

# THE FREETHINKER

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Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,  
Letters to the Editor, etc.

## Views and Opinions

### Christian Truth

To paraphrase a well-known saying, there are liars, damned liars, and Christian evangelists. And the greatest of these is the last. Turn to the New Testament and we find numerous indications of the way in which Christians slandered each other. Study Christianity during the period of its formation, and we find ourselves moving in a medium of personal vilification, forged documents, manufactured miracles and almost criminal charges brought by one body of Christians against other Christians. The lie direct, the lie by suggestion, the lie by implication, all are with us in shoals. Nearly every writer on ecclesiastical history laments the untruthfulness of Christian documents and the difficulty of selecting the possible truth from lies exists to-day. Christian writers were not engaged in recording events, they were conducting a religious campaign. Mr. Joseph Wheless, of U.S.A., has published a bulky volume dealing with the outstanding forgeries of the Church, and Mr. J. Goodspeed (1931) has written on *Strange New Gospels* proving that the Christian forgery mill is still active. Neither have exhausted the subject. For many centuries there was no greater religious industry than the manufacturing of Christian miracles and of documents that would further the interests of the Church. Miracles themselves did not cease to happen because they ceased to occur, but because a better educated public made belief in them a matter of increasing difficulty.

Ilecky thinks that the rise of Protestantism developed a greater liking for truth, or at least a greater dislike to lying. I do not agree with him. The fashion in Christian lying changed, but so does fashion in other directions without in the least disturbing essential facts. Protestants lied with apostolic fervour against Roman Catholics, and Catholics when they dealt with Protestants showed that they had lost none of the vigour of their earliest ancestors. Until

yesterday great Freethinkers died shrieking for Jesus to save them from hell. Death-bed conversions were very common; they ceased only when Freethinkers became numerous.

There is one thing concerning Christian lying that has not been sufficiently noticed. This is the rare occasions (I cannot recall one) on which detected and exposed liars for the greater glory of God have been denounced from the pulpit. It is true that after a time the circulation of the lie has been dropped (when it was no longer profitable to circulate it), but that is all. Nor can I recall a single instance in which the congregation of any church has shown public disapproval of any preacher who circulated the lie. He had lied for the glory of God and in the interests of Christianity, and his congregation would accept the plea of St. Paul: If my lie hath abounded to the greater glory of God why then am I judged a sinner? The sympathy of the congregation lay with the liar.

Ilecky, whose statement of fact so often contradicts his considered opinion, says of the earlier, but very large, part of Christian history:—

Ecclesiastical literature became tainted with a spirit of the most unblushing mendacity. Heathenism was to be combated, and therefore prophecies of Christ by Orpheus and the Sybils were forged, lying wonders were multiplied, and ceaseless calumnies were poured upon those who, like Julian, opposed the faith. Heretics were to be convinced, and therefore interpolations of old writings, or complete forgeries were habitually imposed on the forged gospels . . . generation after generation it became more universal; it continued till the very sense of truth seemed blotted out of the minds of men.

This marked decline of the feeling for truth increased with the advance of Christianity. This, Ilecky goes on to point out, is quite understandable:—

An age which has ceased to value impartiality of judgment will soon cease to value accuracy of statement, and when credulity is inculcated as a virtue, falsehood will not long be stigmatized as a vice. When, too, men are firmly convinced that salvation can only be found within their Church they will speedily conclude that nothing can be wrong that is beneficial to it. They exchange the love of truth for what they call the love of the truth.

That is why we have to-day Roman Catholic truth, Episcopalian truth, Presbyterian truth, etc. Science has but one truth. Goebbels must have been a close student of Christian literature. He has merely added another truth—German truth—to the list. But amid such a crowd of Christian experts, Goebbels must work hard to achieve and maintain superiority.

\* \* \*

### Modern but Ancient

Someone has said that there are only about half-a-dozen jokes in the world. All that one gets are the same jokes differently presented. I think the same may be said of Christian lies. For years I cherished

the hope of meeting a new kind of Christian lie. I never succeeded. But recently I met, not with a new Christian lie, but with a very old one boasting a new centrepiece. I met this in a little pamphlet issued by the "Wimbledon Schoolboys' Meeting Union," a title I had to find from sources other than the pamphlet. That bore only the mystic letters, W.S.M.U., which appears to be the disguise assumed by a Mr. Arthur Mercer. Mr. Mercer's name is the only one that appears on the pamphlet, and it is to him that all moneys for supplies of the pamphlet must be sent. Mr. Mercer says that these pamphlets are supplied at the cost of printing, but considerable sums of money must be spent on the venture. The pamphlets themselves are highly commended by Bishop Chavasse, Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell, Admiral Sir G. F. King-Hall, the Rev Edward Lyttleton, Sir G. K. Scott Moncrieff, and others. Lord Grenfell says the stories contained in these booklets are "woven into the narratives with great skill." One of these narratives attracted my attention and left me wondering what the fundamental quality of the mentality of these prominent men is really worth. For the story that lies before me, and which may be taken as a fair sample of these tracts, contains not an original lie, but one of the oldest in the annals of Christian propaganda. The only feature of this yarn by Mr. Murcel, of Rozel, Sunnyside, Wimbledon, that is new, is the name of the hero of the piece. Here it is.

A Dr. Douglas Adam, of whom I know nothing, says that a friend of his was acting on a Royal Commission of which Professor T. H. Huxley was also a member. On a certain Sunday morning the following incident occurred. Dr. D. Adam is the speaker:—

"I suppose you are going to Church," said Huxley. "Yes," replied my friend. "What if you stayed at home and talked to me of religion." "No," was the reply, "for I am not clever enough to refute your arguments." "But" (said Huxley), "What if you simply told me your own experience—what religion has done for you?" My friend did not go to Church that morning. He stayed at home and told Huxley the story of all that Christ had been to him; and presently there were tears in the eyes of the great Agnostic as he said: "I would give my right hand if I could believe, but I can't."

The story ends with Huxley in tears and the unknown (to me) friend, Dr. Douglas Adam, rejoicing.

In the language of Hollywood, that is a new one on me. But only so far as the name of Huxley is concerned. Otherwise it is one of the stalest of Christian lies. It shows signs of wear, for once upon a time Huxley would have gone straight home, still shedding tears and, struggling against himself, burned all his heretical books, forsaken all his heretical opinions, and after a day or so of continuous thought resolved on spending the rest of his life in prayer, relieved by lying with all the energy of one of the early Christian fathers. Huxley, as we all know, had some very powerful arguments against Christianity, but the yarn of the unnamed friend of Dr. Adam did the trick. For the rest of his life Huxley ought to have gone through the world proclaiming his belief in Jesus.

But one must confess that this friend of Dr. Adam did his best. Of course he could not publicly convert Huxley, but still I think he might have said that Huxley with the tears still dripping, went on his knees and joined his saviour in prayer. As editor of the *Freethinker* I am, of course, professionally bound to laugh at the whole story, but the true Christian will realize that Mr. Mercer's narratives, backed by such prominent men as those named, ought to give one seriously to think. The only alternative hypothesis would be that the eminent men cited who have given their blessing to the work of Mr. Mercer, are inter-

ested in "doping the public," or, where religion is concerned, count them as just fools.

### God and Man

I have space only for one more story from the truthful Mr. Mercer. This concerns another decorated gentleman, Sir Henry Norman, late military secretary to the Indian Government. Sir Henry went to a religious meeting that was being addressed by Lord Radstock. The speaker gave out a hymn, and (with a Christian passion for truth) asked that only those should sing who believed in it. Sir Henry was quite annoyed by this, probably because he was offended at this implied slight on his capacity for believing anything, and left the meeting. But evidently resolved to be saved somehow, he went to another meeting on the same evening. Then, to his surprise, he heard given out the same hymn which he had been forbidden to sing. So, said this wise Government official, "God is evidently following me." Why not? God like a true British deity has an eye for titles. That very night Sir Henry gave in. It was, to use the language of the detected burglar, "a fair cop." The Lord had resolved to grab Sir Henry. He had let the other meeting go to the devil and followed Sir Henry, and from that night Sir Henry Norman, became a "humble and devoted follower of the Lord Jesus." There must have been rejoicing in heaven when the Lord returned, tired, perhaps, after chasing Sir Henry from meeting to meeting, but flushed with victory.

I must stop here. I have been greatly impressed. I realize more clearly than ever that Christianity however much it may change in form remains the same in essence. No matter how great a rogue, or how great a liar one may be, Mr. Mercer will assure you that they, and he, are certain of salvation. For the truth that saves man is not the truth of science or philosophy, it is "Christian truth" alone that saves, and if Christian truth resembled ordinary truth there would be no spiritual benefit in it. It is *Christian truth* by which the Church lives, and for which Mr. Mercer dispenses pamphlets at the cost price of 17 copies for 1s. 8d., post free. Christianity is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

I had better not read too many of the W.S.M.U. tracts. I have no wish to end my life with a recantation of all I have been advocating for over half a century. Nor do I want to have God chasing me from back garden to picture palace, and from picture palace to *Freethinker* office. I must avoid temptation—lest I should be induced to join Mr. Mercer in one of the earliest of Christian practices.

CHAPMAN COHEN

### Darwin's Bull-Dog

There is no darkness but ignorance.—*Shakespeare*.  
Public opinion is far too often public-house opinion.  
T. H. Huxley

CHARLES DARWIN, the solitary student who shook the world with his theory of evolution, was a modest man with but small gifts of literary expression. In the controversial cataclysm which followed the publication of *The Origin of Species*, and *The Descent of Man* it became necessary, not only to defend the new ideas, but also to popularize them. Thomas Henry Huxley has told us how he took upon himself the post of "Darwin's Bull-dog and gladiator-general of science." By this assumption of service Huxley made an imperishable name for himself as a fighter for truth and became one of the agents in the diffusion of evolutionary ideas. Dubbed the "Saint Paul of Darwin-

ism," he proved himself a most doughty champion of Progress.

Huxley was in so many ways the complement of Darwin. Huxley possessed a literary style that most authors would have given their ears to emulate. Darwin knew little anatomy, while Huxley was a trained and accomplished anatomist. Darwin was modest and retiring to a degree, but Huxley was ever a fighter. All these advantages enabled Huxley to supplement the evidence Darwin had adduced, and to triumphantly combat criticism. For example, at the memorable meeting of the British Association Huxley gave Bishop Wilberforce, who had attacked the new ideas, such a trouncing as no bishop had ever previously received at the hands of a scientist. Years later, Huxley engaged Gladstone in controversy, and proved beyond cavil and dispute that a man may be a Prime Minister and yet repeat the ignorance of past ages without realizing its import. Huxley earned for himself a place in literature apart from his position as a scientist. His place in literature rests securely upon the famous essays and lectures in which he brings science to bear upon the interpretation of life and criticizes old beliefs.

Whatever Huxley wrote was always pointed and illuminative. This was, in part, due to the variety of his early experience. Trained as a medical student, he secured an appointment as surgeon on H.M.S. Rattlesnake, and was later engaged for three years on surveying work in Australasian waters. His first published work was a record of his discoveries of ocean life. A few years later he was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and held some important official positions. And all this varied experience of men and affairs was turned to account in his writings. His papers on scientific subjects, even his excursions into theology, and his many controversies, were bright and readable, and at times amusing.

As a rule, serious scientists use a language of their own which darkens knowledge. Whether the scientists feel that, having gained their knowledge by years of labour, it is sheer prodigality to give it away so easily, or whether the old priestly spirit has found a new lodgment in scholastic circles, may be an open question. Nothing appears to irritate some of the authors of ponderous monographs so much as having their life-work made intelligible to the reader. When Professor Max Muller edited the *Sacred Books of the East*, he refused to include the Christian Bible in the series. More recent examples might be given in which learned men have refrained from dotting the i's and crossing the t's, and pressing home their arguments against current superstition. It may be due to jealousy of the democracy, or it may be due to the fear of losing an official position, but the distrust is plain enough. But Huxley hoisted the engineers with their own gunpowder. He opened up a new universe to tens of thousands, and helped materially to raise the culture of his century.

Who that came fresh to the study of science could carp and quibble at the author of *Lay Sermons*, and those other delightful and informative papers which he contributed to the popular reviews. He awoke a new interest, and even made dry-as-dust theology interesting. In entrancing articles and lectures Huxley led the large reading public to understand the mysteries that, expressed in the esoteric terminology of scientific language, else had remained comparatively unknown. Thanks to Huxley, and a few others, the ordinary reader has a clear idea of the labours of the great thinkers of our time, and, it may be, sees more clearly the tendency of those movements than those who, with technical knowledge, dissect the old faiths whilst still bowing the knee to the Great Goddess Grundy.

It is strange that people are only now beginning to see that Huxley's iconoclasm was actually forced upon him by the clergy themselves. As a scientist, he had no wish or even the time for criticizing the absurdities of the Pentateuch, the demonology of the Gospels, or the ignorance embedded in religion. But when he saw the whole body of the clergy attacking evolution without any acquaintance with the subject, and simply in defence of a vested interest, he rallied to the side of science, and, with help, routed the clergy. It was a novel experience for the arrogant priestly caste to be charged with perpetuating uncivilized ideas by the successors of the men they had burnt alive for heresy. And the scientists won all along the line. With the solitary exception of the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, ever the hindmost of the reactionaries, there is not to-day a man with a reputation to lose who talks and writes as men did before the publication of the *Origin of Species*.

Huxley fought the good fight at a time when a mere accusation of Atheism was a serious matter. When John Stuart Mill, "the saint of Rationalism," was appealing to the electors of Westminster the walls were placarded with bills accusing him of Atheism, and he lost the seat to a Tory tradesman.

For holding heretical views Strauss was deprived of his professorship at Tubingen and his career was ruined. Renan lost his chair in the College de France; Buchner was driven from Tubingen; an attempt was made to force Haeckel out of Jena. Here in this country the poet Shelley, because of his Atheism, was judicially declared to be unfit to be the guardian of his own children. Many years later a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant. A former Marquis of Queensbury was thought to be unsuited for the House of Lords on account of his known Freethought opinions. A far more glaring instance was the case of that Radical stalwart, Charles Bradlaugh, who was excluded from the House of Commons for Atheism in a fight which lasted thirteen years. Huxley must have known of these things. He was a truthful man, but I doubt if he wished for martyrdom. By dubbing himself an Agnostic he threw dust in the eyes of his enemies, but there was no doubt as to his meaning. Not one person in ten thousand knew what a gnostic was, and the newly-coined term "agnostic" made confusion worse confounded. Leslie Stephen, in his *Agnostic's Apology*, soon removed any dispute on the subject, for he was as forthright in his iconoclasm as G. W. Foote or Ingersoll.

It is as a popularizer of science that Huxley lives. For in the heart of the democracy his lessons have sunk deep, and if pedants frown and undergraduates sneer, it is something to have helped the people to grasp the teachings of science. Huxley regarded himself as a humble disciple of Darwin, but in popularizing the work of the master he made an enviable reputation, and what writer can desire more? Withal, Huxley was one of the most cultured men of his generation. Though he was doomed by his profession to an everlasting round of lectures and writing, he was free from the tyranny of things. For he had the universe for his intellectual inheritance.

MIMNERMUS

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The test of truth is Reason, not Faith; for to the court of reason must be submitted even the claims of Faith.

Ambrose Bierce

A Wise Man reflects before he speaks; a Fool speaks, and then reflects on what he has uttered.

French Proverb.

## Islam and Christendom

A SURVEY of the Byzantine scene in these pages dealt with some of its characteristics at a time of comparative prosperity prior to the fateful aggression of the new faith of Islam from Arabia. The contact of Islam and Christendom has wide historic consequence beyond its regional vistas; and we purpose here to assess, within the limits at our command, the general effect of this contact on the course of Western Civilization and Culture. At the outset we may proceed by presenting historic panorama to illumine the situation. The significance and upshot of Islam in that regard can then be treated in due sequence.

Suffice it that in the seventh century A.D., a specious theistic cult arose in Arabia, incited by the lead of a certain "prophet" Mohammed (= "the praised"), centring in the ancient cities of Mecca and Medina [570-632]. Eventually, not without difficulty, it was established among a number of the neighbouring Arab tribes. Under a fanatical impulse and from diverse motives this cult, and system, entered on a militant career to spread its evangel abroad by force; a movement continued by the successors of Mohammed in the headship of *Islam*, as it came to be known.<sup>1</sup> Its central tenet made it hostile to Christian trinitarianism and all phases of polytheism. From causes to be dealt with more fully later, these initial excursions brought considerable gains at the expense of the Eastern Empire and the Western marches of Persia. Previous predatory inroads into those regions from various quarters had been incited by cupidity and material interest. Each of these powers at the time was weakened by internal dissension and ill-equipped to meet a fresh onslaught which, beyond any such motives, brought the energy of a religious Crusade.

Syria and Mesopotamia were rapidly over-run; Egypt soon passed under their control; followed by stages by the whole of N. Africa. In 711<sup>2</sup> they crossed what are now the Straits of Gibraltar and established a position in S. Spain. Here, the story goes, they were assisted by a local Christian magnate over some personal quarrel with authority. Having no intention of returning they pursued their conquering course with sufficient prowess that by 713 they had reached the Pyrenees. A determined Christian section, however, held out beyond the mountains of Asturias and in the North, which was to become the basis of an effective counter-stroke. Entering France, after some minor achievements, they were decisively defeated near Tours by the Franks under Charles Martel (= "the Hammes"), in 743, and forced back again into the Peninsula. Here the Saracens (= Easterns) maintained a dubious sovereignty over a diminishing territorial domain for another seven centuries. The growing Catholic Kingdoms in the North, animated by inflexible hostility to the alien faith and intruders, made steady advance, and in 1084 Alfonso the VI. united the two kingdoms of Leon and Castile and won back the old capital of Toledo. The struggle went on until, in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella, having linked the forces of Aragon and Castile, conquered the remaining Islamic stronghold in Granada; where was breathed "the last sigh of the Moor." During the next century the whole Morisco population, and a number of Jews, were expelled from Spain.

<sup>1</sup> [*Islam* and *Muslim* (= Moslem, Musulman) are the infinitive and participle of the causative root *slm*, which connotes "peace." The idea was to make peace with the stronger—to surrender to Allah.] *J. B. Bury: note to Gibbon.*

<sup>2</sup> Dates throughout are taken as presented by the compilers drawn upon.

Sporadic incursions into Mediterranean islands and territories, or temporary lodgments, were effected by the Saracens from their African base. In 846 they descended on Rome itself.

The tombs and temples of St. Peter and St. Paul were left exposed in the suburbs of the Vatican and of the Ostian Way. Their invisible sanctity had preserved them against the Goths, the Vandals and the Lombards; but the Arabs disdained both the Gospel and the Legend and their rapacious spirit was approved and animated by the precept of the Koran. The Christian idols were stripped of their costly offerings, a silver altar was torn away from the shrine of St. Peter; and if the bodies or the buildings were left entire, their deliverance must be imputed to the haste rather than the scruples of the Saracens. . . .<sup>3</sup>

It may be noted here that, contemporary with the rise of Islamic Spain, the Roman Church was initiating its supreme sovereignty, spiritual and temporal, over the West; reviving the title of Caesar, in the person of Charlemagne, with the creation of the "Holy Roman Empire" under its jurisdiction.

Meanwhile Muslim impact on Byzantium and Western Asia took a more prolonged, if chequered, course. It swept through Persia.

A victorious army is insensible to fatigue; and the Caliph Othman promised the Government of Chorassan to the first general who should enter that large and populous country, the Kingdom of the ancient Bactrians. The condition was accepted, the prize was deserved, the standard of Mahomet was planted on the walls of Herat, Merou, and Balkh; and the successful general neither halted nor reposed till his foaming cavalry had tasted the waters of the Oxus. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Such conquests brought the primitive Saracens into association with a more sophisticated civilized milieu. By 1100 the Muslim Empire with its capital at Baghdad was well into the heart of Anatolia. With prosperity came an appreciation of luxury; the primal dynamic of "conversion" became weakened and subservient to mundane considerations. Moreover, peoples who had accepted the Muslim creed were often inimical to Baghdad authority. New dynasties and independent kingdoms took shape out of the original empire. Restless tribes from the vast variation genesis of Asia pressed into some more attractive habitat and were not averse to profiting territorially at the expense of the Baghdad Caliphate, that is, the spiritual and temporal headship of Islam. Of these the most vigorous were tribes broadly classed as Turks, folk distinct from the first Semitic progenitors of Islam.<sup>5</sup> Taking their designation from the ruling House, the Seljuk Turks usurped the sovereignty of the Empire leaving to the Caliphate only a spiritual power, and were in control of the Holy Land during the Crusades of the eleventh and twelfth century.

This movement is a theme in itself, and as it left no permanent political change we will pass it in the present connexion, leaving its influence to be touched upon in the sequel.

The Seljuks were challenged in the fourteenth century by a rival—the Othmanli or Ottoman Turks, who reached the highest tide of fortune among these predial adventurers and exemplars of "power-politics." Beginning with a province in the N.E. of Anatolia they won possession of the whole Islamic do-

<sup>3</sup> E. Gibbon.

<sup>4</sup> E. Gibbon.

<sup>5</sup> We pass any attempt to analyse the complex Asiatic ethnology.

main of Asia Minor. In 1341-47 they entered the Balkans, and in 1453 completed the destruction of the Roman Empire by the conquest of Constantinople; when the Holy Church of the Greek Communion, St. Sophia, became a Muslim Mosque. During the next century, after subduing semi-independent Balkan Kingdoms, they crossed the Danube to become masters of Hungary and country extending as far as the Crimea. The peak of Ottoman power was attained under Suleyman (the Magnificent) 1520-66. In an age of able statesmen he ranks with the leading rulers of his time. He improved Muslim legislation; and also the status of his Non-Muslim subjects, when Christendom was rent with sectarian strife and its different Communion were engaged in fanatical sadistic persecution. During this period while the Eastern Ottoman border remained *vis-a-vis* other States much as it was in the day of the Eastern Romans, its domain covered Arabia, the Nile Valley, the Barbary States of N. Africa and maintained a formidable military and naval armament—an over-shadowing presence and menace.

In the seventeenth century the Ottoman star falls on a steady decline. The causes are various. Their early supremacy was largely due to superior military organization and tactic. With the introduction of modern arms, the musket, changes in method, and importance of industrial skill in armament, they appear to have fallen behind their opponents. A signal reverse before Vienna in 1683 was followed by resolute Austrian campaigns under the famous general, Prince Eugene, and by 1700 they were driven back over the Danube. Another foe now takes up the story. The rising power of Russia appears on the flank of the Ottoman Empire. A Russian Prince in 988 married a daughter of the Byzantine House on condition of embracing equally her creed. Here he was quite accommodating, and in the spirit of the age ordered a wholesale conversion and baptism of his subjects in the bargain. So began the connexion of the Greek Cult with Russian fortunes; and at the time the Eastern Empire ceased to be, Russia was growing into a strong autocratic monarchy with its capital at Moscow, where the Greek Rite was the accepted State Religion under a Slavonic adaptation.

By the eighteenth century Russia had advanced to the position of claiming a Protectorate over all Eastern Christians amid Turkish decay and misrule. Further, there was the lure of recovering the Holy City of Greek faith from Muslim desecration. Persistent hostility, recurring wars, support to revolting Christian subjects, led to Russian control of the N. Coast of the Black Sea and the virtual emancipation of former Christian principalities from Turkish sovereignty. In this imbroglio the attitude of other powers was sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile as with the matter of Greek Independence. The final blow was struck in 1877, which carried Muscovite arms to the Gates of Constantinople. But for the intervention of the British Government of the day the Treaty then concluded would have eliminated Turkish dominion.

Yet, if modified at the Berlin Congress of 1878, it wrote *finis* to Islam as a factor in the European comity. . . . Since then the scene has witnessed singular happenings; and the end is not yet. . . .

AUSTEN VERNEY

(To be continued)

## The Mind of the Chimpanzee

THE intelligence of the ape is tested in the following manner. A desirable object, such as food or a plaything, is placed within sight. The straight path to acquiring it is blocked. The ape has therefore to think how to get to his goal by other means.

Consider a simple case with a hen. A short piece of wire netting separates her from a piece of bread. To get it the hen must turn at 90 degrees and go round for it. But unless the netting is extremely short she is "stumped." No solution presents itself. And if the netting is closed in on three sides the situation for the hen is hopeless, for this would mean that she would have to turn back at 180 degrees. This would mean taking a direction *away from* the object, and in doing this the hen completely loses control of the problem.

It may be, of course, that, as hens do, she would meander aimlessly and light on the bread by accident. This is not a "solution curve." The foot-tracks of the animal can be traced and plotted. In the case of the dog, his traces, and indeed his general behaviour, leave us with no doubt that he has visualized the situation correctly. Like the ape, he presents a true solution curve, round the obstacle to the object.

It is noteworthy, however, that if a tasty morsel is placed right up to the dog's nose on the other side of the netting, its nearness often has such an effect on the nostrils that the dog is held as by a magnet. His ideas about going round for it are temporarily blocked.

The purpose of Kohler's experiments, then, is to test roundabout ways (*Uwege*) to a blocked goal. And the power by which the animal sums up the situation, and acts accordingly, he calls insight (*Einsicht*). We shall hope to show that insight, as conceived by Kohler, is a purely materialistic concept.

\* \* \*

Other elementary tests include going downstairs, and passing through several doors along routes in the opposite direction from the objective, to retrieve something seen from a height. Or again, three strings may be offered to the ape, with the object attached to the other end of one of them. The strings can cross each other in several interesting ways. The problem is which string to pull. We are now obviously passing the dog stage, and are ready to find what use the ape can make of implements.

The latter are left within reach, but the apes' attention is not drawn to them, except where specifically stated. Nor are the implements (sticks, tables, boxes, ladders, etc.) placed in an obvious position. During the experiments the ape would often look round and his eye would fall on them without any solution being conveyed by the sight of them.

A simple test is the employment of a stick, to poke through the bars and angle in the food placed out of arm's reach. When a banana was suspended from the roof of the stockade in readiness for a test, Kohler found that a door projecting outwards into the stockade had been used as a ladder by Chica (the gymnastic ape). In a subsequent test the door was opened: an angle inconvenient for reaching the fruit. Sultan, the most intelligent ape, soon rectified the position of the door, and the apes would later swing on it to approach the suspended object. They would also, except the ground lovers Tschego and Grande, swing on a suspended rope and clutch the object *en route*.

At a still higher level we come now to the use of a "mid-objective." The banana is out of reach, outside the cage bars. A stick is needed. But the stick is suspended from a height, out of reach. The ape is led in casually past a box, big enough to stand on to reach the stick. This experiment dragged on a considerable time and the apes were tested collectively.

The less a man thinks or knows about his virtues the better we like him.—Emerson.

Apparently spurred on by the competition, Sultan, who like the others had had periods of "lost interest" (i.e., where the ape is discouraged by failure to find a solution and will no longer give his mind to the problem), suddenly fetched the box, mounted it and got the objective.

The behaviour of the animal in the solution shows that the box is fetched with a purpose, and that the animal has in mind both the final objective (banana) and the mid-objective (stick). There is no gap in the continuity of his action, such as would suggest that the box had not been fetched for the particular purpose of reaching the stick. Kohler's timing of these solutions is most meticulous. It was his earnest desire to eliminate any chance of counting as a success the mere haphazard collection of implements without foresight. To prove that the animal is behaving as purposefully as human beings it must be shown that the action is continuous and entirely with regard to the final goal. In this connexion the big ape, Tschego, dallied with a problem hopelessly for two hours and then suddenly hit on the solution, without the aid of any accidental advantageous movements. She had to move a box away from the bars in order to get to the spot where she could put her hand through for the object. For two hours she was baffled, and became glum and ill-tempered. She did not touch the box. Finally the solution presented itself and she shifted the obstacle and got the food. Sultan took the shortest time to think of this solution (ordinarily the animals were tested in ones.) There is no doubt at all that the animals knew what they were doing. It was not a case of, "Shift box to there and food miraculously comes within reach." It was, "move box away in any direction, whether by pushing, pulling, lifting, shoving, carrying, dragging or what you will." Chica, in fact, flung the box over her shoulder. The apes were not tied down to any stereotyped movement by which the fruit was mysteriously brought closer. As in other tests, the behaviour was a purposeful whole. It was stamped with foresight.

We come to the next stage, the *making* of implements. The animal already has the idea of the stick. Sultan draws out a loose iron bar and carries it 10 metres to the objective, using it as a stick. His track of behaviour again shows that the bar is drawn with a purpose. For the animal has now got past the level of "actual stick" and arrived at the concept, "possible stick." We here approach the level of conceptual thought, which religious psychologists of a dead age (not so long ago) piously hoped was the sacred prerogative of mankind. Sultan also broke a branch from a tree to use as a stick. The appearance of a branch as a possible stick does not, however, come readily to the ape, for, in the terminology of Gestalt (the psychology which these experiments suggest and support) the tree, with its branches, forms a fairly closed configuration, fixed in the ape's mind as an integral whole (not capable of separation).

G. H. TAYLOR

(To be continued)

#### "On HIS MOTHER'S SIDE"

One of the finest examples of unconscious humour to be found in contemporary literature occurs in a recently published book by Mr. Harry J. Greenwall, entitled, *I Hate To-morrow*, published by The Book Club, Charing Cross Road. Here is the passage on page 232:—

The Aga Khan is, on his mother's side, a direct descendant of Allah.

It is almost a perfect "Howler." The reference should have been made, of course, to the prophet "Mahomet," and not to "Allah," which is the Arabic name for "God." This charming piece of innocence is the work of a very popular journalist who has for years adorned the pages of several so-called "national" newspapers.

## "La Folie de Jesus"

### I.

FIFTY years ago or so, G. W. Foote wrote a pamphlet entitled *Was Jesus Insane?*—a shocking thing to suggest of the Christian God, but which had occurred to more than one critic of Christianity.

Foote's pamphlet was actually a critique of Jules Soury's *Jesus and the Gospels*, a brilliant little work which has fallen into a most undeserved neglect. Soury's contention was that Jesus "was the victim of chronic congestion of the brain, which developed inflammatory symptoms before his death, and that the gibbet saved him from actual madness." The evidence was, of course, drawn from the accounts given in the Gospels—taken by Soury almost at their face value. Admitting them as historical records, Soury analysed many of the incidents narrated, and the sayings of Jesus and his family, as well as those of some of his fellow countrymen, and had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Jesus was insane. It can be fairly added, though, that other writers examining the same incidents and sayings have come to quite the opposite conclusions. For them, they showed Jesus as the veritable son of God, or the greatest Being who ever trod this earth. A lot depends on one's point of view.

Soury did not spend time in discussing the question of the actual existence of Jesus; and neither did Foote. But in the second edition of his pamphlet he adds a note worth reproducing here:—

At the end of the fourth volume of Ernest Havet's *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, there is a note of three pages in length on Jules Soury's theory, which Havet rejects on several grounds, all of which might be included in one, namely, that we have no authentic biography of Jesus. This is probably true, but it does not affect a theory based on the Gospels as they stand. Havet does not believe that Jesus gave himself out to be the Messiah, and even if he did the idea was vague, and was perhaps not an extraordinary one among enlightened Jews. With respect to the boasts of Jesus, it is argued by Havet that we should not take them literally, but regard them as hyperboles, like the statement that a little faith would remove mountains. The irruption of the Temple traders probably never took place, and if it did it was rather an act of fanaticism than of madness. In the same way, Havet gets rid of the cursing of the barren fig tree, by treating it as an imaginary story with a symbolic meaning. Altogether, it is obvious that Havet and Soury are working from different points of view; and if the gospel histories are to be treated as imaginary—for which there is much to be said—it is hardly worth while to discuss whether their hero was sane or insane. As well debate the sanity or insanity of Hamlet.

That is naturally the proper way to look at the problem. If there never was such a person as Jesus, God or man, the question as to whether he was mad or not is merely a theological exercise and does not matter. But it would not be unfair to claim that many Christians would prefer Freethinkers to say Jesus was mad rather than to deny that he ever lived.

Thirty years ago, however, a famous Professor of Psychology, Dr. Binet-Sanglé, produced the first volume of a massive work on the whole question. In three subsequent volumes he expanded his thesis with very great detail, most of which was written from a thoroughly medical aspect. The author dealt with Jesus as a case, and from his own specialized knowledge made an exhaustive analysis, not merely of the Gospels, but also of other Messiahs and religious lunatics. That the whole work has never been translated into English—as far as I know—is a calamity, Jesus

may never have lived at all; but if he did, this work proves that he was undoubtedly insane.

Binet-Sanglé felt it was time that someone should attempt a life of Jesus from an altogether different point of view from that of Renan who thought he was a "divine" man, or that of Proudhon, a "prodigious" man, or that of Soury, a man of "genius." These and other authors mostly lost themselves in a region of fantasy like true theologians. They could not get rid altogether of their youthful impressions. Once having believed that Jesus was a God it was difficult to make themselves believe that he was only a man. They dispoiled their idol of his divine attributes; they did not dare to knock him off his pedestal. They were still hypnotized by the extensive spread of Christianity and by the power of the Catholic Church which they seemed to confound with the actual work of Jesus. Binet-Sanglé is very contemptuous of a good many of the biographers—particularly Soury—of the so-called Lives of Jesus, who admit that they dare not tell all they think because this may do harm to so many religious beliefs.

But Binet-Sanglé is just as severe on those critics who explain religion as purely imposture. "Did not Volney and Dupuis," he cries, "go so far as to deny the existence of Jesus and to see in him nothing but a personification of the sun!" The Gospels were, for him, sincere and naïve biographies which he was going to study as an anthropologist:—

I shall study the family of Jesus, his father, the devout carpenter of Nazareth, his mother, the devout Miryam, his brothers and sisters, and those who according to the actual witnesses Mark and Luke, took him for insane and did not believe in his divine mission. . . . I shall say something about his physical constitution, the charm and the weakness of the Messiah (that is, the Anointed). I shall throw some light on his Transfiguration . . . on his bloody sweat . . . on his ignorance of the knowledge of his time . . . on his ideas of Elohim . . . on how he came to believe that he was the Messiah . . . on his taste for allegory and parables . . . on his hallucinations . . . on his weak judgment and reasoning and the incoherence of his ideas . . . on his melancholy and egoism and his formidable pride . . . on the way he expresses himself, his fits of anger and hatred . . . and perhaps from this conscientious and impartial study there will arise a new Jesus with the only halo which suited him—that of the magic light of the East.

Binet-Sanglé's conclusions were arrived at from a profound study of, not only the canonical Gospels, but also of all the New Testament Apocrypha, of which he gives a detailed list. But it is rather strange that, as he claimed he was writing an absolutely impartial work he should depend on writers like Renan, and he seems to me too ready to accept anything called a Gospel written in the first 200 years of our era.

He is also too ready to accept the judgment as to the historical value of any of these Gospels given by various Catholic and Protestant writers whose opinion is simply conjecture; as for example, when he says that "the oldest and the most historical of the four canonical Gospels is that according to Mark." Binet-Sanglé settles the question, he thinks, once for all when he declares it to have been assuredly written by a Jew about 60 A.D. in Rome. There is no evidence whatever that this is the case.

At the same time he recognized that the four canonical Gospels "are in reality legendary biographies written in the interests of propaganda, though it is easy to separate the legend from the history." And he denies that their authors are merely story tellers or romancers. Why does Binet-Sanglé look upon the Gospels as "authentic?" He claims that it is because their four writers describe minutely a being whose

actions prove him to be more or less insane. Now the diagnosis which proves to a medical pathologist that a man is insane could not have been known to the four naïve biographers, for at their epoch neither neurology nor psychopathy, as we understand them, had been born. The Evangelists therefore could not have been merely story tellers for they described too well symptoms which all medical specialists can easily recognize. The Gospel writers are for him, declares Binet-Sanglé, "good honest souls who saw evolving under their eyes without understanding its nature a case of religious insanity, and who naïvely described what they saw."

It is a particularly interesting point, and it is argued with great perseverance and enormous detail in his four books. I have not been able to discover what John M. Robertson thinks of the theory, but Professor W. B. Smith in his *Ecce Deus* has so much contempt for it that he suggests the title of the book should not have been *La Folie de Jésus* but *La Folie de Binet-Sanglé*.

I will however deal more in detail with the book in my next article.

H. CUTNER

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## Acid Drops

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We are pleased to see in the organ of the B.B.C., the *Listener*, a note from one of the *Listener* staff that endorses much of what we said of Lord Halifax's extraordinary, but characteristic, outbreak in his broadcast on July 21.

The critic says that it was due to Lord Halifax's quality

of exclusiveness, of class-consciousness perhaps, which beguiled Lord Halifax into associating the cause of the Empire with the creed of only one of its partners. That indelicacy will not pass unobserved among the millions of non-Christians in the King's Dominions. What would have been entirely appropriate in a religious broadcast was, in that imperial context, depressingly parochial.

The B.B.C. must have had a nice avalanche of letters of protest to be driven to speak thus of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and so well known a hawk of primitive religious opinions as Lord Halifax. What was the B.B.C. censor doing? The critic says that Lord Halifax spoke as a "voice from another world." The correct description here is that it was a man from a dead world speaking the language of another world, and dead to his obligations, morally and intellectually, to those whom he is, quite wrongly, believed to represent.

After all Lord Halifax is only an exaggerated representation of a common fault, and with the B.B.C.'s production of its religious programme, and its careful exclusion of anything that will look like a direct criticism of religious beliefs, it almost rules itself out of court when it comes to criticize others. Church of England preachers, Roman Catholic priests, a number of miscellaneous Christians are allowed week after week and year after year to use the B.B.C. as a pulpit. In a manuscript which an author, with complete lack of self-respect, sends in for criticism and modification, real criticisms on religion are deleted. We know of one case in which a manuscript dealing with a certain anniversary in science, contained the expression, "as in other cases these ideas met with the opposition of the Church." The phrase was altered to, "These ideas met with opposition." The essence of the sentence was that the Church opposed, not the banality that opposition occurred. The Motto of the B.B.C. should be, in matters of religion, "Come unto me all ye who are muddleheaded or weak-kneed and we will take you in."

But this matter of misusing a public position runs right through society. It begins with the King, who as Defender of the Faith talks in many of his speeches as if

the country consisted of none but Christians. It includes members of the Government who in their official pronouncements have ever since the war commenced been lavish with the remark that we are fighting for the preservation of Christian civilization. It spreads to town councils who open their proceedings with prayer, although their election as councillors have no connexion, save a surreptitious one, with any religion whatever. It continues in the law courts where witnesses are offered the insult of being sworn in the name of God, as though if one did not believe he could not be trusted to tell the truth. (The evidence of a non-believer is accepted on his word of honour). And the general press, with an eye on advertising revenue, carefully act as watchdogs to prevent the Atheist from ravaging the hen-roost. We may not secure intellectual honesty even though religion were abolished in all official places, but it is certain we shall never achieve it in a modern society while religion occupies the position it does.

There seems no end to the impudence of some people. A number of M.P.'s have presented a memorial to the Prime Minister asking him to arrange that there shall be one minute's silent prayer throughout the country every day. And we were under the impression that we were fighting Hitlerism?

The backwardness of some of the American States is notorious. And we are not surprised to see the following, which we clip from the *Catholic Herald* :—

NO ATHEISTS ALLOWED.—A recent "opinion" made public by the Attorney-General of the State of Carolina states that "All persons who shall deny the Being of Almighty God shall be disqualified to hold public office" in that State.

We believe there are several of the States in the U.S.A. in which some such survival from the Dark Ages exists. And we are quite certain a great many survivals of the primitive in this country would like to see a similar law existing. Their fight for the freedom of democracy would be for anything but Freethought. One ought never to forget that the ideal Christian heaven is a place where everyone has the same ideas, sings the same hymns, and for a change of enjoyment leans over the battlements of heaven watching the burning of heretics in hell.

At the time of writing there is a very determined movement being organized in religious circles to exempt the Bible and the New Testament from the proposed tax on books. We have no liking for the tax. In its operation it may prove a tax on knowledge, particularly if it operates in the direction of restricting the publication of very cheap books on vital subjects. There is no tax that will be worse in its effect, and it sets a very bad precedent. Finally we shall have added to the infliction of the tax the difficulty of completely repealing it. We have already to fight difficulties attaching to the publication of very unorthodox papers, difficulties that arise from so many private persons and shopkeepers setting themselves up as censors as to what the public ought to be permitted to read. A tax on books is a tax on knowledge, and a tax on knowledge would realize the ideal of only too many in this country.

But if any book can be taxed with the least damage to the general public it is a tax on the Bible. There are surely enough copies of the Bible in circulation to prevent anyone feeling a shortage if no more were printed until the war was over. And if it must be printed, then the Bible should stand on exactly the same level as other records of primitive history, folk-lore, and early magic. The last thing we desire is to see the Bible drop out of circulation. Although we have a suspicion that a great many of our "advanced" Christians would not be sorry if that happened.

One of the arguments to be used when the proposal appears in Committee is that of the hardships the tax will cause "distributors" of the Bible. But seeing that war-measures have done so much almost or completely to ruin men who were engaged in the distribution of other

things, of far greater immediate importance than the Bible, the plea is very weak. Another argument is that the sales are on a cost-price basis. What kind of a reason is this? The *Freethinker* has been sold on less than a cost-price basis ever since it began its existence. How would that plea be taken if it were used for the omission of the *Freethinker* from the newspaper tax? And in all seriousness the continued circulation of the *Freethinker* is of far more importance than that of the Bible. For there is nothing to take its place; and without it many would never understand the Bible at all. The real ground for the abandonment of this book tax is that the income from it—bearing in mind the colossal expenditure on the war—is comparatively so small that it might well be abandoned. But the war has compelled us to follow in the footsteps of Hitler in so many directions that probably some will decide that one more step in that direction will not matter very much.

The Rev. A. G. Smith, of Aberdeen, writes in the local *Press and Journal* protesting against the legal standing of conscientious objectors. He says they exhibit a "cowardly shrinking from their country's call." That is the kind of statement one might expect from a Christian minister, a member of a body that claims, and accepts, exemption from military service because they know that once men break free from their stupid superstition they can never be regained. We have said more than once that we do not agree with the existence of a conscientious objection to war as a sufficient reason for exemption. But we do say, very deliberately that it requires *prima facie*, a higher order of courage to stand as a Conscientious Objector than is often shown by a volunteer for military service. The courage may be as high in both cases, but the one has to be proved in action, the other is shown in a defiance of public opinion. And right or wrong that requires real courage.

On the other side of the ledger we must write down the appearance of an article in the *Manchester Evening News*, for July 29, by the Rev. W. Rowland Jones, asking that clergymen shall be conscripted on the same conditions as laymen. Mr. Rowland Jones says :—

One would have thought that those who believe this war to be a holy war against the powers of darkness would have been the first to leap over the shelter which exemption offers with the clamorous cry "Here am I, send me!"

Yes, one would expect this—if one did not know the clergy. Besides there is no law preventing a clergyman joining the army—as a private, and working his way upward. As it is they join as an officer with a relatively high rate of pay. Some of them say they are prohibited by their bishop. But the prohibition only means that the bishop will, in cases of disobedience, "have his knife" in the man, and he will not get church promotion. And that is what most parsons wish for, just as any ordinary person does in a mundane occupation.

With impressive ingenuousness Mr. Jones points out the number of the clergy in proportion to worshippers :—

In my own district and within one domination alone there are five churches within a circle of half a mile radius. . . . There are seven clergymen, an average of one minister for every fifty-seven worshippers. Without hardship these 400 people could be brought together in one church, which would then be only half-occupied. Six men could then be set free for other work of national importance.

Interesting, but Mr. Jones makes a false assumption, and comes to a wrong conclusion. He assumes that the churches are there for the benefit of the people. That is quite wrong. The people are there for the benefit of the Churches. The people would get on quite well without a Church, as a large number of people do. But no Church, no parson, and no God can exist without people believing that the Church is more than a mere building, the parson is more than a mere man, and God can exist without people believing in him.

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# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

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To Distributing and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—H. Blythe, 3s. 6d.; A. George, 13s. 6d.; H. Thompson, 2s. 6d.  
L. WOODHEAD, C. SAMUELS AND MRS. LEWIS.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

E. A. ARUNDEL SMITH.—We take it that your regret at approaching the last paragraphs of our *Autobiography* is an indication of your desire for more. That may come one day. We are not surprised at the dissatisfaction in Bournemouth at the Ministry of Information. It is time that it was radically overhauled, or abolished. A better name at present would be the Ministry of Official Impertinence.

A. HATTEK. Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops." Take consolation in the reflection that modern Freethought has never lacked able and adequate advocacy. Our job is to keep on, keep the standard as high as possible, and rest content. And however much men and methods change, the Freethought Cause will continue. If it can be said that we left Freethought a little better than we found it, that is enough.

W. A. SANDERSON.—Thanks. We have already commented on the circular. It amounts to a public scandal that the L.C.C. should display so little sense of honour, and even decency, to circulate a religious leaflet of such a character. But where religion is concerned honesty and decency are not strongly operative.

C. THOMPSON.—You are quite mistaken. We have never denied that Jesus was a God. He has always insisted that he was a God, ranking in origin and function with other gods. What we have denied is that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament was a man.

"TAR CAN."—Yes, Captain Ramsay, at present interned, is the same one that made himself so ridiculously prominent in connexion with his unsuccessful efforts to induce the Government to suppress the International Freethought Congress. He is the "Dear Ramsay" of Sir Samuel Hoare, who expressed his regret that he had no power to suppress the Freethought gathering.

A. GEORGE.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the militant Freethought movement. The world owes more to it than it is aware, and much more than it will ever know. It is true that the orthodoxy of to-day is the heresy of yesterday. But it is not very often that "to-day" recognizes its obligations.

A. F. LEE.—We note your appreciation of *Almost an Autobiography*. We are pleased to say that it bids fair to rank as one of our "best sellers." We may publish presently a selection from the letters received. The significance of the New Testament passage about leading about a sister is two-fold. It illustrates the early Christian practice of antinomianism, and the charges brought by one sect of Christians against another.

H. R. JONES (Buenos Aires).—Thanks for letter. No need for concern. We are feeling quite well now, and hope to continue so. No time for illness in these days.

K. W. LINES.—Thanks for interesting letter which ought to have been acknowledged before this. But we are very busy, and have reliance on the good nature of our correspondents.

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

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

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

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

## SPECIAL

WITH a view to meeting circumstances that may arise with a prolongation of the war, we should be greatly helped if each subscriber to the *Freethinker* would be good enough to send us his, or her, name and address. We refer only to those who procure their copies through newsagents. Those who order direct from the office have their addresses already on our books.

The circumstances we have in view may never arise, but it is well to be prepared for all kinds of difficulties. We have, so well as we can, guarded the future of the paper in many directions, and this suggestion represents the last contingency of which we can think—at the moment.

All that is required is just a name and an address on a postcard or in a letter. We shall know to what it refers. Our readers have assisted us so willingly, and in so many directions, that we do not hesitate to ask this further help.

CHAPMAN COHEN

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

## Sugar Plums

At long last Manchester by a council vote of 55 to 35 is to have Sunday cinemas. That is quite good. The disgraceful thing is that for so long the bulk of the people should have been prevented from attending a perfectly legitimate entertainment because a certain number of people were interested in the ghost business and decided that Sunday entertainments must be restricted to churches and chapels. It is in such circumstances as these that we are inclined to agree that we are trying to save Christian civilization. Religious bigotry proves it so far as the "Let us be gloomy on Sunday" brigade is concerned.

It is worth noting that the Chief Constable made the following communication to the Council:—

The Chief Constable has made enquiries in towns and cities where there were Sunday cinemas, and the replies had been that the behaviour of the populace, particularly of young children, had been much better than it was previously, and that the authorities would make no recommendations to go back to the closing of cinemas on Sunday.

That is the common experience everywhere.

Stamford also takes the plunge and has voted in favour of Sunday opening of cinemas. The war is driving people to desperate determinations. One member of the Stamford Council, Alderman Bowman, hoped that this would be the first step towards more desirable Sunday freedom. On the other hand, Councillor the Rev. W. A. Rees-James, hoped that this would not be the thin end of the wedge. He was of opinion that not only were we fighting for Christian civilization, but for the Christian Sunday. In other words, Mr. Rees-James is of opinion that the war is a method for keeping the Rev. gentleman's business in good order.

Torquay is on the brink of taking this daredevil step of permitting who-so will to look at a picture show on Sunday. And, again, it was expressed that this "end of the wedge" would lead to still further desperate steps. The Council of Evangelical Free Churches sent in a collective protest against the proposal, evidently believing that the inhabitants of Torquay were of such poor material that all kinds of terrible things might happen if cinemas opened on the Lord's Day. And yet it is quite probable that the inhabitants

of Torquay are not made of such poor stuff as the Evangelical Council believes.

The Archdeacon of Chester writing in the *Daily Telegraph* of July 21 is disturbed at the war-time prohibition of Church-bell ringing. He does not object to other bells not ringing, but that the Church should not be allowed to do so appears to outrage his religious susceptibilities. We are not surprised that those who are not curious in these matters take it for granted that the church-bell is rung for the purpose of bringing people to Church. The origin of the practice is due to a very different feeling. It began, as most other things belonging to the Church began, in a form of magic. The purpose of the Church bell was to drive off demons. It was for this purpose that it was set ringing before a funeral procession so as to keep devils away from the corpse. In Yorkshire in early times bells were marked with the hammer of Thor to keep off demons. In Churches, to drive off any evil spirits that might have congregated in the belfry, a bell was baptized as was a living person. Bells or pieces of metal were very commonly and anciently used for such purposes as those mentioned. We should not be surprised to find that the sound given out by a piece of metal was attributed to a spirit, good or evil, in the metal itself. Men such as the Archdeacon of Chester seldom consider how very interesting they are to an anthropologist. They are the real analogues to the surviving savage races.

Mr. J. T. Brighton has been taking a busman's holiday. As a relief from his very successful propaganda in Durham and Northumberland, he has been spending a weekend in Wigan. He had three large and successful meetings there and, as usual, got on very well with his audience. A quantity of literature was distributed, which is certain to bear good results. Mr. Brighton has also had a very successful debate in Chester-le-Street, and is taking part in several more debates in the immediate future. Good work by a good man.

Members and friends of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. are invited to join the party visiting Sutton Park to-day (August 18), and to meet at the Town Gate entrance, Sutton Coldfield, at 3.30 p.m. If somebody will arrange for fine weather the Branch officials will ensure a happy outing for every member of the party.

Will Freethinkers in Norwich willing to co-operate in forming a Branch of the N.S.S. in that city communicate with Mr. J. H. Bowles, 37 Catton Grove Road, Norwich. The possibilities of new and mutual interests within a group of Freethinkers should bring many replies and early notice of a preliminary meeting of prospective members.

## Prayeritis

SUNSHINE, fresh air, and an erect posture having counteracted the toxic effects of studying "Hymns: A. & M.," the writer feels able to tackle the companion volume known as "The Book of Common Prayer."

Skimming its pages, one shies a bit at the idea of considering the book seriously, before accepting the fact that it is reputed to be runner-up to the Bible in the best-selling stakes.

Unlike other fiction, the Bible and Prayer-book are rarely read by their purchasers or owners. They are now mainly survivors amongst those tokens of a respectability once indicated by samplers, antimacassars, wax fruit, stuffed birds, framed "In Memoriam" cards, and "tupp'ny coloured" scriptural texts.

General ignorance of Christians concerning their holy books has often been proved by Freethinking and other debaters. The articles under the title of "Hymnomania" might, indeed, have been a "reve-

lation" to some of them; and, if only they will give their minds free play, these articles should lend them pause to review their position as blind worshippers.

So to "The Book of Common Prayer." In defiance of "divine" distaste, expressed in holy writ, for "vain repetition," the book teems with it! Even a "god" could scarcely stand the repeated volleys of "We beseech thee," "Deliver us," "Hear us," and so on fired through litanies and prayers at the "mercy seat" under the parson's nose. Cold criticism, however, fairly sums up all these religious rites and ceremonies as the hypnotic method to secure and hold fearful and docile congregations sufficiently to keep the church in liquidation.

The prayer-book opens with the Act of Edward VI. revived, with slight revisions, by Queen Elizabeth after it had been "repealed and taken away" by Queen Mary, "to the great decay of the due honour of God, and discomfort to the Professors of the Truth of Christian Revelation." ("Discomfort" is a pretty euphemism to apply to sundry burnings at the stake, what?)

Under the strict provisions of the Act, many beneficed clergy have been, and continue to be, liable to loss of all offices and "profit," and imprisonment for six months; imprisonment for a year, etc., on a second conviction; and imprisonment for life on a third conviction. Unbeneficed persons are threatened with greater penalties. Attendance at service "every Sunday" is compulsory on "all and every Person and Persons within this Realm, or any other the Queen's Majesty's Dominions," under penalty of the Church's censure and a fine of twelve pence. It would occupy too much space to specify the offences for which the clergy may be brought to book, but it can be asserted that few, if any, of them would to-day escape punishment if the Act were enforced. As to non-attendance at church-service, that "twelve pence" fine should rope in enough to finance the war! But how many—or rather, how few—in our Dominions know that the Church's tentacles stretch out to them? Yet how frequently they were compelled to rebel at *Downing Street* control and interference!

In addition to the Church having authority to punish by "Admonition, Ex-communication, Sequestration, or Deprivation," etc., justices, mayors, bailiffs, and other officers have power to "enquire, hear and determine the offences." Obviously, only the general indifference to these antiquated threats has kept the common informer idle.

Following the Act comes "The Preface," a lengthy argument against allowing any alterations in the book, but leaving a loophole for meeting a demand for change—as one would expect from time-servers. Further introductory matter consists mainly of plaintive laments over the "mishandling" the prayer book has undergone. Next follows orders "how the rest of holy scripture" is to be read, for *form* is more than *matter* in ecclesiastical affairs. There is little left for the minister's own judgment or sincerity to function upon. Various "tables" come next, which can have no significance for the Laity unless they are attracted by numerology or abracadabra.

Over "Morning Prayer" and "Evening Prayer" services it is unnecessary to linger; they are familiar to most, whether orthodox or unorthodox. The younger generation is, certainly, far less familiar with them than the older. Sufficient to remark that the same old petitions, the same old responses, and the same old lamentations stand as they stood at the beginning of public worship: that is, stale and unprofitable for all living purposes—except the parson's "living."

Coming to "Holy Communion" one prayer after another has "our king and governor" for its theme,

## Cabbages and Gods

the guests at "the Lord's supper" being constrained to curb their appetites the while. That the ceremony visualizes the raw meat and blood of aforesaid human sacrifice appears in the words: "Grant us . . . gracious Lord . . . to eat the flesh of thy dear son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood."

"Publick Baptism of Infants" has thriven on the intimidation of poor mothers, under the threat that their babies will be eternally damned unless a parson sprinkles water over the protesting innocent. And sponsors still have to make the impossible pact that the child shall "renounce the devil . . . the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous . . . and carnal desires." Mrs. Shufflebottom of Paradise Row may be quite agreeable to do this, but it must create a bit of a problem when the child is heir to a plutocrat or "aristocrat." In naming the child, the priest is advised to "dip it in the Water discreetly and warily." (Note that the water has become "capitalized" by being "holy"). After which the inoffensive mortal is pledged to be confirmed as soon as it can say the creed, the lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the catechism. (Good god, printer! where are your capitals?)

Provision is made for Private Baptisms and for those "of riper years." But what *adult* is going to make the renunciation referred to above? None, surely, unless there's a fat "stipend" to compensate. Yet what a thrill might pass down the aisle if Sir Christian Midas sought the light; and his happy godparents presented him with the customary christening-mug!

That bugbear of children, the catechism, appears next; and aren't they glad to forget it when freed from control of stupid elders! "Confirmation," however, demands it should be gabbled if one wishes a "final bond of unity with the lord."

A. G. DUNN

(To be concluded)

### A Satirical Elegy, on the Death of a late famous Preacher 1940

Woomock! impossible! what, dead!  
Of old age too, and in his bed!  
And could that mighty drivell'r fall,  
And so inglorious, after all?  
Well, since he's gone, no matter how,  
The last loud trump must wake him now;  
And, trust me, as the noise grows stronger,  
He'd wish to sleep a little longer.  
And could he be indeed so old  
As by the newspapers we're told?  
Threescore and ten is pretty high;  
'Twas time in conscience he should die!  
This world he cumbered long enough;  
He burnt his candle to the snuff;  
And that's the reason, some folks think,  
He left behind so great a stink.  
Behold his funeral appears,  
And widows' sighs, and Papists' tears,  
Wont at such times each heart to pierce,  
Attend the progress of his hearse.  
But what of that? his friends may say,  
He had great honour in his day  
True to his nonsense and his pride,  
Made thinkers weep before he died.  
Come hither, all ye empty "dopes"!  
Ye bubbles raised by breath of Popes!  
Who float upon the tide of state;  
Come hither, and behold your fate!  
Let Pride be taught by this "outfit,"  
How mean a thing's a Jesuit;  
From all his ill-got honours flung,  
Turn'd to that dirt from whence he sprung.

J. SWIFT JUNIOR

ACCORDING to the Christians' book of fairy tales, the Bible, day and night were made, and cabbages created, before the sun; for we are informed that light and darkness were created on the first day (presumably so that God could see what he was a-doing of), and that the sun, which produces light, was made on the fourth day. This peculiar arrangement was undoubtedly to ensure that the first cabbage was a nice green, for if it had grown in the dark it would have been elongated, unhealthy, swollen with moisture, weak in the topknot like its creator and etiolated, that is, containing a yellowish colouring matter called etiolin, as plants grown in the dark do to this day. To circumvent this, Jehovah (God the "Father" of the Christians), arranged for there to be light before there was anything to give light, and having obtained light, arranged for something else to give light later on—and all to ensure that the first cabbage, with a rabble of other stuff, was green through having a nice portion of chlorophyll in it.

In Science (as opposed to the "clotted cloacal clap-trap" which ignorant and deceiving parsons foist upon the masses of the population as "The Unquestionable Truth") there are "no absolute beginnings." Science is not something very dry and very difficult to be understood by an ordinary person. It is merely the accumulated organized knowledge of the race concerning the workings of Nature and natural laws. Every cabbage must have grown from a seed or a cutting or something of that kind, and that seed or cutting must have been produced by an earlier plant. Almost mentally deficient school-children know this much, but the idiots in the "Salvation Army" would probably deny the truth of it with an "Alleluiah! Praise His Name! God made the first cabbage out of nothing!" And to think that they send missionaries to Africa! Yes, the Christians are supposed to think, and some of them do, that "God" made the first cabbage out of nothing. He said "Olive Oil" and it sprung from the ground at "His Infinite Fiat." You can't help laughing, can you!; if you have had the rudiments of education?

The better believers only pretend to think this. It makes for mental rectitude of a Christian character. Some of our leading parsons are such twisters that they use corkscrews for rulers. Christian teachers are such stupid hypocrites. They must know that this sort of thing is not true, but they will teach this drivel as Truth to schoolchildren in the "Scripture" lesson and then contradict it a couple of hours later in the "Nature Study" lesson! Straight: it makes you laugh! and later still in the nature study lesson they have to contradict "Divinity" and tell the class how things actually did happen according to the natural laws of universal causation. This is rather a scream, isn't it? Or rather it would be if it were not so insanely criminal and so hard on the minds of the children. But the church does not give a brass hoot for the children so long as it can play them for swell suckers throughout their (mortal) lives, and so get their money out of them by begging, collections and all the rest of successful Christianity, for is it not written that "It is more blessed to give than to receive"? This is what parsons and prizefighters always say.

When I first began to grow cabbages in my garden here, I was rather surprised at all the diseases to which these useful victuals are subject. I can understand God making cabbages "for the service of man," as one can easily put one's self into the pre-scientific state of mind of an honest Christian—a very rare bird, who is generally considered "mental" by his

stronger brothers. But I wish some "believer" would be kind enough to explain to me why God made some beastly insect that eats away the roots of cabbage plants. If Mr. Middleton be a Christian, perhaps he would be kind enough to explain to us why the God who made cabbages also made a whole bunch of diseases and pests to "muck them up," as the saying is. Perhaps the B.B.C. could arrange a discussion on these lines between Mr. Middleton and the Bishop of Ely? Will Ely please tell us why God made caterpillars to eat the leaves, and other pests to mutilate and deform the shoots of cabbages?

Would a sensible "God" create the cabbage, and then create dozens of foul pests to spoil it? Is the answer that God is not sensible, or is that just ignorance on the part of poor sinful man, who invariably seems to show more sense of decency and fitness than the God which his medicine-men have created for him "at terrific expense"? And if God wants the cabbages messed up, why does he allow us to discover how to deal with all these pests by means of the various chemical and other treatments? Or does he let his diseases mar the cabbages for fun so that he can laugh at us fussing round them with patent remedies, glass bottles for containing handpicked caterpillars, etc.? Cannot our simple Christian "friends" see that by postulating an all-good God, for whose existence there is not one shred of real evidence, they have made a problem to which there is no sensible solution, where there is really no real problem at all? Can they not see that he who asks a damned silly question can always be certain of a damned silly answer "from the right quarters"? That is how Cosmo Cantaur at £300 a week and his gang of deceivers work.

In fine, it is to be noticed in the growing of cabbages, or indeed in any other undertaking in which a body might indulge, that whether the operator is a devout Christian of a "fundamental" type, who looks as if he could do with two pennyworth of "God-Help-Me," or whether he is a militant Atheist, his results entirely depend on his knowledge of the subject he is tackling, and not on whether what he believes is supposed to be pleasing to God. An Atheist who knows a great deal about gardening can grow better cabbages than a parson who is an absolute fool at horticulture. God will not stop a parson from wasting his money on, or planting, inferior seeds: nor does he give a thoughtful Atheist rotten results in his agricultural experiments. God does not keep the pests away from a parson's cabbages. The parson has to pick the caterpillars off just the same as the "unbeliever." God does not tell the butterflies not to lay eggs on the cabbages of those who put their trust in him, but only on the cabbages of those who do not believe that "Gawd" exists. "God helps those who help themselves" turns out to mean that if you do not help yourself you will get no help from God because there ain't no sich person. The reason is simple. The universe is clearly one gigantic mechanism. There is no place found for "Old Nodaddy" in it. He is not "aloft" at all. God does nothing that we can definitely put our finger on. There is nothing in Nature that cannot develop as it does without "supernatural help and guidance." Consequently the God-idea is an excrescence. God does not really matter to anyone, except, of course, to the clergy, who keep on with the myth so that they may get their living out of it. If only "all people that on earth do dwell" would cease giving their money to the priests and would treat them with the contempt they deserve, these "gentry" would soon stop preaching, and would be forced to do an honest job of work, as I do, for a change.

EDWARD WARD

## Memories

THE majority of us, as we go through life, have some experiences which we like to recall, each according to his taste and the mood of the moment; and to sit down, quietly, preferably alone and in the twilight, and to reflect upon some past event or events is, often enough, the way to happiness and, occasionally, to that peace of mind which is otherwise unobtainable. Whether we care to admit it or not, most of us live our lives—or some portion of our lives—over and over again, especially the first two or three decades.

For example, some childish prank may stick in our mind and we are tickled to death at the recollection of it. What precocious young devils we were, to be sure, and how richly we deserved the hiding we got. How it hurt, and how hard we tried to keep back the tears and brazen it out. We weren't a bit repentant at the time—or so we tried to make believe!

Then there was that memorable occasion when Mother, believing in our innocence (Bless her!) protected us from Dad, and there was a bit of a scene! We were (for once in our lives!) genuinely sorry then, because as a rule Mother and Dad were like a couple of turtle doves, and we regretted causing heated words between them.

We reflect that we passed from boyhood into young manhood and fell in love and out again with remarkable facility. Every member of the opposite sex, young or old, who came our way we looked at adoringly and declared undying devotion to—only to get our ears boxed for our stupidity. After that, for an hour or two, we hated women intensely and swore to remain celibate throughout eternity, promptly forgetting our resolution at the sight of the next pretty face!

On being told that we ought to take things more seriously and to begin to prepare ourselves for the battle of life, we devoted some time to study and creative reading. We acquired just a little more knowledge, learned by heart whole passages from a few favourite authors, and became dogmatic and declamatory. We felt now that we had the key to the riddle of the universe.

Just how much we were influenced by this extramental effort—this special attention to one or two pet subjects—we didn't then appreciate, but the spasm was of short duration we well remember. Other things—especially the opposite sex—distracted our attention from the main issue, and we joined the crowd of young men who were, we thought, having a good time. . . . Why shouldn't we? There was time enough and to spare for everything, and at the moment we didn't feel like an overdose of hard graft. We could always catch up. . . . So why not "Take the cash and let the credit go," as Omar Khayyam had advised? Yes, why not? A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush any day. So we told ourselves.

Then manhood came with its new outlook, its cares and responsibilities.

Being still young and full of the dogmatism of youth we were quite confident that we knew. And we *knew* that we knew! There was no doubt that if the poor misguided fools there were about would only listen to us we had the panacea for all the world's evils. We told them—yes, we told them in vigorous language that they had been misled in practically every direction: politically, economically and spiritually—and we were surprised that they would not accept our word for it. Thickheads! It was as plain as a pikestaff that the economist, the politicians and the priests had duped them for their own selfish ends. History proved it!

Eventually we married and settled down, fully

determined that our marriage should be an outstanding example to the rest of the world, and that our children should grow up to be intellectual giants and a credit to their sex—leaders of mankind in other words. There would be no half measures about it! One hundred per cent perfect, us!

A good many of us are tarred with that brush—with the brush of ignorance and impudence—but just because we are so profoundly ignorant we believe ourselves to be so profoundly wise. Others have travelled along different paths, admittedly, and the lives of no two men are exactly alike, but "ifs" and "buts" abound everywhere.

And now, as we sit here in the twilight and reflect upon the difference between the precepts and the practice, we smile good humouredly at it all, at our own shortcomings and—yes!—our ignorance.

But we like to recall these past events because they are both amusing and instructive. At least, some of them are amusing. Some are not; some stick in our memory as monitors and cause us uneasiness of mind, and we would rather that they had never occurred.

... Not that we meant to do as we did—or rather, not that we meant our actions to have the effect that they did—and possibly time has healed the wounds. We hope so! But. . . . We try to push the disturbing thought out of our mind and to think of other incidents, incidents that were less discreditable, and of someone whom we have loved and lost.

Yes, we are all given at times to fastening upon these things and, as time passes and we become mellow and meditative, to toying with the "might have beens." H'm! If only this or that had occurred, or if we had done this or that or the other, things might have been different. If only. . . .

But we know that the past is beyond recall, so we bestir ourselves, get up from our cosy-chair reverie, knock out our pipe and go to bed.

Perchance to dream. . . .

GEO. B. LISSENDEN

## Correspondence

### FREEDOM ON THE RADIO

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—While most people will recognize the benefits humanity has gained from the invention of the Wireless (Radio), and also while we all admire the energy and devotion of the workers on the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation, there is a great deal of dissatisfaction in many quarters at what seems in some respects a very one-sided policy at the B.B.C. An undue proportion of time seems to be spent on "conventionally orthodox" talks on religious and kindred subjects. No one will desire to deny a fair proportion of time to such broadcasts—but in fairness other and less conventional views also ought to have their opportunities, especially as such progressive views are widely held in the country. A project is afoot to organize a "Radio Freedom League" to bring about effective expression of that widespread desire. Already many eminent people have expressed approval of the principle of such a movement, and I shall be glad, as provisional hon. secretary, to send particulars to any enquirers who may write to me at 64 Sotheby Road, Highbury, London, N.5.

J. W. POYNTER

### WHY NOT?

SIR,—This war is between the bureaucratic old way of life and that which struggles towards a better—old shibboleths and out of date traditions must go before we can win through to peace.

The President of the U.S.A. approves a bill to spend

10,000,000 dollars yearly for six years on Federal Hospitals; the Surgeon-General is at the head of this, and of a board of eight medical and general scientists one is to be an Osteopathic Physician. This bill has been passed by the U.S. Senate, yet our Ministry of Health still dallies on, and the accidents of war and black-out still are too frequently fatal when immediate treatment by a qualified Osteopath would often save a life or relieve agony. One hundred British Osteopaths are qualified.

Shame on the stilted rules and professional etiquettes which tolerate such an iniquitous state of affairs.

OLIVE MURPHY

### SEXUAL ENERGY

SIR,—In your issue of August 11, Mr. Hornibrook again brings up the question of sublimation. He seems rather to believe in it. Most recent investigators incline to the opposite opinion. Havelock Ellis says: "We may, it is true, transmute sexual energy into more spiritual forms; but only a small proportion of sexual energy can thus be sublimated." Hirschfeld, according to Ellis, "is cautious in admitting sublimation, and denies that the sexually abstinent yield intellectual products in art or science superior to those yielded by persons not sexually abstinent."

The difficulty in arriving at any conclusion is due to the depth of our ignorance. Scarcely anything is known about anybody's sexual energy, and nobody knows whether anybody is sexually abstinent or not.

We do know, however, that all human energy of any kind whatever comes from one source: our food. There is no other possible source. It seems rather unlikely that persons of exceptional intellectual or moral force first of all have their food converted into sexual energy, and then have their sexual energy converted into nervous energy. The direct conversion of the food into nervous energy seems more likely.

One of the few men whose sexual nature we know something about was Napoleon. After his death there was a post mortem, and the doctors reported that his sexual parts were as undeveloped as those of a child. It is therefore fairly plain that his immense energy could not have passed through a sexual channel.

The immense number of great men who have been bachelors seems to indicate that such men have no great sexual energy. Nearly all philosophers have been unmarried: Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Hume, Hobbes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Spencer. Most of the great scientists were bachelors; Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Mendel. The greatest painters and musicians have been mainly unmarried: Michael Angelo, Raphael, Reynolds, Turner, Beethoven, Handel, Chopin. From what we know of the lives of most of these men it is difficult to believe that their food was first of all transmuted into sexual energy, and then from sexual into nervous energy.

R. B. KERR

[We have published Mr. Kerr's letter, but we must point out that Mr. Hornibrook was giving a presentation of the *author's* opinion, not of his own, and therefore Mr. Kerr's criticism of the writer of the review was irrelevant. E.D.]

### WAS JESUS A MYTH?

WE have received a rather lengthy letter from Mr. Roy Boulting in reply, but not in answer, to our criticism in "Views and Opinions," of July 28. The length of the letter would not have prevented its appearance in full, had it really had anything new to say, or if he had explained the things he had said. But his communication divides itself into two parts. One part is concerned with myself, and I have received the chastisement with all the sense of humility it demands. So I must just summarize.

Mr. Boulting thinks I am "absolutely pigheaded" in my refusal to recognize that nineteenth century science has met the pragmatic test. My difficulty is that as I have always claimed and taught that *all* science is

materialistic, and that its only basis is that it works—that is, it is pragmatic in character, I am left wondering as to what “science” or to what pragmatism Mr. Boulting refers. A further summing up of my quality is “that Christ to Cohen is like Bolshevism to Blimp.” I hope I may be permitted to meet this version of Low’s celebrated character, in a way I think Low himself might answer. I do not believe that Christ ever existed. But I do know that Blimp exists. He is a multiplied personality. He stands for one who mistakes words for things, who has a wishful philosophy that enables him to discover what he wishes to find, exhibits a blindness to facts, and takes a repetition of statements for proof. Mr. Boulting has definitely removed any doubts I might have had of the reality of Blimp. I am more certain of his existence than I am even of Mr. Boulting’s. I thank him for the reference.

The rest of Mr. Boulting’s letter consists of a repetition of the peculiar statements he made in his published letter. They are evidence in the sense that “when I say a thing three times it is so” is evidence. I asked and still ask for some evidence—which Mr. Boulting may possess in some unknown document—that “Jesus Christ was crucified because he tried to introduce a new social philosophy.” What I am given is Mr. Boulting’s conviction that Jesus was killed for trying to introduce a new social order, just as “Tom Mooney was held for many years in gaol . . . because he was a known member of a political organization.” But that is saying it all over again. But if Mr. Boulting can produce any evidence whatever for this remarkable statement I can promise I will so far shed my “pigheaded” obstinacy as not to stand in the way of publishing his communication in full. I will not ask him to prove that science can be anything but materialistic, or that modern science has any other basis than a pragmatic one. That would be too cruel even though it might be salutary.

C.C.

### GOD IN NEW JERSEY

A ruling by Judge Thomas Brown forbidding attorneys to practice in New Jersey if they do not believe in God brought to a dramatic halt a suit for \$10,000 damages started here to-day in Circuit Court against the city of Hoboken under New Jersey’s so-called “Riot Act of 1924.” The case did not continue until Paul Blanshard, attorney for the plaintiffs and former New York Commissioner of Accounts, assured the court that he was neither an Atheist nor an Agnostic.

Mr. Blanshard, who said he was a former Congregational minister, failed to win his point that the court’s question regarding his belief in God was “irrelevant,” but he scored the major legal victory of the day when Judge Brown denied a motion for non-suit by counsel for Hoboken.

The suit was brought by Hermann and Elizabeth Matson of 405 Fourth Street, Hoboken, who seek damages for injuries suffered in a riot September 15, 1938, in a Hoboken park. Mr. Matson, who is associated with the Workers’ Defense League, and who is regarded as a foe of the McFeely administration, charge that the place deliberately avoided protecting him from a mob when he attempted to deliver a speech.

At the outset of the day’s session, which was adjourned until 10 o’clock to-morrow morning, Carl Gelman, attorney of record for the plaintiffs, asked Judge Brown to allow Mr. Blanshard to act as trial attorney for the Matsons.

“Mr. Blanshard is a member of the New York bar?” asked the Court.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Blanshard.

“And a believer in God, I hope—is that so?” inquired Judge Brown.

“It seems to me, Your Honour, that this is wholly irrelevant,” replied Mr. Blanshard.

Judge Brown rapped with his gavel and rose.

“Well,” he said, “you cannot be admitted to practice if that’s your opinion. We are of the opinion that New Jersey and the Constitution are built on Christian foundations. We also do not believe that any witness, nor any

party who is an applicant for public office, has the right to take oaths unless he can swear to God.”

The judge then walked out of the court room. About three minutes later he returned to the bench. Mr. Gelman then told him that Mr. Blanshard did not “mean to say he did not believe in God.” Mr. Blanshard, as well as his father and grandfather, had been a minister, Mr. Gelman said. He declared that Mr. Blanshard had wished to show that the Court’s question was irrelevant.

“Mr. Blanshard,” Judge Brown asked, “do you believe in God?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Blanshard.

The judge then asserted the Court “does not intend to have this case made a circus,” and the trial was resumed.

*From the New York “Truth Seeker”*

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON

##### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, A Lecture.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 6.30, Mr. T. H. Elstob.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury, Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 7.30, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. F. A. Ridley. Brockwell Park, 6.30, Sunday, A Lecture. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 7.45, Tuesday, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Thursday, Mr. E. C. Saphin and supporting speakers. Sunday, 3.0, until dusk, various speakers.

#### COUNTRY

##### OUTDOOR

ACCRINGTON MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps): 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.30, Mr. Smithies. A Lecture.

HUNCOAT: 7.15, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Bury Market): 7.0, Saturday. Stevenson Square, 3.0, Sunday. Ashton Market, 7.30, Sunday. Blackburn Market, 7.15, Monday. Chorley Market, 8.0, Tuesday. Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at these meetings.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 7.0, Sunday, Messrs. G. Taylor, C. McCall and S. Newton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

ROSSENDALE (Scoutbottom): 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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