imaginative writer is usually religious in a profound meaning of the word, but he is seldom orthodox, and literature seems to flourish best in an atmosphere in which the writer is not perpetually compelled to consider whether his work will have the approval of the heads of this or that church.

There is a great deal in Mr. Lynd's article with which I am in accord. I agree that propaganda does not usually, if ever, accompany great literature, neither can it well accord with writing to please a particular party, with the fear of offending, or with even the desire to please. Clever writing may be done in such conditions, but not great writing. There was never so great a need to stress this point as there is to-day, when so much is being written as a propaganda of the "Right" or "Left," religious or political. All those who have the power to produce great writing will keep themselves free from party propaganda. Propaganda has its place, and I should be the last to deny its value. But even propaganda should be accompanied with some degree of honesty, and a desire for truth which rises superior to mere securing of adherents.

I also agree that there has been literature of a high order produced in the name of religion. There is not much of that kind of thing to-day, and that is because we live in a time when our much more exact knowledge of the origin and nature of religion prevents genius from being associated with it. These conditions did not exist with men such as Hooker, Donne and other men of that type. They lived when the development of science in all directions was on such a level that it did not prevent first-class intellects giving of their best to religion. To-day things are vastly different. Mediocrity has now come into its own. There is good writing associated with religion, but not great writing.

So when Mr. Lynd says that everyone will admit that religion has made an enormous contribution to literature, I deny that, categorically. As it stands, and without qualification, this is a very shallow form of propaganda—common enough, but still, shallow. In any case the sea, the forest, the birds of the air, war and peace, love and hatred, with numerous other aspects of life also (in Mr. Lynd's sense) religion, have contributed to literature, but this is, all the same, propaganda. Of course, the writer who was religious has translated his feelings and his ideas into his work. But that is equally true of any other strong feeling that animates a man capable of writing. Some very fine things have been written of wine, but will Mr. Lynd say that wine has made valuable contribution to literature? If he will not, why thank religion for the

good writing apart from the defence of religion? If he will, under what general head will he group both the influence of wine and the influence of religion?

All that he is really saying is that where a literary genius is deeply religious his writing will take a religious form, or will be permeated with religious imagery. No one ever denied a truism of that kind. It has no greater significance than an astronomer such as Professor Jeans finding an astronomical basis for the belief in God. Professor Jeans manages to marry God and the stars. But it is a union, as many are aware, that is bound to end in the divorce court. As a member of the religious "fifth column" that operates in our obliging press, Mr. Lynd may be doing useful work, but he will add nothing to his reputation as a writer of understanding.

* * *

Man and His Environment

Let me present Mr. Lynd with a scientific fact to which he might have called attention. The earliest forms of art are associated with religion. The cave drawings of primitive man, it is believed, had a magical source. The dances of primitive man were religious in origin. They too worked a form of compulsive magic. That eminent lady writer, Miss Jane Harrison, says definitely that art can be seen developing from ritual, but she is too clear a thinker to say what Mr. Lynd implies. I could cite many others, but to those who understand the subject what I have said is just a commonplace. And I give Mr. Lynd, not merely literature, but *everything*, for everything is in its origin associated with religion, and in Mr. Lynd's misleading use of the term, religion has contributed to all.

But, having said this much, what is it in substance? Have we said more than that human faculty will always express itself in terms of its environment? Have we done more than elevate a scientific and philosophic commonplace into a profound generalization? Given a purely primitive environment, and everything will be closely associated with religion. The storm becomes the voices of angry spirits, the sunshine the smile of contented ones, the birth of a baby is the incarnation of a tribal spirit—a belief which leads, by a not very broken road, to the virgin birth of Jesus. And as man develops poetry begins to play its part in heightening the imaginative powers of man. Alter the form of human society and extend the degree of human knowledge and understanding, and we have the same substantial phenomena before us. Much of the current imagery is, in fact, only primitive actualities given a temporary vitality in the verse of the poet the music of the musician, or the creative mind of the writer. In Mr. Lynd's sense of the expression it would be the gods of ancient Greece that gave life to the plays of Euripedes. In a scientific sense it was the genius using familiar material to drive home the message he was giving to his world. Human action is always and everywhere a sum of the mutual reactions between man and his environment; and environment covers *everything* past and present—and an imaginative future.

* * *

Art and Religion

There is one other sentence in what I have cited from Mr. Lynd that is worth noting. He says there has usually been a religious background to the greatest ages of literature. This is mere verbiage, since there is no period of human life up to date in which there has *not* been a religious background. Mr. Lynd's confusion here ends almost in dishonesty to his readers. What he gives us is the commonplace that there has been a religious background in human history, which no one denies. What he wishes us to

understand is that great literature flourished best when this religious background was greatest. And that is simply not true. Great literature has manifested itself, not when the religious background was greatest and strongest, but when its dominance was threatened by heresy, by unbelief, and by actual Atheism.

What were the days of the greatest literature of ancient Greece? Certainly not while religious beliefs were strongest and least questioned, but when the old beliefs were being set aside, when the strongest and best of the Greek thinkers either set down the gods as natural products, governed by the laws that govern nature in general, or put them on one side altogether. Euhemeros, Anaxegoras, Democritus, Epicurus, Xenophones, were Atheists, and so in a Christian society would even Socrates have been labelled. Professor Verral is firm on the fact that the gods of the Euripedean plays are merely stage figures, and the fact is plain to the careful reader. How could it be otherwise with a man who says:—

To say there are gods in heaven! Nay, there are none there; if you are not foolish enough to be seduced by the old talk.

Such a passage would be impossible in a society in which non-belief was uncommon. And, in Rome, when the greatest of its literature developed, unbelief was common. They were the days of which it was said a priest could not look another priest in the face without smiling. Lucian and Lucretius were both Atheists.

Following this period comes the Church. What great literature was produced while the background was wholly Christian? The gross childish superstitions of the fathers of the Church flourished. Without making an exact valuation one may safely assert that never, until the complete background of religion was broken, was any great literature produced. The revival came with the Renaissance. But the Renaissance was non-Christian in its origin, and was animated by the recovery of the critical and sceptical literature of Greece, and the impact of the scientific and artistic culture of the civilized Mohammedan world. There was no great background there of religion, but of unbelief, of avowed scepticism, of thought which put the Christian tradition on one side.

Take English literature and the English Renaissance. The religious background was here as elsewhere, but great literature came with the weakening of religion. I may commend here to Mr. Lynd and others Mr. G. T. Buckley's (I fancy not too well-known) book *Atheism in the English Renaissance*, published in 1932. Mr. Buckley quite properly says that the essence of the Renaissance was the secularizing—not the religionizing—of men's minds. But take the whole of the sixteenth century. There were current the works of Pliny, who said there was no God unless it was the world itself, the works of Lucian who had riddled all religion with his satire, Lucretius, the writings of the Mohammedan scientists and sceptics, the sceptic Pomponazzi, with scores of other authors of a similar character who were frequently printed and often translated. They circulated all over Europe. From 1472 to 1580 there were over a hundred editions of the works of Averroes* a very pronounced Free-thinker. In the later part of the 16th century when English literature was at its greatest, Atheism and unbelief were common charges against men, and on good grounds. The Earl of Essex lamented that "There is nothing but infidelity and Atheism, no religion." The multiplication of sermons and pamphlets against

* Some years ago I tried very hard to induce publishers to undertake a translation of Renan's *Averroes et Paverroism*, but could meet with no success. Its not being in English is a slur on British culture.

Atheism and Infidelity is alone evidence that the brightest period of English literature was that in which the background of religion was broken. Ascham's *Schoolmaster* is easily got, and the evidence of much disbelief is there clearly indicated by its criticisms. Among the playwrights and poets such names as those of Greene, Gabriel Harvey, Marlowe, Kyd, Sir Walter Raleigh, jump to the mind. Shakespeare was obviously a Freethinker. The distance between the miracle plays of the Church and the Elizabethan school of poets, playwrights and prose writers, represented more than a change of technique. It represented the wearing thinner and thinner of the religious background and the transformation of the imaginative and intellectual and emotional qualities of human life.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Light of Asia

Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!
Ah! brothers, sisters, seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought
Each man his prison makes.—*Edwin Arnold.*

Buddhism is the most popular of the great religions its adherents exceeding those of Christianity. Yet it is contradictory and paradoxical. Originally a system of Humanitarianism it is now, in its present form, a Salmagundi of debased Oriental Superstition. Gotama Buddha was an Atheist, but his teaching has been transformed through the ages from Atheism to Pantheism, Polytheism, Spiritualism, and even Demonology. Under a cover of profiteering Monasticism it shelters necromancy, witchcraft and fetishism. Hence a study of the story and character of Gotama himself does not really throw much light on modern Buddhism. Unlike Confucius, the great Chinese sage, Gotama never succeeded in impressing his teaching thoroughly upon his followers.

Buddhism, as a system, is a disappointment. It is not, and never has been, what might have been expected from the ethical code and the lofty character of its founder. Although Gotama taught for forty-five years, and had a most devoted following, Buddhism flouts its founder, and contradicts his teaching. It may bear his name, but it is no child of his, and remains but a changeling. In none of the great religions of the world is the priesthood so ignorant, worship so utterly mechanical, and superstition and idolatry so rampant. Had he been confronted with this farrago of faith and fraud, Gotama would have considered Buddhism as more childish and idolatrous than the Brahmanism which he himself rejected, and which he hoped he had superseded. Buddhism in its purity, as it left the mind of its founder, was worthy of being the light of Asia, but in its developed and debased form, with its praying by machinery, it is but "the rotary calabash system," to use the words of old Carlyle.

Yet the sacred writings of the Buddhists are of enormous interest to Freethinkers. Not alone because its founder was an Atheist, but principally on account of its parallelism with the Christian Religion which has puzzled scholars for generations. The early missionaries were so astonished that they declared that the "Devil," foreknowing the details of Christ's life, anticipated them by resemblances in Gotama and his teaching. More recent scholars, such as John M. Robertson and others, have explained the matter more soberly and more sanely by saying that Buddhism being the older, must be a parent religion, and that the writers of the New Testament must, of necessity, have come in contact with Buddhist monks, or Bud-

dhist ideas and legends. Other scholars maintain that the Christian documents had received Buddhist accretions. In either view Buddhism has the priority of idea and teaching.

The Jewish Old Testament has, obviously, nothing in common with the teachings of Buddha, but there is a singular resemblance between the "Tripitaka," the "Three Baskets," of the Buddhist Faith, and the Christian Gospels. In the "Tripitaka" it is stated that Maya, the Mother of Gotama, was immaculate. According to St. Matthew's Gospel, Mary the mother of Jesus, was also. The child Jesus was visited by magi; the infant Buddha by Kings. Neither Jesus nor Gotama wrote anything; their teaching was by word of mouth. Both preached charity, chastity, poverty, humility, and self-denial. Both fasted in a wilderness; and both were tempted by the "Devil." Both announced a second coming, and both were transfigured. Both died in the open air; and at the death of each there was an earthquake. Both healed the sick.

According to St. Luke, a courtesan visited Jesus and had her sins forgiven. According to the Mahavaggo, Gotama was visited by a harlot whom he instructed in sacred things. In St. Luke is the "Golden Rule"; in the Dhammaphada it says: "Put yourself in the place of others, do as you would be done by." In China Confucius was at the same time summing-up his life's teaching as "Reciprocity: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Indeed, the so-called "Golden Rule" is a commonplace of religious thought, but in the Christian Religion the beneficent effect is nullified by the intrusion of the dreadful dogma of eternal torment.

There are very many other similarities, which a study of comparative religions soon unfold. Hindoo and Egyptian beliefs constitute the two primal inspirational faiths of large masses of mankind. From the one, Buddhism itself proceeded. From the other, which, indeed, has been called "the Motherland of Superstition," the creed of old Israel proceeded. The Egyptian Religion contained the germ of so many faiths. Religions that followed were but afterthoughts. Old Egypt had all the rites, ceremonies and abracadabra of modern religions, and, what is disturbing, the figure of the virgin and the child.

These analogies between Buddhism and Christianity are far too numerous to be fortuitous. There is definite evidence of Buddhist missionaries being in contact with the near East. Pliny, the historian, states that centuries before his day, disciples of Gotama were established on the Dead Sea, and from Josephus it seems highly probable that the so-called Essenes were in reality Buddhists. But the parallels between Buddhism and Christianity have been dealt with at length by many scholars.

How comes it that Buddhistic Atheism has resulted in a primitive New Testament and an earlier Catholicism? How is it that Gotama, the Atheist, whose teaching was Humanistic, should have unwillingly given his name to an ignorant and debased superstition? And why did Confucius succeed so well, precisely where Gotama failed? The answer is that Buddhism began as a heresy and degenerated into a superstition, just as the Protestant Reformation has degenerated into a battlefield of contending sects, instead of ascending to Freethought. Confucius never worried about such small things as heresies. He appealed to the human intellect. To the Chinese people that was an unique experience, but they were practical and level-headed, whereas the Hindoos were saturated with Brahmanism and Priestcraft. They even fanned Gotama's Atheism into a puerile system of idolatry and monasticism. If such men lived in England they would deify the Port of London Authority, and recite prayers to the Gas Light and Coke Company. Gotama

himself was only a man, and never for a moment pretended to be more. In some respects he may be likened to a Hindoo Hamlet, who found the times out of joint. Regarded by some as the light of Asia, his life's work was wrecked by Priestcraft. For the pure aim of the truthseeker has been frustrated by the monk with staff and alms-bowl, asking for bread and expecting money. What an inglorious conclusion, but is it not the story of all religions?

MIMNERMUS

A War Myth

It may be recalled that after the last war it was said that the increase in male births signified that God was restoring the balance of the sexes, after the belligerents had lost so many of their male members. It was even claimed that the newly born boy babies were actually the reincarnated souls of the dead soldiers.

Should the phenomenon recur this time it is more than probable that similar claims will be advanced by those ready to snatch at any straw to support the crumbling structures of theology.

In the first place, the religionist who argues in this fashion does not realize that the problem, if such it is, is subsumed under the larger one of why a God who has the power and prescience to indicate to his creatures an amicable settlement of their differences should permit war at all. And the reply that war is a punishment for man's wrongdoing is quite evasive. Not only does it rest on an obsolete notion of the purpose of punishment, a notion which, if satisfying for a God, is certainly barbaric to the modern educationist; but, if the evils of war represent divine vengeance on those responsible, why then the slaughter of the innocents? And the further reply that the innocents (e.g., babes in arms) are slaughtered as a by-product, is a sad criticism of the almighty goodness of God.

If the hypothesis of a God cannot surmount the primary difficulties of the situation, how can it be valid for the contingent ones?

What are the facts? The increase in the proportion of male births was a feature of, I think, all the chief belligerent countries except Italy. In Germany the proportion rose from 1,055 per 1,000 girls, to 1,068. Again as per 1,000 girl babies, England showed a rise from 1,039 to 1,049, and France went from 1,045 to 1,054. In Holland, the non-belligerent most directly affected by the war, the figure rose from 1,051 to 1,059.

Now while an increase of one per cent is not enough to cause any raising of the eyebrows in a village or a city, or even a country, it becomes rather noticeable over a wider field. Statisticians may regard it as big enough to demand an explanation.

We may therefore note two deterministic accounts attempting an explanation, neither appealing to supernatural intervention. One author (Haslett, *Some Unsolved Problems of Science*) suggests food shortage, and quotes the case of the flour moth, whose sex ratio is altered by partial starvation of the larvæ. Normally there are 61.6 per cent of males to 38.4 of females. Two days' partial starvation of the larvæ brings the proportion to 46.4 of males to 53.6 of females. Food shortage is thus a physical condition affecting sex ratio. Biology, of course, reports other physical conditions which do this, but perhaps none so analogous to war conditions.

Nevertheless, the theory has defects, and we now turn to a suggestion contained in *The Science of Life*, by H.G. and G. P. Wells and Julian Huxley. It is here pointed out that the male has less resistance. While the preponderance at conception is 120 to 100

females, miscarriage and infant mortality bring a greater proportion of female survivors. Thus any factors tending to make easier the conditions of a safe birth from the time of conception will favour the comparative survival of males. To illustrate this, imagine the male and female standing in water whose level is at the head of the male and the waist of the female. A lowering of the water level (i.e., a lessening of the struggle to exist) would increase the relative proportion of the male above water. It is "the same for both" only additionally, not proportionally.

Thus any improvement in pre-natal hygiene favours the chances of male survival (it has nothing to do with male conception, of course). The Jewesses, who pay more attention to this than the Christians, are rewarded with a greater proportion of boy babies. There are similarly greater male proportions among the whites than among the negroes of U.S.A., and in the case of illegitimates the comparatively lesser interest in their safe birth probably accounts for their greater proportion of females.

And so the authors of *The Science of Life* suggest that the decreased sexual demand on wives in wartime favours a slightly higher survival, bringing, as we have seen, advantage to the more fragile males.

Whatever the explanation we certainly need not expect any evidence of "the finger of God."

G. H. TAYLOR

Science as the Servitor of Mankind

THE cultivation and pursuit of science for its own sake alone, has been the ideal of many of the past ministers and interpreters of Nature. The great poet, Alfred Tennyson, eloquently acclaimed the majestic picture of the Universe disclosed by modern science. But while warmly welcoming the knowledge which grows from more to more, this seer and singer dreaded the danger that man's mastery of natural forces might render him procreant to the Lords of Hell. Unfortunately, this foreboding has proved too true, and misapplications of science and discovery have already filled the world with woe, with every prospect of a more terrible toll of human life with its attendant misery in the immediate future.

Not only are scientific applications in the cause of destruction deeply deprecated in certain circles, but many reject the supremely important method of scientific reasoning itself. As Woolf cuttingly declares in his clever *Quack Quack*: "We are living through one of the periods of struggle and decivilization, and the well-known symptoms of intellectual quackery can be observed all about us. . . . The intensity of a man's belief having been adopted as a measure of truth, the ignoble creature who still tries to use his reason, and is feeble enough to admit that he does not know what happens to him when he dies, or why billions of stars are flaming through space, or whether his spaniel has an immortal soul, or why there is evil in the world, or what the Almighty was doing before he created the universe, or what he will be doing after the universe has come to an end—the stupid creature is hardly admitted into the society of intelligent men and decent philosophers."

Nor can all men of science be exonerated from the charge of pandering to the prejudices and presuppositions of the crowd. The practical scientist certainly continues to pursue the path of observation and experiment before reaching his conclusions, but when the problem is one of a cosmological character or relates to the origin of living matter, mystical and meta-

physically-minded scientists give currency to fictions and fables similar to those that have been contemptuously relegated to the realms of popular delusion for more than a century.

Dr. J. D. Bernal points out in his highly suggestive and instructive volume, *The Social Function of Science* (Routledge, 1939, 12s. 6d.), that present-day science is regarded from two distinct standpoints which he distinguishes as the ideal and the realist concepts of existence. The first of these, pictures science as the discovery and establishment of truth which enables it to erect a system which corresponds with the verdict of experience. Should its achievements prove of practical benefit to mankind, that is all to the good, but its ideal aims must ever remain supreme. In the second and more practical picture, utility is the main justification of science, and this becomes obvious when its advances and discoveries are devoted to social services of a beneficent character.

These divergent views are subject to variation and tend at times to merge. But the strictly idealist attitude towards natural knowledge has proved decidedly detrimental to progress, both in classical and recent times. Its metaphysical predilections are pronounced, and it trespasses on the domains of the sacerdotalist and philosopher. This becomes plainly apparent when this so-called science delivers judgment on matters that transcend the realms of experience. Dr. Bernal, F.R.S., tells us that science is illegitimately "taken as a means of finding the answer to the deepest questions which men may ask about the origin of the universe or of life, of death and the survival of the soul. The use of science for this purpose is paradoxical; what science 'cannot know' rather than what it has established is made the basis of affirmations about the universe. Science cannot tell how the universe was made, therefore it must have been made by an intelligent creator. The very indeterminacy of quantum mechanics is made an argument for human free will. In this way, modern science is being made an ally of ancient religion, and even to a large extent a substitute for it. Through the work of Jeans, Eddington, Whitehead and J. S. Haldane, assisted by the Bishop of Birmingham and Dean Inge, a new scientific mythical religion is being built up." Also, continues Dr. Bernal, "the use of science in modernist religion is an implicit admission of its importance in general culture. No religious views could be expected to hold their own in cultured circles unless they were at least phrased in scientific terminology and did not contradict the positive results of the scientific theory of the day."

Bernal naturally deprecates the restriction of science to its intellectual aspects, invaluable as these assuredly are. Sarton justly claims that the "almost inconceivable immensity of the universe revealed by his own efforts does not dwarf man except in a purely physical way; it gives a deeper meaning to his life and thought." Still, the strictly mental contemplation of external Nature in her vast and varied manifestations serves to exclude and belittle the material considerations absolutely essential to human life and well being. Indeed, were this ideal contemplation of natural phenomena the sole province of science, then organized knowledge would never have been gained. For obviously, the most cursory inquiry concerning the evolution of science makes plain the truth that the stimulus towards discovery and invention arose from material needs which could only be met by practical appliances which are as much, or even more scientific, than the speculations of philosophers or the cloudy abstractions of metaphysical mathematicians.

Roger, and the later Francis Bacon alike valued science as an instrument for increasing human control over the giant forces of Nature, and this remained the

guiding principle of most men of science for at least two centuries. And this practical aim was richly justified by results. The achievements of science in navigation, agriculture and in the entire range of domestic economy were stupendous. To its revelations and practical services mankind owes the innumerable comforts and conveniences of modern civilization. Progress and utility were the watchwords of its votaries, and its triumphs seemed to herald universal peace and happiness.

This sanguine forecast, however, has proved grievously delusive. Despite the giant strides of medical science during the past century and in this, and the practical solving of the problem of production which eliminated the danger of pestilence and famine in the Western World, our much vaunted science has so far failed to ensure anything remotely resembling a fair distribution of the national income in any contemporary community. Nor does this economic anomaly stand alone. "War," declares Bernal, "financial chaos, voluntary destruction of goods which millions need, general under-nourishment and fear of other wars more terrible than any before in history are the pictures that must be drawn to-day of the fruits of science."

This appears a startling indictment from a scientist himself. For surely, many and very varied factors: national, economic, historical, geographical and immediately environmental, among others, are responsible for the insane condition of the present day world.

The remarkable expansion of science in recent centuries, and the great proportion of our ablest and most intellectual men now enlisted in its service are noteworthy themes. It is incontestable that the social activities of scientists dominate civilized life to-day. Its omnipresent influences pervade every department of existence, and private enterprise and the State alike employ many unravellers and expositors of Nature's secrets. These aiders of industrial success greatly contribute to the prestige of science in public estimation. With its medical, technical and agricultural triumphs its social and economic importance becomes constantly greater.

Bernal stresses the truth that past cultures have arisen and ripened only to stagnate and disappear. He wonders whether our own science will prove permanent and regards this as an open question. He recalls that "the greatest burst of scientific activity before the present age, the science of Hellenistic times, which had also become an institution faded away long before the society in which it had been born was itself destroyed. How do we know that the same will not happen and, indeed is not happening to modern science?" And he asserts that any conclusive answer to this query necessitates an adequate acquaintance with the complete chronicle of science. He deplores the absence of this history, especially in its bearings on "social and economic events." Such a work, he complains, has not been penned or even attempted. "Existing histories of science," he avers, "are little more than pious records of great men and their works, suitable perhaps for the inspiration of young workers, but not for understanding the rise and growth of science as an institution." This record, then, is a great desideratum. Without it we cannot fully comprehend organized knowledge in its present phase, nor its multitudinous ramifications within social structures and their highly complex activities. A fairly reliable foresight into the future of science may perhaps be furnished by a careful scrutiny and understanding of its past history. In any case, Bernal has striven to prepare the way by judiciously inquiring into and, if possibly, determining what are now, and what may in coming decades become, the beneficent services of science to the human race.

T. F. PALMER

On God's Side

It is plainly a comforting thought to be on the side of God. God and I! There can be little doubt that it gives one a delicious sense of importance, difficult, though not impossible, to obtain in any other way. I recollect many years ago a demonstration convened in favour of Sabbatarianism was gathered together in that medieval building, Newcastle Town Hall. Things were going badly that night for the friends of a Gloomy Sunday. One well-known Newcastle citizen sensed, quite accurately, that the meeting was going in an Anti-Sabbatarian direction, and this to him was a *God-less* direction. From the back centre of the raised platform he rose, and in full view of everyone in the Hall, he moved an amendment. It needed courage in the circumstances, so he got a courteous, if chilly, reception. He closed his remarks with the words: I do not mind if in this matter I stand alone with God.

I should think not indeed. To have the Christian God on one's side, God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, Him who contrived the Deluge and annihilated Ananias! None should mind, surely, having such a useful ally. That precise honour was, however, denied the gentleman in question. His amendment obtained a seconder, and obtained also the support of the Chairman, the Bishop of Newcastle-on-Tyne of that time. So three people, not one, stood (in their opinion) with God that day. It was a case for each of them of modified rapture—rapture divisible by three. It is necessary to say "in their opinion," for although the three gentlemen claimed to stand with God that day, it was far from clear, particularly when one thought—in retrospect—of the result of that day's business, that God *stood with them*. It is just in that consideration that the rub always lies.

So, for just another occasion, God stood by and saw his friends discomfited that day, and, as far as can be gathered, Sabbatarianism in England has not had much help from him since. It is extremely difficult for men like Sir Thomas Inskip to prove that they have friends in such influential quarters when these ghostly allies so frequently amuse themselves by "cutting them dead."

This Novocastrian pietist was typical of many. The claim to fight on the side of God is a common one. It is common because it is gratifying—one does not lose caste by advertising such friends—but it is a claim, all the same, which cannot escape the ordeal of trial by results. It requires colossal egotism to make such a claim—particularly in view of the "results"—but such a type of egotism is common enough. To have little doubt that you are on the side of God, whatever that may mean, is just one of the many forms of reflex egotism. It is common with simple creatures, and with vain, assertive creatures not so simple. It is a gratifying belief and people gravitate towards self-gratification as naturally as they do towards sweetmeats, pretty girls for their wives, novels which do not attempt to dissect them, and books and plays which have endings soaked in molasses.

It is in war-time that the belief that one has God on one's side becomes a certainty with multitudes. The pious on both sides shoot, maim and disembowel (or countenance such activities) in the sure belief that Jehovah approves both the act and the objective. In Capek's fine work *The Insect Play*, this point is picked out for emphasis. The Yellow Ants are there depicted as being engaged in bloody conflict with the Black Ants because of the disputed ownership of a pathway between two blades of grass. At one period, the Yellow Ants appear to be overwhelmed. They are forced to retire—*according to plan*—and the Black Ants, thinking that the day is theirs, return thanks to

the "Most Righteous God of the Black Ants who knowest that we fight only for justice and our national honour." The thanksgiving, however, proves premature, for the Yellow Ants, heroically and successfully, return to the fray. Then the spectacle is observed of prayers being offered up in identical terms by the High Priest of the Yellow Ants.

"God on our Side" is a slogan of amazing effrontery in such circumstances. Galsworthy in the Four Years War saw this plainly enough and said so. And yet the usual incantations are rife from every official mouth or almost every official mouth. Another High Priest, Cardinal Hinsley, has been recently telling the Catholic Truth Society in Glasgow that the Allies were fighting on the side of God, and when it is a question of what God is thinking Cardinals speak with authority—clad in all the grandeur of their pieces of scarlet. We are told, "We are fighting for the cause of God, and of Truth, and of Christianity, and nothing else." He knows! He knows! There are also a few other things he knows but speaks not of. In this war for God and Truth and the rest, there are for the most part conscript armies engaged. In these conscript armies are linked up believers in all kinds of Gods and believers in No God At All. And uncomfortable though the Romanist may be, he must hail as spiritual companions those who believe in pernicious and soul-destroying heresies such as these countenanced by the Lutheran and Orthodox Greek Churches. And the occupant of the paillasse next to his may be one of the Anti-Godites, the receptacle of Cardinal Hinsley's specially vitriolic outbursts. Whatever enthusiasm those who disbelieve in God bring to the fight will not, we surmise, be increased by the thought that they are offering their lives for primarily a religious objective of Papal pattern. What gives them courage and endurance is the fact that they are fighting for truth without that capital T. Truth with a little t is good enough for them.

Yes, whether Cardinal Hinsley likes it or not—and we have a suspicion he would rather have it so—side by side in this war stand believers in God of all shapes and sizes and in No God at All. The Cardinal is willing for this to be the case, willing that Anti-Godites should give their lives for a Romanist objective. In moments like these, Catholics are willing to take all the help they can get from the Godless and blackguard them at the same time. It is just as impudent from the non-Catholic religious angle. For, to a Catholic, belief in God is not a saving virtue. It is *what* a person believes about God that matters. Holy men of old girded on their armour, themselves to fight for the True Faith, their own particular God. All other Gods were to them abortions, misshapen issues of the human mind, to be stamped out viciously, ruthlessly.

It is what you believe about God that counts. Luckily, as far as one can judge, the little Cherub that sits up aloft hardly bothers to look up from his *Europa Gazette*. It was ever thus. God, for example, didn't reward the armies that fought Crusade after Crusade to recover the Tomb of the Third Person in the Trinity, one Jesus of Nazareth, the Hero of Part Two. Yet that was a Holy War if ever there was one!

Draper tells us that the Infidel Khalif, Abubeker, of those days, proclaimed:—

In the name of the most merciful God! Abubeker to the rest of the true believers, health and happiness. The mercy and blessing of God be upon you. I praise the most high God. I pray for his prophet Moham-med.

This is to inform you that I intend to send the true believers into Syria, to take it out of the hands of the infidels. And I would have you know that the fighting for religion is an act of obedience to God.

Khaled, the Saracen General, lifted up his hands and prayed on the field of battle:—

O God! these vile wretches pray with idolatrous expressions and take to themselves another God besides thee, but we acknowledge thy unity and affirm that there is no other God but thee alone. Help us, we beseech thee, for the sake of thy prophet Mohammed, against these idolaters.

The Khalif Omar, who took Jerusalem, commenced a letter to Heraclius, the Roman Emperor:—

In the name of the Most Holy God! Praise be to God, the Lord of this and of the other world, *who has neither female consort nor son.*

God sat aloft and listened to these prayers, computed the forces and equipment and their strategic positions, and gave unto the Infidels, JERUSALEM!

For, said the Cherub, "In these conflicts, it is not only important to believe in God, it is what one believes in God that matters."

O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! And thus it came about that it was meet in the sight of God to take this Christian shrine and throw it to the dogs.*

T. H. ELSTON

* One may be reminded that Jerusalem may yet be returned to this Church in God's Own Time. "The mills of God grind slowly, and a day in the Lord's sight is as a thousand years." It is as well to note, therefore, that it is this type of victory that Christian prayers and activities may grant us in this European conflagration.

Acid Drops

Napoleon said there was only one vital figure in rhetoric—repetition. We do not wholly believe in this. It is not the complete truth, but it contains a truth. Let a people hear the same thing often enough, let them, in addition, refrain from hearing its contradiction, and that thing is likely to take rank as an unassailable truth. The B.B.C. and its religious policy is an example of this. Under that first-rate bigot, Sir John Reith, the policy of boosting Christianity was deliberately adopted. He was a "son of the Manse," and in the Manse a rather peculiar ethic is dominant, and Sir John Reith, who ought daily to thank whatever gods there be for having so many good friends, must have been responsible for the official notice that one of its objects was "to prevent any decay of Christianity" in this country. The fact that a great volume of thought in this country was non-Christian and anti-Christian did not trouble the religious mind of Sir John. The policy was formed, and in spite of thousands of protests from licence-holders it has continued with increasing force.

Since the opening of the war the religious mixture has been stronger than ever. It commences at about eight o'clock with a religious "thought for the day." It gives a "service," at any odd time in the day a sermonette may be interposed, and it winds up with an announced dose of religion about ten-thirty. On Sunday, the dose is stronger—in quantity, and its quality is rather lower. But a common trick is for the B.B.C. to introduce a series of talks on ethics, anthropology, or some other subject that has no clear or logical connexion with religion, but to bring, quite casually, the moral that the one thing which will set the world right is the Christian religion. Dogmas are of course avoided, not because the speaker or the B.B.C. is averse to dogma, but because if the "Christianity" referred to was definite there would be "war in heaven." There is such a series of addresses now running, "A Christian Looks at the World," which ought to be followed by one on "The World Looks at Christianity." But that is a degree of intellectual hospitality and fairness impossible to the B.B.C. Finally, we should like to get, what the B.B.C. has always refused to give, (1) a census as to the proportion of licence holders who desire this

perpetual religious propaganda, and (2) the number of protesting letters against these religious talks. On both issues the B.B.C. has lied with a rare facility.

The Archbishop of Canterbury gave an address at the May Meeting of the Church Missionary Society, and with the usual clerical dishonesty, after complimenting the Buddhists, Moslems, Jews, and other religious odds and ends who are taking part in the world war, said "there had come the impressive testimony to the conviction that there could be no lasting peace, or better order, unless it was based on Christian principles." We wonder what the Moslems, Buddhists and Jews, to say nothing of Free-thinkers, will think of this. No one but a parson would dare to state such an obvious lie as though it were an unquestionable truth.

But even an Archbishop cannot help dropping into the truth occasionally, and the Archbishop tripped over the line when he told his listeners that "It was not by principles that in the early days the Church confronted and converted the world but by power." Truth crushed to earth will rise again, and this time it seems to have got up in quite a hurry. The stories of the conquest of peoples by the power of the cross or by mere preaching is just an example of *Christian* truth. There is not a country in the world where Christianity has established itself where the inducement of conquest has not been force. Sunday laws, laws against "blasphemy," preferential laws for Christians in all directions are so many proofs of this. And if the legal subsidization of the Christian religion were abolished there is not a country in the world where Christianity could maintain its present position. Our artful Archbishop has stumbled into the truth.

Banbury, where the cakes come from, is in turmoil over the Sunday opening of cinemas. The Council agreed to the Sunday opening of cinemas, but for the troops only. The Cinema proprietors say that if their potential audiences are thus restricted it will not pay them to open. The clergy stand for "troops only," for fear the cinema will prove more attractive than church or chapel. Or it may be that the clergy know the troops to be unconvertible. In any case it is a piece of downright impudence for the clergy to insist that anything that threatens to affect their places of business shall be suppressed by law. We are fighting for the liberty of peoples—we have the Government assurance for that! What have the people of Banbury done that they shall be denied the liberty that other people enjoy? Or do the clergy of Banbury think the people of Banbury are made of such poor stuff that their morale will fall to pieces if they are permitted to behave like rational human beings on Sunday?

The Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society called the attention of all "Christian" people to the fact that there was to be a National Conference of Freethinkers to be held in Manchester. He thinks this is, together with the circulation of Freethought literature, "a melancholy reminder of the enemy within our gates." We rather like that word "melancholy." It says a lot in one word. For why should the Secretary of the C.E.S. feel melancholy over the things named. To speak in Christian terms, we are but poor, weak, erring mortals, and against us we have god and his angels and the Church, and power, and wealth, and the Christian Evidence Society. Yet the poor Secretary finds it melancholy to think of a Freethought Conference being held at Manchester. Why not approach the Lord in prayer and leave it at that? The Secretary concludes by saying that "Nothing could be more futile than the propaganda of the Christian Churches concerning the dangers of the pernicious efforts made by the opponents of Christianity." Well, we have been demonstrating this for years.

We learn through a South London newspaper that the Camberwell Council have posted, along with rate notices, a pamphlet giving information as to their Crematorium. There is, however, a body of citizens in Camberwell who

believe that God will have more difficulty in sorting out the fragments of human bodies on Resurrection Day if those bodies have been subjected to incineration rather than earth burial. Archbishop Peter Amigo has been telling his flock what God thinks on this matter, and the Catholics have become annoyed to instruction. Says the *South London Press* :—

Thousands of Catholics in the borough are furiously indignant at receiving these pamphlets, and on Sunday priests told their congregations "Send them back with the word 'No' written across them in large letters."

God, we presume, will have similar reconstruction problems over the unburied bodies of combatants shot to fragments in war-time, not only in this war, but in all the wars since Jesus brought immortality to light. Here, we suggest, is another matter that Catholics might become furiously indignant about. Yet the colonization of Abyssinia, which involved such enormities, was looked upon by many Italian Catholics as a matter for spiritual congratulation. But then, we suggest, God would never bother about resurrecting "Coptic Christians!"

Archbishop Amigo is annoyed at the Camberwell Council sending out circulars to ratepayers advertising the Camberwell Crematorium. Earth burial for him. We can assure the Roman Catholic priests of the Camberwell district that cremation is a clean, scientific method of disposing of our dead, with none of the revolting features of an earth interment. And we should like to see as many as possible of the Roman Catholic priests testing the matter for themselves.

A Boy's Right to Religion is the title of a booklet in the Pilot Series. It is amazing in its impudent claim to enforce religion in the public schools. The author is a schoolmaster, Mr. Conrad Skinner, M.A. The use of the word "Right" in relation to something thrust upon a boy—often entirely against his wishes—reminds us of Hitler's claim that the Poles and other races have a right to be bombed into acceptance of Nazi rule. It is evident that this publication is part of a demand from the clerics for more and more of their narrow little sectarianism—for Christianity is only one of many religions—to be taught what Mr. Skinner thinks best. Speaking of the School-chapel and the Bible, he says "Failing a really Christian staff and a Christian atmosphere, these (Bible and chapel) will be but candles shining in a naughty world . . . they must not be missionary activities in a pagan community." This means if it means anything at all, that dissentient teachers will lose their jobs and the ratepayers and parents will have nothing to do but pay.

It is announced that another clergyman has declined the exemption of his class from military service and has joined the forces as an ordinary private soldier. It is stated that this makes four who have done so. We would think there must be more than that, and that the "four" is an error. At any rate we congratulate this parson on his self-respect. If we have Conscriptio there is no justifiable reason why the whole body of the clergy shall be exempted from the obligations that every other citizen has to face, nor is there any justification for those who are in the army as chaplains receiving an officer's rank and pay. We wonder whether these parsons believe that God will not help the Allies unless he has uniformed representatives in the army who are kept bawling at him to do so.

An Army Chaplain in the last war, Mr. C. B. Mortlock, gives some information re the religious huts with the British Expeditionary Force in France. The number of these huts has been trebled, the number now authorized by the War Office being 300 as compared with the 100 originally sanctioned. But the funds supplied by the religious denominations are not sufficient to maintain such a number, so the religious bodies are making a big effort to get the fixed 5 per cent discount (allowed on all goods obtained through the N.A.A.F.I.) increased. This amounts to State subsidy for religious denominations, and it is

good to note by what trickery such subsidies come into being. Most of the religious privileges are, of course, obtained by such subterranean methods. "Relations with N.A.A.F.I. have already improved" we are told, "to the extent of their getting better though by no means generous terms."

Probably, in order to make such assaults on the public purse more likely to succeed these religious huts are termed officially, "philanthropic institutions." By such terms the religious pill is gilded :—

All the huts are used for religious services. In some of them it is the custom to close down at night with an Ipsi-logue after the B.B.C. Sunday-night model, though it does not last quite so long.

The huts deal "in what is known to the soldiers as 'holy grocery.'" This means that the soldier's cigarettes, cups of tea, bars of chocolate, are purveyed as far as possible in the odour of sanctity. The odour of sanctity will become the more pronounced in ratio with the amount of profit on these commodities the religious denominations can squeeze out of the N.A.A.F.I., that is, the State, that is, you and me.

The writer also deals with the question of compulsory Church Parade. The Army Council insist, he says, upon this feature of Army Life. What he does not say is that the Army Council insist because of the many shapes of ecclesiastical pressure. There would be such a "how-d'ye-do" from religious organizations should the Compulsory Church Parade be abolished, that even military men quail at the prospect of stirring-up such a hornet's nest.

Mr. Mortlock has the audacity to quote from the Rev. Paul Bull on this matter. This gentleman, it would appear, announced oracularly: "Compulsion is the only safeguard of freedom." This is the kind of religious foolery that Burns pilloried in the *Kirk's Alarm*. Many of us remember his scathing comments on the pious gentleman who tried to popularize the phrase "Liberty's Chains."

We rarely hear nowadays from cultured quarters, the ancient delusion that Art owes anything at all to religion, except that at a certain period a wealthy church patronized artists—sometimes perhaps to prostitute art into propaganda—oftener putting the artist into conditions wherein he fulfilled the letter of his instructions, but triumphed by putting his own personality and genius into the god or saint's picture. Dr. Inge says, in the current *Fortnightly*, "Religion for the Greeks was not a desperately serious matter." The ex-Dean believes that the deeper mental and emotional (he calls them "spiritual") needs of the Greeks "were supplied by philosophy." As Professor Ernest Gardner in his *Religion and Art in Ancient Greece* pointed out of the Greek artists—and the same is true of most of the Christian ones—"A Temple in Greece does not belong to the phase of 'indwelling' by a god. Its form, based on that of a human dwelling-house, implies an anthropomorphic imagination."

Although Christians on this side of the Channel are always pointing to France as returning to Christianity, it is good to note that not all French journals are kow-towing to the Vatican. For example, Mr. Leon Blum's paper *Populaire* recently published, according to a Roman Catholic organ, "a series of blasphemies." It was talking about the Feast of the Ascension which it called "a sort of millinery foolery." The Gospels themselves were called "lies and perversions"; the resurrection was described as Jesus's "furtive appearances, due mostly to the phenomena of suggestion"; while his Ascension into heaven "belongs to the realm of legend." As for the Bible, it has grown out of miracles "conceived in the imagination of fanatics . . . they are allegories or myths." However much the average Frenchman may want to be baptized, or confirmed, or married in church, most of them are really Voltairean Freethinkers. In fact, in France the word Voltairean is a sort of synonym for Freethinker.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—A. L. Jones, 208.

D. PENFOLD, C. TOWNSEND, MRS. MACDONALD, C. F. BUDGE, H. A. ALEXANDER, and H. ORMEROD.—Thanks for stamps to cover extra postage.

A. BELL (Cape Town).—We appreciate your statement that it is "the opportunity to agree to differ" that makes the *Freethinker* so welcome. We are not angling for mere "yes" readers. In any live movement that is of real value to the world there should be agreement on main principles, with disagreement on any number of things. Total agreement is a religious paradise, but it must be awfully dull for those with active and independent minds. The getting of the *Freethinker* direct from the London office, or ordering it through a newsagent, is one that must be decided by what is most convenient to the subscriber.

A. J. ASHLEY.—Shall be very pleased to meet you when we are again at Liverpool. Your use of the *Pamphlets for the People* is admirable. It is what they were intended for—to give an outline of a subject, sufficient to state first principles, with enough information to excite further interest in the subject. Mr. Cohen hopes to add to their number soon.

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.

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9. The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

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

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

The sudden flare-up of the war had its affect on the attendance of delegates and members at the N.S.S. Conference at Manchester. Had the outbreak been foreseen the Conference might have been postponed till a later date. Train difficulties got in the way of visitors from the North, and with many members there was the natural feeling of not wishing to be from home at such a time. Nevertheless, although a smaller gathering than usual, the attendance was not notably so, and there was a marked air of business and resolve with all present to do what was possible for the advancement of the Cause. The discussion of the various resolutions was good tempered and useful, and boded well for the future.

Unfortunately circumstances connected with the war prevented the usual Whit-Monday excursion, the arrangements for which had to be abandoned at the last moment.

For the twenty-fifth time Mr. Cohen was re-elected President with acclamation. This makes him the holder of the Presidency for a longer period than either of his predecessors—Bradlaugh and Foote. That election is not an easy time—for the President himself, and the warmth of feeling manifested, the complimentary things that, ap-

parently, *must* be said on such occasions, and the obvious loyalty of the electorate, make it a very hard moment for the President-elect. He could say with absolute sincerity that the greatest trial he has to face as President is the few minutes when he is *not* President—that between his surrender of office and his re-election. To his other records Mr. Cohen now adds that of leading the Free-thought movement during two world-wars. That opportunity, we hope, will never be given to another.

The evening Public Meeting was a great success. The Chorlton Town Hall was crowded, and for just over two hours the audience listened to different speakers with obvious enjoyment. There was not a dull moment on the platform, and there was certainly not a bored one on the floor of the hall. The speeches, too, were on a uniformly high level. They were "easy" without being flippant or cheap, and showed that humour and wit are not the natural enemies of solid thinking and serious aims. The meeting gave one more occasion for all to congratulate themselves on being connected with such a movement as that of ours. Not many could hold the close attention of an audience for so long on a beautiful summer evening.

Correspondence and some other things will have to wait for notice until next week. Mr. Cohen had not far short of twelve hours work on Sunday, and with a very early start for London on Monday, and work at the office on Tuesday, only things that would not wait could receive attention. However arrears will be overtaken. The Report of the Conference will appear next week.

A reader for some years of this paper has written us asking in what form a bequest should be made to the *Freethinker*. We have supplied him with the information, and repeat it here for others who may be interested:—

I hereby give and bequeath (insert here particulars of legacy) to the trustees of the Freethinker Endowment Trust for all or any of the purposes of the said Trust Deed, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the Trustees of the said Endowment Trust shall be a good and sufficient discharge for the said legacy.

Any further information will be given on request.

We have to thank the number of readers who have voluntarily sent on stamps to pay for the extra postage on their subscription to the *Freethinker*. We did not ask for this, and we appreciate the more the thoughtfulness displayed. An editor would be made of very poor stuff indeed who did not take care to give of his best to a band of readers such as we possess. The paper ration, at present placed at thirty per cent of the usual supply, is to be considered anew at the end of this month. Whether that means more or less remains to be seen. But the difficulties of the 1914 War threaten to be left far, far behind by the present contest. If we get through this war unscarred we shall feel like arranging for a tablet when we are dead by way of a monument, "He carried on through two world-wars." At any rate the situation does not lack interest.

In 1937 we published what was probably the largest edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* ever issued. It was a complete edition, with a forty-page introduction by Chapman Cohen. We anticipated that we had printed enough to last six or seven years. The edition was exhausted in three years. We have now printed another large edition, paper and type as before. There has been a great increase in costs of late, and instead of the original price of fourpence, it is now issued at sixpence. At that price it still remains one of the cheapest editions ever issued. We confidently anticipate the steady sale of Paine's great work.

We say advisedly "Paine's great work," because no other criticism of the Bible has ever had so persistent, so continuous a sale, or has done its work so effectively. There were two circumstances that accounted for this. The first is that Paine, while writing for all classes, made a special appeal to the people. What he had to say was said plainly, so plainly that a man or woman in any grade

of society could read it with interest and profit. That indeed was Paine's greatest offence. He wrote with a simplicity that marked a high level of literary ability, breaking completely with the classical vogue of the eighteenth century; and initiating a style that has been well developed since his day. If what he said was not always new, it was always *fresh*, and the hatred which the Christian world bore Paine was well earned.

The second reason for the perpetual demand for the *Age of Reason* to-day is that Paine wrote as one who had believed in the Bible of the historical Christian Church. To-day the Freethinker who writes about the Bible with all the culture and knowledge of the period between Paine and ourselves cannot do so with the gravity Paine shows. But there are millions of believers in much the same mental state as those whom Paine had in mind when writing. He can meet them on a ground that is next to impossible for the informed Freethinker of to-day. And the Church which must keep to the Bible still dreads this complete exposure by the author of the *Rights of Man*. Freethinkers who indulge in any sort of propaganda should have a copy by them to give or lend to a promising reader.

We do not think that we are conceited when we say that the increased interest shown in Paine (there has been quite a number of articles and books on Paine, along with an increased number of references to him in articles by reformers) is due to the wide circulation of our issue of the *Age of Reason*. Probably it was discovered that they might safely refer to or write about one of the best and one of the most abused men of his day, the man who saved the American Revolution, who worked for the Revolution in France, and fought so well for the greater freedom, mental and physical, of the people of England.

National Secular Society EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT

BY THE PRESIDENT

THREE-FOURTHS of the period covered by this report has been passed with the country in a state of war. Quite apart from the distraction of the public mind in such circumstances, special difficulties due to war conditions have had to be faced. Guns may or may not be better than butter, but when the guns roar the comparatively weak voice of reason is apt to be drowned.

In these conditions the Executive wishes to pay tribute to the gallant manner in which our speakers, in spite of the blackout, and other difficulties, have kept the flag of Freethought flying. After the first two or three week's dislocation branches settled down to make things as nearly "as usual" as possible. The result is that the number of meetings held under the direct auspices of the Executive has been only slightly reduced in number—662 against 687. This accounts only for such meetings as were arranged by the Executive—in conjunction with Branches. But a very much larger number of meetings were arranged by Branches on their own responsibility, and the work has mainly gone on as usual. It would be invidious to single out individuals, but the readiness with all to carry on, the loyalty to those principles for which this Society stands, demands and should receive the appreciation and thanks of all Freethinkers.

It is impossible to say what new difficulties may arise in the future, but we may rest assured that these will be faced with courage, and we believe will be successfully overcome. Expenditure is certain to be higher in the near future, but the resources of this organization and its sister society, the Secular Society Limited, should be able to meet the demands.

During the year the Society has received

a legacy of £400 from the estate of Mr. J. Forrester, of Dundee; £100 from that of Mr. David Clarke, of Bury, and several fresh notices of wills from which the Society will, in due course, benefit. In one case, in India, the will is being contested on a point of Indian law by the next-of-kin. The estate runs to about £11,000, and the N.S.S. and the R.P.A. are the residuaries. The first receives two-thirds of the residue, and the second one-third. After taking legal advice, both in this country and in India the two societies have decided to contest the claim, and the prospects of winning are, according to the advice received, good.

During the year new Branches have been opened at Southend-on-Sea, Cardiff, Portsmouth and Rossendale.

At the last Conference in view of your President having completed fifty years work in this Society as a propagandist, the Executive was instructed to consider in what way this "Jubilee" could be fittingly marked, and report to this Conference. A Committee was appointed and duly reported to the Executive. But the difficulty of persuading a horse to drink, even though it might be led to the water, arose. In view of prevailing conditions, and particularly of the need to make an appeal to its readers for the maintenance of the *Freethinker*, the well-being of which is of incalculable value to the movement, the President felt he could not accept the suggestions made. He suggested that something might be done when he had finished another 25 years. The Executive was therefore reluctantly compelled to acquiesce and to report accordingly.

The passage of time has, as usual, robbed us, by death, of many valued members and sturdy workers. Among these is to be noted that Manchester has figured prominently. Mr. H. Black, who was prominent when the Manchester Branch was reformed, and to whose unwearied labour it owed much of its initial success. T. F. Greenall, who was active in several directions, but was chiefly valued as a successful literature secretary; and David Mapp whose readiness to do whatever lay within his power to help the Cause was very highly valued. Other deaths include Mr. Vivian Phelps, author of *The Churches and Modern Thought*, whose appreciation of the work of the Society and of the *Freethinker* grew with the passing of the years; Mr. Murray Martin, a one-time President of the Glasgow Branch; J. M. Stuart Young, who while forced for health reasons to reside in Africa, never lost interest in the Freethought Cause; Mr. H. S. Salt, the well-known Humanitarian; Ralph Chapman, of South Shields, a worker for very many years in the local Branch; A. Bonner, son-in-law of this Society's first President, Charles Bradlaugh; and T. Griffiths, an ardent London Freethinker, whose son is a member of your Executive; and Mrs. G. Quinton, widow of C. G. Quinton, a very old and esteemed worker in our Society. To all these and to others whose names are not so well known, but have contributed what they could to the cause of the higher humanitarianism, we pay the tribute of our respect and appreciation.

During the year the Executive has continued its policy of providing speakers for outside organizations whenever that has been possible. This is a field of operations that might usefully be extended. It brings our propaganda before many who would not otherwise hear it, and, when the speaker is graced with tact and an appreciation of the audience he is addressing, cannot but yield good results. The Executive will always be ready to help branches, financially, where it is required for this purpose.

The Executive and the Editor of the *Freethinker* have received many letters from men joining the armed forces concerning the difficulties placed in the way of substituting an affirmation for the religious oath. On communication with the proper authorities

a prompt announcement has been made authorizing the affirmation to be accepted, and also pointing out that those who have permitted themselves to be entered as belonging to the Church of England or other Church, may at any time claim to have the description of themselves altered to their satisfaction.

It should be quite clear that the legal right to affirm exists in every case where an oath is usually required. This is not a favour, but a legal right, and when this is refused the recruit should refuse to sign any declaration and insist upon his rights being respected.

Protest has also been made against what is probably the most unpopular feature of army life—compulsory Church service. A forced attendance at a religious service in which a large number of those attending do not believe, is a grim satire on a war that is being fought in the name of individual liberty. Many men have asked to be excused attending service, but in most cases where this is allowed they are ordered to some other duty, which takes the form of a punishment. Nevertheless a number do protest, and if this were persisted in by those who object to this forced worship, their number would soon modify this unacknowledged form of punishment. There is no compulsory attendance at Church in the French Army, and there seems no adequate reason why British soldiers should not enjoy the same freedom of opinion. It will hardly be held that a greater sense of self-respect will militate against the efficiency of the army, navy or air-force.

The Executive regrets to report that cases of interference by the police with outdoor meetings continue to arise. A little firmness in many of these cases where it is known that the National Secular Society is behind the action taken, is usually enough to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. At the moment, however, there is one case pending in which the local authorities, while not exactly abusing their powers, are yet applying them in a way which clearly indicates that the real motive is the desire to prevent Free-thought propaganda. It may be that the refusal of the police to act impartially will lead to legal action, and if necessary this step will be taken. Probably firmness in insisting on our rights will be enough.

Whatever justification there is for a country being in a state of war, it is a time when retrogressive forces are in operation to retrieve past losses or to achieve new gains. An expression of this tendency is to be seen in the probably "arranged" article which appeared in the *Times*, and which gave the signal for the leading clergy of this country to attempt to re-establish the full measure of clerical control of the State schools. What is demanded, precisely, and by logical deduction, is to give definite religious instruction to all children, to see to it that teachers believe the religion they teach—which implies a theological test for teachers, the repeal of the Cowper-Temple clause which forbids the teaching of any definitely Christian sectarian religion, and the abolition of the Conscience clause which permits parents and guardians to withdraw their children from religious instruction. There is no need to enter here into a criticism of these plans, and their effect on the educational system of the country. The Executive is desirous only of pointing out two causes that encouraged the clergy—seventy years after the power now sought was taken from their hands—to attempt to recover their old influence.

First, there is the policy of the Labour Parties in this country, who for political reasons refrain from making the complete freedom of the State-schools from clerical influence a plank in their platform. It was owing to religious influence entirely that the Trades Union Congress withdrew a resolution from its agenda asking for the secularizing of the schools, and this after the Congress had voted many times in its favour. As is so

often the case, a vital principle was sacrificed to the needs of political opportunism. Roman Catholic influence was mainly responsible for this.

Second, it is to be regretted that Freethinkers themselves should have unconsciously encouraged the clergy in their action by refraining, in a very large measure, from availing themselves of their rights under the Education Act. Ever since 1870 the law has given them the right of withdrawing their children from religious instruction. This has not been generally done, and it has enabled the clergy to proclaim that the demands run all one way—that of maintaining religion in the schools. Often it is argued that to withdraw children from religious instruction would expose them to persecution by their schoolmates, and sometimes by teachers. There does not appear to be any adequate justification for this. A great many are withdrawn, and no serious complaints are made. And if the practice of withdrawing children from religious instruction was followed by those who do not believe in the State teaching of religion, their very numbers would secure immunity from annoyance. Nor is it likely that the children of the nation would suffer in mental quality if they very early realized the value of having opinions of their own. Our great neighbour, France, manages without religion in the State-schools. Why cannot we?

In spite, then, of the general progress that has been made there still remains very much to be done. That peculiarly intolerant and, in its consequences, immoral British institution the Puritan Sunday, although it has suffered many blows, and has lost much of its power, is still actively mischievous. There are still many of our larger centres of population where no other centres of entertainment save churches and public houses open their doors to the people. The theatre is still completely barred, although the Cinemas, subject to a "racketeering" law which demands a "rake-off" of the profits, are open in many places. So large a centre as Manchester is without any place of entertainment on Sunday, except for the Churches. Presumably this is because the agreement that when the Church opens the public-house shuts, enables perfectly friendly relations to continue between the two. But it is a slur on our culture that the right of every man and woman to spend their day of rest in ways that are freely recognized as permissible during six days of the week shall be denied them on the seventh.

But worse than the sabbatarianism that closes places of amusement for adults is the taboo which keeps closed places of amusement for children. There are still many, many towns—there are in fact few exceptions—where gymnasiums and games are forbidden to children on Sunday. In the height of the factory system, when children were sold like cattle and sent to work in the factories 12 to 14 hours a day, Sunday was faithfully observed, but pleasure on that day met with strong denunciation. Christians quote their leaders as saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me." The modern Christian repeats the text, but adds: And I will see that they play no games, or experience healthy enjoyment, during one-seventh of their lives.

Another direction in which the Executive suggests that our members and sympathizers might do useful work is by using the daily and weekly press to ventilate a protest against the conversion of the B.B.C. into a pulpit for a continuous and fundamentally dishonest propaganda by the Christian clergy. During the whole existence of the B.B.C. it has never permitted the voice of organized Freethought to be heard, or permitted any reply to the many open and covert attacks on its teaching. The microphone has been converted into a new "coward's castle" for the Christian clergy. It is suggested, therefore, that as active a campaign as

possible should be carried on by individuals as well as by speakers against this established semi-governmental intolerance.

We are in the early stages of what may well result in a world-war in the fullest sense of that term. Those who do not agree with our entering the conflict emphasize the disastrous character of the war. But that word "disastrous" applies to all wars, for there never yet was a war that did not bring disaster in some directions however great the actual evils that the war warded off. War itself strikes at the supremacy of the higher values of life, and liberty is invariably first among the casualties. Always when a war is over we have to fight for the recovery of the freedom that has been sacrificed during the war period. This war, more clearly than most is a war of fundamental ideas. But already our freedom of movement and action has been curtailed, and we shall be fortunate indeed if we quickly recover that freedom when the war is over. Meanwhile, and while the war is in being, we have to be on our guard against those retrogressive forces in our midst which seek, under cover of the conflict, to recover lost privileges and, when possible, establish new ones.

In these circumstances the existence of a society such as this, one that stands aloof from political ties and obligations, which in all circumstances has never ceased to insist on the fundamental importance of freedom of thought and speech, has an enhanced value and is of significant importance. For we do not stand merely for particular opinions, we stand for the right of voicing all opinions, with the truth, or even value, of which we are not immediately concerned. This is an ideal which does not readily command the ardent support of multitudes, but it is one on which the existence of a progressive civilization depends. In the last century and a quarter the Freethought movement in this country has passed through stormy times, but it has never lost sight of the fact that it stood, not for the privileges of a sect or a party, but for the Rights of Man. It remains true to that ideal, and there was never a time when insistence upon it was more urgent or more important.

St. Augustine on Lying

PART FIRST

AUGUSTINE'S AUTHORITIES

In his *De Mendacio* and his *Ad Consentium. Contra Mendacium*,¹ St. Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo (now Bona), a city of Numidia in North Africa, strongly condemns lying. He bases his condemnation upon the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament, without making any qualificative distinction between these authorities. The ninth commandment of the Decalogue he quotes as saying no more than "Thou shalt not bear false testimony";² and he contends that this prohibits every kind of lying. But, according to both our Authorized and Revised Versions, the Hebrew text of the passage in question read as follows: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Hence, it might seem that, on this occasion, Augustine was guilty of that kind of lying which the casuists term *suppressio veri*, i. e., fraudulent concealment of the truth. Emphatic-

¹ The edition here used is that of Joseph Zycha, who prepared those two works, and twelve others (also by Augustine) for a volume published at Prague, Vienna, Leipzig, in 1900. The *De Mend.* occupies pages 411-466, and the *Contra Mend.* pages 467-528. The present article deals with the former work except when the latter work is specified.

² *Falsum testimonium non dicas* (vi)

ally, such is *not* the case. For, the Septuagint Version,³ confirmed by *Matthew* xix. 18, *Mark* x. 19, and *Luke* xviii. 20, omits the last clause of the Hebrew text. Even supposing, what is somewhat dubitable, to wit, that Augustine had met with the commandment in its original form, he would naturally have preferred the one alleged to have been given by his divine Lord and Saviour, who in a well-known sermon made so many improvements upon the Mosaic system; and of whom John the Baptist testified saying: "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (*John* i. 17).

Augustine's mainstay, however, is *Wisdom* i. 11, which he quotes at least six times, and gives as follows: "But the mouth that lieth, slayeth the soul."⁴ On one occasion (xvi.), Augustine, quoting these words, along with their context, says that the lying to which they refer is detraction.⁵ This is the truth; but, in other places, he takes them as condemning lying of any kind, and, as menacing the liar with the loss of his soul. For example, when discussing the question: Whether or not a person can justifiably lie to save another person's life, Augustine says, "It is written: *But the mouth that lieth slayeth the soul.* Is it not therefore most perverse to say that a person should incur spiritual death to save another person from bodily death?" (vi.) Augustine displays dexterity in his exegesis of the above passage, which he regards as being of the greatest importance. He says that the Holy Scriptures contain, not only the divine precepts, but also the examples of the just, whereby those commandments are to be interpreted, if and when they appear to be ambiguous. Premising that the cases in the Old Testament were figurative, whilst those in the New Testament are moral-patterns intended for our imitation, he points out that Christ and the apostle Paul when struck on the cheek remonstrated with the strikers, instead of turning the other cheek to be stricken which Christ himself had commanded. (*John* xviii. 23, *Acts* xxiii. 2, *Matthew* v. 39.) The explanation is that Christ intended the turning of the cheek to be done in the heart; that the conduct of Paul proves him to have regarded the Jewish system as outwardly shining but inwardly corrupt, and about to perish by the vengeance of Christ, whilst his own later sufferings indicated his willingness to bear any infliction. Touching Christ's command: "Swear not at all" (*Matthew* v. 34) Augustine recalls the well-known fact that the apostle Paul does not scruple to swear in his Epistles. This he says indicates that the words: "Swear not at all," only teach us to avoid swearing lest we contract a facility, and from the facility a habit, and from the habit fall into perjury; and that the word *omnino* [which unquestionably means *not at all*] implies no more than that we should not affect, nor love, nor strive, after swearing. As regards Christ's injunction, "Take no thought for the morrow," Augustine points out that Christ and the twelve were provided for, and that at a later time the apostles made preparations not only to meet present needs, but also to forestall those of an impending famine. Thus the command implies no more than that we should not aim specially at getting temporal things and avoiding scarcity.

Applying the above information to the case in point, Augustine says that the Scriptures often use the term

³ Horne's *Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*. p. 1, c. ix. s. ii. London, 1823.

⁴ *Os autem, quod mentitur occidit animam,*

⁵ The passage with its contents reads thus in our Authorized Version, made from the Greek original: "Refrain your tongue from backbiting: for there is no word so secret that shall go for naught and the mouth that believeth, slayeth the soul." Here, a marginal note gives "slandereth" as an alternative for "believeth."

"mouth" to mean the receptacle of the heart, as in *Psalms* xv. 2. which refers to him, "who speaketh the truth in his heart."⁶ Hence some teach that the truth should always be spoken in the heart, but not always with the lips, as for instance, when lying is used to prevent a greater evil.

Augustine rejects this distinction because Christ taught that "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart." (*Matthew* xv. 18). There is also *Ecclesiasticus* vii. 13, which says: "Be unwilling to will to lie any lie";⁷ and forbids even the desire of lying. A difficulty is that *omne* may mean either "any" or "every," and there is a great difference between, "Do not tell any lie," and "Do not tell every lie." The context also might make it appear that habitual mendacity is the thing intended. Turning to *Psalms* v. 7. "Thou wilt destroy all who speak lies,"⁸ he says, this passage has been interpreted in three different ways. First, that it condemns all lies; second, that it condemns lies spoken from the heart; and third, that it condemns lies but not every lie.

Those who think lying is unconditionally wrong, produce Scriptural testimonies; and those who think lying is sometimes justifiable also turn to the Scriptures for support. In his opinion, those who defend lying do so on the principle of choosing between a smaller and a greater evil; whilst they limit evil to the ills of this life and base their choice upon their personal feelings. If such teachers had once realized the difference between temporal and eternal things they would never have made that grave mistake. As regards choosing between evils, Augustine, after having premised that the point in question concerns not only voluntary suffering, which suffering by its voluntariness becomes a form of action, proceeds to take the case of a Christian who is faced by the alternative of either presenting incense to idols, or being subjected to sexual pollution. Along with this he puts that of homicide, which includes suicide. The martyr who lets himself be slain rather than blaspheme Christ, does he commit suicide? and, if his father's life is also threatened by his refusal, and his father begs him not to refuse, does he commit patricide, as well as suicide, if he still refuses, and in consequence of his refusing, both he and his father are slain? The reply is, that neither he who submits to the infamous infliction, nor he who submits to his own and his father's death, approves the conduct of his persecutors, and therefore they and they alone must be held responsible for what happens. Their command is, Do evil lest we do it. Their victims refuse to obey, and thus cast upon them the entire responsibility for the commission of the threatened crimes. It is vain to urge that he who could prevent a crime becomes a partner in the crime, if it is committed. For this would only be true if he could prevent the crime without committing another crime for the purpose. Even though the prevented crime would have been greater than the preventive crime, the latter would not be justifiable, because a man is responsible for what he himself does, not for what others might do, unless he stopped them from doing it.

Besides the passages against lying, which have been herein already specified, Augustine refers briefly to the command of Jesus, "Let there be in your mouth, Yea, yea; No, no, what, however, is more is from the

⁶ *Qui loquitur veritatem in cordo suo.* "He that walketh uprightly and speaketh the truth in his heart." (R.V.)

⁷ *Noli velle mentiri omne mendacium.* "Use not to lie." (A.V.)

⁸ *Perdes omnes, qui loquuntur mendacium.* "Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies." (R.V.)

evil one";⁹ and the injunction of Paul, "Wherefore laying aside a lie, speak ye the truth."¹⁰ In view of the rarity, and sometimes the ambiguity, of the evidence which Augustine gleans from the Scriptures with respect to the sinfulness of lies, it is indeed remarkable that he does not quote the terrific passage where the *Revelation* says of "all liars their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (xxi 8 R.V.).¹¹

C. CLAYTON DOVE

⁹ *In ore vestro: est est, non non; quod autem amplius est a malo est.* "Let your speech be Yea yea; Nay, nay, and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." (*Matthew* v. 37 R.V.)

¹⁰ *Quo propter deponentes mendacium loquimini veritatem.* "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbour." (*Eph.* iv 25 R.V.)

¹¹ The Editor of the present volume traces Augustine's references, and gives their sources above his textual notes at the bottom of each page. According to him the *De Mendacio* never quotes *The Revelation*, but the next work after it, the *Contra Mendacium*, twice cites the words, "in their mouth was found no lie," (xiv. 5). It also has a reference to Judah's lion, which, however, in my opinion, may be from *Genesis* xlix. 9.

Seeking the Incontrovertible

It is an old custom to ascribe to oneself and one's beliefs all the virtues considered to be of cardinal importance, while at the same time attributing wickedness, folly, crime, and indeed all society's maladies to the other fellow and the pernicious ideas to which he obdurately clings. Naturally, no one likes to be considered in the wrong, nor does one relish being told that one's theories are in error; but that is no reason for protesting that one is always right, our opponents never. All of us make mistakes; indeed, error is a harsh but, none the less, expert teacher to whom we owe a considerable debt.

Man, however, is extremely loth to acknowledge a blunder. He will endeavour at all costs to conceal it, and is even prepared to incriminate another person in order to evade responsibility for it. When his ideas are shaken, when his self-complacency is disturbed, it is not gratitude he reveals for the service rendered, but angry resentment. Vanity is certainly one of the main-springs of such conduct, but of equal import is the fear of social censure, which, incidentally, is often the mere gloating of a group of egotists at the downfall of an acquaintance.

Concomitant with the ideal of personal infallibility we discover on the one hand an exaggerated nationalism, a belief that "my country can do no wrong"; and, on the other, devout faith in an omniscient god. It should not be necessary to have to dilate on the serious trouble which is being fomented throughout the world by the former, since the facts are too striking for even the least discerning to ignore. What we can do within the scope of this essay is to notice the stratagems employed to fortify the latter against animadversion. As the two beliefs are psychologically akin, each involving simple, easily understood formulas anent good and evil, and an incontrovertible answer to searching questions or scepticism, one being, "the Fuehrer has so commanded," the other, "it is God's will," our observations will generally apply to both.

It is quite permissible, quite legitimate propaganda for an individual to praise his own creed, whilst directing a fusillade of criticism at those beyond the exclusive circle. But propaganda which depends almost wholly upon the use of unwarranted claims for itself, particularly as regards virtues which are appropriated, but for which there is a singular lack of evidence, is analogous to an infectious disease the effect of which is to impair man's capacity for ratiocination.

To the resort to such tactics does the search for ideas that cannot be challenged lead. Let us examine a concrete case.

Recently five canons of Canterbury Cathedral attacked Dr. Hewlett Johnson for his left-wing political utterances with special reference to Soviet Russia. Their letter appeared in the *Times* on March 11. Four days later the Dean of Canterbury wrote a rejoinder in the *News Chronicle*. We quote the opening paragraph: "It is a truism, demonstrated afresh only too clearly today . . . that the first casualty in war is truth. The second casualty one is tempted to say, is tolerance, and with tolerance those other Christian virtues of love and understanding and good will."

Here, in his anxiety to bolster up his own religious convictions, the Dean with subtlety awards Christianity the credit for the existence of the virtues he names.

Of course, he is not the only one guilty of giving Christianity praise where it is not merited. Mr. George Lansbury often spoke of Christian goodness, Christian kindness, and even President Roosevelt seems to share the same delusion that qualities are *ersatz* unless they are prefixed with the word Christian. In view of the self-delusion which is here apparent it would seem to be more correct to expiate on Christian hypocrisy and Christian plagiarism. No cogent argument can be advanced setting forth Christianity's monopoly of all virtues, since they are developed in the course of human evolution, and in any case they are relative and arbitrary, rather than absolute values as Christians contend.

Another favourite practice similar in tendency is the skilful introduction of the emotion-infused term. Thus, if the objective of a speech or an article is to denounce an adversary, it is easy to label him so that your audience will picture him as you desire. Describe his methods as brutal, callous, sadistic, terrorist, his opinions as blatant, immoral, drab, and an impression is conveyed to the not-too-critical hearers which is damning in the extreme. To the person endowed with a vivid imagination and a delicate appreciation of emotional values there is ample scope for accusing an opponent of practically every crime in the calendar, and, what is more to the point, having his statements believed. Yet in the act of producing this virtual havoc he has no need to adduce an iota of fact. Given the correct stimulus the emotions of the crowd will take control of their more sober but less mature reasoning faculty.

Examples of the deft manner in which words, calculated to rouse sympathetic or hostile feelings according to whichever is required, are inserted are too numerous to need citation. They may be noted in any newspaper whether it advocates right or left-wing political views, or any religious journal voicing its particular doctrines. Speeches are frequently crammed with them. Indeed they are an expeditious, though somewhat unscrupulous, medium for inducing conviction or invoking support where otherwise a lengthy, closely knit argument would be necessary.

Why should man employ these words, these red-herrings which, trailed across the path of a lecture or an essay, tend to obscure the main issues involved? The question of saving time is certainly not his primary concern. We submit, then, that it is because he seeks the incontrovertible, and having lulled himself into the wishful thinking state he is not averse to attempting a little deception on those who will give him their attention. He knows that the average person is repelled by injustice, treachery, and cruelty; he is also aware that if he can foist these vices on an opponent he has built up a hate complex which is likely to offer stout and perhaps bigoted resistance to enquiry and doubt.

The Freethinker is one of the few men who scorn the search for the incontrovertible. Granted he believes his opinions are true, but he does not make it his business to invest them with purloined virtues, nor does he favour the technique of the red-herring to win allegiance. His theories must be sufficiently elastic to allow for expansion or re-adjustment when new facts are discovered. His ideas are not so sacrosanct that they cannot be impugned.

To him an antagonist is not a nuisance or a thorn in the flesh, but an individual from whom to learn what to avoid and what to cultivate. He holds no brief for any supreme authority, whether dictator or god, in matters of opinion since his enlightened mind ridicules the possibility. Hence his tolerance toward all opinions.

Though he acknowledges the value of emotion, he realizes that as an instrument of propaganda it is a stark appeal to the primitive in man. He abhors prejudice and bigotry because they stimulate the baser reactions, and act as a barrier to the advance of humanity.

C. MCKELVIE

Correspondence

SWEDENBORG AND TRANSMIGRATION

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The Brahmins considered "Reminiscence" a tenet of Transmigration. And so did Swedenborg, see *Arcana Coelestia*, 8 Vol. Ed. 1756, or if a more explicit statement be required, *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*.

Dr. Garth Wilkinson (*The Human Body and its Connexion with Man*, particularly) and some others might be quoted if their "obscurity" permitted.

GEORGE WALLACE

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—"The Politics of Democratic Socialism."

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 6.30, Mr. E. Saphin.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond) : 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. G. W. Fraser. South Hill Park, 7.30, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 3.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

INDOOR

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Central Halls, Bath Street) : 6.0, Debate: "Secularism versus Socialism." Mr. Higgins (Socialist Party of Great Britain). Muriel Whitefield (Glasgow Secular Society).

OUTDOOR

BERKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket) : 8.0, Saturday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

BLYTH (The Fountain) : 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton. CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge) : 11.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Sauchiehall Street) : 8.0, Tuesday. Muriel Whitefield. Minard Road, 8.0, Thursday, Muriel Whitefield.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps) : 6.30, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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