

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### Fiction and Fact

MISS DOROTHY SAYERS has won a deserved reputation as a writer of detective stories. Having achieved this she has followed the example of many others by exploiting the reputation won in the field of pure fiction, although the religious field supplies fiction of a special kind, in another field where she is an obviously badly equipped amateur. There is nothing unusual in this. To the majority of people, particularly in the religious world, an "authority" means little more than one having a reputation. The fact that one who is an authority in one direction may be almost childish in his mental attitude towards other questions escapes the consideration of the majority of people. Sir Isaac Newton, one of the greatest intellects of his time, wrote cheerfully in support of that nightmare of half-mentally-laked theologians, prophecy. Another great scientific genius, Faraday, belonged to one of the most foolish sects of his time—the Sandemanians. These examples might be multiplied, but they all give evidence as to two important facts; first, that the wisest of people may fall the victims of folly when they step outside their proper sphere; and second, that the religious profession is always ready to exploit a reputation in the interests of their creed.

Trained theologians must have many a smile when they read the preachments of these poorly informed amateurs, but it pays them to withhold criticism, and to refer to the testimonial to their creed written by "that eminent writer," etc., etc. They know that few of their clientele will reflect on the change that has come over a church which once gave orders to all men what they should believe, and now cite testimonials that are about as truthful, but quite as profitable, as a patent-pill advertisement. They know that large numbers of people will conclude that if Christianity is good enough for the author of *The Crime at the Cross Roads*, it will be good enough for them. So the novelist profits from the advertisements and the Church profits from the testimonials given by the novelist. It is all on the side of dishonesty, but one

must remember that Christians hold their religion began on the cross, and to-day it simply cannot continue to exist on the square.

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### Dorothy Sayers to the Rescue

One must assume that it was because of her advertising value that Miss Dorothy Sayers was invited to give an address to the Church Tutorial Association. I say this because, if I am to be quite frank, Miss Sayers shows no acquaintance with either the present position of religion or that of Freethought. There is, however, at least one point on which I agree with her. She says that when Christians come up against Atheists and Agnostics they are as well fitted to refute them as "a boy with a pea-shooter facing a machine-gun." I said this myself years ago, and am glad to find Miss Sayers endorsing it. In my *Letters to a Country Vicar* (a real vicar, by the way, who left unfulfilled the promise to reply to my criticisms) I said:—

I cannot say that I believe what I have said will carry conviction to the mind of the average believer . . . (but) it will save the more argumentative believer from wasting his energy on demolishing positions that are almost as much out of date as the religious beliefs he champions. So much help I would like to give the Christian. At present the poor fellow is like fighting aeroplanes with popguns.

I hope, therefore, Miss Sayers will not consider me impolite if I say that I have the same benevolent disposition towards herself. I will try, not merely to enlighten her with regard to the Freethought position, but also as to the real significance of many of the "dogmas" of which she is so great an admirer.

I beg her not to be offended at this, but one really cannot understand religion by regular attendance at church, or by prayer. To understand the Church and its teachings one must bring to the Church a knowledge of mental and social history. And if Miss Sayers acquires this she will find a church and a church service far more interesting than any detective story that even she has written. In her mind's eye she would see the aisle lengthen and the side walls fall away until she would find herself gazing into a forest clearing; she would see the congregation of smugly dressed, self-satisfied worshippers replaced by slightly clad savages, the parson would give way to the medicine-man, and his gown replaced with paint and feathers; the organ would give way to the tom-tom, and if she were lucky she might even see the crucified Jesus replaced by the ceremony of converting a man into a god by a ceremonial execution. There would be scores of other sights she would see if her knowledge was thorough enough and her appreciation keen enough to visualize the whole story of religion, and also the travels and transformations of early practices and beliefs. Religion to the educated Atheist is really an interesting subject. One cannot

understand history without it. But you cannot understand religion and believe it. A great many of these primitive folk-beliefs now form the material for stories for those of tender years. But there are still a great many, edited and revised, that are perpetuated among adults. Otherwise the Church Tutorial Association would not be in existence. And with the facility that Miss Sayers has for unravelling mysteries of her own construction, she should take an interest in unravelling the religious mysteries of the Christian Church. But she must exercise the same keenness she uses when writing her books. As it is if she had not been a successful writer of fiction her value as a "catch" at a religious gathering would be very small.

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#### Religion and Life

The criticism of the churches by Miss Sayers reads to me rather shrewish. She says:—

The reason why the churches are not discredited to-day is not that they are bigoted about theology, but that they have run away from theology. The Church of Rome alone has retained her prestige because she puts theology in the foreground of her teaching. . . . If we want a Christian society we must teach Christianity, and it is absolutely impossible to teach Christianity without teaching Christian dogma.

That is Miss Sayers' remedy—dogma, more dogma, always dogma. But Miss Sayers is not quite fair to the English Church, nor has she properly analysed the position of the Roman one. The clergy have not run away from theology, it is theology that has run away from the Church. The Church fought against the anti-movement so long as it could. It boycotted, it imprisoned, it argued, and, of course, it lied with that facility which so often accompanies long prayers and strong religious conviction. I must plead for fair-play for the churches.

Nor is it true that the Church of Rome has "retained her prestige" because she has retained her theology. The Roman Church has modified her theology, and its prestige, great as it is, is but a shadow of what it was. But the main reasons for the Roman Church maintaining a modified prestige is, first, because it has not been so obviously a tool of the State as the other Churches, and second, because it is more of an international Church than any other of the Christian sects. An additional reason might be found in the fact that long before Adolf Hitler the Church decided that not merely must religion be taught to children, but both they and adults must be kept from reading or hearing anything contrary to their creed. That is part of the genuinely religious curriculum. It is astonishing how often the implications of Miss Sayers remarks coincide with the ethics of Hitler. I must also add that an acquaintance with the nature of historic processes (mark, I do not say a knowledge of historic events) while not essential to writing detective stories, is essential to understanding historic situations.

Miss Sayer's desire, her all-cure for the sickness that has overtaken the Churches, is, as I have said, more dogma. She says the question "What think ye of Christ?" simply "lands the average man at once in the very knottiest kind of dogmatic riddle." Probably the word "think" is the one that appals the average church-goer. So one must not announce problems, one must just tell a man what he must believe. And with a complete non-sequitur, so far as her main thesis is concerned, she says:—

You cannot have Christianity without Christian principles . . . because their validity depends on Christ's authority.

I have heard this teaching in a different dress. Just now we are at war with another nation with a lengthy Christian history behind it, and which is still one of the most religious (using that term in a strictly scientific psychological sense) nation in Europe. But in that nation there has been developed a brutality that has horrified the civilized world. And the leaders of that nation have justified themselves in terms of the principle laid down by Miss Sayers. They have laid it down as a dogma beyond discussion that you cannot have German principles without Hitler, who, if not God incarnate, has been called by God; they say that asking what people think about Government "lands the average German in a state of chaos," therefore orders must be issued as so many dogmas, and to question them incurs death, as questioning Church dogmas once led straight to the prison or the stake. I do not for a moment suggest that Miss Sayers will agree with Hitler on all points, but her "spiritual" alignment with him is remarkable.

Miss Sayers believes that the validity of Christ's principles depends upon belief in Jesus as an incarnation of God. Now there is a sense in which we may say that we owe Universal Gravitation to Newton, Natural Selection to Darwin, Psycho-analysis to Freud, and Radium to Madame Curie. But once given to the world these things have no dependence at all upon these people. They have to be criticized, accepted or rejected without any reference whatever to their originators. All of these people might be complete myths, but the truthfulness and the value of their discoveries are not altered in the least.

If Christian principles are good, then although we may accept the perfectly stupid proposition that they would never have been known but for Christ, once known they must be accepted as good on their own merits. We may be ungrateful to Jesus in not thanking him for giving us what the author of "1066" would call a "good thing," we may never even have heard his name, but if the teachings are of value the name of their originator is of very small importance. No one knows who started boat-building by hollowing out a log to float down a stream, who first discovered the art of making fire, and so forth, but we are not likely to set either on one side on that account. And I remind Miss Sayers that the earliest attempts to explain the origin of fire and language and other things was that a god came to heaven and taught mankind.

So if I may put a plain question to Miss Sayers—not with very great expectations of getting an answer, for Christian advocates are not noted for their celerity in answering questions that are of a fundamental character—I would like to hear from her what she really means by the very extraordinary assertion she has made. Mark, I am not now questioning the value of "Christian principle"; that is not the point at issue; I do not ask her not to give me a sermon on the value of Christian principles. She may count them as valuable as she pleases. I shall not contradict her. She may take their value for granted. What I wish to know is what Christian principles are of value that would not retain their value whether we accept Jesus Christ or not?

It may be that Miss Sayers holds Christian principles to be of use in heaven, and that they have no earthly value. If so I should agree with her that at least some Christian teachings are of no earthly use, although I suspect that she will disagree with me more violently and more completely when I agree with her than when I do not. I write in a very humble mood for mere information, for instruction. If Miss Sayers is right I am missing a really "good thing." If she is not right then she is wasting a lot of her time. 'To

a professional unraveller of mysteries it should be an easy task to answer so simple a question as mine. But I shall not be surprised if Miss Sayers adopts the usual custom of Christian advocates when faced with an awkward question. She will probably say "nowt."

I must return to the subject next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## Mary Wollstonecraft

Hail to the steadfast soul  
Which, unflinching and keen,  
Wrought to erase from its depth  
Mist, and illusion, and fear!—*Matthew Arnold*

SOME innocents imagine that authors exert little or no influence in politics and upon politicians, in statesmanship and upon statesmen. It is a fond illusion. What far-reaching influence did not Jean Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire exert in world politics? Rousseau may almost be considered as the father of modern Socialism, whilst the prevalence of Anti-clericalism in European politics is of Voltaire's own making. Instead of being mere voices crying in a wilderness, these two writers were the most potent voices in the Europe of their own day. Who heeded Thomas Paine? Yet his was the hand that first wrote the arresting words, "The United States of America," and the great Republic of the West owes as much to Paine's live pen as to Washington's sharp sword. Nor was this the only service that Paine rendered. For he also wrote the *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*, two virile books which not only tremendously influenced public opinion in his own time, but have been the best of best sellers for a period of nearly one hundred and fifty years, and still rouse men like the sound of martial trumpets.

What a tempest this *Age of Reason* provoked! It challenged the enormous pretensions of all the clergy of Christendom. For years it rained prosecutions and pamphlets. Whether men applauded, cursed, or criticized, none could deny its power. Priests might rail and persecute and the pious might sigh, but they both have had to reckon with it. Not even the most hidebound and reactionary of the theologians have written and spoken as they would have written and spoken if Paine's book had never been published. It was, indeed, a thunderous engine of revolt.

The triumph of the modern Woman's Movement is a victory for Progress, and the belated recognition of the rights of women is a tribute to the pioneers from Mary Wollstonecraft to John Stuart Mill and Mrs. Pankhurst. If not the first advocate of women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft was, at any rate, the first of her sex to have the courage to live up to her convictions. Her book, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, was not a very revolutionary production, and an earlier work was largely a well-reasoned plea for the universal education of both sexes. From that seed, however, that she sowed, sprang the goodly fruit of a free national education, and, ultimately, a larger and broader freedom for her sex.

Mary Wollstonecraft's life was pathetic, the pathos of a brilliant and beneficent career, frustrated, at the height of her power, by an untimely end. The story bears witness to the heroism of a brave woman using broken opportunities to the best advantage. The very courage of such an effort touched to pathetic issues, and the partial success with which it is crowned is a tribute to the recuperative power of an eager and indefatigable temperament. For in Paris

during the Great Revolution she met Captain Imlay, to whom she bore a daughter. On his desertion, she even attempted suicide, but later married William Godwin.

In spite of the anguish and terrors of an unrequited affection, and other drawbacks, Mary Wollstonecraft did most useful work. Her views on education were years in advance of her time, and her spirited reply to Burke's rhetorical *Reflections on the French Revolution* showed that she was a keen critic and a keener politician. Her death in childbed in her thirty-eighth year was a distinct loss, for women at that distant date were largely inarticulate in politics, and her expression of the Democratic woman's point of view was in itself valuable.

Her marriage with William Godwin actually intensifies the interest of her association with English literature. For their daughter, Mary, married the poet Shelley. And Shelley himself was a disciple of William Godwin, and the great poet adopted his philosophical ideas from Godwin. So much is this the case that it has even been said that Godwin explains Shelley, and it is equally true that Shelley is the indispensable commentary to Godwin. It is no paradox at all to add that Godwin formed Shelley's mind, and that the *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas* were, in a sense, the greatest of Godwin's works.

Nor is Godwin's daughter undeserving of notice. Although necessarily overshadowed by the greatness of her husband, Mary Shelley had distinct literary gifts of her own. It was while staying at Byron's villa on the lovely lake of Geneva that she conceived the idea of her world-famous novel, *Frankenstein*, a grim and powerful work, which made an immense and lasting sensation. None of her other novels had the same success, but they pleased contemporary readers. She also contributed brilliant biographical sketches of foreign writers and artists to Dionysius Lardner's *Cabinet Encyclopædia*. She survived Shelley nearly thirty years, and latterly made her home with her son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, at Boscombe Manor, Bournemouth. Robert Louis Stevenson was among the guests at the Manor at a later period. It was the intention of Sir Percy to erect a monument to his illustrious father in the adjoining church, but the then vicar, a Mr. Bennett, refused his permission on account of the poet's Free-thought. Accordingly, the splendid memorial had to find refuge elsewhere, and finally landed at a more hospitable Christchurch place-of-worship, where it is still visited as one of the literary shrines of England.

We began by saying that Mary Wollstonecraft's career was one of pathos, and so, to a certain extent, it was. And yet, perhaps, the last word is one, not of pathos, but of strong human encouragement. For the woman who can in large measure live down disaster and shipwreck of hope, and rise triumphantly over the fell clutch of circumstance, may justly be acclaimed as the victorious mistress of her fate. Mary Wollstonecraft stands before us a figure of singular fascination and disquiet, a symbol, as it were, of the world's passionate longing after the dimly-apprehended ideal, of its unquenchable revolt against the wrongs and agonies of mankind.

MIMNERMUS

This is true liberty, when freemen, having to advise the public, may speak free; which he who can and will, deserves high praise; and he who neither can nor will may hold his peace. What can be more just in a state than this?—*Euripides*.

## St. Augustine on Lying

### PART SECOND

#### AUGUSTINE'S OPINIONS

In chapters xiv. and xxi., Augustine resolves lies into eight classes. Here is the scheme, enriched with details taken from other parts of the work, and put between crotchets.

I. Lies which concern religious doctrine. These are "capital," and absolutely inadmissible. For a lie of this kind is a great crime (*magnum scelus*). [May any one lie to further the affairs of a person whom he would incline towards religion? The reply is, that if this were allowed, any crime might be permitted for the self-same purpose, and thus the authority of religion itself would be destroyed; besides which the method suggested is fatuous, because, if the proposed convert found his teacher lying for him about earthly things, he might suspect the man of lying to him about heavenly things. Nevertheless, it is lawful for those who deal either with temporal or with eternal things to conceal occasionally what seems to be better concealed; but never to lie or to conceal by lying.]

II. Lies which help no one, and harm some one. These are condemnable because it is wrong to inflict injury.

[Augustine, introducing the first of the last two sentences, uses the adverb "unjustly"; but, elsewhere he says that even a slight injury should not be done to repel a greater injury. Hence, it would seem that the lies specified in this section are slanderous inventions.]

III. Lies which, in helping some one, harm some one else; but without involving corporal impurity. These are excluded because no one ought to be helped by injuring another person.

IV. Lies told solely from the lust of lying and deceiving. These are evil because they spring from a vicious principle. [Besides this, the tellers of such lies injure themselves by their "gratuitous" lying, because, although they may do no harm to those whom they deceive<sup>12</sup> they harm themselves by rejoicing in falsehood, instead of in truth, and by preferring pleasure to veracity.]

V. Lies told from the desire of pleasing by sweet speech. These are blameworthy because not even the truth itself should be spoken for the sake of giving pleasure. [These men-pleasers would often rather speak the truth than tell a lie, and they invent pleasing lies, because they cannot find pleasing truths].

VI. Lies which harm no one and help some one, e.g., if a man prevents another man's money from being stolen by saying falsely that he does not know where it is. These are not permissible because testimony should not be corrupted for anyone's temporal advantage, whilst to seek a man's salvation by means of lies is nothing less than an effort to bring him into good ways by setting him a bad example, which, after his conversion he would be likely to follow. [Lies of the so-called harmless and helpful type often pass with the vulgar for good and kind people. But the point is: Can a man tell a lie to help another without harming himself by violating the truth? Moreover, once admit that he who tells a harmless lie to help another person is not blameworthy, and you will have to show, why this helpful liar should not lie on his own behalf if he could do so without harming other people. Admission of the principle at stake would have serious

<sup>12</sup> This statement is incorrect, because the person to whom a lie is told receives injury (albeit unconsciously) inasmuch as he is subjected to deception, a thing which if known to him, he would certainly dislike, and probably resent. In the part now quoted Augustine mentions, not without a delicate touch of humour, the lies which men tell to make themselves appear important.

consequences in various directions. Thus the poor would be justified in stealing from the rich what the rich would never miss, and the poor would greatly need. Consequently it would be right to bear false witness in aid of the thief. If you might do this for another, but not for yourself, you would be put into the position of loving your neighbour more than yourself; and, therefore, both cases are bad, and to be avoided. Perhaps it may be said that lies which harm no one and help some one may be told where crimes are not concealed, or defended. Suppose that a man had hidden his money in your presence, and that you were asked by the thief where it was, would you not be justified in lying? Here, you harm no one; but, what about the sin of lying considered in itself? The Scripture which says, "Thou shalt not steal," says also, "Thou shalt not bear false witness!" At the end of a long section dealing with the case of those who know the hiding places of persons unjustly accused, Augustine gives it as his opinion that the best way is to declare, "I know, but I will not tell," and then to bear any punishments threatened, except such as are offensive to pudicity.]

VII. Lies which harm no one and help some one where a pursuit for crime is involved<sup>13</sup> e.g., if a lie is told to conceal the whereabouts of a man exposed to the death penalty, and the person who tells it perhaps does so because he knows, or believes, that the sought-for man is innocent, or, because Christian discipline despairs not of any one's amendment, and excludes none from the gate of repentance. These lies must be avoided because fidelity is to be put before the subservience of anyone's temporal interest, and, because, although some one may be turned still further from piety in consequence of our right doing, yet, nevertheless, we should continue doing right, recalling the words of the apostle: "to some we are the odour of life unto life, and to others of death unto death." [The plausibility and popularity of the lies described in sections six and seven have caused Augustine to consider them in various parts of his work. Answering the query, Is it right to save another person's life by lying? he says that since the divine command bids us to love our neighbours as ourselves, he who to save another's sacrifices his own temporal life exceeds the injunction; and far more so does he, who for the same purpose sacrifices his eternal life. The Christian, however, following the example of his Lord, will not hesitate to lose his temporal life to save the eternal life of his neighbour.]

Moreover, since lying involves the loss of eternal life, a lie should never be told to save anyone's temporal life. Let those, who rave about saving men's lives by telling lies, ask themselves if they would employ theft, or adultery, for the self-same end? If a man bought a rope, and threatened to hang himself unless he were permitted to commit a lewd violation, who would consent to save him on such a condition? What more absurd and wicked than for a man to corrupt his soul by telling a lie to save another man's life, when, if he corrupted his body with this design he would be regarded as infamous?<sup>14</sup>

VIII. Lies which harm no one and help some one

<sup>13</sup> The text of the part in italics is corrupt, but the meaning seems to be what I have given.

<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, in a work entitled *Contra Mendacium*, Augustine poses the case of a sick father whose only and dearly beloved son has died, and who would be likely himself to die, if he were told the truth upon asking, whether or not his son still lived. With this case, Augustine compares that of a lecherous woman whose death would probably be caused by the refusal of her unlawful desires. Here he says that, if a person were prevented from baptism by his guards, it would not be right to deceive them in order for him to reach the font. This implies that even to save a soul deception must not be practised.

to avoid bodily uncleanness of a grave nature. (xiv.) e.g., Whether we may or may not tell a lie which will do harm to no one, and which is the sole means of saving us from sexual violation, or "some execrable pollution," (xv.) Lies of this kind are condemnable "because, among good things chastity of mind" is greater than pudicity of body, and, among evil things, that which we do is worse than what we allow to be done." In the eight kinds of lying above specified, the last is the least sinful; but, whoever thinks a lie of any sort to be without sin is greatly deceived when he takes himself for "an honest deceiver of others." (xxi.).

Defence of chastity against violation is the only point on which Augustine wavers in his stalwart opposition to lying. But the decision quoted above should probably be regarded as his final conviction respecting this matter when he was writing the present work. Here are some interesting statements. Does the person who suffers himself to be plunged into dung, or to have some such filthy things thrust into his mouth, or to be sexually polluted, share the guilt of his tormentor, if he could have saved himself from this torment by committing a light sin? It is granted that all inflictions save those defiling the body must never be avoided by any sin whatsoever on the part of the prospective sufferer, or that of his friends. As regards corporal impurity, however, he who suffers it is not made impure by the contact itself, but by the sin of not avoiding it, though he could have avoided it. "For whatever might have been done to avoid it would have been no sin. Thus, whosoever lies for that purpose is not sinning."<sup>16</sup> Augustine, nevertheless, asks Whether some lies be excepted in the present case, because the infamy had better be suffered than be avoided by such lies? For instance, Is it justifiable to violate the good name of one person in order to save the body of another person from violation? Were a man selected for sexual abuse, might he not justly escape this degradation by referring his selectors to some other man, whom he knows to be innocent of the vice in question; but from whom he falsely assures them the gratification of their foul desires? Augustine says that no one should tell a lie which may injure another person, even though it would injure the other less than he himself would be injured if he did not tell it. The bread of a rich person ought not to be stolen to supply the need of a poor person; and one man ought not to be beaten to save another from being slain; unless, of course, the sufferers are consenting parties, in which case no wrong is done. He does not know if the consent of the man whom another untruly accuses of unnatural vice in order to escape its infliction, justifies the lie employed; but, he feels quite sure that no one is justified in defaming Christ in any way for this purpose.

#### POSTSCRIPT

As an illustration of Augustine's acuteness, take the following twofold example.

Case I. A is friendly to B, but is distrusted by him. B proposes to go along a road which A knows, or believes to be infested with robbers. A, being sure

<sup>15</sup> By chastity of the mind, Augustine does not mean the absence of lewd thoughts. What he means is mental intactness with respect to truth. This sort of chastity is deflowered by telling lies. He is very clear on this point in the two works.

<sup>16</sup> Nullum enim peccatum esset, quidquid propter illa vitanda factum esset. Propter haec vitanda quisquis mentitus, non peccat. Elsewhere he distinguishes between permitting and consenting in respect to the case of corporal pollution. The mind, he says, remains free from guilt provided it does not approve of, or agree to, the infamy which it permits the body to suffer.

that B. will believe the opposite of what he tells him, declares the road to be free from robbers, and B, hearing this declaration, at once resolves to avoid the road.

Case II. Here the circumstances are the same except that A is unfriendly to B, and, knowing or believing about the robbers, tells B of their presence in the road, so that he may get him to fall into their hands.

Commenting upon these two cases, Augustine says, that if a lie is the voluntary utterance of an untruth, then A in the first case undoubtedly lied; and that, if a lie is any utterance made with the purpose of deceiving, then he also lied in the second case; but that, if a lie is the voluntary utterance of any falsity whatsoever, then he was a liar in both cases. Moreover, if a lie is the utterance of one voluntarily speaking an untruth in order to deceive, then A did not lie in either of the two cases, because, in the first he spoke an untruth to convey the truth; whilst in the second, he spoke the truth itself. Augustine rightly adds that the essential character of a lie is not changed by the motive inspiring the liar. It seems to me, however, that A deceived B in both cases. In case (i) he practised deception by telling a lie for the man's gain; whereas in case (ii.) he practised it by telling the truth for the man's loss.

C. CLAYTON DOVE

P.S.S.—In Part First of this article, p. 317, col. 1, line 35, should have read: voluntary action, but also voluntary suffering.

## L'Affaire Dreyfus

IN Paris during 1898, I made the acquaintance of a charming old gentleman, Scheurer Kestner, the President of the Senate; it was he who gave his influential support to Zola and Colonel Picquart in their endeavours to bring about the revision of the trial of Alfred Dreyfus for treason in selling valuable military documents to Germany. As far back as January 5, 1895, I had myself been a spectator amongst a crowd which had gathered outside the *Ecole Militaire* one foggy morning to watch the unfortunate artillery captain being publicly degraded, and I always took an interest in the affair. I must admit that Dreyfus's demeanour had made a bad impression upon me at the time, and such was the case, strange to relate, with everyone who endeavoured, from an independent standpoint, to espouse his cause.

The truth of the *Affaire Dreyfus* is very difficult to elucidate, as it became so involved in the political hatreds and prejudices which were tearing France in pieces in those days. Undoubtedly Alfred Dreyfus was a most unattractive man to his brother officers—the sort who might have been hounded out of any English regiment in the old days by the brutal and cruel method of ragging—and these brother officers wanted to get rid of him. Besides, he was a Jew, and Jews were not popular in the eyes of many influential officers who had received their education at Benedictine or Jesuit Colleges, or at the army cramming establishment in the Rue des Postes run by Monsieur Odelin. However that may be, Dreyfus was keen, clever and ambitious; he had qualified by examinations for appointment to the Staff, and in 1894 was at the War Office as a *stagiaire*: he was undergoing an apprenticeship in all the four bureaux of the War Office. At that conjuncture it became known at headquarters that leakages were occurring through some espionage-agency, and suspicion, on account of the nature of those leakages, pointed to an artillery officer who had access to all four bureaux of the War Office; thus it was that circumstances combined with prejudice to weave a *prima facie* case about the un-

fortunate Alfred Dreyfus. In any case, he cut a sorry figure in both his trials, leaving the impression that he had something guilty to conceal upon two such astute judges as Lord Russell of Killowen, the Lord Chief Justice of England, and Steevens, the Journalist, who were both spectators at the second court martial at Rennes in 1899.

It has been definitely established that the most important—perhaps the only—evidence against Dreyfus, the *bordercau*, or schedule of documents, which was intercepted on its way to the German Embassy, was actually written by a consummate rascal, of the name of Walsin Esterhazy, an Austro-Hungarian and an ex-officer of the Papal guard, who, on the disbanding of that corps in 1871, had been granted a commission in the French Army; of this there can be no doubt whatever, because Esterhazy, who never disguised his hatred of the French, subsequently fled from France and confessed his treason: besides, he was well-known as a spy to both the Italian and German military attachés. For some mysterious purpose, the stolen *bordercau* was torn in pieces so as to give the impression that it had been found in Major Schwartzkoppen's waste-paper basket: in point of fact, that officer, years later, asseverated that he had never set eyes upon this incriminating document which had been stolen before postal delivery.

In order to secure Dreyfus's conviction at the first court marshal, before which he was arraigned on December 19, 1894, only the evidence of Bertillon, the handwriting expert, was submitted to the court, because it was hostile to the defendant; the testimony of Gobert, the handwriting expert of the Bank of France, being suppressed by orders of General Mercier because it was favourable to Dreyfus.

Mercier, the Minister of War, a weak man, was bitterly prejudiced against Dreyfus for no other reason than because he was a Jew. In order to allay any misgivings which might be entertained by members of the court marshal they were privately—and, of course, illegally and irregularly—shown the photograph of a letter filched from the correspondence between Panizzardi and Schwartzkoppen, the Italian and German military attachés: this letter contained a marginal note which ran thus: "*ce [sic!] canaille de D—devient vraiment trop exigeant!*" Moreover, it was alleged that D— meant Dreyfus, and that the marginal note was in the Kaiser's handwriting. It was ultimately proved, however, that D— referred to a civilian spy of the name of Dubois. This letter and other fabricated evidence were contained in the famous secret *dossier* used with such deadly effect by different Ministers of War in thwarting all attempts at securing a revision of the sentence passed on Dreyfus, and this secret *dossier* was carefully guarded in the Intelligence Bureau of the French War Office. Thus when any *député* used to make an awkward enquiry in the *Chambre* concerning the evidence produced at Dreyfus's court martial, the reigning *Ministre de la guerre* would silence all doubts by declaring that the secret *dossier* contained definite and convincing proofs of the guilt of Dreyfus, and a certain politician once even suggested that the condemned man had confessed. When, after months of this sort of dialectical by-play, Colonel Picquart revealed to the world that Esterhazy was the real author of the *bordercau*, and that the famous secret *dossier* contained nothing but counterfeit proofs of Dreyfus's guilt, and when the forger, Colonel Henry, who had relieved Picquart of his duties at the War Office on November 16, 1896,<sup>1</sup> committed suicide, public

opinion began to veer round in favour of Dreyfus, and this eventually brought about his re-trial and the ultimate vindication of his honour. I have always believed myself that Colonel Henry was murdered: when in 1898 he confessed to Cavaignac that he had forged the letters mentioning Dreyfus's name, which, it was pretended, had passed between Panizzardi and Schwartzkoppen, he loudly protested that he had forged them by order of senior officers of the Staff, nor can there be any doubt that he was acting under the instructions of General de Boisdeffre who, himself, was completely under the thumb of the Dominican monk Didon, a popular preacher in Paris in those days, who burned with hatred for Jews, Protestants and Freethinkers; Gonse and de Pellieux, too, were undoubtedly implicated. Colonel Henry, howbeit, was a somewhat unsavoury character, as he used to work in partnership with Esterhazy in selling military secrets to the German Embassy. It is quite remarkable how often awkward witnesses of the truth lost their lives during the Dreyfus affair: the Marquis de Morés, for instance, who began to have doubts about the honesty of Du Paty de Clam, was ordered to Tripoli where he was conveniently murdered by some fanatical Arab; and Lemercier-Picard, the expoliceman and Henry's colleague, who was found hanged in his lodgings when he might have "blown the gaff": this latter was a double-crosser, and he had sold to Schwartzkoppen copies of all the forged letters in the famous secret *dossier* of Dreyfus. During an interview with the German and Italian attachés, Monsieur Hanotaux had given his word of honour—the word of honour of a French statesman was cheap in those days—that none of these forged documents should ever be divulged, so that when, during Zola's trial, the egregious de Pellieux proceeded to read out a forged letter, mentioning Dreyfus's name, and purporting to be written by Schwartzkoppen to Panizzardi, the cat was among the pigeons, and the French Government, during 1898, had to squirm under the threats of Germany and Italy. In April of that year the *Cour de Cassation* quashed the conviction of Zola and, on September 26 ordered the retrial of Dreyfus.

There cannot be any doubt that Alfred Dreyfus was a loyal—if unpopular—French officer who had no intention whatever of betraying his country, who was illegally tried and unjustly condemned by both the courts martial before which he appeared. Moreover, what is still more shameful, purely through spite, he was treated with unnecessarily savage cruelty when a prisoner on Devil's Island. Unfortunately, a gang of unsavoury characters, who longed to do France as much injury as possible, from the very outset of the agitation ranged themselves on the side of Dreyfus, and this alienated the sympathy of many of his brother officers, who were shocked at the cruelty and injustice towards this unfortunate Jew. As Colonel Carencez, a brother officer of Dreyfus's, told me years afterwards when I was attached to the *Inspection Générale d'Artillerie*, during the armistice in April, 1919: "We simply dared not side with the unhappy Dreyfus, because siding with him meant being openly patronized, praised and befriended by notorious rogues who were notorious enemies of France."

II. DE MONTMORENCY

(To be concluded)

Christianity teaches us to despise life. Say what its adherents will, the earliest central doctrines of this morbid faith are all of them associated with a subtle attempt to disparage the visible world that we know.

Llewelyn Powys

<sup>1</sup> To leave the field clear for Henry, Picquart was privately hurried away from Paris on a secret mission to Tunis, and was only permitted to return to Paris a year later, on November 25, 1897.

## Acid Drops

The King as one monarch to another, and as a democracy appealing to an autocracy, has ordered a day of prayer on behalf of an Allied victory. We cannot make certain as to what will happen after the day of prayer, but we have carefully considered the matter and we dare to state in our considered opinion that something will occur; and whatever occurs, it will be because the Lord has willed it. In his unapproachable wisdom it may be something that is unpleasant for the Allies, or it may be a disaster to the Germans but to really devout minds such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, or Sir John Reith, Cardinal Hinsley, or a lunatic that lives near us, who believes that Jesus Christ will soon reappear on earth in his absolutely last performance, there will be shown the power of God to all, particularly to the wickedest of Atheists.

But what a blunder has been committed by either the King or his advisers. Why did they not ask for God's intervention about a month ago? God must have known what would happen. If he was, and is satisfied with the progress of the war, what is the use of praying to him now to alter its course? If he is just a neutral, and not a non-belligerent (one who sympathises with one side, but will not interfere with either) is he likely to change his attitude? But consider what a difference it would have made if God had done something for us before the position got to the danger stage, and what a saving of lives and misery. The Atheist does not believe in God, but if he exists, the unbeliever does treat him with more implied respect. Probably the explanation is that the character of God is always a reflection of the character of his worshippers.

Already there have been suggestions as to what form the prayers shall take. A clergyman writes in the *Daily Telegraph* that they should be short. We approve that. There is no use having a long prayer in which we belittle ourselves by overstating our unworthiness and by overpraising God Almighty. Five words should suffice. Let it be a plain, honest request, "O God, send us victory." If we all repeat that, all at the same time, the din should be overwhelming in heaven. Better still, why not try another form of attack on heaven? Let the nation solemnly assure God that if victory does not come speedily all the places of worship in the country will be closed, and perhaps never re-opened. We have had enough petitions without tangible results. Let us now stand erect and issue an ultimatum that means something.

Mr. Shaw Desmond suggests that everyone shall pray every morning at 9 o'clock. He thinks the combined effort will be effective. These are the days of massed attacks, and Mr. Desmond believes in following the example of Germany. But in this instance the one against whom the mass attack is aimed may easily evade the attacking column. It might even be pointed out that no one knows just in what direction to shoot; and to fire ammunition without knowing where the objective exists is not good strategy. Nor is it good strategy to inform the other part exactly what time, and how often an attack is to be opened. Besides God may well be annoyed at the impudence of people who inform him daily what he ought to do in managing the world. And the "soft soap" that so often accompanies these advices to God, may irritate him. Like the Duke of Wellington who was once grossly flattered by an admirer, he may say, "Don't speak so loudly, or people will think I am damned fool enough to believe it."

The *Star* is getting rather bold. In a recent issue it actually published the following well-known passage from Montaigne—a passage with which *Freethinker* readers will be quite familiar:—

Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, yet he will be making gods by the dozen.

We suspect that most of its readers will read this as a condemnation of making gods of men like Hitler and Mussolini, or others, and also that its readers will take it in that sense. In its original sense it was an attack on all gods, even that of the Christian Church, although Montaigne never said so in as many words. We wonder when the *Star* will have the courage and the candour to inform its readers that all gods, big and little, heavenly as well as earthly are all man-made, and have no other claim to exist than that men believe in them. As we have said elsewhere, Man makes gods and then offers a belated apology for what he has done by destroying them.

The Roman Catholic Church occasionally displays a very admirable quality—that of being straightforward in the statement of its aims. Thus, Archbishop Godfrey, Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, says that his Church may "intervene if a Government is unjust," but he makes it clear that what is meant is "the promotion of Christian government" for "Papal representatives have only one end in view, the glory of God and the salvation of souls." But that is precisely where the trouble begins. Modern progressive governments have nothing, or should have nothing to do with the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The glory of God is the business of these who believe in him, or it, and the salvation of souls is the business of the individual alone. It should be outside the scope of State action. Put into plain and unambiguous language what the Archbishop says is, that the Roman Church claims the right to interfere with Governments wherever and whenever the interests of the Roman Catholic Church are threatened. There is nothing new in this. It has been the cause of innumerable troubles in the past, and is the parent of some of the most dangerous survivals of modern times. The Roman Church still claims the right to dictate to the State, and unfortunately we have in this country a number of individuals in high places who appear ready to regulate their conduct in political matters by the orders of the Church.

The *Church Times* says, "It is a matter for congratulation that persons generally indifferent to religion should want their children to be married in Church, and should want their children to be baptized." This is one of these very Christian statements that are made up of a few grains of distorted truth held together by a fundamental untruth. It is decidedly not true that people generally indifferent to religion want to be married in Church. The increase in the number of Registry Office marriages disproves that. And a vast number of these marriages in Church is due to the fact that young women usually like the "show" given by a marriage in Church, and the young men give way when they have no very strong convictions on the subject. Religious influences see to it that the Registry office shall not usually have a very attractive outside or inside. There has been much improvement in this respect, but there still amounts much to be done. In this matter they do things better in France.

Finally, whether the contract occurs in Church or out of Church, there is no such thing known to present English law as a religious marriage. Marriage can only be performed by a person licensed to perform such marriages, and in a place licensed for the purpose. The clergyman is merely one who is licensed by the State to register marriages, and he may not register them without that licence. If the Archbishops of Canterbury and York were without this licence they could not register a marriage. Substantially the law says that you may have whatever ceremony you please at a marriage—jumping over a broomstick, breaking a saucer or a glass, or mumbling prayers in English, Hebrew or Latin, but the marriage has no validity without the secular sanction. The religious marriage has no legal force in English law.

We are indebted to *Reynolds* for the information that Quisling, the Norwegian who betrayed his country to Germany, and whose name will be handed down as a symbol of complete dishonesty, is a member of the Oxford Group. We are not surprised. Psychologists have always recognized Buchmanism as mainly consisting of rationalized lying, and disguised sexualism with a governing exhibition of exhibitionism. Lying and double dealing is inevitable with a body of men who imagine they can "circumvent God," as Polonius would say.

The King has ordered, so say the daily papers of May 20, that every one attending divine service in St. George's Church, Windsor, shall carry a gas-mask. Those who recall the Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey, will remember that the King and God were placed by the Archbishop on peculiarly intimate terms. It is too bad now for the King to suggest that gas-masks are a better protection than prayers. We may next expect to see hung up, "Trust in God, but bring your gas-mask."

We have received a circular from the "League for God." The title sounds very much like an appeal for the formation of a rescue party. Notice, it is a League for God, not a league to tell us all about God. One would have imagined that God should be able to act for himself, or herself, or itself, whichever category he falls under. So far as we understand the matter these religious parties have always been at work, and the God they have so far rescued does not appear very much like the one they set out to save. For the God they began with did everything, from controlling the weather to manipulating an earthquake. But the God these people have retrieved does not appear to do anything at all. Besides we are doing what we can to save Belgium and Holland, and France and a few other places—including this country. Cannot we leave God to look after himself? We admit that few gods have ever been able to keep themselves alive if they did not have some kind of a League to look after them. This formation of rescue parties to save God is a queer business.

Bournemouth has now joined the growing number of towns in having Sunday Cinemas. There was the usual opposition, the main points being the usual ones. First, it was a retrograde step. But it can be retrograde in the religious sense, that it offended the Sabatarianism of a number of narrow-minded bigots, who disregard the testimony that a brighter and freer Sunday means a morally better Sunday. It is disgraceful that in the midst of war in which freedom, a better life, etc., are used as "slogans" the people of this country should be dominated by one of the most primitive of superstitions.

The second point is again a usual one. The people do not want it. But the Cinema industry is a commercial one. It is kept going by people who want the Cinema as a business, and those who are ready to pay for visiting Cinemas. No one is compelled to go. No one is abused if he does not go. If the Cinemas are not wanted on Sunday they will soon close. If they are it is sheer religious tyranny to say they shall not be opened because organized Christian bigotry says they shall be closed.

But the Church does move—however slowly. It took just over two hundred years after Galileo to admit that the earth went round the sun, and about the same length of time to admit that the science of the Bible, judged by "human standards" was faulty. Here is the way in which a priest now states the case:—

The Bible does not teach natural science, and it is not written in scientific language. When dealing with matters studied in natural science, the Bible uses the popular language of the time, which goes by appearances. Thus even now we say the sun "rises" and

"sets" because it appears to do so. The first chapter of Genesis gives a somewhat artificial arrangement of the work of creation. It is not intended to teach us the order in which things were made, but rather that God was the Author of all things, and that all things as he made them were good.

That, in plain English, means that whatever science finds to be true is what the Bible really teaches. But as you must first find out what is true in order to determine what the Bible teaches, one wonders what is the use of bothering about what the Bible says. What a pity it is that God did not have among his army of angels a competent journalist to set down clearly just what he meant. But there is perhaps a scarcity of journalists in heaven.

A writer in *John O'London's Weekly*, refers to "Thomas Mann (the well-known German writer) and Tom Paine." But why not *Tom Mann*? It is time that writers with a proper sense of decency stopped this distinctiveness. Of course, it would be childish to insist on "Thomas Paine" in ordinary circumstances, but in the case of Paine the abbreviation as used is an indication of one who was coarse, common, and illiterate. Of course, Paine was not one of the three. But Christians kept up the game. It is because of Christian slander that Freethinkers have insisted on Paine being addressed in the proper manner. But the writer I am citing does admit that Paine is "very English, stubborn, brave . . . with a bright conscience and a mission. . . . His writing is as lively today as it was a hundred years ago." The truth of this is proven by the constant demand for his writings, and the continuous slanders of Christians, and the comments of journalists who so often pander to a religious animosity they lack the courage to oppose.

Mr. R. W. Osgathorp, a Socialist and a Conscientious Objector, has been elected chairman of the District Council of Potters Bar. Opposition to his appointment is being led by the vicar, Rev. A. B. Robinson, who says:—

It may quite well be that Councillor Osgathorp would make an excellent chairman, but that our civic head in this critical year should hold the opinions which he openly professes is entirely out of place, and offensive to a great majority of citizens.

If he does not resign the alternative is for the council to pass a vote of confidence in the chair.

Now that's good Christian reasoning; a man may be an "excellent" choice for a particular office, but, should he hold unpopular opinions *outside* that office, he is unfitted to retain it! 'Twas ever "good religion" to repress, suppress, and oppress conscience.

Hodder and Stoughton are welcome to our free notice of their advertisement announcing:—

*The Times* insists on the urgency of a shorter Bible. It is ready—A DIGEST OF THE BIBLE is the world's greatest book in a form in which thousands need it. The 66 books, 1,189 chapters of the Bible have been condensed here, without essential loss, to form this single book of average size. Now, for the first time, you can read the Bible at a sitting—and to do so is an unforgettable experience. The bird's eye view you get in this way makes you visualize the Scriptures as a single, connected story. No other contribution to Bible literature gives just the same sense of grateful surprise.

This fixes another nail in the coffin of "divine inspiration," and loosens another in that of the dear, lamented Bowdler. "No essential loss" to cut "God's word" short!! Blasphemy has lost all meaning if Christians can stand this. And "grateful surprise" expected from the issue of a Bible in *readable form*! Well, well!—as Donald Duck might squawk.

**To get a New Subscriber is to make a New Friend**



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—D. Cordingley, 4s.; W. T. Hawks, 5s.; W. Nelson, 9s. 6d.

F. BEAN (Norway).—We have read your letter with great interest. We would agree that the world ought to be different when the war is over, from what it now is, and that difference should move in the direction of better things. But we have tremendously powerful conservative forces to fight, and men and women who can think clearly will be needed if movement in the right direction is to be achieved. There must be no more such satires on the dead as the monument in Whitehall to the men who died to "end war," and whose sons are now being killed on the same battlefields as those on which their parents fought. The "Chain Letter" is an idiotic thing, and bodes ill for the future.

G. TAYLOR.—Thanks. We shall either reprint, or quote from, your interesting letter in our next issue.

S. L. THOMPSON.—Pleased to have your appreciation of *Almost an Autobiography*. No doubt you are right in saying that we could write a second volume, but we have too many other things on hand, and the war has given us material for enough worry to cause us not to take on extra tasks for the present. We have a very hard time before us.

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

We would again impress upon all the absolute necessity for those who wish to make sure of the weekly copy of the *Freethinker* regularly to see that it is "firmly" ordered from their newsagents. If an extra copy is needed it can be ordered, but wholesale agents are now acting strictly on a "no return basis," and often do not bother to send to the publishing office for another copy after the date of issue.

The West London Branch is holding a Dinner and Dance at the New Inn Restaurant, 252-254 Westminster Bridge Road, on Saturday, May 25. There will be a reception at 6.30. Dinner at 7 prompt. Mr. Cohen has promised to be present. Tickets, price 4s. 6d., may be obtained from Mrs. N. B. Buxton, 18 Cambridge Circus, N.W.6. There is just time for this notice to be of use to London members.

We can do no more than just acknowledge the complimentary letters Mr. Cohen has received concerning his *Almost an Autobiography*. These letters are the more welcome because some of them are critical in character.

We may give excerpts from some of these letters at a later date.

Here is a rather interesting passage from a letter received from a friend:—

A commercial friend asked if I would object to his sending my boy (who is on military service) a copy of the New Testament. I replied "certainly not," but would he object to my sending his boy a copy of the *Age of Reason*? The New Testament has not yet arrived.

It is quite evident that the Christian parent had very little confidence in the capacity of his son to make up his own mind, or to withstand the influence of Thomas Paine.

We saw the other day the private presentation of a film which should take a place in the front rank of serious film productions. It was a story simply told, and plainly presented when it might so easily have been showy and have dropped into the sin against which Hamlet warned the players, that of tearing a passion to tatters. The story of the film is based on a play by Toller, but we do not know how much of it, or what parts of it belong to Toller, or how much is due to the producers—Roy and John Boulting—but we understand that the very effective last scene belongs to the producers of the film. In any case it should take a very high position in the films for 1940, although we write, of course, without any claim to authority in judging the technical side of such productions.

The title of the film is "Pastor Hall," and it is based on the life of Pastor Niemöller—at the moment a theme that easily lends itself to exaggeration. All the more noteworthy is the fact that the producers, consciously or unconsciously, have been guided by a sense of the power of restraint, and nowhere is that sense of restraint so manifest, and so effective as in the last moments of the play when "Pastor Hall" elevated by a sense of ecstasy which has so often enabled martyrs, whether religious or atheistic, to remain firm under extreme threats or tortures, walks calmly to the death awaiting him at the church door. Sentiment might then so easily have degenerated into sentimentality. The play is without the semi-melodramatic quality of the "Nazy Spy," or the exciting moments of the much greater play of "Professor Mamlock." But it has a quality that lifts it above both. Particularly well is the natural effectiveness of the manner in which the corruptive quality of Fascism—not mere Nazism—twists, distorts, and degrades the feelings of family, friendship, and all that is best in human relationships. And the scene in the Concentration Camp lingers in memory like that of a horrible nightmare. But the quality of restraint is evident. When the lights went up, after the shortest hour and forty minutes we can recall, we looked round in a "You that have tears to shed, prepare to shed them now," frame of mind, and found our feelings were not unwarranted. Many near us were using handkerchiefs, and wet eyes were paying their tribute to what they had just witnessed. We do not know when "Pastor Hall" will be "released," but when it is we invite all not to miss it.

The following anniversary note appears in the *Daily Telegraph* for May 8. It is reprinted from the *Morning Post* of May 10, 1820:—

Court of King's Bench.—R. Wedderburn (a man of colour), the blasphemous licensed teacher, yesterday, received sentence of two years' imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, and to find securities for three years, for blasphemy, after having been found guilty by a Jury of the country, of delivering a certain discourse in a debating society, concerning the Holy Scriptures. Several other persons also received sentence of imprisonment for blasphemy.

The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. has arranged a series of Sunday Rambles, the next being to-day (May 26) when all Freethinkers and their friends within range are invited to meet at the Rubery Tram Terminus at 3.30 p.m. Tea will be arranged, and if the weather is kind a very enjoyable half-day should result.

## National Secular Society

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE

VICTORIA HOTEL, MANCHESTER

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1940

With the customary promptitude which is such a marked feature of N.S.S. Conferences, the 1940 Conference was opened by the President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, at 10.30 sharp. Whilst traffic conditions kept many from attending, there was a good muster of delegates and members.

The following Branches were represented:—

Birmingham, F. Terry; Bethnal Green, Mrs. M. Taylor; Bradford, W. Baldie; Bolton, P. Foster, H. Hankin; Blackburn, W. Collins; Burnley, J. Clayton; Chester-le-Street, J. T. Brighton; Cardiff, W. Bray; Chester, Mrs. H. B. Grant; Chorley, C. L. Cocks; Edinburgh, Mrs. McCall; Kingston, W. Griffiths, J. V. Barker; Liverpool, J. V. Shortt, G. Thompson; Manchester, G. H. Taylor, W. A. Atkinson, Newcastle, R. G. Mahomed; Nelson, J. Leyland, F. Metcalfe; North London, L. Ebury; Plymouth, T. Bayard Simmons; Portsmouth, W. Blaney; Rossendale, J. Barlow, W. Ogden; South London, F. A. Hornbrook; Seaham, Mrs. Blaney; Southend-on-Sea, Mrs. N. B. Buxton; West London, E. C. Saphin, G. Bedborough; West Ham, H. S. Wishart.

The Minutes of the 1939 Conference were approved on the motion of Mr. G. Bedborough (W. London), seconded by Mr. E. C. Saphin and carried.

The Executive's Annual Report was read by the President and listened to with great interest. Its acceptance was moved by Mr. G. Hall (Manchester), who regarded it as one of the finest reports he had had the pleasure of hearing. He referred to the question of Sunday Cinemas, which had recently been before the Manchester City Council, and stated that Members of the Council were bombarded with propaganda literature from Churches—so great was the amount that it was collected as waste by the Council. Mr. Shortt (Liverpool) seconded, and the Report was adopted unanimously.

The Financial Report was adopted on the motion of Mr. Brighton (Chester-le-Street), seconded by Mr. Mahomed (Newcastle-on-Tyne), and after several questions had been asked and satisfactorily answered was carried unanimously.

At this point the retiring President asked permission to suspend the standing orders for the purpose of raising a matter of importance in connexion with the Birkenhead Branch. After discussion the Conference unanimously resolved that the matter should be referred to the Executive for settlement, and that the President be requested to convene a meeting of the members of the Birkenhead Branch as early as possible, and to take whatever steps thought necessary.

Mr. Cohen then vacated the chair, which was taken by Mr. Rosetti, pending the election of a new President. Mr. Wishart in moving that Mr. Cohen be re-elected President, reminded the Conference that Mr. Cohen was first elected during a world war, and the Society owed him much for the manner in which he steered the party through that crisis. It was a promise of what may lie ahead.

Mr. Bedborough, in seconding the resolution, said he endorsed all that had been said by the previous speaker, and paid high tribute to the qualities of Mr. Cohen. He added that Mr. Cohen had just published an autobiography, but that was to some extent incomplete. Someone now ought to write a *biography* of him, and include the many good and valuable things

he had done for the Cause, but which he had been too modest to mention. Mrs. Grant, and Messrs. Brighton and Clayton also paid tribute to Mr. Cohen's services. The motion was then put and carried with acclamation.

Mr. Cohen, in thanking the Conference for his re-election, said that this election enabled him to mark another record. He had now been President of the N.S.S. for a period longer than that office had ever been held by one man. He would in the future, as in the past, do his best.

The re-election of Mr. Rosetti as Secretary was moved, on behalf of the executive, by Mr. Cohen. He paid a very high tribute to Mr. Rosetti as a Secretary. He was loyal to the movement and devoted to his work. The President's eulogy was enthusiastically endorsed by all present.

Motions No. 6, 7 and 8, the election of Treasurer, Auditor, and members for the Executive were carried after a few brief questions had been asked and answered.

Motion 9, by Executive:—

"That this Conference, in view of the nation-wide clerical agitation to repeal the Cowper Temple clause, to gain more direct control of the State schools for the introduction of dogmatic religious teaching, and to introduce a religious test for teachers, reaffirms its conviction that the only method of ending this seventy-year-old quarrel is by the adoption of a clear policy of Secular Education, and calls on all who do not believe in the State teaching of religion to withdraw their children from religious instruction in schools receiving a Government grant."

was formally moved by the President and seconded by Mr. Thompson (Liverpool). Mr. Brighton suggested that much more use might be made of the form issued by the Executive for use by parents. He had found this very useful, and in many cases parents had acted who might otherwise not have done so. The motion was carried.

Motion 10, by North London Branch:—

"That this Conference condemns the tendency, now finding expression in the House of Commons and elsewhere, to suppress the activities of political and other organizations during the course of a war that is avowedly being fought to secure freedom in Europe. This Conference also urges Freethinkers to question all proposed restrictions, under plea of war-time necessities, of that freedom of speech and publication which has been so dearly won by our predecessors."

was moved by Mr. Ebury and seconded by Mr. C. McCall.

Mr. Blaney (Manchester) moved and Mr. Brighton seconded that the first portion of the resolution down to Europe be rejected. The amendment was lost, but it was agreed that the word "Pacifist" be inserted in place of "other" (fourth line) and an amendment by Mr. Cocks that "expressions of opinion and publication" be inserted in place of "activities" was lost. The motion was then carried.

Motion by West Ham Branch:—

"That a distinctive inscription be designed and placed on the badge of the National Secular Society."

was rejected on the ground that the main purpose of the badge was to secure recognition between members of the Society, and a plain inscription would defeat this.

Motion by Kingston Branch:—

"That this Conference, bearing in mind that the British armed forces comprise men belonging to all shades of religious opinion, and those who are opposed to all forms of religion, bearing in mind

that one of the avowed purposes of the war is to secure complete religious equality, in order to further these aims demands:

- (a) the abolition of compulsory Church parade;
- (b) the abolition of the appointment of Army chaplains with the rank and pay of officers."

After clause (a) had been withdrawn on the ground of redundancy and with the deletion of "with the pay of officer's," the resolution was carried unanimously.

Motion 13, by Mr. Siebert:—

"This Conference strongly protests against the dishonest attempt of leaders of the Christian Churches and others to identify the cause of the war with the growth of Freethought, and condemns the gross dishonesty of such an assumption in a world that has been dominated by the Christian religion for nearly two thousand years."

was moved by Mr. Hornibrook and seconded by Mr. Mahomed. And after an agreed amendment that the word "Atheism" be substituted for "Freethought" the resolution was carried.

Mr. Brighton, in the absence of Mr. Charlton, then moved resolution (a):—

- (a) "That this Conference regards the growing influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the Press, Parliament, and local government as a direct menace to civil liberty and freedom of speech."

This was seconded by Mr. Mahomed. Mr. Shortt moved an amendment that "Christian Church" be substituted for Roman Catholic Church, which on a vote was lost, Mr. Atkinson pointing out that the Roman Church offered a very real danger, and this should be emphasized. The Motion was carried.

Motion (b):—

- (b) "That, bearing in mind the use being made by the B.B.C. for the propaganda of religious ideas, this Conference urges Freethinkers to agitate by all the means at their disposal for a representation of Freethought teaching through what is substantially a government organization."

was moved by Mr. Brighton, seconded by Mrs. Grant, with the substitution of the word "views" in place of "teaching," and was carried.

Motion 15:—

- "That it be an instruction to the Executive to consider the circulation of the case for Secular Education among students leaving training colleges to become school teachers."

Mr. Taylor said the resolution did not "urge" or "recommend" it called for action, and involved practically no expense. Existing pamphlets could be used. The resolution gave rise to an interesting discussion, and ways were suggested by which the resolution might be carried into effect. It was then put to the vote and carried unanimously.

At this point Mr. Ebury said that after consultation with the President, he wished to move the suspension of the standing orders in order to raise a question concerning the action of the Agenda Committee in declining a resolution sent in by the North London Branch. After discussing the subject, and having heard the President's statement, the action of the Committee was endorsed by the Conference.

Motion 16 was moved by Mr. Ebury and seconded by Mr. Mahomed. After several amendments had been discussed, the motion was agreed to in the following terms: "That in view of the increase in Race-hatred brought about by the war, and its inevitable accompaniments, injustice, brutality and intolerance, this Conference reaffirms the principle of the uni-

versal Brotherhood of Man and advises, in order to create a just and lasting peace, that stress be laid on this principle in our propaganda." This was carried.

Motion 17, by South London Branch, asking for an extra session of the Conference, failed to find a seconder, and was dropped.

Motion 18, by Kingston Branch:—

"This Conference regrets the many instances in which Freethinkers and others who are in favour of the Secularization of life, fail to take advantage with regard to making affirmation in all cases where an oath is necessary, of their legal right to withdraw their children from religious instruction, and the neglect of the facilities for conducting a secular service at funerals.

moved by Mr. Barker and seconded by Mr. McCall, was passed after a brief discussion.

Only a brief time was left for the proposed talk concerning the aims and purposes of the N.S.S., but it enabled the President to stress the main principles on which the Society rested, and the manner in which it had always worked. The large number of new members coming into the Society made it necessary to insist upon the value of our retaining the distinctive character of our work, a work which if we did not do, was not likely to be done very effectively by any other organization. The National Secular Society was a voluntary association and our policy was to combine a certain degree of rigidity with elasticity. We had ultimately to rely upon the loyalty of members to a movement which relied upon those who could rise above material gain or the desire for social prestige. Our history had shown that a small compact body of men and women could exercise and influence altogether out of proportion to their numbers and their financial resources.

In bringing the meeting to a close the President, in the name of all present thanked the Manchester Branch for the work they had done in helping to make the 1940 Conference a distinct success. The discussions had been thorough, differences, which must always arise in a gathering of Freethinkers, had been expressed, but there had been good-temper throughout, and all had benefited from the differences expressed. Above all it had been made very clear that men and women could meet and differ on many things without that difference leading to anything but a confirmation to carry on the work of development and orderly progress. So long as that spirit obtained, the future of the National Secular Society was assured.

## Nazareth

Most Freethinkers have found, I think, that many Christians in debate with them seem very fond of using the term "Jesus of Nazareth"—instead of saying "Jesus" or "Christ Jesus" or "the Christ." I suppose the reason for this is that, knowing we do not accept the "divinity" of "our Lord," they have a vague hope that, at least, we do accept him as a man—and that is some consolation in the face of our unbelief. But whether this is so or not, I fancy few Christians ever stop to think about the word they so glibly use—this word "Nazareth." It appears a number of times in the New Testament, but the word has troubled many commentators with vague doubts. Was there such a place in Palestine in the supposed time of Jesus?

The problem is actually a very complicated one because, if Jesus was born in Bethlehem as the New Testament asserts, it is difficult to account for Jesus

of "Nazareth" and not of "Bethlehem." And little help can come from a minute study of the two very conflicting accounts of the Nativity given in Matthew and Luke. The contradictions of what ought to be a plain statement of fact found in the two narratives have always been the despair of commentators, and not at all solved by either a pathetic appeal to faith, or a confident appeal to the Roman Catholic Church. While if one goes to the Apocryphal Gospels for further elucidation confusion becomes even worse.

The first big shock to the faithful must be in the clear statement of Dr. T. K. Cheyne in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*. He categorically asserts there that "it is very doubtful whether the (present) beautiful mountain village of Nazareth was really the dwelling place of Jesus. No such town as Nazareth is mentioned in the Old Testament, in Josephus, or in the Talmud. . . . Was Nazareth originally the name of a town (or village) at all?" This is—for the true believing Christian—a very important question.

Cheyne tries to show that when the word "Nazareth" is used it may really mean Galilee—"the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was regarded as an indispensable sign of the Messiahship, but that, in the earliest form of the evangelical tradition, Jesus was said to have been born in Bethlehem-Nazareth (= Bethlehem of Galilee). The title Bethlehem-Nazareth was misunderstood by some of the transmitters of the tradition, so that while some said, 'Jesus was born at Bethlehem,' others said 'Jesus was born at Nazareth.'" And Cheyne rather touchingly adds:—

What the meaning of Nazareth (i.e., Galilee) is, can hardly be made out. The current explanations "guard," "branch," "flower," (Jerome, "*florem Galilaeae*"), have a very insecure basis.

But this word Nazareth has been hotly discussed in spite of Cheyne by orthodox commentators. Certainly Jesus is called the Nazaree (or Nazara or Nazarene or Nazarite) though the Greek *Nazaraios* varies in the "original" spelling. Has this word some connexion with Nazareth?

Here authorities are very confused. Obviously if there was a sect called the Nazarenes, about or before the Christian era, but not a town called Nazareth, there could be no connexion between the names.

The curious thing is that the faith of these Nazarenes (or Nazarees or Nazorees) is described by Epphanianus (315-403), the great antagonist of "heresy," as *before* Christ, and "they knew not Christ."

The editor of the edition of the Bible called the Polychrome Bible, Professor Haupt, insists that the name Nazareth "was a new name for an old thing, the venerable city of Hethlon," which underwent this change: Hethlon-Hittalon-Hinnathon-Hinnatun-Protection-Nazareth. Professor W. B. Smith, in the *Open Court* (1910) pokes a great deal of fun at this attempt to bolster up the New Testament in such a way; but all this discussion is proof that the word Nazareth has been a big stumbling block for the true believer.

Dr. Paul Carus, the editor of the *Open Court*, claims that Jesus belonged to the sect of Nazarenes, but "the question is whether he was also a Nazarethian, an inhabitant of a city called Nazareth. He is never called Nazarethian, but only the 'Nazarene,' or 'he of Nazareth,' and Nazareth is often mentioned as his country, his city, and his home, though the passages are open to question, and may have originally referred to Capernaum."

The Nazarenes and the Nazarites were the same sect according to Dr. Carus, but he admitted that he "came more and more to acknowledge the improbability of the existence of Nazareth." But Dr. Carus

never would agree to any question of the non-historicity of Jesus, though forced to acknowledge that his life was almost entirely obliterated by the accumulation of myth and legend.

John M. Robertson goes very minutely into the problem of Nazareth, Nazaren, and Nazarite, in his *Christianity and Mythology*, and shows into what a state of hopeless confusion the New Testament is on the question—a confusion by no means bettered through wrong translations in the English versions. Both in the Septuagint and in Josephus there appear to be two different spellings of the word which we translate as Nazarite; while in the fourth gospel, "while Jesus is thrice called 'the Nazarite' he is never called 'the Nazarene'; and the only passage in which Nazareth is mentioned (i. 45, 46) is plainly interpolated in the same fashion as the early allusions in Matthew and Luke."

After a very careful analysis of the passages in the New Testament, which have the words Nazareth, etc., Robertson concludes:—

The earliest text told only of a Jesus, knowing nothing of Nazareth, and saying nothing of his being a Nazarite. Such is the position of Paul or the Pauline writers. After Paul, Jesuism appears to have become associated with the old sectarian or ascetic usages of Nazarism. It is doubtful whether to begin with the forms of Nazarene and Nazarite had acquired the same force, or whether the name Nazarene was set up, on the basis of the "Netzer" or Nazareth myth, to distinguish non-Nazarite Christians from Nazarites. After a time anti-ascetic groups probably sought to counter-check Nazarism by giving a new quasi-historical basis to the term Nazarene: that is, they invented the myth of the upbringing of Jesus at Nazareth.

There is, of course, a modern town called Nazareth, or rather, it is called by the natives *en-Nasira*, situated in lower Galilee, but Cheyne says it "is doubtful" if "the earlier city occupied the same site." In fact the whole of his article in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* is an argument that there was no Nazareth in the time of Jesus. Yet in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, one of the latest and most authoritative written from the orthodox standpoint—it is packed with many heretical statements, by the way, which make some of those in the *Age of Reason* look ultra-orthodox—Mr. P. Usher calmly tells us that "the site of Nazareth is not doubtful. It is En-nasira. . . ." He must have known Cheyne's article and the many long discussions on the problem, yet he completely ignores them; probably he was afraid to be too heretical for his pious readers.

There is a word in Job xxxviii. 32, which is given in the original Hebrew as "Mazzaroth" (also spelt with one z). In the margin the meaning is given as "the seven stars," but a note in the Variorum Bible says that, according to tradition, it means "the signs of the Zodiac"—a meaning accepted by both the great Hebrew lexicographers, Gesenius and Fuerst. The root is "nazar" (as a verb) which means "to surround, to enclose, to encircle." This word "nazar" has been claimed to have some connexion with Nazareth, though it is contended that the similarity between the two words has nothing to do with the problem. Prof. W. B. Smith says:—

In Mark vi. 3, the question is put, "Is not this the Carpenter?" Turning it back into Syriac we get, "Is not this the N-S-R?" where the scarcely perceptible difference between the two sibilants allows the beautiful pun on N-Z-R and N-S-R. It seems plain that Jesus is here called the Carpenter (N-S-R) because he was the Defender (N-Z-R).

But if n can be changed into m or vice versa (as, we

are told, is allowable in Hebrew) Mazaroth could well be Nazareth or Nazareth; and we get here some connexion with the signs of the Zodiac and Sun worship—which, in the opinion of Dupuis and Robert Taylor, is at the base of Christianity. However “far-fetched” some attempted explanations may be of this religion, we should, I think, always examine them and reject them only if quite absurd. Actually, Christianity itself is one mass of absurdities.

If there never was such a town as Nazareth in the year 1 A.D., how came the gospel writers to make Jesus, not of the town where he was born “of Bethlehem,” but “of Nazareth”? It is a problem by no means yet satisfactorily answered; though no one can deny its being of the utmost importance in the elucidation of the Jesus problem.

H. CUTNER

## Highways and Byways in English History

### VIII.—THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND RELIGIOUS REACTION

THE attitude of the British ruling classes towards the French Revolution started with self-righteous complacency and ended with hysterical panic. Seldom have men shown themselves more sensitive to the mote in their neighbour's eye and more blind to the beam in their own. Britain had no cause for self-congratulation. The Enclosure Acts and the industrial revolution were producing an ever deepening and ever widening pool of misery. Property was defended by well-nigh the most inhuman criminal code ever known in a civilized community. Boys of fourteen and fifteen were sent to the gallows for theft. England, it might have been thought, was sufficiently backward and barbarous in these respects to engage the full attention of a man of the calibre of Edmund Burke. He chose instead to empty the vials of his wrath on the French Revolution. Another Whig man of letters, Horace Walpole, went into transports of indignation when the French did to Louis XVI. exactly what the English had done to Charles I. in the previous century.

The fact was that Burke and Walpole, as men of property, saw in the Declaration of the Rights of Man promulgated by the French Assembly, and in the rationalist attitude to politics which it implied, a menace not only to the effete feudalism of the continent, but to any social order based on the exploitation of man by man. Fears for property were increased by the French suppression of religious orders and confiscation of Church lands. Forgetting the many family fortunes founded on similar confiscations in their own country, British property-owners began to manifest unwonted sympathy with Catholic priests, and to discover unsuspected merits in the Middle Ages. A tiny minority of the Whig party, under Fox, kept the flag of reform flying in Parliament. Outside Parliament, Burke was trenchantly answered by Thomas Paine in *The Rights of Man*, the wide circulation of which among the masses went far to earn its author the incendiary reputation which *The Age of Reason* was to complete. Paine was indicted for treason, but escaped to France. By the end of 1792, when the long war between feudal Europe and the Revolution had begun, and the French were carrying the fight into their enemies' country, the propertied classes in Britain were thoroughly frightened.

One result was the Evangelical movement, of which

Wilberforce was a leading ornament. The wealthier classes dropped the Deism which had been fashionable throughout the eighteenth century, and persuaded themselves that supernatural beliefs were necessary as a bulwark of social order. Wilberforce would have repudiated any imputation of inhumanity in his attitude to the poor; yet he wrote in his *Practical view of Real Christianity*:—

Their situation in life, with all its evils, is better than they have deserved at the hand of God.

Arthur Young advocated the building of more churches to inculcate

the doctrines of that truly excellent religion which exhorts to content and to submission to the higher powers.

A certain Rev. Thomas Gisborne, deploring the “criminal habits” of Lancashire miners and especially their excessive addiction to meat-eating, recommended that they should be educated in

a just sense of revealed religion, and of the rewards and punishments of a future state.

These pious sentiments were rammed home in practice by a series of repressive measures—the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794; the Seditious Meetings Act of 1796, which subjected all political meetings to the control of the magistrates; the Corresponding Societies Act of 1799, which made popular political organizations illegal; and the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, which prohibited all combinations of workmen on pain of imprisonment for all concerned. Combinations of employers were also prohibited; but the expense of prosecution, and the fact that magistrates were frequently employers themselves, rendered this quite nugatory.

The period of the Napoleonic Wars was marked by open or suppressed class struggle. The National Debt rose to £800,000,000, three-quarters of which were incurred in fighting Napoleon. There were food riots in all districts, provoked by the prohibitive duties on wheat imposed by a landlords' Parliament. Poor rates soared under the Speenhamland system (so-called from a meeting of Berkshire magistrates at that place in 1795), by which rates were used to subsidize the starvation wages paid in rural districts. The rampant evils of the factory system were untouched. True, in 1802 an Act was passed limiting the hours of factory apprentices to twelve a day, exclusive of meals; but as no penalty but a small fine was provided for its infraction, and no inspectors were appointed, it was ineffective. The Government had no prescription for discontent except spies, *agents provocateurs*, the gaol, and the hangman's rope. Wilberforce, whose work contributed so greatly to the abolition of the black slave trade, was callous to the sufferings of white workers, and defended the prohibition of trade unions on the ground of the “progressive rise of wages which must be the inevitable result” of their operations.

In this policy of repression the Church was the active instrument of the Government. In 1807 Whitbread, the brewer, one of the small party of reformers who followed Fox, introduced a bill for establishing elementary schools at the cost of the rates. It was whittled down by the House of Commons, and thrown out by the House of Lords on the motion of Lord Chancellor Eldon and Charles Manners-Sutton, Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1811 Manners-Sutton and others founded the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. Robert Owen, who had proved himself an educational pioneer by his infant schools at New Lanark, visited London in 1813 to seek legis-

lative sanction for a plan of national education, but was completely unsuccessful. The Church was also active in opposing Romilly's uphill battle against the atrocities of the penal code. In 1810 a bill to abolish the death penalty for shoplifting was rejected by the House of Lords; Manners-Sutton and six other bishops joining the temporal peers in throwing it out. In 1813 a similar bill was rejected by the Lords, five bishops voting against it. Boys of fourteen continued to be hanged for theft.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

(To be continued)

## Correspondence

OSCAR WILDE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Readers of the *Freethinker* are, no doubt, tired of this discussion. I still maintain that my memory is not at fault; but, really, whether or no Lord Alfred uttered the words I attributed to him is a matter of no moment.

What I desired to indicate in my first letter was, that Wilde was a most undesirable companion for any young man, and that Queensberry was justified in taking the strongest action in order to terminate his son's intimacy with him.

The downfall of Alfred Taylor was caused by Wilde and others like him. Wilde took part in the orgies at Taylor's flat in Westminster, and this unfortunate ex-public school boy, who dissipated his fortune in the company of sexual perverts, was convicted and imprisoned.

EDGAR SYERS

[This correspondence is closed.—ED.]

## DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—Before Mr. Taylor tries to convict Marxists of ignorance of the history of philosophy, he will do well to look nearer home. He says that metaphysical theory starts with noumena, not phenomena. This is true of some metaphysicians, but certainly not of Kant, who proved to his own satisfaction, and that of a host of disciples, that noumena were unknowable.

Mr. Taylor denies that any metaphysician has yet presented the theory of a world in which nothing happens. May I remind him of Plato in antiquity, and Bradley, Bosanquet, McTaggart and other metaphysicians in modern times, who deny the reality of time and space? Obviously in a timeless and spaceless universe nothing can happen, though we may have the illusion that it does. This inversion of common sense naturally provokes reaction, and no one denies that there are philosophers (e.g., Bergson) who try to combine metaphysics with a belief in time. But it is the Idealists who carry the bigger guns in academic estimation.

Mr. Taylor accuses Marxists of ignorance of such developments as Critical Realism. For my part, I read the critical Realists (Santayana, Drake, Strong, etc.) years before I heard of Dialectical Materialism, and am aware of their points of contact. What Mr. Taylor fails to see is that the main points in Marxist philosophy (the union of theory and practice, the solution of theoretical conundrums by action, not by logic-chopping, and therefore the final futility of metaphysics) were outlined as long ago as 1845, while the Critical Realists' "animal faith" was not heard of till our own day. Marx therefore can claim priority over these academic innovators.

Mr. Taylor spoils his case by counting as Materialists writers like Mach, Clifford and Russell who are nothing of the sort and expressly repudiate the title.

Of course the later nineteenth and twentieth century developments of science have been in the direction of Dialectical Materialism, even when not consciously Marxist. Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* is largely occupied in pointing this out. But Mr. Taylor is

too anxious to make a case against Marxists and to trot out the familiar bogeys of "religious fixity," "Lenin-worship," and so on, even to trouble to study what he attacks.

To cite as evidence of "rapprochement between Communism and Christianity," a few random sentences from a symposium to which both Communists and Christians contributed, without even naming the contributors from whom they are quoted, is about the limit even in anti-Communist polemic. However, we live and learn.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

## Obituary

JOSEPH CARRUTHERS

WE regret to announce the death of Mr. Joseph Carruthers of Blackburn at the age of 65. Mr. Carruthers was a member of the local Branch, and was connected with the Freethought movement some 30 years ago. All the time he has been a regular reader of the *Freethinker*, and was much respected by all who knew him. His remains were cremated at Carleton, near Blackburn, on May 11.—J.S.

## 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, Dr. H. Mannheim—"The Nazi Penal System."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Inn Restaurant, 252-254 Westminster Bridge Road, three doors from County Hall), Dinner and Dance, on Saturday, May 25. Reception 6.30. Dinner 7.0. Tickets 4s. 6d. each, from the Secretary, 15 Cambridge Gardens, N.W.6.

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 6.30, Mr. J. W. Barker.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond) : 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury. 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, Mrs. N. B. Buxton.

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

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket) : 8.0, Saturday. Birkenhead Park Entrance, 8.0, Sunday. Birkenhead Park Entrance, 8.0, Monday. Catherine Street, off Grange Road, 8.0, Tuesday. Well Lane Corner, 8.0, Wednesday. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at these places.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. Meet at Rubery Tram Terminus at 3.30 p.m., for a Ramble. Tea will be arranged.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum) : 7.15, Mr. H. G. Liem (China)—"Hands off China."

BRIERFIELD : 3.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY (Market) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

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

NELSON (Chapel Street) : 7.15, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton. NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SCOTBOTHOM (Rossendale) : 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton. SOUTHEND BRANCH N.S.S. (Marine Parade) : Sunday afternoon, Mr. G. Taylor will speak.

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