

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### Light on the Darkness

It was in no spirit of sarcasm that it was said last week I would endeavour to help Miss Dorothy Sayers in two directions. One was to explain to her what was the real position of Freethought in relation to Christianity, the other to throw some light, if she would permit me, on the true nature of fundamental Christian beliefs. I can make no sharp division of these two aspects because they overlap and interlap at so many points. But I do wish to emphasize the important truth, generally overlooked, that Christian dogmas are held by those who do not understand them; whilst the Freethinker rejects them because he does. For example, if I wished to know the routine of Christian ceremonies, the number of Christian dogmas—of which Miss Sayers appears to be so staunch a supporter—or what Christians are expected to believe, I would consult a well-informed clergyman, or an accepted Christian manual. But if I wished to understand these dogmas and ceremonies, I should leave parsons and manuals on one side, and turn to the anthropologist, the historian, the sociologist, and the psychologist. Take, for example, the confusion inherent in the following quite common statement by professional preachers, and B.B.C. parsonic auxiliaries, repeated by Miss Sayers:—

The rival philosophies of humanism, enlightened self-interest and mechanical progress, have broken down, followed by the conclusion that what is wanted is more specific dogma.

Now in what sense have the philosophies mentioned broken down? I do not know, by the way, what is meant by mechanical progress. It is something, I assure Miss Sayers, that is quite unknown to sociologists. Probably Miss Sayers really means progress in mechanics, or in mechanical appliances. But that certainly has not broken down. Progress in this direction has been very rapid. The trouble is that the development of the social sense has not kept pace with our "mechanical" discoveries. This is a feature of modern times

that has struck most observers. But it is not the thesis of Miss Sayers. Her case is that civilization has broken down because it has left Jesus Christ on one side.

\* \* \*

### Has Civilization Failed?

I think all that really emerges from the case as stated by Miss Sayers is that certain ethical teachings have not had the force we would wish them to have. But that is not peculiar to non-religious teachings; it is common to most teachings, including those that centre round Jesus Christ. But "broken down" is one of those extravagant, and ultimately worthless, statements which make up so much of the Christian case. Every teaching breaks down somewhere and at some time—that is there are always people who do not carry it out in practice. "Thou shalt not lie" has broken down, and always will break down somewhere or the other, and in no direction has it broken down more frequently than in connexion with Christian propaganda. Even the rule of a thieves' kitchen "Thou shalt not peach on a pal," breaks down here and there, or so many thieves would not be captured. I am not foolish enough to believe that we are now at war out of sheer benevolence and the desire to help other people. Only a politician would make that statement and only a fool would believe it. But allowing for the play of self-interest, it is still unquestionable that there is, serving as an animating force, a conviction that the conduct of Germany is an outrage on human decency, and that if no reliance is to be placed on the word of the German Government, if one nation is to regard itself as ordained to ride roughshod over others, then the very basis of civilization is threatened. I repeat that good principles are always breaking down somewhere or other, with both individuals and nations, with those in love with dogma and with those who have no religious dogmas at all. Miss Sayers, assuming the air of a professional discoverer of self-created mysteries, unearths a commonplace and announces her find with the air of a Columbus discovering a new world.

I would ask Miss Sayers seriously to consider, using her own test of failure, whether there has ever been in the history of the world a more decisive failure than religion has been, and particularly that brand of religion known as Christianity. After all, the world of Christianity was built upon belief in Jesus Christ. And Jesus was, in Miss Sayers' opinion, an inseparable part of the godhead. Nearly fifty generations of people have lived and died with the Christian Church as a dominant feature in their conscious lives. For very many Christian dogmas were propounded in circumstances where they could not be questioned, save at the risk of losing liberty or life. And we are now faced with a crisis on the result of which, to a greater extent than has ever before been the case, the future of civilization depends. Is not this an indica-

tion of the breakdown of anything, a thousand times more deadly in its implications than anything that can be cited concerning breakdowns in other directions? I submit the case to Miss Sayers, and I beg her not to imagine that she will meet the situation with a recitation of enigmatical religious dogmas, or clichés concerning the "Christ-life." That form of verbiage ought not to deceive a schoolboy.

\* \* \*

#### Christian Origins

Now for another application of Miss Sayers' illustration of the simile of the pea-shooter and the machine-gun, although this time it is the lady who is in possession of the pea-shooter, and she is not even shooting in the right direction. Miss Sayers over and over again asserts the overpowering value of "dogma." But the essence of a dogma, particularly a religious one, is that it must not be questioned and need not be understood. The moment it is understood it loses its value as a dogma. The position is as Mr. Belloc says, that, having come to the conclusion that the Church is to be trusted, "I accept what she teaches and trust her more than I do the evidence of my own senses." Miss Sayers and Mussolini and Hitler, and many other dictators all have a profound faith in dogma. Miss Sayers' thesis is that you cannot preserve civilization without Christianity; you cannot have Christianity with dogma; and the Church alone can supply the dogma needed. There is plenty of religion being taught in the Church, in the schools, etc., but to her it is dogma of the wrong kind, or it is not sufficiently emphasized. Preachers argue when they should confine themselves to dogmatic assertions. I agree with her that discussion in or from the pulpit is a dangerous practice—to religion. The moment you begin to discuss a dogma you admit it may be wrong.

It is at this point that I feel I may be of use to Miss Sayers. She wishes merely to believe Christianity, and I want her to understand it. I want her to realize that the pea-shooter she is using is not aimed even at the right object, that the real meaning of Christian dogmas and doctrines is not to be found in Church teachings or pious commentaries, but in the beliefs and practices of existing groups of primitive peoples, who in turn lead us back to the twilight of human intelligence—to the very earliest phases of human society.

For example. There is no more force to-day in dwelling on the "miracle" of the Virgin Birth than there is in insisting on the historic reality of Hans Anderson's fairy tales. That virgin births do not occur to-day is quite plain. But there are plenty of contemporary instances in which it is believed, sincerely believed, that children are born as incarnations of tribal spirits, in which the co-operation of mere man as necessary to the birth of a baby is strongly denied. As it happens we know the history of this queer belief, and readers of works such as Hartland's *Legend of Perseus*, and other modern works on anthropology, and students of customs still existing in this and in many "civilized" countries, know the history of one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian Church. There are still tribes of people who believe that every baby owes its existence to a liaison between a woman and a tribal spirit. Fatherhood is a later discovery, but one can trace this belief in virgin births, first as true of all, then confined to the birth of great men, and finally restricted to semi-gods who have been incarnated in a human body to teach and lead mankind. In ancient Egypt there were numerous miraculous births of this kind, and there were also existing many analogues of the sacred trinity.

Perseus was not the only god who came to earth without an earthly father. Egypt gives us, among

others, the Virgin Isis suckling the newly-born Horus, and the picture is so close to Jesus and the Virgin that it has been taken by Christians as a representation of the Christian legend. Frazer well sums up the matter by saying:—

Tales of virgin mothers are relics of an age of childish ignorance when men had not yet recognized the intercourse of the sexes as the true cause of offspring. That ignorance, still shared by the lowest of existing savages, was doubtless once universal among mankind.

What is the use of Miss Sayers telling the unbeliever that the Virgin Birth of Jesus is a dogma of the church, when on receipt of the information the informed mind automatically places such a belief as belonging to "the lowest of existing savages"? Pea-shooters are really of no use against machine-guns.

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#### Faith and Fact

Another dogma associated with Jesus is that of the incarnated god. This, too, is as common as dish-water. There are not many primitive tribes in existence that have not one or more incarnate gods, and we had a very pale revival of this in the Coronation Service of George VI. In all parts of the primitive, and even of the ancient classical world, we have stories of a god who taught man agriculture, or language, or writing, or something or other. These ideas grow more and more elaborate as we work backward, and the Christian Eucharist, which is, to the modern Christian, the symbolical eating of the body and blood of Jesus, is derived from the actual practice of creating a god by the ceremonial execution of a man, and the transference of the "divine" qualities to the worshipper. It is in the fact of eating a man-god that the central doctrine of the Christian religion, the Eucharist, begins, and although Cicero could say in his day, referring to the pagan form of the Eucharist, that no one could be "so insane as to believe that the thing he feeds on is a god," in a comparatively short time the world witnessed that primitive doctrine fully restored in the ceremonies of the Christian Church. If Miss Sayers will turn to *Christian Myth and Ritual*, written by, I think, a professing Christian (E. O. James, 1933) she will find plenty of keys to the understanding of her beloved dogmas.

I will not now pursue this subject further, I have been concerned only with making clear, if possible to Miss Sayers, but in any case to others, that it is not the apologetic parson, trying to adapt his creed to modern thought who is deepest in the mire of misunderstanding, but those who try to force dogma on people who understand Christianity and have deliberately rejected it. Miss Sayers' case is really one of pea-shooter against machine-gun. As I have so often said, the educated Freethinker understands and can explain Miss Sayers. What I really am curious about is how she would explain the Freethinker and his view of life and religion. And I ask her to bear in mind the important consideration that Freethinkers began where Miss Sayers now is. They began by believing in religion, and gave it up in the face of ascertained facts. The Christian began with Christianity and still holds to it, despite all that disproves it. We can understand why the Christian clings to his religion. Can Miss Sayers explain why the Freethinker gave up religion altogether? Merely shrieking for more dogma, to make extravagant and foolish assertions as to the dependence of ethics upon Jesus Christ, is to set out to fight with the feeblest of weapons an enemy armed with the latest weapons science can give him. Worse than that, Miss Sayers has thought so much of her pea-shooter that she has forgotten to bring along with her even the peas.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## History's High Spot

As if day had cloven the skies  
At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,  
Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,  
Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

Shelley, "Ode to Liberty."

FEW events were so well worth celebrating as the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the French Revolution. Yet, even in France itself, reactionary hirelings posted protesting bills on the walls and hoardings, and in England the very respectable press damned the event with faint praise, making too much of the military side-shows, and ignoring the tremendous symbol of the whole occurrence.

In plain truth, the celebration should have represented the homage felt by the sons and daughters of Democracy of 1939 for the France of 1789, the tribute paid by grateful children to fine and brave forefathers, whose intellectual and moral heritage they valued. The French Revolution was history's great explosion, and has completely changed the face of the world. It was as significant as the Renaissance, which revived a dead world. The Renaissance was the rebirth of learning, but the great Revolution was the upheaval of humanity against tyranny. It was the first time in human history that the common people rose against tyrants and oppressors and actually seized power themselves. Not only that, but it was a successful effort to replace the rule of the haphazard and arbitrary by a social order based on reason and justice, a social order which might be truly human, and not a system by which an entire nation was exploited for the petty vanities of a mere handful of half-witted voluptuaries. Such a tremendous event was not graceful, for:—

The brute despair of trampled centuries  
Leaped up with one hoarse yell and snapped its bands,  
Groped for its right with horny, callous hands,  
And stared around for god with blood-shot eyes.  
What wonder if those palms were all too hard  
For nice distinctions.

England, although a practical rather than an idealistic country, had a hand in the making of the French Revolution, or in the circumstances which prepared the way for this extraordinary event. Voltaire in his eager youth spent three years in this country, and learnt to speak and write English. During those years he mastered the philosophy of Bacon, Newton and Locke, the critical works of the early English Freethinkers, and the theory of political liberty as understood in England. These doctrines, presented later by Voltaire's brilliant genius and matchless style, and circulating in a country prepared by tyranny to receive them, acted as a powerful solvent on the intellectual basis of French society. In its turn, the Revolution had a tremendous effect on English politics. It influenced English history more powerfully than any other event, although in most unexpected ways. It gave a completely new direction to the statesmanship of Pitt, it shattered and rendered ineffectual for a whole generation one of the great parties of the State, and it altered our foreign policy.

All Europe was startled by the Revolution, but it was the capture of the Bastille which fired men's imaginations and roused their passions. People had regarded the French monarchy as a splendid, powerful, enduring thing, yet, in the twinkle of an eye, it was swept away. A national army was in being independent of the Crown, a Parliament was in session, and the whole Feudal System toppling into ruin. All these things electrified Europe, especially in England, and the country was sharply divided. Fox threw

himself into the revolutionary cause with all the ardour he had shown on behalf of American independence. Pitt, as became a statesman, was cautious and reserved, but Burke ransacked the dictionary to express his indignation, and used a vivid imagination to influence the electorate. In sonorous and impassioned periods he depicted the sufferings of the French Aristocracy, provoking the effective reply of Thomas Paine, which has since echoed round the world: "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird."

The Tories were in power in England, and war was declared against France. The great struggle had begun, which was to split our politics into new complexions and fresh combinations. The immediate effect of the war was to stop all progress in social reform. Things were nearly as bad in England as they had been in France, and wise and temperate reform was demanded. But an insane reaction set in. Physical distress co-operated with political discontent to produce a state of disaffection such as the whole preceding century had never seen, and thirty years of cave-men politics brought England to the very verge of a revolution.

There was a real cause for complaint. The social life of the mass of the people was actually worse than in the Middle Ages, and the penal code was a disgrace to civilization. Working hours were excessive, and even little children were forced to do hard work. People were hanged for stealing goods over the value of five shillings, and executions took place in the open air. At that time English people were the most drunken in the world. It permeated all classes of society, and to be "drunk as a lord" was a commonplace. Some of the forms of sport were brutal, such as bull-baiting and cock-fighting. The prize-ring was then a degraded pastime. The slave trade was a huge vested interest. Insane people were treated with incredible barbarity, and the lunatics in Bedlam were on show. There were nearly two hundred offences on the Statute Book punishable by death. Skulls lined the top of Temple Bar, and rotting corpses hung on gibbets along the Edgware Road. Every few weeks processions of condemned criminals to Tyburn made a holiday for Londoners. Bath-rooms were luxuries reserved for the rich, and even Windsor Castle was so insanitary that cess-pools were found in the foundations. Except for the flower of the working-class, the ordinary people lived under conditions that brought our boasted civilization into utter contempt, and as late as 1870, thousands of children were not only ignorant but verminous.

Reform was stimulated by the humanitarian philosophy of Shaftesbury and Voltaire, and by Rousseau's sentiment. The humanitarian movement also received powerful support from the French Revolution with its declaration of the rights of the people, and gradually, almost imperceptibly, altered the aspect of English life. There was a slow but gradual growth of decency, refinement, and the home life of the masses began to improve slowly, but surely. A desire for education manifested itself by the formation of Mechanics' Institutes, and the circulation of informative literature by high-minded publishers. In the "stormy 'forties" of the nineteenth century the Chartist Movement voiced emphatically the need of political reform. The founding of the Co-operative Movement and the formation of the National Secular Society were two very important factors for progress. But it was not until 1870 that free national education removed the stigma of illiterateness from the English people. Since that day progress has been very rapid, and the Labour Movement now champions the workers, and takes a share in the Government of the country.

The bad, old order has passed away, and human society has been made new. The cooler blood of the English saved this country from the dramatic incidents which marked this period of transition in France. But though more quietly effected, the change in England has been as momentous and as permanent as on the Continent. The heroes of the French Revolution fought for Freedom, for our freedom of the world. Let us see that they are never forgotten.

MIMNERMUS

## L'Affaire Dreyfus

(Concluded from page 326)

It is impossible for an Englishman to disentangle the confused issues of the Dreyfus affair, unless he understand that it occurred at a time when a veritable anti-semitic crusade was being preached throughout France by Edouard Drumont, the editor of the *Libre Parole*; Rochefort, the editor of *L'Intransigeant*; Odelin, the tutor of the army-cramming establishment in the Rue des Postes; le Père Didon, the Dominican monk, and le Père du Lac, the Jesuit priest, who in articles, sermons and academic lectures daily appealed to the Roman Catholic youth of France to rise in the name of their country and rid the army of Jewish influence! Didon, too, was the confessor of General de Boisdeffre, *chef d'état-major*, exercising great influence over him.

In the French army, the officers are divided into two classes: the *calotins*<sup>2</sup> and the anti-clericals—and in the latter category are included Jews, Freethinkers and even Protestants: the *calotins* are those who, belonging for the most part to rich families or those of ancient lineage, have been educated at Jesuit or Benedictine colleges: the *calotins*—those who take sides with the priests—are often, but not always, royalists at heart, who despise the *bourgeoisie* from which spring the other officers of humbler social status. It was these *calotins* who were the enemies of Dreyfus, and who, being incited to fury by the exhortations of Dominican and Jesuit hot-gospellers in their mad passion to gain control of the army, were responsible for the flagitious behaviour of the French Staff. The Dreyfus case revealed the intense, fierce hatred which French Roman Catholics in those days harboured for their compatriots who were Freethinkers, Protestants or Jews: a hatred which can only be compared with that of the Turk for the Armenian: a hatred fostered in the atmosphere of sneaking and espionage which prevailed in all French Jesuit colleges. Much capital for instance was made out of the fact that Scheurer Kestner, Dreyfus's champion in the Senate, was a Protestant. Reaction after the Dreyfus affair led to the political defeat of the *calotins* and threw all influence into the hands of the anti-clericals, so that General André, a politician-soldier, was appointed war-minister: French officers of every faith look back to-day with horror on his administration: under André, it became a military crime to attend Mass: indeed, religious persecution was rife in the Army: thus in their turn many *calotins* were made victims of spies and blackmailers: they were hoist with their own petard!

At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 the anti-clerical officer was top-dog, nevertheless Foch, a most sincere Catholic, was given his appointment by Clemenceau, an Agnostic, who was nevertheless a loyal Frenchman! The *calotin* still remains even to-day after the Great War in which, through the heroism

and self-sacrifice of many French priests, the Roman Catholic Church regained much of its lost influence. On the whole, I believe, the *calotins* made the best fighting officers; they displayed at all times sublime courage and a profound sense of duty.

Besides Generals Mercier, Gonse, de Boisdeffre and de Pellieux, some despicable characters emerged from the Dreyfus affair; Commandant du Paty de Clam, who years afterwards, on his death-bed, implored and obtained pardon of Dreyfus: Rochefort of *L'Intransigeant*, Drumont of the *Libre Parole* and Commandant Walsin Esterhazy; but some very noble ones too: there were Zola, Maitres Labori and Demange and Colonel Picquart, who made the greatest sacrifices in the interests of truth and justice. Two distinguished Frenchmen, Georges Clemenceau and Anatole France, were also strong supporters of Dreyfus. Colonel Schwartzkoppen, the German military attaché, might easily have cleared Dreyfus's character, as he knew that Esterhazy was the real traitor, but he had been commanded to remain silent, and a Prussian is ever an officer firstly and only secondly a gentleman!

Schwartzkoppen hurriedly quitted Paris never to return on November 17, 1897, the very day after Mathieu Dreyfus had publicly written to the Minister of War denouncing Esterhazy as the real author of the *bordereau*, as the paid spy for whose crimes his brother, Alfred, was suffering life-imprisonment.

The sight of this execrated Jew being reviled and insulted as he passed through the terrible ordeal of degradation in 1895 made an awful impression upon me; indeed, I could not shake off the feeling of melancholy which depressed me for many days. On my way back from Autenil races one Sunday, three years later, I saw Esterhazy assault Picquart in the Avenue Henri Martin; but, much to my delight, it was Esterhazy who received the thrashing. In this unjust world it is not always the most virtuous who is the most muscular!

Dreyfus suffered his degradation on January 5, 1895, on the parade ground of the *Ecole Militaire*: peeping through the railings which surround the *polygone*, in the company of a group of idlers and workmen loitering on their way to earn their daily bread and amidst cries of *Conspuez le traître*, I witnessed the lace being cut from Dreyfus's uniform and his sword being broken across the knee of an armourer of the *Garde Républicaine*. But it was not until January, 1898, that Zola published his famous article "J'accuse" in the *Aurore*, and set the mills of Justice in motion. It was Mathieu Dreyfus who carried conviction to Zola, that his unhappy brother, Captain Dreyfus, had been falsely convicted. One morning in November, 1896, the *Matin* published a facsimile of the famous *bordereau*, which played so important a part in the drama. It was not for a year, however, that this paper fell into the hands of M. de Castro, a stockbroker, who used often to make bargains for Commandant Esterhazy, a keen gambler on the Bourse. De Castro was struck by the resemblance of the writing to that of his client, and at once meticulously compared Esterhazy's letters with the *bordereau* and the damning secret was revealed. De Castro at once communicated with Scheurer Kestner and he, in his turn, told Mathieu Dreyfus, who carried the evidence to Zola, who could not rest until he had righted the wrong: on January 13, 1898, he published a letter to the President of the French Republic in the *Aurore*, in which he accused the H.Q. Staff of having obtained a verdict against Dreyfus by illegal methods, and of having covered up their illegality by ordering the members of a second court martial to find Esterhazy not guilty, although they knew him to be guilty of treason; of crying: "away with this man and release unto us Barabbas." This letter ex-

<sup>2</sup> A word derived from *calotte*, the skull-cap worn by Roman Catholic priests.

pressed the burning indignation of the great writer and set all France ablaze.

Thus by two entirely independent lines of investigation, through Picquart in 1896, and through de Castro in 1897, the responsibility of having written the *bordereau* was brought home to Esterhazy; but by that time all the foulest passions of anti-semitism had been aroused and the cruelty of Jesuit bigotry had been awakened, and so the powers of falsehood and hatred were able to delay and pervert the course of Justice; thus two more long years crept by before Dreyfus obtained his freedom.

Dreyfus was again found guilty—but this time with *circumstances atténuantes*—by the second court martial which retried him at Rennes in 1899; he was nevertheless pardoned by the President of the Republic. Subsequently, however, it having been proved that vital facts had been withheld from the second court martial at Rennes, the Court of Appeal in 1904 pronounced his complete innocence of all the charges on which he had been tried, and his full rank and status in the army were restored to him. He retired into private life when he had vindicated his honour.

His son, I believe, behaved with the utmost gallantry in the Great War against Germany.

The *cagoulard* conspiracy to overthrow the French Republic, which came to light in 1937, has much the same origin as the Dreyfus affair, it has derived its nick-name, moreover, from a similar source, the *cagoulard* being one who wears the *cagoule* (the conical hood or cowl with eyeholes placed by monks on the heads of penitents, such as can be seen in pictures of the victims of the *auto da fé* on their way to execution). Since 1895, however, the political power wielded by the Roman Catholic Church has much diminished in France, and nowadays the sly Jesuit or cunning Dominican has to seek more congenial atmosphere for his machinations: he is compelled to work underground.

Dreyfus, himself, died about two years ago. To the end he remained a simple, retiring man of very noble character: he never bore any ill-will towards the foul creatures who had treated him with such vile cruelty. Indeed, at all times, he forbade any public reference to the fatal miscarriage of justice of which he had been the victim. To the end he remained a loyal, self-sacrificing soldier of France and the most patriotic of Frenchmen; so brave and loyal was he in fact that his name deserves to be enshrined with that of the noblest of Jews of all time: with the name of Benedict Spinoza.

H. DE MONTMORENCY

### If I were God

Gin I were God sitting up there aboon,  
Wearied no doot, noo a'my darg wis daen,  
Deaved wi' the flockin' angels hairse wi' singin',  
To some cloud edge, I'd daunder furth, an' feth  
Look ower an' see hoo things were gaun aneath.

Syne gin I saw hoo man I'd made masel,  
Had started in tae pooshen, shoot an' fell,  
Tae reive an' rape an' fairly mak a hell  
O' my braw birlin' earth—a hale weeks wark.

I'd cast my coat again, rowe up ma sark;  
An' or they'd time to lench a second ark.  
Tak back my word an', send anither spat.  
Droon oot the hale hypothie, dicht the sklats,  
Own my mistak', an' since cleared the brod.  
Stert a' thing ower again, gin I were God.

### The Advent of Islam

WHEN the Western Roman State was tottering towards its fall, the frontiers of the Empire were penetrated by hordes of Teutonic barbarians from North-Eastern Europe, and the invaders were rapidly absorbed in the territory they had ravaged, and their civilization, such as it was, was adopted from that of the Latin communities they had subjected to their sway.

When, however, in the seventh century of our era, the Arabian Peninsula became the centre of the cult of Mohammed, there was little to resist a Moslem invasion of the Asiatic provinces of the Eastern Empire. Apart from a fortified wall that had been erected to protect Syria against the depredations of the nomads of the Desert—a defence entirely disproportionate to those that had been constructed along the Rhine and Danube—nothing existed to withstand an Arabian onslaught on Byzantium's eastern possessions.

Indeed, invasion had never been seriously regarded by the military authorities. Both to Rome and the adjacent Persia, this Asiatic region constituted a seat of inspection only. For it had long continued a recognized caravan route through which spices, perfumes, fruits and other Oriental products were transported. Nor is this defencelessness surprising when we remember that the Peninsula was the habitat of wandering Bedouins split into tribes ever engaged in armed conflict one with another, or pillaging the commodities carried through their dwelling districts.

So vague were Christian ideas concerning the Moslem evangel, that John of Damascus thought it a novel Christian heresy similar in character to many others that then distracted the religious world. Even when the Arabian Prophet died in 632 there was little to suggest that in two short years a wave of Moslem enthusiasm would soon lead to the speedy overthrow of both Roman and Persian dominion in the Near East. When the uprising of the Arabs began, the Imperial authorities were completely unprepared, for no one even dreamed of the impending danger. Also, the long sustained hostilities between Persia and the Empire had severely strained the military and monetary resources of the two rival Powers.

In the words of the eminent French historian, the late Professor Henri Pirenne, recorded in his *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (Allen and Unwin, 1939, 10s. 6d.): "The Arab conquest which brought confusion upon both Europe and Asia, was without precedent. The swiftness of its victory is comparable only with that by which the Mongol Empires of Attila, Jenghiz Khan and Tamerlane were established. But these Empires were as ephemeral as the conquest of Islam was lasting. This religion has its faithful to-day in almost every country where it was imposed by the first Caliphs. The lightning-like rapidity of its diffusion was a veritable miracle as compared with the slow progress of Christianity."

Pirenne also compares the long-delayed successes of the Germanic hordes and, after so protracted a period, with such mean results, with the rapid advances of the Arabs and, needless to remark, much to the discredit of the northern barbarians. For the Arabians annexed extensive territories previously governed by the Eastern Empire from its capital Constantinople. As a result of the Battle of Yarmok in 636 A.D., the whole of Syria became Moslem, while Persia and Mesopotamia were taken two years later. Then Egypt was assailed and occupied, and the restless Arabs swept over the Imperial provinces of Northern Africa. Although the Moslems were favoured by certain circumstances, it remains astounding that permanent conquests on a scale so vast

were completed by a comparatively small number of invaders.

The civilization and culture of the conquered countries were far superior to those of the children of the Desert. Yet, although they were not assimilated to the native populations of the lands they overran, they proved apt pupils of their subjected stocks. They eagerly learnt science from the Greeks, while Hellenic and Persian art stimulated their sense of beauty.

Pirenne points out that Islam was not a persecuting or even a missionary creed, at least at its inception. So long as its objects were obedient to Allah and paid their taxes they remained unmolested. "There was no propaganda," declares the historian, "nor was any such pressure applied as was exerted by the Christians after the triumph of the Church. 'If God had so desired,' says the Koran, 'He would have made all humanity a single people,' and it expressly condemns the use of violence in dealing with error. It requires only obedience to Allah, the outward obedience of inferior, degraded and despicable beings, who are tolerated, but live in subjection. It was this that the infidel (in this case, the Christian) found so intolerable and demoralizing. His faith was not attacked; it was simply ignored. . . . It was because his religion compelled the conscientious Muslim to treat the infidel as a subject, that the infidel came to him, and in coming to him broke with his country and his people." Also, in addition to this, many Christians became converts to Islam for purely material self-interested reasons.

The Moslem Power determined to exercise its authority over the entire Mediterranean region and, for a time practically succeeded in doing so. It seized Rhodes and Cyprus, and installed itself in Crete and Sicily. Constantinople was repeatedly, if unsuccessfully besieged in the seventh century, but it was not until the fifteenth that the celebrated Eastern Capital succumbed to the attacks of the Moslem Turks.

The Arabians captured Carthage, and thus ended the tragic history of that famous African city. For the ancient Carthaginian commercial capital was replaced by Tunis, whose harbour became the chief haven for Moslem vessels. With their newly constituted and highly efficient fleet they defeated the Byzantine naval forces. Now they were supreme at sea, the Arabs soon dominated nearly all the Mediterranean and mastered the greater part of Spain.

Newly converted to Islam, as they were, the Moors and Berbers of Northern Africa crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and invaded the Iberian Peninsula. Rodrigo, the last of the Gothic Kings of Spain was overthrown in the opening battle of 711 and his defeat was so decisive that the Spanish cities almost immediately opened their gates to Tarik the Moorish commander who, in the following year, with the aid of reinforcements, made himself master of the country. Shortly afterwards the Caliph of Damascus was proclaimed at Toledo as the sole sovereign of Spain.

The victorious Moslems now cast a covetous eye on the land beyond the Pyrenees. So, crossing the mountains, they penetrated Gaul as far as Autun, which they pillaged in 725 A.D. The Frankish ruler in Gaul was quite incapable of stemming the torrent, and was compelled to implore the assistance of Charles Martel, who proved victorious in a sanguinary encounter with the Arab Commander, Abd-er-Rhman in 732. Although the Saracen leader perished on the battlefield, Pirenne shows that this engagement had not the outstanding importance that historians have attached to it. "It marked the end of a raid," he observes, "but its effect was not really decisive. If Charles had been defeated all that would have happened would have been that the Muslims would have pillaged the country more

extensively." It is certainly significant that in 735, three years later, Arles fell to the Moslems, while later still, they seized Avignon and ravaged the surrounding district.

Even after Charles had inflicted another defeat on his adversaries they were still in Gaul in 739, and after several unsuccessful sieges, twenty years passed before Pippin, the son of Charles Martel, brought the attack on Narbonne to a victorious conclusion, and it was only then that Arabian expansion in Western Europe came to an end.

The conflict continued to rage in the Mediterranean with varying fortune, but even Charlemagne after capturing Barcelona, was unable to profit by his success, so long as the Arabian fleet controlled the inland sea. In 809 and 810 the Moslems still held possession of Corsica and Sardinia; the Italian ports were plundered, and the Byzantine and Venetian navies defeated in 840. By 876 the Saracens had secured so great a hold on Italy that the Pope was reduced to the indignity of purchasing immunity from Moslem raiders by "the annual payment of 25,000 *manusi* of silver."

Nevertheless, Moslem depredations continued, and the Arabians entrenched themselves in the vicinity of Rome itself. The Campagna became a solitude, and it long seemed doubtful whether the Crescent would not ultimately supplant the Cross throughout Latin Europe, when serious internal dissensions and other factors weakened the Islamic States, thus enabling the Western and Central European Communities to eventually prove victorious in a contest that continued for several centuries. Yet the Moslems still retain practically all their African and Asiatic ascendancy over the Christian cults they superseded.

T. F. PALMER

### Curt Comment

"THE GUARDIAN" gives a life-like and almost credible account of "The Lord's Leisure"—a sermon by the Vicar of Rainbow Hill! Mr. Lindfield, the Rainbow Vicar, roughly summarizing the sort of excuse Jesus is said to have made for his indifference to human affairs, tells us "the apostles were surprised and keenly disappointed by the rather casual and dilatory way in which Jesus behaved during the great forty days. Jesus showed what we may without irreverence call a divine indifference." Mr. Lindfield is quite right: the Lord is like most Lords, a man of infinite leisure. And all the gods we ever heard of are the same.

Writers in the *Church Times* are concerned because, although the only actual hero of a Christening is the baby, there is always a priest present besides the parents, and sometimes a Choir. And now this is not considered enough. Several "god-fathers" ought to be on tap. Even then the church is almost empty, and it is proposed that the entire congregation should be present. The popularity of this nonsensical ceremony is such that at Sheffield Cathedral thirty to forty children at a time are "baptized"—a congregation in themselves, and usually a pretty noisy one. We suggest that passing-round the feeding-bottle would be a good introduction to Holy Communion besides keeping the kids while being "sprinkled" with cold water.

Dr. Hensley Henson is a bit hard on the preaching fraternity. He says: "No learning, ability or devotion in the pulpit can wake response from empty pews. The preacher's *raison d'être* is a congregation. If the last has disappeared the first has no apparent reason for remaining." Sound commonsense. But many churches have big endowments which perpetuate pulpits and preachers, centuries after congregations have ceased to congregate.

G.B.

## The Editor's Latest

*Almost An Autobiography: The Confessions of a Freethinker*, by Chapman Cohen; Pioneer Press; 280 pp.; 5 plates; 6s. net.

THIS volume—containing some memoirs of the President of the National Secular Society and Editor of the *Freethinker*—has been long overdue. That ancient autobiography which the Prophet Moses wrote, gave, as we all know, an excellent character to its hero-writer. Incidentally it narrated details of his own death and burial—which was carrying autobiography a bit too far.

Few autobiographies reveal half as much as a good biography. Even Dr. Johnson could never have told us as much about himself as Boswell has done. Rousseau's and St. Augustine's Confessions are said to have "half-revealed and half-concealed the soul within." Pepys and Evelyn tell us too much about other people to have much space left for all they might have said about two very interesting people—themselves. Is it possible that in the volume under review we have that rare thing, a candid autobiography?

It depends on what one looks for in a book by Mr. Cohen. We believe he has a genius for saying all he has to say, as a rule, in the fewest words possible. The vaster area he has here allowed himself may make us think he has changed his tactics. We should be wrong. Here the reader will find a very large number of topics condensed—sometimes into a paragraph or two, but in each case providing enough substance for the reader himself to expand into many pages of thought.

Like much that Mr. Cohen has done, there is here a novel form of presentation. It is an autobiography with a difference. One may have thought that this branch of literature had been specialized to exhaustion; here is a new one; and it has distinction in more ways than one.

Mr. Cohen is an exceptional man, who habitually underrates the value and importance of the long years of admirable work he has put where it was most sincerely needed, in a movement where—as G. W. Foote, once said—"the highest pay is a soldier's (1880) pay at the best, but more often none at all or less." He and his successor have often had to face the "less than nothing," which means a debt instead of credit.

The accession to the Presidency would have made a fascinating chapter of autobiography. The author has given us already some hints about it in his *Freethinker* controversy with Mr. Bernard Shaw. Under the weighty influence of the great Charles Bradlaugh and the powerful though genial G. W. Foote, the National Secular Society was in no mood to accept an inferior genius as its President. It is no reflection on Shaw's undoubted genius to say that as President of our fighting propagandist organization Shaw was far from our ideal, and Chapman Cohen was in every way fitted to lead us. It is just as well for a private member to supplement Mr. Cohen's autobiography to the extent of reminding readers that Cohen's election as President was unanimous then, and his continued support by the entire society without a rival, has continued down to the present day. As to "defections," I cannot recall anybody of importance to the movement who failed to support Cohen's election on Foote's death or subsequently.

The outstanding novelty of this autobiography is that it is a mixture of personal reminiscences, the history of an eventful contemporary movement and a most interesting and informative series of "Opinions,"

philosophical, political, scientific and social. These things are woven together by so expert a hand that they fit into and run smoothly in the medium he has chosen: it is like a long chatty visit to one's old schoolmaster: one listens with delight because of the personality of the speaker, and takes away weeks, months, or years of later food for thought.

There is a great deal of the unexpected about this many-sided fearless writer's work. I doubt, by the way, if Chapman Cohen cares to be called a "writer"; it is almost as bad as calling anybody a "reader"! Or worse still, a "talker"! It is probable too that many people will disagree with some of the things Mr. Cohen says. I imagine he will get a lot of critical comments—to put it mildly—on some of those audacities which he offers as axioms. But as he doesn't offer them as religious dogmas, it is always stimulating instead of sedative reading. Happily he has no congregation of "Yes men" to consider. His regular readers have long been trained to THINK, instead of swallowing only. This book will supply more encouragement to individual thinking than almost any book of the day.

It ought to be explained that this is a NEW book: not a reprint. It is a book to read and to keep, although we are sure that all who can afford to do so will want to give a copy to a friend. It will certainly make converts of those intelligent enough to read it, but it is far from being just one more propagandist publication. Beyond and above everything else it will gratify all who know Mr. Cohen, and delight many who now are introduced to the most scientifically equipped—and the most persuasive—advocate that Freethought ever had.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

## Aoid Drops

Sunday, May 26, was by the request of the King and the connivance of the Archbishop of Canterbury—a day of National prayer—that is it was a day of prayer for all who cared to pray. Tuesday, May 28, brought the news that Belgium had surrendered to Germany. God had plenty of time to give a considered answer. Can it be possible that there is a fifth column in heaven?

Hitler has an American Champion in the shape of the *Christian Century*, which, apparently, endorses the gangsters jack-booting over at least Europe, with probably the remainder of the world to follow. It denounces the war, in the hackneyed phrase "essentially a struggle between rival imperialisms." The *Church Times* suggests that the *Christian Century* should be given the Iron Cross. The journal appears to deserve it.

Something seems to have gone wrong. The *Universe* has been conducting a crusade of "holy communions" for General Gamelin, and claims to have recorded many thousand communions. And now General Gamelin has been replaced by General Weygand. It looks as though the sacramental wine was sour or perhaps the communicants did not make themselves quite clear.

Always ready to do anything that will promote the interests of "respectable" religion, the *Times*, which steadily refuses to publish letters on the "other side," gives publicity to the suggestion that the B.B.C. should have regular "Children's Night Prayers." We suspect that this is a parson-incited request, as was the early requests for regular religious services. At one stage the B.B.C. publicly announced that unless they received more letters expressing approval of the services they would be stopped. Parsons repeated the message from the pulpit—and the letters came. Why on earth should children be worried with a nightly B.B.C. service? They would much prefer—and would go to bed in a better

frame of mind—if they had something in the nature of a Hans Anderson as a nightcap. We have often heard children begging for a story before they went to bed, but we have never heard of them begging for a religious service.

A book just issued by the Student Christian Movement has the title *Suffering: Human and Divine*. In recent years this attitude is very common. We are to be cheered in our own suffering because someone else is suffering with us. But no decent-minded man or woman feels their own suffering less because someone else is suffering also. If Jones catches a fever he does not feel better because Smith, his neighbour catches it also. "God suffers with us." is a miserable apology with those who believe in God, for his blundering and clumsy methods. And how on earth, if the Christian God exists, can he suffer with us? Everyman's suffering has to be individual, although we may be cheered by the sympathy of others who suffer. But my neighbour does not share my toothache because he sympathizes with my suffering. But, granted a God, the thesis that he is suffering because he did not, or could not, do better than he has done is a reasonable thesis. Most of us feel sympathetic towards one who has made a mess of his job.

How the bigots have captured the B.B.C. on Sundays can be seen by a glance at one of the recent programmes provided. Here is a record of the religious element given during the day. At 9.30 a.m. there was a Service, and another from a "League of Youth" at 11.30 a.m. At 3 p.m. we had an "Empire" Youth Service, and a Children's Epilogue"—generally of a suitable mentality just before 6 p.m. At 7.10 p.m. we were given a "Peace of God" programme, and at 8 p.m. the long and particularly boring "Service" which the Churches have forced on to the B.B.C. now for many years. And finally, the usual "epilogue" at 10.45 p.m. Whether this means that the heavy Presbyterian hand of Sir John Reith is still operative with the Governors and Directors of the B.B.C., or whether we are given a sample of Mr. Ogilvie's pet beliefs, it is impossible to say. In any case so many members of Parliament are obviously in favour of these programmes that it is useless to approach them in the hope of a change. We trust that those who think that the work of Freethought is practically over will reflect a little in view of the above.

Professor A. Rappin, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, has written a book, *Jewish Fate and Future*, in which he discusses the fate of the mixture of peoples who are known as the Jewish race. They have to choose, he thinks, between anti-Semitism and assimilation—though he feels that perhaps in Palestine the Jewish community "will restore cohesion to the scattered limbs of the Jewish nation." He sorrowfully admits that the Jewish religion, which has in the past held the various units together, "cannot do so any longer." This is a notable admission. It means that Judaism is an anachronism based on a whole lot of nonsensical myths and legends, with folk-lore taken for history, and Prof. Rappin is clear-sighted enough to see it. But without its special mission, and its God, and the Chosen Race invention, what is the *raison d'être* of Judaism? The answer must be there isn't one. Judaism, like Christianity, must go; and the Jew must be—as in fact he is being—assimilated. That is the only answer to the Jewish problem.

The Vicar of Bournville writes to the *Times* to report that at Bournville they have a splendid open public park with no railings to exclude anybody. And to be in harmony with this aesthetic rule his Church has removed all the external Notice Boards which were once a blot on the landscape. We see only one flaw in the worthy parson's letter. It concludes—in a rather pathetic phrase: "No Railings. No Notice Boards. But we have not emptied the church yet!" But why not make the notice complete by adding "no more services"?

The Rev. Owen Rattenbury suggests that the third line in a verse of a well-known Hymn should be altered

so as to save Christian singers from lying every time they join in the Hymn which says of their churches:—

We are not divided,  
All one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine . . .

which line, he says, ought to read

Differing in doctrine

Mr. Rattenbury says there are many Christians who

hold superstitions with which I have no sympathy . . . they are in my church . . . I do not wish for any instrument of excommunication.

This parson at least stands for some kind of toleration. He says:—

Men and women do not need in a free world to be told what is right and what is wrong. . . . If principles are clear then they can decide for themselves.

Yes, but suppose they don't agree with Mr. Rattenbury's principles any more than they do with the application of them?

The recent work of an escaped Jew from Dachau, called *Dachau: The Nazi Hell*, is a terrible indictment of this uncivilized inhuman prison. The number of prisoners is not stated, the Nazis discreetly hiding the facts. It seems, however, that the figures of all the German Concentration Camps run into hundreds of thousands. The author, apparently an orthodox Jew, has not allowed his religious bias to exaggerate the sufferings of himself and his co-religionists (there is no need to say more than that they, like all the rest of Hitler's victims endure or die under intolerable cruelty.) What the author says is that Jews and other religious and racial victims are somewhat better off than what are called "political offenders." This class includes Freethinkers, Radicals, Communists (until the recent Russian "friendship" with Hitler), and all who have in any way stood up against the oppression of the German people. He makes one exception: the Student Christian Passivists who refuse to fight in any war: these get the worst treatment of all. This book throws a light, incidentally, on the hollowness of the plea that Hitler is waging a war on religion.

The *Cambridge Daily News* quotes Commissioner S. M. Bruce as saying that "the circulation of the Bible in Germany last year was 100 per cent more than in 1938." We are not impressed by these figures because these Bibles may not have been paid for. The evidence that they have been read is perhaps merely that so many vile deeds have been committed during this quoted period that Mr. Bruce may be pardoned for believing the Bible is read and acted upon in the Reich. He is probably quite wrong.

All the world sympathizes with the unhappy Dutch victims of the Nazi hate. Queen Wilhelmina's Proclamation does not lack dignity or appeal. Her regret that God had refused to attend to her countrymen's Prayers was absolutely proper in the circumstances, knowing as we do the singular popularity of prayer in the Netherlands in spite of its inevitable uselessness. But her Proclamation should not have concluded with yet another Prayer to the same Deity who has treated with scorn the widespread prayers of so many Dutch Christians. Is God illustrating His own sacred words: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh"?

With unusual infelicity the *Church of England Newspaper* quotes the words, "Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the Heathen." We have no objection to calling the Nazis Heathen: we can think of worse epithets which better fit the case. But why should the Allies remain still? And, may we suggest that if God is about to interfere between us and Germany, would it not be infinitely better if God did something worthy of His being "exalted" amongst the Allied and the once neutral lands of Europe? It would do the world precious little good if Hitler exalted God more than he does at present, and added the infamies of Torquemada to those of Goebbels and himself.

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# THE FREETHINKER

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## Sugar Plums

Readers of the *Freethinker* have very often read the statement, "The Best of Causes," and some may have wondered where it came from. A similar sentence was used by James Russell Lowell in describing the fight against slavery in America—a phenomenon that was upheld in Southern America by very sincere Christians and upheld by multitudes of Christians till it was forcibly abolished. Readers of the well-documented book by Mr. Cohen on Slavery will be acquainted with details on that point. But its use here was due to a letter from George Meredith to Foote, whose fine literary taste made him a very early admirer of the poet and novelist, long before he (Meredith) was generally recognized by the reading public. Meredith applied the words to the National Secular Society, and specially to the *Freethinker*. Here is the relevant passage:—

I know what it is to find myself standing in the public ways with a printer's block upon me. Your remarks on my verse have given me pleasure. You carry on a brave battle for the best of causes, personally profitless to you as you must know it to be.

The date of the letter is July 6, 1887. It was the tribute of one great writer to another.

Meredith's acquaintance with and admiration for Foote dated much further back than 1887. It began with the imprisonment of Foote for Blasphemy. He sent Foote some of his books while he was in prison. And after his release he wrote to Foote saying that if his name and pen would be of use to him they were at his service. How many would have refused such help from one of the calibre of George Meredith? They would have jumped at it, and have advertised it to their own advancement. But Foote was no tuft-hunter even when the tuft was worth hunting. He was a democrat in feeling as well as in profession. Foote's reply was that Meredith had enough difficulties to fight without adding to them the odium of writing for so notorious a paper as the *Freethinker*. We always counted that as an act of

which one's friends might feel proud. We emphasize that phrase "One's friends," for unless such an act is done quietly and without consciousness of its value it becomes nothing at all.

We are pleased to say that the attitude of the founder of this paper has been maintained. We have never invited anyone to write, but readers will know that we have never lacked a sufficiency of good writers, and have given our columns to many who have afterwards put to good use their trial runs in these pages. And many a professional journalist has written for us in order, as they said, to take the taste out of their mouths, of their daily job. "The best of causes" makes the most of men, even when man do not make the greater use of the best of causes.

The following is from a letter of one of our readers who has just joined the army:—

I think you will be interested to hear on joining the army last week I had no trouble whatever in getting myself registered as an Agnostic. This was not challenged, and the recruiting officer automatically substituted the affirmation for the oath without being asked.

The officer was evidently a gentleman who understood his duty.

On the other hand a letter received by the N.S.S. General Secretary reports from a man joining the Navy that the officer declined to register the man as an Atheist, but pressed him to be set down as a Presbyterian. A lie for the greater glory of God was a virtue to this person. The Society is taking up the matter with the Admiralty. We think that the lying statement of the Archbishop of Canterbury that this war is being waged for Christianity should be enough to make all Freethinkers insist on their rights.

All things considered the Annual Dinner of the West London Branch of the N.S.S. must be registered as a success. There was a good attendance, and everyone appeared to be in first-rate spirits. The Dinner was excellent, and the speeches commendably brief, thus enabling plenty of time to be given to the dancers. Mr. E. C. Saphin, President of the Branch, was in the chair, and was lively and active in a manner that gave the lie to his seventy-five years, joined in many of the dances. Thanks must also be given to Mrs. N. B. Buxton for her work in seeing that the evening went smoothly. The easier such gatherings go the harder the work of preparation.

Those who are interested in Freemasonry, shorn of the fantastic secrets that some have woven round it, will also be interested in a booklet on *The English and French Masonic Constitutions*, issued by Paillard (Paris) and Watts & Co. (London). It contains the Constitutions, in French and English drawn up since 1717, ending with the Grand Orient. Several of these constitutions lay it down that a Mason "will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious libertine." The Grand Orient differs from these in leaving out all mention of religion, and has no reference to stupid Theists and religious libertines. Things that are well known hardly call for mention. The published price of the booklet is 2s. 6d.

Rose Macaulay's very entertaining book *Going Abroad* has now reached the popular stage of a Collins' Sixpenny. Readers of the *Freethinker* will enjoy her numerous jocular joustings at many superstitions, which lose none of their "grip" by being sometimes spoken by a character who is a bishop. There is a world of satire in the title of the book her bishop is said to be writing: *Early Christian Heretics as Exemplified Among Modern Primitive Men*. We know so many of these modern primitive men! The Bishop says a "good word" for the Groupists: "I remember meeting a Chinese Missionary in Persia who told me that he considered it just the thing for the Japanese . . . There was something about them that might go down very well with the

coloured and primitive races." The Bishop himself liked to call them Oxford Groupists—but then he was a Cambridge man. "They're a plague of earwigs, tersely explained his son." It tells a good story relieved by abundant humour—and much good sense.

Professor Gilbert Murray's new publication, *Stoic Christian and Humanist* (Allen and Unwin and Watts, 5s.), is well worth reading by Christian and Freethinker alike. The four lectures are reprints of admirable addresses. The new Preface is an Essay on "what people call 'the Christian spirit,' but which we would just as soon call 'a humane spirit,' or 'a liberal spirit.'" In any case, says Murray, humanism is totally different from the spirit which inspired "the hell-ridden persecuting Christianities of various past ages." He thinks that we call things "Christian" simply because we feel that we must have some authority for our humaner feelings. We understand Prof. Murray, and we think his whole life work is characterized by a purely human (and humane) intention. His terminology differs from our own, but his politeness to pietists will not help him wherever these pietists see through his phrasology to his ideology, as may be gathered by his sad or indignant allusions to them in his preface:—

What I have written in this little book may, I fear, alienate or at least pain some of the friends with whom I have worked most closely for certain great humane causes. They may ask why I should write such criticism at all. If I cannot positively help the faith of the average man, can I not at least keep silent? My answer is that if these subjects are of importance to mankind, as I believe them to be, it is our duty to seek the truth about them.

And in the spirit of the N.S.S. Motto, he tells us what one learned and honest seeker after truth has discovered.

When the world is civilized enough to appreciate its really great men in the highest ranks of the men of his day will be found the name of James George Frazer. No anthropologist of his day has done more to throw light, not merely on the origins of religion, but also on the beginnings of our social customs and institutions. It is, indeed, in the application of his facts and theories to our own life that the great value of his work lies. That in some directions his theories have been challenged was to be expected; it is the quality of great men to create such differences. That he should not always have pushed his theories to their ultimate conclusion, is a fault common to many, but his statement that the guns had only been brought into position, and it was left to others to fire them, left no doubt as to the application of his work to current established religion. Not to have read Frazer leaves one's education incomplete.

A very strong incentive to send one to Frazer, and equally delightful to those who are not already directly acquainted with him, is provided in *James George Frazer; the Portrait of a Scholar*, by Angus Downie (Watts & Co., 5s.). It is not intended to be a critical study, but it does in the course of a brief 130 pages bring out the charming individuality of one who has left the impress of his work on his time. There is here and there in this study of Frazer a tendency to hero-worship, but that is to be expected, and without it we should have had a less interesting work. The great effect of the book should be to send new readers to Frazer, and to intensify for the man the admiration that must have existed for the wizard who has made the dead past live again in the life of the present. Perhaps Frazer would not agree with that last sentence. He would probably say that he had never ceased to stress the fact that our remote savage past was still alive to-day, and that more than once he had warned the world that our culture was but a thin veneer resting upon a savagery that might at any moment break through the crust bringing devastation with it. The present world situation has, unfortunately, justified the prophecy.

## Faint Hearts

We are all aware of the person in political and social movements who demands, first and foremost, *quick returns* as the price of his adherence. He has his counterpart in the commercial world. It has led there to an impatience in this blessed isle with the slow methods of research in industry because the results couldn't be promised in the lifetime of him who footed the bill. The consequence is that other countries who have taken the longer view have reaped the harvest. Many of those uneasy mortals seem to find it easy at the present day to attribute the sad state of affairs to the bankruptcy of science rather than to the bankruptcy of religion. But religion has had a respectable chance to make its presence felt. It has had both time and opportunity. Christianity has had two thousand years of power on an enormous scale, and has wielded that power in a totalitarian manner. Loud has it shouted, "All Hail the Power of Jesus's Name"; competently has it persecuted those who refused so to shout. Even so cautious a writer as John Morley stated that the Church had little to learn, and much to teach in the way of blood-thirstiness. And yet when we have another of the wars which have characterized the Christian Era it is discovered that it is the lack of Christianity that is to blame for it. What is required to-day is a hair of the dog that bit us! Not to-day's milk-and-water version but the Christianity of the Creeds—and (but this they do not say) of the Crusades, the Inquisition and No Faith with Heretics!

It is interesting, but not encouraging, in connexion with this phenomenon to find that it is amongst those who claim to be "emancipated" that such a thesis is elaborated. They tell us we have to-day too much Anti-Religion, and it is because of this that we are reaping the whirlwind. One is led to conclude that if an appeal to History is made to discover the effects of a belief in the Apostles' Creed, its excellent effects on human society will be found plainly therein writ.

In fact we are told that so excellent are the words of the Creed that if we only give a humanist significance to "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints" its effect on human society will be both enormous and salutary. It would be "dynamic," a word threatening to become as blessed as *Mesopotamia*. One fails to see why "I believe in One God and that Muhammed was his prophet," is not occasionally given an innings by our broad-minded preachers of the New Evangel, unless they are anxious to prove to us that they cannot escape the influences of Geography. For Muhammedanism was a dynamic belief if ever there was one, so dynamic in fact that the framers of the Apostles' Creed lost their great Christian Cities to the followers of Muhammed in a brace of shakes. Carthage, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople! If we are to judge religions by results, it would appear that there is dynamic and lack of dynamic in any old religious formula. It depends upon circumstances.

Those to-day who see unsuspected virtues in old religious formulas do so from various reasons or—a better word—feelings. Those who are disappointed at the non-arrival in a generation of a Jerusalem in this green and pleasant land, in their impatience are disinclined in their own persons to make allowance for the Pull of the Past. And there are others who have reasons—and here *reasons* is the correct word. They feel that certain Institutions belong to the Old Night, and that as the Church belongs to the Old Night they are brothers under the skin. It is easy for them to see a value—an intense practical value—in

the Church's Totalitarianism. The Church had power; they should have it again.

We are told that social life has been given its binding power by the Church, and the weakening of the Church is disintegrating social bonds. This line is purely pragmatic: a belief is a worthy belief if it acts usefully—it becomes, in fact, a true belief. We should be justified in applying the bellows to any religion—even if it shelters the Fall of Man, the Virgin Birth, Bible, Prayerbook, Hymnbook, too—if it tends to generate an equitable social state, generally, strange to say, a slightly modified *status quo*.

The passion to achieve a peaceful world-community, something rather like the present state of affairs, requires then a dash of Christianity (a larger dose may prove necessary) to arouse it. It is probably the achievement of Hitler that has brought this belief into being. Hitler, in fact, belongs exactly to this pragmatic school. He believes in God, and that he is the instrument of God. That Hitler believes a Religion of some kind to be necessary in order to bring about an enthusiasm for a finer form of society is evidenced by his actions. One of his earliest efforts was to manufacture a new Religion. He failed, but he made the effort. He knew the value of Religion to him.

The Russians differed in the respect that they thought the belief in God and the Holy Ghost unhelpful. They thought these beliefs were apt to distract mankind from whole-hearted adherence to the idea of a New World State. It would be difficult to argue from the Russian case that the weakening of a belief in the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints has gone hand in hand with the abolition of enthusiasm for a new Social Experiment. The Dynamic, strange to say, is there all right.

Mankind is to be saved by giving a Humanist interpretation to the terms Holy Ghost and the Communion of Saints! Dear, dear! Magic Words and Verbal Gymnastics! These words have magic in them and so it is common-sense to make use of them. "Emotional Rhetoric" is essential. We cannot meet "Emotional Rhetoric" save by emotional rhetoric. To try to do so is to try to win the fight by tying one of our hands behind our back.

There is a place for emotional rhetoric, unless, as it seems likely, what is meant by it is just *nonsense*. Those who love nonsense do not, of course, require any encouragement. John Selden in his *Table Talk*, gave us, however, a table of precedence:—

First use your logic then your rhetoric.

For the rest those who cast loving eyes on the Old Church confuse, as is so necessary to their case, Religion and Morality. When men chanted the Creeds and took the Sacraments then Social Life obtained a dynamic. Magic! Put not your faith in Magic. Those who believe in this day of Christian glory in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, and The Communion of Saints, could see beauty in the colonization of Abyssinia, even if that colonization entailed air-bombardment and poison gas. Just as in the past they erected barriers against the promulgation of knowledge (which means "Let nonsense grow from more to more,") and fought against the abolition of man having property in man. A Dynamic may in fact not convert your college into a mansion; it may raise it to the ground.

No! the passion to achieve a world community has not been generated by a belief in the Holy Ghost. What has been generated is first of all, often first and last, the desire of man to save his *soul*, a selfish desire as inimical as can be to the "passion to achieve a world community." Man has emerged from the primeval slime through a process of blood and tears. It is still, but not the same extent, a process of blood

and tears. Man has achieved much, but his achievements with no God to help him contain that which is calculated to break his heart as well as to enoble him. It may, where nothing is absolute and all is man-contrived and therefore imperfect, be possible to move too fast towards a desirable world-community. But it surely is the dreariest of pessimisms to put back the clock because we know not where the free mind of man may take us. We are facing things we know not of. So be it! That is better than retracing our steps towards a country we know of too well. The country of Absolute Truth, Revelation and Holy Books, the land of Uniform Belief, Mental Stagnation and Perpetual Darkness! We are prepared to go forward slowly, even to make temporary retreats, but we are not prepared willingly and with our eyes wide open to enter once again the City of Dreadful Night.

T. H. FURSTON

## Messianism

### I.—PARSEEISM

WHEN the Aryans of Iran passed from the magical to the religious stage their purpose was mainly to encourage the agricultural life. Hitherto they had been nomads, and to some extent Nature-worshippers. Many of the old spiritual terms and formalities were retained. It is difficult to make people abandon words and practices of that sort.

So their religion was in appearance a sort of sham magic. A spirit was invoked and implored to perform miracles. The Iranians decided to have only one religious God with unlimited powers. His name was Ahura-Mazra (Ormuzd).

The attributes and surroundings appropriate to such a God were hard to conceive, so Ormuzd was pictured on the analogy of earthly royalty. He was a splendid King with courtiers, councillors, ministers and an army. Besides helping people to be good farmers he inspired them with good thoughts, good words and good deeds. He rewarded virtue and punished vice like any good king. He proved his power by creating the world in six days, and started the human race with Māshya and Māshyōi.

All that seemed enough at first, but on reflection it did not explain life satisfactorily. Why were the good liable to disease, to be plundered by robbers and killed by accident?

The magical tradition supplied the answer. As there were certainly bad spirits as well as good spirits, might there not be a bad god as powerful as the good one? Of course there might! So one such was included in the religious scheme under the name of Angra-Mainyu (Ahriman).

That accounted for evil, perhaps, but did not get rid of it. If people wanted to be bad there was a god there ready to help them. Zoroaster explained that on the whole the balance of happiness is on the side of goodness. To make this certain he arranged that there should be long periods when Ahriman is checked and the good have it all their own way. There were to be three such millenniums under semi-divine leaders, Hushēdar-māh, Hushēdar-bāmi and Sosyōsh. Two had already taken place. Sosyōsh was to be a descendant of Zoroaster begotten in a supernatural way. (Haug, 314).

Another idea was to transfer the good to a spiritual heaven or somewhere up in the sky. The trial took the form of walking towards heaven over a bridge (Chinvat). The good found it wide and walked securely. For the wicked it was narrow, and they slipped over into filth and darkness.

When the Parsee millenniums have done their work there is to be a Last Judgment which will settle all matters for ever without any more ado.

"Ormuзд will summon together all his powers for a final decisive struggle and break the power of evil for ever; by his help the faithful will achieve the victory over their detested enemies, the *dava* worshippers. Thereupon Ormuзд will hold a general ordeal. Forthwith begins the one undivided Kingdom of God in heaven and on earth. This is called, sometimes the good kingdom, sometimes simply the kingdom. Here the sun will for ever shine, and all the pious and faithful will live a happy life, which no evil power can disturb, in the eternal fellowship of Ormuзд and his angels. Every believer will receive as his guerdon the inexhaustible cow and the gracious gifts of the Vohu Mano." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Zoroaster).

How about food and feeding in the Golden Age? Can we be perfectly happy if we have to labour for our bread and kill innocent animals for our meat? Here is the Parsee solution.

"On the nature of the resurrection and future existence it says in revelation, that, whereas Māshya and Māshyōi, who grew up from the earth, first fed upon water, then plants, then milk, and then meat, men also, when their time of death has come, first desist from eating meat, then milk, then from bread, till when they shall die they always feed upon water. So, likewise, in the millennium of Hūshēdar-māh, the strength of appetite (*āz*) will thus diminish, when men will remain three days and nights in superabundance (*sirih*) through one taste of consecrated food. Then they will desist from meat food, and eat vegetables and milk; afterwards, they abstain from milk food and abstain from vegetable food, and are feeding on water; and for ten years before Sōshyans comes they remain without food, and do not die." (*Bundahish*, ch. xxx).

We train ourselves to do without food for ten years before the final millennium begins, and need no food or drink ever afterwards. Nothing is said about any increase in population during the millenniums.

D. B. McLACHLAN

## Highways and Byways in English History

### IX.—FROM PETERLOO TO CHARTISM

THE period following the end of the Napoleonic Wars is epic in the history of British democracy. The slump which followed the peace led to years of intensified class conflict, marked by hunger marches, food riots, rick-burning, machine-breaking, the formation of unions in defiance of the Combination Acts, and agitation for manhood suffrage, annual Parliaments, and vote by ballot. The Government met the agitation by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, instituting prosecutions for sedition and blasphemy, and passing a new series of repressive Acts. At the same time, in 1818, Parliament voted a million for building churches. The Government held that whatever might be said for private enterprise in industry, docility in the multitude was best guaranteed by a State religion. The reign of repression culminated in the Peterloo massacre of 1819, when a peaceable Radical demonstration at Manchester, attended by eighty thousand men and women, was dispersed by drunken yeomanry, many demonstrators killed, and between three and four hundred injured.

In those days there was no severance, as now, between the Freethought movement and the democratic

and working-class movements. Robert Owen, who, as managing partner of the New Lanark cotton mills, proved that a factory could be run with some regard to the interests of its employees, and who was one of the first to grasp the inherent vices of modern capitalism, alienated his influential friends by rejecting all existing religions and maintaining that good environment could produce good citizens. Owenite ideas, propagated among the working class by William Thompson and others, led to the foundation of the London Co-operative Society; and it was in this society's magazine that the word "Socialist" was first used to denote those who advocated the common ownership of the means of production. Richard Carlile, repeatedly imprisoned for his propaganda, was no less active as a Radical and Republican than as a Freethinker, and underwent two years' incarceration for his eloquent championship of the agricultural labourers, who rioted for a living wage in 1830.

Were you proved to be the incendiaries, you have more just and moral cause for it than any king or faction had for making war. In war, all destructions of property are counted lawful, upon the ground of that which is called the law of nations. Yours is a state of warfare, and your ground of quarrel is the want of the necessaries of life in the midst of an abundance. You see hoards of food, and you are starving. You see a Government rioting in every sort of luxury and wasteful expenditure, and you, ever ready to labour, cannot find one of the comforts of life. Your demands have been, so far, moderate and just, and any attempt to stifle them all will be so wicked as to justify your resistance even to death, and life for life.

While the labourers were crushed by the yeomanry and driven back to work at their former miserable rates of wages, the Government of Lord Grey introduced and passed the Reform Bill which, in effect, took the middle classes into political partnership with the ruling class, in order more easily to hold the workers down. Thus the oligarchy of landlords and rich merchants, who had shared power since 1689, were dethroned, and the manufacturers enriched by the industrial revolution came into power. The first result was the abolition of chattel slavery in the colonies. The West Indian planters belonged to that landed and mercantile oligarchy from which power had just been wrested at home; and it was not to be expected that the new electorate would tolerate their privileges. Emancipation was passed into law at the cost of £20,000,000 in compensation to the owners. The beaten Tories retaliated by attacking the manufacturers on their most vulnerable spot—child labour in the factories. The expectations raised among the working class by the Reform agitation, and the damning facts elicited by a Parliamentary committee of enquiry, forced the Government's hand; and the first effective Factory Act became law in 1833—a poor thing, but a precedent.

The old Radical demands for manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual Parliaments were revived by the Chartist movement. Hundreds of thousands of workers, to whom democracy was "a knife and fork question, a bread and cheese question," attended monster meetings, and signed petitions to Parliament which denounced the monopolization of power by a class and contrasted the incomes of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and the Archbishop of Canterbury with the sweated wages in industry and agriculture and the long hours in factories. One result was to increase the interest taken by Parliament in popular education. From 1832 on, a grant of £20,000 a year was divided between the National Society and the "undenominational" British and Foreign School Society. In 1839 this was increased to £39,000, and

a Government education department, working in close collaboration with the bishops, was set up to exercise a general control. A letter addressed by the department to Sir Thomas Phillips, a Welsh mineowner, aptly compares this "small annual expenditure, judiciously employed in introducing the elements of civilization and religion," to insurance paid by merchants and manufacturers for their property.

In the end the Chartist movement forced Parliament to do something more tangible than this to satisfy the starving multitude. The true story of the "hungry 'forties" is one which cannot be read without horror. Only the fact that Britain was still the workshop of the world enabled the social crisis, acute as it was, to be surmounted without a revolutionary upheaval. In 1842 a lurid report on the conditions of child labour in mines shocked Parliament into prohibiting the employment of women and girls underground. In 1844 a twelve-hour day was introduced in textile factories, with half-time for children under thirteen. In 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed. In 1847 factory hours were further reduced to ten. The technical superiority of British manufactures was still sufficient to ensure their supremacy in the world market, and to procure abundant imports of cheap food and raw material in exchange. The flood of Chartism ebbed. Its supporters turned their energies to the organization of trade unions, legal since 1824, and co-operative societies. The revolutionary storm of 1848 came and went. Victorian England thanked God that she was not as these foreigners, and got on with her business.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

(To be concluded)

## Scientific History and Christianity

### V.

CONTINUING the part played by the devil and his disciples in early Christian propaganda, we note that they were commonly routed by the sign of the cross. But it is astonishing to find that the sign could be used effectively by a non-Christian:—

Now one day a certain Jew was coming to Rome. He did not know at all where he might sleep. He was near a temple of Apollo, and he decided to stay there.

He feared the sacrilegious character of the place, so though he had not the faith of the cross, he took care to protect himself with the sign of the cross. In the middle of the night . . . he lay awake. Suddenly he looked up and saw a crowd of evil spirits. He who was in authority over the rest took his place in the midst of them and began to discuss the deeds of each spirit, and to ask how much evil each one had accomplished. . . . One of the spirits told how he had caused Bishop Andrew to think an unholy thought. . . .

Then the spirit who commanded the rest ordered his followers to find out who had presumed to sleep in that temple. But the Jew made the sign of the cross, and all the throng of evil spirits, crying out "Woe, woe," disappeared. (From the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great.)

When Columban and St. Gall went to Bregenze; near the Lake of Constance, they found the pagans worshipping three idols of gilded metal:—

The people gathered at the temple for their wonted festival. . . . Then before them all Gall broke in pieces with stones the enthroned idols, and cast them into the depths of the lake. . . . Some

time after, in the silence of the night, Gall, the elect of God, was laying nets in the water, and lo! he heard the demon of the mountain top calling to his fellow who dwelt in the depths of the lake. The demon of the lake answered, "I am here"; he of the lake returned, "Arise, come to my aid! Behold the aliens come, and thrust me from my temple." Gall, the elect of God, heard this, and fortified himself on all sides with the sign of the cross, and said to them, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you, leave this place, and do not harm anyone here."

When Columban, the man of God, heard this, he called the brethren together in the church, and made the accustomed sign (the cross). Before the brethren could raise their voices, the voice of an unseen being was heard, and wailing and lamentation echoed from the mountain top. So the malicious demons departed with mourning. . . . (From the *Life of St. Gaul* (630) by an anonymous writer.)

Readers of the *Freethinker* will probably be interested in the account of purgatory and the mouth of hell, and of the activities of the devils there. The information is supposed to be given by a Northumbrian named Cunningham, who died one night, and in the morning came to life again:—

He that led me had a shining countenance and a bright garment, and we went on silently, as I thought, towards the northeast. Walking on, we came to a vale of great breadth and depth, but of infinite length; on the left it appeared full of dreadful flames; the other side was no less horrid for violent hail and cold snow flying in all directions; both places were full of men's souls, which seemed by turns to be tossed from one side to the other, as it were by a violent storm; for when the wretches could no longer endure the excess of heat, they leaped into the middle of the cutting cold; and finding no rest there, they leaped again into the unquenchable flames. . . .

I began to think that this perhaps must be hell, of whose intolerable flames I had often heard talk. My guide, who went before me, answered to my thought, saying, "Do not believe so, for this is not hell, as you imagine."

When he had conducted me, much frightened by the horrid spectacle by degrees, to the farther end, on a sudden I saw the place to begin to grow dusk and filled with darkness. . . . As we went on through the shades of night, on a sudden there appeared before us frequent globes of black flames, rising, as it were out of a great pit, and falling back again into the same. . . .

Having stood there a long time in much dread, not knowing what to do, which way to turn, or what end I might expect, on a sudden I heard behind me the noise of a most hideous and wretched lamentation, and at the same time a loud laughing, as of a rude multitude insulting captured enemies. . . . I observed a gang of evil spirits dragging the howling and lamenting souls of men into the midst of the darkness, whilst they themselves laughed and rejoiced. . . . Some of the spirits ascended from that flaming abyss, and, running forward, beset me on all sides. . . . and they threatened to lay hold on me with burning tongs. . . . (From Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*.)

Another American book which may be promoting rationality to some extent is Professor Shotwell's *An Introduction to the History of History*. Here the Old Testament is treated in a very outspoken way:—

Higher criticism has robbed it of its unique distinction as a special revelation of Jehovah, denied the historicity of the account of the Creation, destroyed the claim of the legends of the patriarchs to be regarded as authentic; the great name of Moses disappears as the author of the Pentateuch, and that of David from the book of Psalms; the story of Joseph becomes a romance.

As regards the matter of the Pentateuch, "the earliest text, which runs from Genesis to Kings, is a

repository of prehistoric legend . . . tribal legends of reputed ancestors and heroes, intermingled with myths of tribal religion. Anthropology can match them from all over the world. The narrative is often awkward, self contradictory." And so on.

The chapter on the early Christian period is less comprehensive and detailed, but is otherwise quite as derogatory. As regards the adoption of the Jewish pseudo-history and legend, as contrasted with the good existing history and other available learning of the Greeks and Romans, the verdict is: "There is no more momentous revelation in the history of thought than this, in which the achievements of thinkers and workers, of artists, philosophers, poets and statesmen were given up for the revelation of prophets and a gospel of worldly renunciation . . . the scientific output of the most luminous minds the world had known was classed with the legends that had grown up by the campfires of barbarians. . . . All was pagan."

*Note.*—The extent to which Robinson's *Readings in European History* (from which, as previously stated, the quotations in these articles, unless otherwise stated, are taken) and Shotwell's *History of History* are read, even by historians, is apparently limited, at least in this country. The former is in the library of the Historical Association, and the copy is much defaced by pencil marks, all seemingly made by one reader. The latter is not in the Historical nor in the Central London Library. But having seen the book in a Midland library, I succeeded in getting it through the Central library from a Yorkshire city library. I have mentioned the work to three English historians, two of them professors, and the third an eminent non-professional one, and only one of the three had heard of it.

J. REEVES

## Correspondence

### SWEDENBORG

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The note of Mr. George Wallace in your issue of May 19, has been sent to me for comment.

I am delighted that Mr. Wallace studies the Writings of Swedenborg in the original Latin. I have revised a volume of the Popular 6d. and 1s. Series, comparing it with the Latin, but confess that my general reading is confined to the English editions.

It would be a kindness if Mr. Wallace would be more specific with his references. The volume of *Arcana Coelestia* to which he refers comprises 690 pages and 1,400 paragraphs. Dr. Garth Wilkinson's *Human Body and its Connexion with Man*, has 443 pages. I have not the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* at home, but that is another large work. Most correspondents, lecturers, and preachers, quote the paragraph numbers of Swedenborg's works and page numbers of contemporary writers. I only mention this for the trouble it saves.

I have searched through Dr. Wilkinson's work in vain, but it is quite possible I have missed the reference.

HAROLD GOYDER SMITH

## Obituary

### LOUISA MARTHA BURY

In the quiet and picturesque surroundings of Downham Parish Churchyard, Wickford, Essex, the remains of Louisa Martha Bury were interred on Thursday, May 23. As a young woman she began to have doubts concerning

her Christian beliefs and wandered into the more serious side of literature. At that period she became acquainted with Mr. H. Bury. They were married in 1919, and spent 21 years of mutual trust, companionship and affection, which were severed by her death on May 19, a collapse following an operation. She and her husband were both respected members of the West Ham Branch N.S.S., and have many years of membership to their credit. Before an assembly of relatives and friends, Mrs. F. M. Warner, representing the West Ham Branch N.S.S., a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary of the Society:—R.H.R.

## 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, C. E. M. Joad, M.A., D.Lit.—"Truth Propaganda."

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. L. Ebury.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 6.30, R. H. Rosetti.

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, Friday, Mr. G. W. Fraser.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. F. A. Ridley. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. Barker. Liverpool Grove, Walworth Road, 8.0, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket): 7.30, Saturday, Mr. G. Whitehead.

BLYTH (The Fountain): 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton. CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 7.45, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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.

HASLINGDEN (Market Cross): 3.15 and 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive): 7.30, Sunday, June 2, to Friday, June 7. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak each evening.

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

PADHAM: 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SCOTTHOTTON (Rossendale): 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

STOCKTON (The Cross): 6.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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