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

Views and Opinions

More about the Clergy

Two letters received in the course of a week, each “going for” the clergy, and one defending them, induce me to say things, which things will be, at least partly, in their favour. I agree that it is foolish at this time of day to hold or to expect the clergy to be better than other folk, freer from worldly temptations than others, more truthful or more intelligent than others. But I do not think that, as the world goes, we have any right to complain of a parson getting a comfortable salary, and for being ready to take a larger one. I think most of us would accept a larger salary if it were offered us. Judging things as a whole we pay large sums to many kinds of officials from the King downward. In the case of the clergy we may rightly complain that, in a left-handed manner we have to pay something for the maintenance of the clergy, whether we want them or not. It is true that what outsiders contribute to the ministers or religion is not levied as are local taxes. Save in such forms as payment to prison chaplains, chaplains in the army and navy, and, in a few cases, emoluments from some local councils, the outsider is not forced to help pay for the reign of the parson. But there is a very substantial sum—it must run into millions—which places of worship receive in the shape of remission of taxes, and a large part of the invested wealth of the Established Church has been directly derived from the State. Apart from these considerations I have no right as an outsider to object to salaries paid to clergymen, except the right every citizen possesses to protest against a misuse of wealth and energy. In this respect I am like the boy’s comment on the flea—I don’t object to it being alive, but I do object to the way it gets its living. But given the right to live one must expect every organism to live after its kind, and to try to make the best of the situation in which it finds itself.

* * *

Acting Differently

I do not expect parsons to act differently from other people. I never did expect them to do so. The clergy

like other folk will bear the stamp of their profession. They were not different from other people before they were ordained, and I do not believe they are different afterwards, even though they wear the front of their collar behind, practise an adenoidal accent, and refrain from using a cuss-word in circumstances when, as the great preacher Spurgeon said, a man must swear or burst. Men take to the Church for much the same reasons that other people chose a profession, and they bear the stamp of their vocation quite clearly. They have the same general vices and virtues that other people have, with just those departures from the normal that other classes present. To repeat what I have said more than once, if one were to take a thousand clergymen, a thousand commercial travellers, a thousand actors, and a thousand politicians, there would be found in each group the same sum of vice and virtue expressed in terms of their mode of life.

I mean by what I have just said that while human nature remains human nature, its manifestations will follow certain general lines. Status, income, the form of the education received, etc., will determine the kind of action, but I do not think that it materially alters character. One would not, for instance, expect the same proportion of the inhabitants of Mayfair to be convicted of picking pockets as one finds in Whitechapel. On the other, one would expect to find a much smaller number of people in Whitechapel charged with abuse of trust, the formation of swindling companies and the like than is found in Mayfair. Drunkenness would be about equal in both places, but there would be fewer police court charges for drunkenness in Mayfair. There are ways of getting drunk, if one has money, that do not end in a police-court charge. One could not bribe a man with five thousand pounds a year with a five-pound note, but the promise of a knighthood might do the trick. So one might run through the whole gamut of vices and virtues, and discover, as in the case of the clergy, that vice and virtue are not quite so unequally distributed as many imagine. It is a case of the Major’s lady and Mrs. O’Grady being much alike under the skin.

So when we have quite overcome the prevalent, but actually primitive feeling that a “medicine-man” is different, a “holier” character than the ordinary person (a pose that is expressed in an almost criminal manner by the Roman Catholic clergy) we may deal with them as we should with other people, and realize that a clergyman is a very ordinary personage, dressed up in a very fantastic manner and often behaving in a very fantastic way.

* * *

Man and Society

There is another aspect of the subject, a very important one, that must be noted, particularly in view of those who are fond of stressing the financial side of the situation. I do not believe that this motive is any stronger with the clergy than it is with other sections of

the community. Readers will know how strongly, and for how many years I have stressed the psychological character of distinctively human society. The need for food, shelter and clothing man shares with the rest of the animal world. But the capacity for looking beyond and behind, the creation of dominating supernatural powers, the transmission of ideas in the form of inventions, institutions, and verbal instruction are things that specifically mark off the human from the animal group. Ideas and ideals, the submission of the individual to the traditions of his tribe, the desire of the individual to stand high in the opinion of his fellows become increasingly powerful factors in human evolution. What the tribe has thought the individual re-thinks with certain variations, few in primitive life, but becoming more numerous and fruitful as society develops.

Readers will know for how many years, and how persistently, I have stressed the understanding of this aspect of human evolution. I am the more pleased to find the same point of view taken up by that very brilliant thinker, Bertrand Russell, who has the capacity for importing science into his philosophy and philosophy into his science. In a recent book, *Power*, he says:—

The fundamental concept in social science is power in the safe sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics. Like energy power has many forms such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion. No one of these can be regarded as subordinate to any other, and there is no one form from which the others are derivative. The attempt to treat one form of power, say wealth, in isolation, can only be partially successful, just as the study of one form of energy will be defective at certain points, unless other forms are taken into account. Wealth may result from all military power or from influence over opinion, just as either of these may result from wealth. The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of this or that power. In former time military power was isolated, with the consequence that victory or defeat appeared to depend upon the accidental qualities of commanders. In our day it is common to treat economic power as the source from which all others are deprived; this . . . is just as great an error as that the purely military historian whom it has caused to seem out of date. . . . To revert to the analogy of physics, power, like energy must be regarded as continually passing from one of its forms into any other, and it should be the business of science to seek the laws of such transformations. The attempt to isolate any one form of power, more especially in our day, the economic form, has been, and still is, a source of great practical importance. . . . When a moderate degree of comfort is assured, both individuals and communities will pursue power rather than wealth as a means to power, or they may forego an increase of wealth in order to secure an increase of power, but in the former case as in the latter their fundamental motive is not economic.

The fundamental motive is not economic, although it may in a given environment play a part, even a considerable part. Given a society where money has become a symbol of greatness, of distinction, or ability and men will strive for financial greatness. Abolish that form of distinction and another will take its place. In this country there is evidence that the economic motive is not always supreme, even though it may often be present. Men and women will fight for distinctive office in Government, in local bodies, in trade organizations, in art, in science, in music, in literature. One man surrenders an income of twenty thousand a year to devote himself to a political career that can, at most, promise him £7,000. Even Mr. Chamberlain might, with his family influence, could have made more money as a company director than he could make as Prime Minister. And unless history is one flaming

lie, then it is true that to reduce the play of motive in the human mind to one factor is grotesquely inadequate. Science works by the method of isolation, but it is only in synthesis that we get a complete picture of any situation. Even in Russia, where the economic motive has been, if not destroyed, very seriously weakened, the eternal social struggle for distinction goes on. And it is well that it should go on. When men and women are not ready to march, to obey or to revolt to criticise or to approve, to accept or reject, then human progress will have been brought to a standstill.

The Clergy as a Survival

What has been said should, I think, express a sane, even scientific summing-up of the position of the clergy. It is probably true that a great number of the present-day clergy take themselves quite seriously and really feel that ordination does really lift them above the level of their fellows. And that in itself gives many an officiating nitwit a sense of his own superiority that could not exist were he brought face to face with himself. The habit of interpreting every phase of feeling as a sign of "divine" guidance is one that is easily acquired, and nothing is plainer than the ease with which family, national, or international affairs are taken as continuous proof of divine help as seen in the non-religious as well as in the religious world; if they could not be so traced they would not be present in religious circles. The golden rule here is to remember that there is not a situation which is called religious that cannot be paralleled by one that is admittedly in the world of non-religion.

The only remarkable thing about the completely honest priest is that so ancient a figure should have persisted for so long. I recall once conducting a party of young men on an educational tour over the Kensington natural history museum. During that tour we encountered a party of clergymen, evidently on the same errand. I had for a moment a feeling similar to what I might have had if one of the extinct animals arrayed before me had suddenly come to life. I realized that I was face to face with a survival of one of the most primitive types of human character.

But more important than the medicine-man's opinion of himself is the opinion of the people concerning the medicine-man. This survival of the primitive did once occupy the most important of all positions in the human group. He was in touch with the gods, he was able to state their wishes and to protect men from their anger. In some form that feeling towards the priest still lingers. Among the Roman Catholics we have it in its most brazen form. In other directions the conviction of the parson being in some way different from ordinary folk lingers. He has still special privileges, and in a vague way there is abroad a feeling that a parson ought to be a better man than others. That is an historic blunder, an anthropological error. The function of the priest is not to set mankind an example in conduct, and certainly not in intelligence. Most of them are to-day driven to that pose because life has moralized religion and also its representatives. The parson to-day has a place as a museum piece for those who understand him and his functions. He is an interesting study for those who appreciate his quality. Modified as he is, humanized as he is, moralized as he is by the impact of civilized thinking, he remains, as a priest, the survival of a type of character that might well have ceased to exist many generations ago.

The Daring of Davidson

Not the riches and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Walt Whitman

A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit.
Milton

THE reproach has often been levelled against our insular art that it is Philistine. The French artistic sense lifts itself out of that ruck. It may go to the dogs, but it is not Philistine. As a plain fact, French art, in all its divisions, is Bohemian. There seems little risk that the bulk of our English writers and artists will ever be Bohemian. Dickens and Thackeray were eminently respectable, and nothing could be less Godly than Thackeray's apology, in the preface to his *Pendennis*, of his inability to portray the real life of a young man. Nowadays, with us, James Thomsons are very exceptional, but so is the genius of that gifted poet who sang of *The City of Dreadful Night*.

If any foreign critic shall throw this up in our faces we may take refuge behind the broad backs of Swinburne and John Davidson. Neither of these singers dwelt beside the still waters. To think of their literary careers is to recall alarms and excursions, of Mrs. Grundy in hysterics, of tabernacle calling unto conventicle, of manifold recriminations and vituperations. We may wish that these two poets had not been compelled so often to exchange their pens for their swords, but on their careers all will look with pride to whom the glory of English literature is dear. The bright flame of their enthusiasm always burned for right issues and noble causes. Their eagerness for battle has been in the cause of Freedom against conventions and traditions. And to-day Swinburne and Davidson are already classics.

John Davidson won his separate place in the literature of our country by his "Fleet Street Eclogues" and his "Ballads and Songs." The appearance of the latter volume raised a storm, for orthodox folk could not endure his "Ballad of a Nun" and "Thirty Bob a Week." Admirers of the placid verses of Lewis Morris were unaccustomed to the beauty and freedom of John Davidson's poems. It was a long way from the sugary "Epic of Hades," so irreverently called the "Hades of an Epic," to Davidson's powerful muse.

Like all heretics, Davidson had to be content with soldier's wages. In one of his later books, *The Triumph of Mammon*, published in 1907, he told his readers he was fifty years old, and that nine-tenths of his time, and that which is more precious, had been wasted in the endeavour to earn a livelihood. He also complained that the age was too commercialized, too immoderate in its pleasures, to care for poetry. He pointed out that the mind of our time was not healthy enough to enjoy the best in literature. So Davidson cast his book upon the waters, and appealed to a court of supremacy, "the dozen superior persons scattered throughout the world," as it has been called wittily.

Small wonder that Davidson's books made a noise in the literary world, but brought him little or no profit. He could write a perfect masterpiece such as *The Runnable Stag*, yet he was forced to do hack work for publishers. His lyrics had a verve and spontaneity denied to his rivals, yet he never caught the ear of the great reading public. And, as he grew older, he became somewhat didactic. In his later works he emphasized his belief that the Christian Religion was tottering to its fall, and it was upon the great changes that this belief involved that he based his poetic visions. For the Christian cosmogony he substituted that of man and science. Being a real and unmistak-

able poet, he breathed life into the terminology of science, for like Swinburne, he blew everything to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius.

As a dramatist, Davidson was so very unlike ordinary playwrights. He regarded Christianity with abhorrence, and he wrote plays with the deliberate object of converting people to his iconoclastic opinions in this matter. He hits Orthodoxy hard, and religious persons harder. But the plays become debates in the process. When you read Davidson's *God and Mammon*, for example, you do not care what befalls Prince Mammon or King Christian; what you care for is the beautiful language, oftentimes as resistless as the honeyed perfection of Kit Marlowe. When you think of a really great play you do not think of any single person or isolated passage. The glory of that most perfect tragedy, *Othello*, is neither the Moor of Venice, nor Desdemona, nor Iago, but each and all. To recall Davidson's plays is mainly to think of isolated purple passages of great charm and beauty.

Despite all this, regardless of its thunder and its earthquake, Davidson's poetry does not fail in the sweeter and kindlier note:—

It is vibrant as an octave bell that hums
Harmonic mirth to hear his neighbour chime.

There are many passages which are the veriest glories of charm and imagination:—

High hearts and youth are destiny enough.

The little child

That lives a year and holds its parents' hearts
In dimpled hands for ever.

And thunder of the thought shall seem to wait
Upon the nimbler lightning of the dead.

As keen as dawn that with a crimson slash
Hews out the darkness and delivers day.
Life's heavy fruitage and imperial nights
When naked darkness gluts the sky with stars.

Hush!

The murmur of the seaboard: surges beat
Their slow, uncertain, softly swelling fugue
The brooding surges fingering the shore.

It is by no means of passages such as these that the discerning reader can see the genius of the poet who was equally at home on Romney Marsh as in busy London. Nothing shows his rare talents so much as his ability to find subjects for verse in the rareness, hugeness, and noise of modern Babylon:—

The million-peopled lanes and alleys
An ever-muttering prisoned storm,
The heart of London beating warm.

Davidson's own life was a tragedy, deeper than any that he wrote. He possessed literary ability that would have enabled him to make plenty of money had he prostituted his rare talents. But his mind was set on something far higher and nobler. He dedicated himself to the service of principles. And he was entitled, in his degree, to echo the fine words of Heine: "Lay a sword upon my coffin, for I was a loyal soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity."

When Richard Carlile was fighting the good fight for Freedom, he was unaware that his deeds of daring were watched by two great poets, Keats and Shelley, who perceived that he was a hero fighting for the most precious possession of humanity. Nearly a hundred years later, G. W. Foote, fighting bravely in the same good cause, was heartened by the encouragement of George Meredith and John Davidson. It was well and happily done. For the pioneers look beyond the tumult of the day, and are touched, by what Shakespeare calls, "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

A New Philosophy of Life

(Concluded from page 606)

PROBLEMS of racial antagonism, of pacifism, of economics, or anything else that is human, must therefore be regarded as being primarily problems of human nature. Thus viewed, the finding of a permanent better solution for any of our social problems is reduced to an issue of better mental hygiene, and a matter of democratically further maturing our impulses and our intellectual methods. Because of the belief in our world-wide psychologic interdependence, these remedies will be effectively applied, only in so far as they are more democratically applied toward the end of promoting the universality of more democratic-mindedness. By that I mean something different than some of the social settlement worker's self-righteous and blind emotions over the word "democracy."

Envisioning this larger relationship and interdependence, within his speciality as a psychiatrist, Dr. J. L. Moreno expressed the present view in these words: "A true therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind." (*Who Shall Survive?* Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1934, p. 3.) Thus our general clamor for a return to the delusional "prosperity" of 1928-9 implies the need for a psychologic recovery from the inner conflicts of our world-wide infantilism, in education, religion, morals, politics, and economics.

Those who grasp my meaning will now see that none of us can get much nearer to Utopia than the rest; and we cannot travel far in that direction unless we can take an ever-increasing number of persons with us, to give mutual support to our effort. Every laggard, anywhere, is an impediment to our onward march. We can only become a little more perfect (that is, mature) human animals, in so far as an increasing number of those around us are making similar progress in their understanding of human behaviour, relations, interdependence, and the need for an ever enlarging co-operation. We must all become more mature or we will go insane and kill each other off, *en masse*.

Now a word as to moralists, politicians and social uplifters in general. Here we apply the same evolutionary standards of judgment. We waste no time in debating with them about the acquired meaning of their creedal words or pious slogans. We prefer to discover how mature are the impulses and intellectual methods which controlled their choice of creedal words, their social technique, and their economic programs. Taking the human animal as we find it, we ask: Will this or that program, and its manner of application, accelerate or retard the natural process of the psychologic maturing of those humans who come within the scope of its influence?

Looking back over my own mental evolution and that of the race, I formulated a statement of the "law" of its procedure. I now attempt to summarize a philosophy of life which includes, and perhaps presupposes a knowledge of that evolutionary process. Unfortunately, again, I cannot take the space to tell all which that language means to me.

An adaptation to that psycho-evolutionary process requires the extreme democratization of education, far beyond anything that I have so far seen proposed; and education *only* for the maturing of our impulses and intellectual methods. This aim, of adaptation to the natural law of psycho-social evolution, is soon found to require the inclusion and stressing of education (maturing) of the impulses toward the love of ever more inclusive co-operative endeavour; and co-operation for accelerating the democratization of work and welfare. Thus, we will ever approach the unattainable goal of a

complete, universal voluntary co-operation. By such a philosophy we may grow toward, but never reach, Utopia.

Humanity cannot be saved by a worshipful following of aspiring leaders; nor by the political fakirs who are perfectly conscientious in the profound ignorance of their erudite infantilism; nor those who in pursuit of their own delusions of grandeur feel honestly justified in playing psychologic tricks upon an infantile electorate, only to secure for themselves a consciousness of power, no matter how "justified." No! The world cannot be permanently helped by such saviours. By such means we can only acquire temporary pleasant delusions. Real salvation can come only through the leadership that seeks to make itself unnecessary by exposing the tricks of current "leadership;" a leadership for eliminating the need for future leadership among adults.

This can be done only by democratizing the right kind of education, which will make leadership ever less important; and by which that leadership which depends upon emotional appeals will be made ever less possible; and the leadership of fireside special pleading ever more repulsive. Such an ideal leadership, which consciously seeks to promote its own lessening power, will educate the masses only in the habits of nature, including human nature and the conditions of its maturing. If mature themselves, such leaders will not be deterred by the fact that infants hate to sacrifice their infantilism which sacrifice is the unavoidable price of growing up.

Suppose that we apply our psycho-evolutionary standard to our educational leaders; our brain-trusters and brain-trustees. No, I dare not, it would be treason to the Holy Ghost of our recent delusion of prosperity; it would be blasphemy against the holy cause of restoring that happy delusion of grandeur which dominated us from 1925 to 1929. No! It must not be done—not yet, not yet! We must first have another delusion of grandeur, many sadistic orgies, such as riots and revolutions; and another world war. When the mob's insanity has resulted in the death of most of our physically mature infants," then—then what? Will the remnant listen? Will there be anyone left to teach them? Or, will the vision of evolution have faded from the earth, and the remnant begin again, at the level of its "unconscious" sadistic cannibalism?

THEODORE SCHROEDER

"Christ" and Freethought

ALTHOUGH most, if not all, Freethinkers, Agnostics, Rationalists, etc., have given up Christianity (or Churchianity as some prefer to call it), not a few still have a hankering for "Christ." They prefer to use the word "Christ" rather than Jesus, and they steadfastly ignore all the many and weighty arguments put forward by so many of our able writers against his historicity. "Christ" did not, of course, perform any miracles, but there is no doubt in their minds that he really lived, that his father and mother were the Mary and Joseph of the Gospels, and that he went about "doing good" and "healing people."

It is not easy to reason with these people, and personally I am all against "heresy" hunting; but I sometimes marvel at the state of mind into which they argue themselves.

One of their favourite little ways is to badger our modern clergy because they refuse to take "Christ's" words literally. I hope that I shall not be misunderstood if I say my sympathies often go out on this point to the much-battered Christian medicine-man. It is

his job to defend every word uttered by his deity, and he knows that often it simply can't be done. However high an ideal may be, we are living in a rough practical world, and it takes two to make a bargain. It is not difficult to go about preaching "Love your enemies"—one can even wander around and say that this earth of ours is not a globe and is as flat as a plate—but it is quite another thing to tell people that their enemies should be loved when they are being slaughtered and tortured by the said enemies. A priest slaughters and tortures very wisely from his point of view, point out that the teaching of Jesus is a lofty ideal to which we all can strive, but that there are occasions when it is impossible to argue with or convince a mad beast.

For a very reverent Rationalist or Agnostic to jeer at the clergy for trying to stop a mad beast doing any harm, and that means that they are bound to kill it and not love it, seems to me extremely unfair. And all the while we must not forget that "Christ," if he ever said "Love your enemies," found it very easy to say, but soon discovered that even he could not do it, for no one loathed his enemies more; he even damned them to eternal punishment.

But is "Love your enemies" something great and ideal? I speak for myself alone, of course, but it seems to me almost like saying "Draw a round square." A man can no longer be your enemy if you love him; and what guarantee is there that even if you do love him, he won't kill, maim, and torture other people? Yet when our reverent unbeliever in Christianity (or Churchianity) attacks the parson because he is in favour of (let us say) continuing the war against such a mad beast as Hitler, and therefore not a follower of the "Love your enemy" nonsense, it is because he, the reverent Agnostic, really agrees with Jesus that we should love our enemies. In my opinion it is not the parson who is stupid, but the Agnostic. I have never been able to understand the state of mind which agrees that Christianity should be attacked but not, by Heaven, the magical words or teachings of "Christ."

As a matter of fact, I am quite convinced that it is Christianity (or Churchianity) which has civilized Jesus. It is true that almost all parsons and priests mouth the words "Our Lord" on every possible occasion, and constantly refer to his "teachings." But it is all done in a general sort of way, and as soon as a special case crops up, they can produce some very excellent arguments that any particular teaching, to be rightly understood, must be explained by the only people qualified to explain it—namely the clergy. If we Freethinkers wish to poke fun at a parson for not maintaining some consistency between precept and practice from the point of view of Jesus and Christianity, let us do so by all means. But don't let us delude ourselves that is what Jesus said that we ought to follow, and not what the Church says. In most cases, I prefer the Church.

You got a good example of the kind of thing I mean when the (very) reverent Agnostic or Rationalist tells us that "Christ" went about "healing people." Here I often begin to lose patience. What exactly is meant by this? The story of the way in which Jesus is supposed to have restored sight to a blind man shows him performing a pure miracle. Now, only a god can perform a miracle, and only by being a god was Jesus able to cure the blind. What earthly sense is there in insisting that Jesus "healed people" in this way? We cannot do it, nor indeed can the clergy. If I were able to perform a miracle of healing, there would not be a sick man on earth. If a miracle can cure one man, it can cure man *en masse*—why not? I see absolutely nothing except sheer nonsense in this talk about Jesus "healing people" and "doing good."

If the clergy are beginning to find out that the teach-

ings of "Christ," might lead them to a lunatic asylum if literally followed, they are well on the way to becoming at least sceptics, and from scepticism to unbelief, and even to Freethought is not so far off. We can naturally attack them for halting a quarter of the way, and getting money on false pretences, but that is another story. Thus I deprecate any attack on them for giving up, even a little, some of the teachings of "Christ," when put forward, not on the grounds that these teachings are on analysis supremely silly, but that we Freethinkers ought to follow them.

Lecky, for example, wrote some of the most scathing attacks on Christianity and on the teachings of Jesus I have ever read, but he went off into a pæon of praise directly he mentioned the Christian deity; so did John Stuart Mill, Renan, and even Thomas Paine. And there is the standard case of Robert Blatchford who, in the old *Clarion*, went for Christ and Christianity for all he was worth, and even came to the conclusion that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ. Yet when the bother caused by *God and My Neighbour* had died down, and the feelings of the Christian readers of the *Clarion* were no longer lacerated, Blatchford hardly ever referred to our slums or to other of our social evils without crying out in righteous indignation—"What would Christ have said if he saw them!" He could think of no greater condemnation than Christ's, so strong is the habit of allowing somebody else to think for one.

If Jesus ever lived, what he had to say about almost anything does not matter two hoots. He was bound to say something sensible one day, but nearly everything else he said was ringed by his own period and upbringing. We have passed him by two thousand years, and nothing that he said in his time could have prevented somebody going mad these days.

The world of science and sanitation, of literature, and art, and music—the world of amusement, theatres and cinemas and social amenities—of transport and travel—of kindness and humanity—in short, our world, but for a raving lunatic let loose at the moment, is a world as far removed from anything envisaged by "Christ" as can possibly be imagined. And our business is to see that his dead hand and mind can no longer interfere with it. At least this is my plea.

H. CUTNER

Christian Origins

Most people are concerned with persons, some people are concerned with things, few people are concerned with ideas. As Buckle's generalization indicates, few people are interested in such an abstruse subject as Christian origins or Biblical criticism, and of these few, most are concerned with the historical Jesus. L. Gordon Rylands is among these few. Nevertheless, it is difficult to think that his work will not have a profound influence.

The documentary evidence, for him, indicates types of mentality and culture, the understanding of which, is dependent upon our own ability to accurately describe the characteristic conceptions and modes of thought of the times, together with an appreciation of the motivating circumstances. "The subject is wide and complex, and different writers have necessarily specialized in different directions." But, he thinks, "sufficient results have been secured to make a co-ordination possible and useful." He essays the task in a work entitled *The Evolution of Christianity* (Watts).

"The result of a hundred years of devoted labour on the hypothesis of an historical Jesus is that while at

the the beginning—a great deal was thought to be known about him, at the end of it we are certain of nothing." Progress has been held up by this "unfortunate obsession." The solutions of our problems are not to be found in "an obscure Jew."

All the essential tenets of Christian doctrine can be traced back to pre-Christian sources. The main Christian stream was formed by the mingling of several streams of independent origin. "One stream is traceable from the Wisdom literature," (poetical writings in praise of Wisdom) The influence of Greek philosophy, leading Jewish thought into metaphysical speculation, developed a religious philosophy; mystical, magical, astro-mythological. Distinctive features are noted and characterized under the term Gnostic. Although documentary evidence is scanty, we can trace "the line of development which began with the Wisdom literature and ended with the Gnosticism of the second century." Our understanding of Gnostic development is helped by a lately discovered document, *The Odes of Solomon*, which, it has been admitted, "anticipates so much Christian doctrine that the historicity of Jesus is threatened in the highest degree." A number of early Gnostic communities or sects are admittedly pre-Christian—the Ophites, Naasenes, the Mandeans, the Nazarenes and the Therapists who may be identical with the Essenes, described as Jewish Pythagoreans: also the Ebionites. It has been argued that Jesus was an Essene; also a Nazarene, that John the Baptist was an Essene, and that the early Christians were called Nazarenes.

"The oriental mind was not scientific or critical, but mystical and symbolic. Metaphysical difficulties resolved figuratively," not literally but metaphorically or allegorically. Gnostic allegories, and their mystic or magic rites, were called "mysteries"; and were the means by which resurrection, redemption, salvation and communion, were attained by knowledge (Gnosis) of divine Wisdom (Pneuma) through the medium of Logos (Psyche). There are many variations of this central theme, and in a progressive *metaphore* a variety of central conceptions—The "Holy One," the "Just One," Chrestos the "Anointed," the Messiah, Christos.

This semi-philosophic conception is, of course, different from the one which can be traced in the Old Testament: which arose during captivity, of an incarnate conquering hero who was to "lead them out of the land of bondage," and re-establish the Kingdom. Then in post-exilic times "the succession of disasters which afflicted the Jewish nation and the hopelessness of contending against the power of Rome," led to the idea that the "Messianic Kingdom would be established, not by force of arms, but by the power of God—as a result of suffering and martyrdom"; produced the idea of a suffering Messiah, there was to be a Messiah, ben Joseph, who would suffer for his people as distinct from the conquering Messiah, ben David." A Son of Man and a Son of God; a Second coming; this idea had its counterpart in the heavenly Messiah of the Apocalypses. Here we find a number of other contributions to the development of Christian doctrine—the conflict of the Angels, the "Evil One," the resurrection of the righteous at the Day of Judgment, future rewards and punishments, the Millennium, the End of World, the New Jerusalem, and around this celestial Messiah, a further variety of metaphorical conceptions—Son of God "Angel of the Presence," "Lamb of God," the "Elect One," also Son of Man, Joshua or Jesus. "There is nothing in common between the Jesus of the Apocalypse and the Gospel Jesus, beyond the name and the fact that each was slain as an atoning sacrifice."

Sacrifice was also a feature of various Saviour God

cults which became widespread at the beginning of the Christian era, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysus, Mithra, and Jesus. In nearly all of them the god of the cult was a Son of God; they all died and rose from the dead. Some were vegetarian gods, others were Sun Gods. At their rites the devotees enacted the death of the god, and then represented his resurrection in full life and vigour together with a sacramental meal at which his body was eaten and his blood drunk. At one time an actual human sacrifice of the King who was often also priest, afterwards, in some cases, the King's son was substituted, or further a substitute for the King's son. He might be a criminal or he might have been purchased. He was dressed in royal robes and sacrificed instead. Still later an animal was substituted, and later still an image of an animal or a man which might be of bread. "The whole body of evidence justifies us in inferring, with a considerable degree of probability, that after the return from Babylon, a Jesus Barabbas rite, with an actual human sacrifice, was solemnized somewhere in Palestine, and that the Gospel account of the Crucifixion is a description of this rite."

In connexion with these cults were communal associations, at the meetings of which mysteries were enacted; festivals and initiation ceremonies were held. Baptism was one form of initiation. "The Christian community came to be known as the body of Christ and the decrees of the assembly, utterances of the Holy Spirit." The growth of these communities gave them political influence; they sometimes appeared dangerous to the Government, and decrees were issued suppressing them.

Before the capture of Jerusalem "There cannot be said to have been Christians in the later sense of the term, the Gnostic communities had been founded on a Jewish basis—they held their meetings in synagogues, after the fall of the Temple—an independent Christian Church began to exist," bringing together communities or "Churches of different origin and differing in doctrine," and "we can trace in the Pauline Epistles—the gradual transformation of communities founded on, a more or less, Gnostic basis, by a process of doctrinal synthesis into Jesus cult communities." Christian doctrine was "formed eclectically out of various streams of thought which met and partially mingled in the first century." In this way the various conceptions became progressively assimilated, Logos Chrestos, Christus Jesus with Joshua the Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

The body of Catholic doctrine thus evolved was very composite—this diversity contributed to its success, since men of varied minds could find in it elements which attracted them; "the Church is all things to all men." Its inheritance of the Jewish scriptures was another asset, which "continued in the form of Gospels," another factor "was a certain arrogance which Christianity inherited from Judaism in combination with the Gnostic hostility to Polytheism"; the Christians vigorously attacked and, when they obtained power, suppressed all other cults." Finally, the Christian community was well equipped for survival by the "development of an efficient ecclesiastical organization."

This "syncretion of ideas" was a slow process. In the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, although Messiah Joshua is identified with the Logos, he remained simply the "Servant of God." There was, moreover, a continued development and accretion "the legend of the Appearances of Jesus after his death was a growing one, the development of which can be traced." Each of the Gospels "went through several editions, and at each re-editing something was added." For instance, the primitive Gospel did not contain any account of the birth or youth of Jesus, but

began as Mark's Gospel begins. "The direction of the development—was from the spiritual, abstract, and symbolical to the material concrete, and literal." Subsequently, degeneration continued "through the gross superstitions it gave birth to, and the pagan elements" it absorbed.

It has long been recognized, even by orthodox critics, that there is symbolism in the Gospels, and it has been admitted that such symbolism has been misunderstood as historical. To admit allegorical interpretation of the miraculous incidents, and not the non-miraculous is unreasonable, and, "when the greater portion of the Gospel has been proved to be symbolical, the probability that the residue is also—is raised to very high degree, even though we may at present not be able to interpret it."

As there is no evidence outside the Gospels "The purely human Jesus of modern criticism is a figment created by a misunderstanding of the character of the Gospel narrative."

Confirmation of our thesis is afforded by the different forms of doctrine concerning the sacrament; in Corinthians we find the Gnostic idea that it symbolized "the bond between participants as members of one community," which is quite different from that in Matthew. Similarly, we have two conceptions of the Kingdom, and two of the Resurrection, traceable to independent sources.

L. Gordon Rylands says that "The book is in no sense an attack on—Christianity." Is he misunderstanding the character of *his own* narrative? I wonder!

H. PREECE

Woman and Life

What should make you believe is your own assent to yourself, and the constant voice of your reason, not that of others!

Pascal

READING Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann's penetrating and philosophic little essay entitled *By Which We Live*, published in a recent issue of your journal, in which he pays so courteously a tribute to my surprised and gratified sex, I am impelled in all probity to tell him that the hearts of women (which he has undoubtedly studied more exhaustively than I, but from a somewhat different angle) do not always find, as easily as he supposes, that free passage to the upper air, where they reward either themselves or others by the simplicity and directness of their feelings. For where may we say that the heart leaves off and the intelligence begins? What generally happens is that our heart drives us toward something that is withheld from us, and we have but two choices left—either to submit with humility (which is the last proud stand of the defeated will) or to develop sufficient cunning to get round the impeding obstacle. If consciousness, as certain of our modern psychologists maintain, is created by our opposition to instinct, intelligence is certainly the offspring of that prolonged attention that the anxious heart devotes to studying ways of attaining the object of its desire: for "as the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his curb, the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires."

I agree with Mr. Du Cann that our only true wisdom in life lies in being ever more and more resolutely individual, in listening more and more attentively to the marauding whisperings of our own unfettered minds, in avoiding mass superstitions, mass hypnosis, in being fearless enough, indeed, to see through the pitiful and perilous illusions that blind and bewilder most of the human race, fearless up to the very limits of our too fragile reason: "How then can you create a living fountain within? Imbue yourself in freedom every

hour. . . ." But where does our heart, this noble and misused instrument of torture and delight, lead us if all the doors fly open to let it have its way? Where but into every possible disaster, depositing us as likely as not in the end in the law courts, where we are lucky indeed if we find some one as chivalrous and sagacious as Mr. Du Cann, to look down into our bewildered distress and save us from being dragged off—"A stage play, a fight, a scramble, a torpor, or a bondage—such is life!" said Marcus Aurelius. And how can we outwit fate in so inimical and hazardous a world unless through intelligence and more intelligence, cunning and more cunning!

Much health,
A little wealth,
And a life by stealth

But my sex has received so few compliments, though flattery enough to keep us boxed up in our tight and merry little homes for nigh on to twenty centuries, from that other sex so formidable, astute, drowsy, and victorious that when anyone speaks as generously and disinterestedly as Mr. Du Cann, it seems the height of thankfulness, not merely to make our bow and withdraw with fitting modesty. Indeed, even in the same issue with his commendation of us we are denied. "with those other wearers of petticoats, the clergy," by another one of your contributors, a sense of irony; and among all the illustrious names mentioned as examples of this rare accomplishment that of one of England's most notable ironists has for some mysterious reason been omitted, namely Jane Austen. But going on to read the definition of irony that is quoted for us from the great master of the dinner party epigram, George Meredith, I do not wonder that anyone who looks for irony in the form of "engines," and who requires so many exaggerated and pretentious words to convey a subtle meaning should have missed those lighter and more tremulous shafts, no matter how sharp their point or how sure their aim, sent off by my more diffident sex. And perhaps this is only a proof of what Mr. Du Cann meant when he said women lived more by their hearts than men, for that anyone as perceptive and discriminating as the writer of this essay, *The Gentle Art of Irony*, could have brought in such a quotation to round off his cultured periods with, can surely be but a commentary on the sensibility of his feelings. For what a reflection of upper class snobbishness these words of Meredith's disclose hinting at a situation where some poor "ridiculous" person is suddenly to be subjected to a "semi-caress," that will set the whole fashionable company off into a titter of superior amusement, and leave him discomfited but still uninstructed. And how utterly lacking in true style! How different was the irony of Swift—hot from life, freezing cold from the breast, as deadly as a springing panther, and as sinuously light.

And yet I cannot honestly, I fear, plead a superiority in the matter of either head or heart for my harassed sex. For I think we are all driven forward, willy nilly, men and women alike, as Mr. Du Cann has implied. And I agree with him heartily that "life is merely to be lived," and if he had added "alone," I would have agreed with him even more. For this is the true secret of all knowledge, the isolation of each human soul in a universe limitless and without solution. And man his own disquieter must discover unaided that guide to his own happiness, his own ease of heart, that lies within the matrix of his accumulated experience. But how are we to read this secret and interpret its meaning—and here is where I would go one step further than Mr. Du Cann and say that the power of detachment is a necessity for all free men, the power, at a moment's notice, of regarding our own lives and experiences with an objectivity as great as that with which we view the lives

of others, of gazing into the errors, the illusions, the weaknesses, the ephemeral hopes which life is for ever planting within our too credulous hearts and appraising them for what they are worth. This is the goal to which, like children who are playing a game, we must always return after every misadventure, every disappointment, for as George Santayana has recently written, "It is not the fate that overtakes us that makes our dignity but the detachment with which we suffer it."

ALYSE GREGORY

Acid Drops

The seven-fifty-five daily horror the B.B.C. lets loose on a long-suffering and powerless public outdid itself for sheer idiocy on the morning of Sept. 18. The subject of the candidate for an asylum dealt with suffering and he stressed the point that God was in no wise responsible for suffering, and that Jesus never associated suffering with God, but only with evil. We might agree with this, for the moment, but that will only make the more prominent cardinal fact that the Jesus of the New Testament never arose above the crudest demonism. Disease and disaster meant to him the handiwork of demons, a view of things of which all educated people to-day are thoroughly ashamed. The great test of being a true disciple of his was the power to expel demons, and it was the influence of the Christian Church that wiped out the science of the ancient civilized world for nearly a thousand years. A true title for the Jesus would have been "Jesus the Demonist." The demonism of the New Testament Jesus dominated the world for centuries. To say that the B.B.C. speaker did not know this is to credit him with almost unbelievable ignorance. His explanation of the situation is an example of Christian dishonesty in its most brazen form.

And here is the second gem:—

My suffering is my share of the world's suffering which God bears eternally.

Therefore we must not complain. But in what way does having a toothache ease the pain or decrease the number of those who have toothache? Pain is pain, and while the fact of others suffering may remove the feeling of unfairness, or sheer ill-luck in being the only one that suffers, it leave one's pain absolutely untouched. In what way does God share the pain of a toothache, of men mutilated during a raid, of a mother mourning her murdered baby? This talk of God suffering with man is one of the vilest examples of the theological criminality in existence. The speaker cannot be such a complete idiot as not to know that he is voicing a falsehood. The religious controller of the B.B.C. may not be able to help, but he at least need not mock the sorrow and suffering of humanity by droning out the hypocritical lie "God suffers with us," therefore we should not complain.

The "Church Times" has come to the conclusion that:—

The date for celebrating the birth of the saviour was perhaps fixed to coincide with the pagan festival of the birth of the Sun, the idea being to supersede the pagan feast by the festival of the birth of Christ, the Sun of righteousness.

We like the "was perhaps fixed." The writer of those words must be curiously uninformed if he does not know that Jesus Christ is only a variant of numerous other saviour gods who came into and went out of the world in much the same way as Jesus Christ. Christianity is a rehash, in every important particular, of earlier creeds, and the whole of the essential portions of the Christian creed was demonstrably established in Egypt centuries before Christianity was heard of. Still it is something for a paper such as the "Church Times" to admit that there is nothing historical about the date of the birth of Jesus Christ. Perhaps in another fifty years it may admit that we have nothing historical of either his birth or life or death—that is nothing historical save the actual existence of a number of legends that were afterwards crystallized in the Christian religion.

How far the Roman Church speaks with one voice can be seen in the career and radio antics of Father Charles Coughlin, who is considered in America the most dangerous of Nazi propagandists. He is anti-Semitic, of course, dead against Democracy, and according to Protestants, anti-Christian. His great ambition is to lead America's Fifth Columnists, and he is using the powerful instrument of broadcasting to spread his poisonous hatred and bigotry. Like Hitler, he is a Roman Catholic, and "rabble rouser," and there is no doubt that he has a large following in his country of Roman Catholics, Germans, and Italians, who are moving heaven and earth to keep the United States at least neutral, and are working hard for the destruction of Britain. The Vatican should be asked to explain Coughlin—or perhaps Cardinal Hinsley might undertake the task. For the Irish-American priest is Roman Catholic through and through.

The genuinely Christian mind cannot get away from the attractiveness of the indecent. It gloats upon indecency, and that to a psychologist is full of significance. If a theatre is in question no one is so sharply on the look out for indecency as a certain type of Christian. If abroad no one has so keen a nose for smelling out "suggestive" performances and sights. No one has such a keen eye for "indecent" passages. Not so long ago this type of character saw indecency in undraped female legs if the female was over, say four years of age. On that last point he has been decisively beaten, but he is still at the seaside and will resort to opera glasses in order to make sure that if anything in the shape of bare female bodies is about he will not miss the sight. We agree that one cannot always change this type of mind by altering the subject matter on which it feeds, but the kind of person we have in mind may thank Christianity for having given him a fine feast while it could.

We were led to write the above because of a writer's complaint in the "Universe" of the stockingless legs and unduly short skirts worn by young girls attending Church. Yet there seems an easy way out of the difficulty. Let him pay attention—undivided attention—to the performance which the Church produces. Don't look at the bare legs and shortened skirts. If he does not feed his mind on filthy suggestions, that aspect of his mentality may be for want of sustenance. And we can assure this man that uncovered legs and short skirts, with a great many young ladies look quite attractive to many without carrying anything of a "suggestive" nature. In such things there is nothing of a sense of mortification over lost opportunities to a clean mind, whatever they may suggest to a very, very Christian one.

Archbishop Downey (Roman Catholic) of Liverpool, has a much better brain than the ex-Bishop of London, but at times he appears to be attempting to outdo him in foolishness. Preaching in Liverpool, he said, we should give "special thanks to God for the manifest aid from on high which has been vouchsafed to the defenders of the homeland." It is a pity that God's efforts are so limited in their application. If he was able to give aid to our defenders he should have done the job properly and protected the lot. If he had done that for a week, and granted our "defenders" complete immunity, that would have settled the Germans in a week. But a God who can protect only a few, and does nothing to protect the thousands of helpless civilians, from babies to those tottering towards the end, is about as ridiculous a figure as one can imagine. And an Archbishop who says that we ought to thank such a god deserves to be indicted for something in the way of criminal conspiracy. We do not believe that Archbishop Downey is fool enough to believe what he says. He is just a priest, playing his professional game to the end and counting on fooling his congregation.

One must search far and carefully to equal the nonsense that is given the air at religious assemblies. At the Chester and Warrington Methodist Synod, the Rev. J. Norton said ("Derby Telegraph") that Germans were sparing breweries and maltings because if drinking continued at the present rate we would lose the war. We give brother Norton first prize for the most amusing religious lie of the week. And we are open to prove that the consequences of excessive drinking, bad as they may be, are not nearly so disastrous to the human race as are the consequences of religion. We mean this quite seriously.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THE General Secretary of the N.S.S. acknowledges a cheque for Two Guineas from Winifred Smith as a donation to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

T. H. Garrat.—There is no likelihood of the "Freethinker" not appearing. Britain without it is unthinkable. The collection of the names and addresses of subscribers was merely to prevent dislocation in view of conditions that might arise. But a very large number seem so certain of the future that they have not yet troubled to comply with the request. But we suppose some will leave even the date of their funeral to others.

H. P. Manscott Hunt.—Thanks for what you are doing to gain new readers.

S. Brown.—Thanks for compliments regarding the "Freethinker." I think the secret is that its contributors feel themselves free to give expression to their opinions, and that means a lot.

For Circulating and Advertising the "Freethinker."—Hugh Thompson, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. M. Vanstone, 20s.

M. Vanstone.—We greatly appreciate all you are doing. The total results of such work can never be completely calculated, but they have their place in the process that we have come to recognize as evolution. We are taking every possible care, but in a war such as this the risk lies in being alive, and the only thing is to just keep on. We may as well die all at once instead of doing the job piecemeal.

I. Humphrey.—Obliged for cuttings. Fooling oneself is a very old occupation, and the commercial interest shown by the prayer-pushing community is reflected in the folly of those who continue to do business with them.

E. C. Saphin.—Pleased to hear from you. I have passed on the cheque to its proper destination.

Ian Yule.—There was never a split between the N.S.S. and the R.P.A. The N.S.S. was formed in 1866, the R.P.A. many years later. Many belong to both bodies.

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums

We can add but little to what we said last week concerning the bombing (incendiary) of the "Freethinker" offices. The worst damage done to us was due to the fact that the A.F.S. having performed its proper task with a zeal that cannot be too highly praised, proceeded to pour the Lord knows how many thousand gallons of water through ceiling after ceiling down to the lowest level. Going up the stairs was like trying to walk on an old-fashioned mill wheel in motion, with one's feet always on the lowest step. The stock of books and pamphlets

suffered severely, as did much of the "Freethinker" paper. So also did many of the books in the editorial room. Never since they were published has the collected works of Ingersoll been subjected to so much cold water, and some rather scarce Freethought works wept plainly at the sight. The contents of Canon Gore's Commentary on the Bible were as watery as many of the apologies for Christianity. Everybody worked with a will, and in less than two days things began to assume a more cheerful aspect. No definite estimate of the damage done—particularly to the linotype machine—can yet be made. But the paper was got out—a day late it is true, and for that we must thank all concerned. A very trying time while it lasted, and there is still much to be done; so we ask the patience of all concerned, and we are certain of getting that.

This "visitation" has led us to decide one thing. The "Freethinker" is probably the only journal in this country that has not, since the war started, either increased its price or decreased its size. We have economized the use of paper in other directions, as it might be advisable soon to issue a smaller "Freethinker," but we put off the evil moment. Now we think the time has arrived. A very old friend of this journal, Mr. A. G. Lye, writes:—

I know you will not let personal danger prevent the continued issue of the paper. But do not kill yourself in trying to maintain it in full. It will be a "miracle" if you do. Better have half the paper with you in it than all the paper without you.

We have received many letters in the same vein, but we never had a doubt that any steps that were thought necessary to carry on our fight would receive, as it has always received the warmest help from all concerned. Without that assurance, and in the absence of the support so cheerfully given, we could not carry on at all. We are very proud of our army of stalwarts.

But we think the time has come when in respect to the size of the paper we must fall into line with others. The next issue of the "Freethinker" will consist of 12 pages instead of sixteen. But the difference will not be that of four pages. In fact by decreasing the space taken up by advertisements, by lengthening the columns of printed matter, and by other economies of space, we hope to supply readers with practically an undiminished quantity of reading matter. There will, of course, be no difference in quality. The paper will retain the reputation for fearlessness in expression and independence of thought that it has always had. We think that no such trying experience as the past twenty-five years has been experienced by any other Freethought paper. We see no reason why we should lower the flag now.

We must again remind readers that this issue of the "Freethinker" is being produced under great difficulties. This will be the situation for several weeks. But we know the patience of our readers will withstand the strain.

Quite a number of the religious papers and prominent London clergymen have paid tribute to the courage, the stoicism, the kindness to each other of those who have found themselves homeless, and almost clotheless as a consequence of the German air-raids. We believe the tribute is well-deserved; the fellowship of the poor in times of distress has been often noted, and we believe it is well-deserved. But these same religious papers and religious preachers are also telling us that the brutality of this war, the increased love of self, etc., etc., is a product of the decline of religious belief, and the B.B.C., with its remarkable readiness to provide any religious nit-wit with a platform, is delivering this message with increasing emphasis. Even the Archbishop of York, a cleric with rather too much intelligence for the present-day pulpit, is engaged in a course of lectures repeating the silly message that the higher human values have no authority once we give up the belief in God.

Major D. Yuille, Hon. Secretary of the Burns Federation, speaking at Glasgow (dealing with the migration of children) said "The Overseas Reception Board proposed that each child should be presented with a Bible, a hymn book, and a prayer book. But the Scottish Reception Board thought that the English prayer book was no use to a Scottish child, and it was sug-

gested that the poems of Burns should replace it." This was done, and we congratulate the Scottish children on the exchange. They will be encouraged in the direction of a broad humanitarianism as things stand, and would have experienced a narrow-minded sectarianism in the other. It is a Bible-drenched international public that is responsible for the present war, and one of the reasons why we are writing these notes to the booming of big and little guns and the sound, every now and again, of falling bombs.

The following from a reader of eight years' standing, accompanied by an application for membership to the N.S.S., will interest readers:—

I owe a great debt to the "Freethinker" for its masterly approach and singularly independent line, which has stood by me as a ready guide against the morass of superstition in our midst and so many "isms." To you Mr. Editor especially, I tender my heartfelt thanks for the help I have obtained from your articles in the "Freethinker" and your books, and I wish you continued good health to further the best of all causes.

Cheek!

"Is there anything I can do for you?" said Alexander the Great to Diogenes. "Yes," said Diogenes, "Stand from between me and the Sun!"

The Cynic was sitting in his tub, enjoying universal light and heat, when his visitor, and would-be benefactor, overshadowed him.

Benefactors, too often, are really malefactors. To do good is difficult. To do it in a good way, an almost forgotten art! Good intentions are even said to be dangerous! Well might Artemus Ward observe:—

O Life, you are too many for me!

To Diogenes gifts were dangerous things. Giving seemed difficult without, unconsciously, taking from the recipient something of greater value than the gift.

In educating our children, for instance, we rob them of their most precious possession—individuality. If our method of transmitting knowledge acted as a stimulant to personal effort, as it might do, it would free the mind of the child from corrupting bias, and leave it with an untainted individuality, strengthened, and not weakened, or utterly destroyed.

A correspondent, responsible for the above remarks, asks me to state whether I know better than talented men, the products of great universities like Cambridge, and Oxford? And, in thanking me for trying to convert him, by sending *Freethinkers*, he says, "the only thing I admire about that journal is the cheek of its writers." Further, he says, "Comparing the writers of your paper with the products of Oxford and Cambridge, what are they but:—

A set of dull conceited asses?

He misquotes his national bard, but that by the way.

Does our friend wish to suggest that you have got the cheeks of Asses, or what? Wycliffe tells us that "Samson slew 1,000 men with the Cheke of an asse." (Judges xv. 16). I would bid him beware! I will not, however, use the "Cheke" of any writer of this Journal to slay him with, but that of a talented son of one of his great Universities—Bertrand Russell, who gave a series of eight lectures on "The Principles of Social Reconstruction," during the Great War. The following quotations which not only answer, but explain my correspondents queries, are taken from these lectures. Only one or two answers, not given in the lectures, I must make.

My friend writes as though the population of the

world was Christian, whereas only 692,400,000 are Christian and 1,167,110,000 are non-Christian. Heredity has more to do in determining beliefs than thought.

Our Universities turn out all sorts of believers, and many unbelievers. Buddhists, Mohammedans, and many other creeds go to our Universities, but most of them keep their faith. Why? Because they were branded with it in childhood!

And here I begin to brandish the "Cheke" of a "University product." Our philosopher tells us that even Universities brand their students. He says:—

"Eton and Oxford set a certain stamp upon a man's mind, just as a Jesuit College does."

Religious bodies have a great deal to do with not only the running of our Universities, but education throughout the country. What is a religious body?

"A religious body exists through the fact that its members all have certain definite beliefs on subjects as to which the truth is not ascertainable."

The aim of all these bodies is to mould children to their pattern. To enable them to do this, obedience and discipline are exacted from them, from their earliest years. But in educating children:—

"Instead of obedience and discipline, we ought to aim at preserving independence and impulse."

Obedience is this yielding of one's will to outside authority. Obedience and discipline in schools may be more or less a necessity where large classes of children have to be dealt with. Education to-day seems but a means of acquiring superiority over others. That obedience and discipline in schools are very largely evils, a little thought will soon make clear. There is a great difference between what is imposed from without, and that which is developed from within.

Education should aim at making children able to think, not at making them think what their teachers think. The purpose of education is to produce belief rather than thought. . . . Education ought to foster the wish for truth, not the conviction that some particular creed is the truth.

For lack of a vision our education authorities perish.

Education should not aim at a passive awareness of dead facts, but an activity directed towards the world that our efforts are to create.

It is not at all to be wondered at that many men leave our Universities still believing their childish faith! Time is required to develop critical thought.

For the abler boys there is no time for thought, no time for the indulgence of intellectual taste, from the moment of first going to school until the moment of leaving the University. From first to last there is nothing but one long drudgery of examination tips and text book facts.

The end and aim of education is a comfortable living, a high social position.

Instruction is treated mainly as training for a livelihood, leads the young to regard knowledge from a purely utilitarian point of view, as the road to money, not as the gateway to wisdom.

Real education is never once thought of. It is regarded as a valueless thing that retards one's progress in this world, limiting one's chances of ever attaining worldly possessions, and making any great advance in the social scale almost impossible.

Hardly anything is done to foster the inward growth of mind and spirit; in fact, those who have most education are very often atrophied in their mental and spiritual life, devoid of impulse, and possessing only certain mechanical aptitudes which take the place of living thought.

Freethought, our friend fears, would destroy his faith. He shouldn't acknowledge a destructible faith. Freethought is only destructive of shame. It is really,

in the best sense, constructive. It only suggests that he should become a man, and put away childish things!

We have but faith, we cannot know, says Tennyson. But Temples made with hands, and idols of all kinds, will be with us for many centuries yet. The conception of the Pantheist is still far above the crowd:—

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him, who reigns?

Without man, God is impossible!

But why fear anything? The brave know no fear! No institution inspired by fear can further life. Hope, not fear, is the creative principle in human affairs, all that has made man great has sprung from the attempt to secure what is good, not from the struggle to avert what was thought evil.

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!

Life, to some of us, is a great romance—a thrilling mental adventure! To awaken our unfortunate brethren who perish for lack of vision, "the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson," has fallen upon the shoulders of some of us who only crave with brave Old Walt:—

O to die advancing on!

"A little thought," says Thoreau, "is sexton to all the world."

In conclusion my final quotation, from Bertrand Russell, should cause "the lips of those that are asleep to speak":—

"Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth—more than ruin, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible; thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habits; thought is anarchic and lawless, indifferent to authority, careless of this well-tryed wisdom of the ages. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. It sees man, a feeble speck, surrounded by unfathomable depths of silence; yet it bears itself proudly, as unmoved as if it were lord of the Universe. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man."

Finally, my friend, *Think*—from the first opening of the gorgeous East, until night cometh, and sleep—
"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John v. 32).

GEORGE WALLACE

Things Worth Knowing

MUCH may be forgiven to men whose profession forbade recourse to force in an age when force was the only law respected, and yet Charity herself might well stand aghast to see those who represented on earth the Gospel of Love unpack their hearts with curses so venomously that they seem enamoured of the opportunity to consign their fellow-beings to ruin in this world and to perdition in the next. The clergy themselves, indeed, by their worldly and too often flagitious lives had forfeited the respect of their flocks, and when their censures lost effect, it was but natural they should seek to impress upon sinners by copiousness of malediction the salutary fear which the sacredness of their character could no longer ensure. In the following formula, for instance there is a richness of imagination and a particularity of detail which show that its author fairly revelled in his power of malediction, and rolled as a sweet morsel under his tongue every torment which he invoked upon his

victim. It was not called forth by the exigences of a supreme occasion, but was a general form of malediction for petty thieves and similar malefactors:—

By the authority of God the omnipotent Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of the sacred canons, and of the body and unsullied Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and of all the heavenly Virtues, Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Cherubim, Seraphim, and of the Holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and all the Apostles and Evangelists, and of the Holy Innocents who alone are worthy in the sight of the Lamb to sing the new song, and of the holy martyrs, and the holy confessors and the holy virgins, and of all the saints and elect of God, we excommunicate this thief, or this malefactor, and we expel him from the holy church of God, that he may be delivered over to eternal torment with Dathan and Abiram and with those who cried to the Lord God. "Away from us we wish not to know Thy ways." And as fire is quenched with water, so may his light be quenched for ever and ever, unless he repent and render full satisfaction. Amen. Be he accursed of God the Father who created man, the Son who suffered for man, accursed of the Holy Ghost which cometh in baptism; accursed of the Holy Cross which the triumphant Christ ascended for our Salvation; accursed of the Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of God; accursed of St. Michael, the receiver of souls, accursed of the angels and archangels, the princes and the powers, and all the hosts of heaven; accursed of the worthy legions of Prophets and Patriarchs, accursed of St. John, the forerunner and baptizer of Christ; accursed of St. Peter and St. Paul and St. Andrew and all the apostles of Christ, and the other disciples, and the four evangelists who converted the world; accursed of the wonder working band of martyrs whose good works have been pleasing to God; accursed of all the holy virgins who have shunned the world for the love of Christ; accursed of all the saints beloved of God, from the beginning even to the end of the world. Let him be accursed wherever he be, whether at home or abroad, in the road or in the path, or in the wood, or in the water, or in the church. Let him be accursed living or dying, drinking, fasting or athirst, slumbering, sleeping, waking, walking, standing, sitting, lying, working, idling—and bleeding. Let him be accursed in all the forces of his body. Let him be accursed outside and inside; accursed in his hair and accursed in his brain; accursed in the crown of his head, in his temples, in his forehead, in his ears, in his brows, in his eyes, in his cheeks, in his jaws, in his nostrils, in his front teeth, his back teeth, in his lips, in his throat, in his shoulders, in his upper arms, in his lower arms, in his fingers, in his breast, in his heart, in his stomach and liver, in his kidneys, in his loins, in his hips, in his . . . in his thighs, in his knees, in his shins, in his feet, in his toes, in his nails. Let him be accursed in every joint in his body. Let there be no health in him from the crown of the head to the sole of his foot. May Christ, the Son of the living God, curse him throughout his kingdom, and may heaven with all its Virtues rise up against him in his damnation. Amen, so be it. So be it. Amen.

This would seem to exhaust every possible resource of malediction, and yet the infinite variety with which the Church could invoke the anger of heaven upon her oppressors is shown in another excommunication, launched about the year 1014, by Benedict VIII.,

against some reckless vassals of William II., Count of Provence, who were endeavouring to obtain from the latter the grant of certain lands claimed by the celebrated monastery of St. Giles. Without being quite so formal and precise in its details of cursing as the foregoing, there is a bold comprehensiveness of imagination about it which befits the supreme head of Christianity, while it is by no means lacking in hearty vigour of imprecation. After excommunicating in general terms and consigning to Satan the audacious men who thus sought to lay unhallowed hands upon the possessions of the Church, the Pope proceeds:—

Let them be accursed in their bodies and let their souls be delivered to destruction and perdition and torture. Let them be damned with the damned; let them be scourged with the ungrateful, let them perish with the proud. Let them be accursed with the Jews who, seeing the incarnate Christ, did not believe, but sought to crucify him. Let them be accursed with the heretics who sought to destroy the church. Let them be accursed with those who blaspheme the name of God. Let them be accursed with those who despair of the mercy of God. Let them be accursed with those who are damned in hell. Let them be accursed in the four quarters of the earth. In the East be they accursed, and in the West disinherited; in the North interdicted and in the South excommunicate. Be they accursed in the daytime and excommunicate in the night-time. Accursed be they at home and excommunicate abroad; accursed in standing and excommunicate in sitting; accursed in eating; accursed in drinking; accursed in sleeping and excommunicate in waking; accursed when they work and excommunicate when they rest. Let them be accursed in the spring time and excommunicate in the summer; accursed in autumn and excommunicate in the winter. Let them be accursed in this world and excommunicate in the next. Let their lands pass into the hands of the stranger, their wives be given over to perdition, and their children fall before the edge of the sword. Let what they eat be accursed and accursed be what they leave, so that he who eats it shall be accursed. Accursed and excommunicate be the priest who shall give them the body and blood of the Lord, or who shall visit them in sickness. Accursed and excommunicate be who shall carry them to the grave and shall dare to bury them. Let them be excommunicate and accursed with all curses if they do not make amends and render due satisfaction. And know this for truth, that after our death no bishop nor count, nor any secular power shall usurp the seignory of the blessed St. Giles. And if any person attempt it, borne down by all the foregoing curses, they shall never enter the Kingdom of Heaven, for the blessed St. Giles committed his monastery to the lordship of the blessed Peter.

H. C. LEA.

From *Studies of Church History*

No day is more wasted than the one in which we have not laughed.—*Chamfort*.

Religions are like glow worms; before they can shine it must be dark.—*Schopenhauer*.

Except a man believeth unfeignedly the Catholic Faith, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

Athanasian Creed

Heresies and Heretics

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain."

WHOEVER has an opinion of his own, and honestly expresses it, will be guilty of heresy. Heresy is what the minority believe; it is a name given by the powerful to the doctrine of the weak. This word was born of the hatred, arrogance, and cruelty of those who love their enemies, and who, when smitten on one cheek, turn the other. This word was born of intellectual slavery in the feudal ages of thought. It was an epithet used in the place of argument. From the commencement of the Christian era, every art has been exhausted, and every conceivable punishment inflicted, to force all people to hold the same religious opinions. This effort was born of the idea that a certain belief was necessary to the salvation of the soul. Christ taught, and the Church still teaches, that unbelief is the blackest of crimes. God is supposed to hate with an infinite and implacable hatred, every heretic upon the earth, and the heretics who have died are supposed, at this moment, to be suffering the agonies of the damned. The Church persecutes the living, and her God burns the dead.

It is claimed that God wrote a book called the Bible, and it is generally admitted that this book is somewhat difficult to understand. As long as the Church had all the copies of this book, and the people were not allowed to read it, there was comparatively little heresy in the world; but when it was printed and read, people began honestly to differ as to its meaning. A few were independent and brave enough to give the world their real thoughts, and for the extermination of these men the Church used all her power. Protestants and Catholics vied with each other in the work of enslaving the human mind. For ages they were rivals in the infamous effort to rid the earth of honest people. They infested every country, every city, town, hamlet, and family. They appealed to the worst passions of the human heart. They sowed the seeds of discord and hatred in every land. Brother denounced brother, wives informed against their husbands, mothers accused their children, dungeons were crowded with the innocent; the flesh of the good and the true rotted in the clasp of chains, the flames devoured the heroic, and in the name of the most merciful God his children were exterminated with famine, sword, and fire. Over the wild waves of battle rose and fell the banner of Jesus Christ. For sixteen hundred years the robes of the Church were red with innocent blood. The ingenuity of Christians was exhausted in devising punishment severe enough to be inflicted upon other Christians who honestly and sincerely differed with them upon any point whatever.

Give any orthodox church the power, and to-day they would punish heresy with whip, and chain, and fire. As long as a Church deems a certain belief essential to salvation, just so long it will kill and burn if it has the power. Why should she show mercy to a kind and noble heretic whom her God will burn in eternal fire? Why should a Christian be better than his God? It is impossible for the imagination to conceive of a greater atrocity than has been perpetrated by the Church.

Let it be remembered that all Churches have persecuted heretics to the extent of their power. Every nerve in the human body capable of pain has been sought out and touched by the Church. Toleration has increased only when and where the power of the Church has diminished. From Augustine until now the spirit of the Christian has remained the same. There has been the same intolerance, the same un-

dying hatred of all who think for themselves, the same determination to crush out of the human brain all knowledge inconsistent with the ignorant creed.

Every Church pretends that it has a revelation from God, and that this revelation must be given to the people through the Church; that the Church acts through its priests, and that ordinary mortals must be content with a revelation—not from God—but from the Church. Had the people submitted to this preposterous claim, of course there could have been but one Church, and that Church never could have advanced. It might have retrograded, because it is not necessary to think, or investigate, in order to forget. Without heresy there could have been no progress.

The highest type of the orthodox Christian does not forget. Neither does he learn. He neither advances nor recedes. He is a living fossil, imbedded in that rock called faith. He makes no effort to better his condition, because all his strength is exhausted in keeping other people from improving theirs. The supreme desire of his heart is to force all others to adopt his creed, and in order to accomplish this object he denounces all kinds of Freethinking as a crime, and this crime he calls heresy. When he had the power, heresy was the most terrible and formidable of words. It meant confiscation, exile, imprisonment, torture, and death.

In those days the cross and rack were inseparable companions. Across the open Bible lay the sword and fagot. Not content with burning such heretics as were alive, they even tried the dead, in order that the Church might rob their wives and children. The property of all heretics was confiscated, and on this account they charged the dead with being heretical—indicted, as it were, their dust—to the end that the Church might clutch the bread of orphans. Learned divines discussed the propriety of tearing out the tongues of heretics before they were burned, and the general opinion was that this ought to be done, so that heretics should not be able, by uttering blasphemies, to shock Christians who were burning them. With a mixture of ferocity and Christianity, the priests insisted that heretics ought to be burned at a slow fire, giving as a reason that more time was given them for repentance.

No wonder that Jesus Christ said, "I came not to bring peace but a sword!"

Every priest regarded himself as the agent of God. He answered all questions by authority, and to treat him with disrespect was an insult offered to God. No one was asked to think, but all were commanded to obey.

In 1208 the Inquisition was established. Seven years afterward, the fourth council of the Lateran enjoined all kings and rulers to swear an oath that they would exterminate heretics from their dominions. The sword of the Church was unsheathed, and the world was at the mercy of ignorant and infuriated priests, whose eyes feasted upon the agonies they inflicted. Acting as they believed, or pretended to believe, under the command of God, stimulated by the hope of infinite reward in another world—hating heretics with every drop of their bestial blood—savage beyond description—merciless beyond conception—these infamous priests, in a kind of frenzied joy, leaped upon the helpless victims of their rage. They crushed their bones in iron boots, tore their quivering flesh with iron hooks and pincers, cut off their lips and eyelids, pulled out their nails, and into the bleeding quick thrust needles, tore out their tongues, extinguished their eyes, stretched them upon racks, flayed them alive, crucified them with their head downward, exposed them to wild beasts, burned them at the stake, mocked their cries and groans, ravished their wives, robbed their

children, and then prayed God to finish the holy work in hell.

Millions upon millions were sacrificed upon the altars of bigotry. The Catholic burned the Lutheran, the Lutheran burned the Catholic; the Episcopalian tortured the Presbyterian, the Presbyterian tortured the Episcopalian. Every denomination killed all it could of every other; and each Christian felt in duty bound to exterminate every other Christian who denied the smallest fraction of his creed.

In the reign of Henry VIII., that pious and moral founder of the Apostolic Episcopal Church, there was passed by the Parliament of England an Act entitled, "An Act for Abolishing of Diversity of Opinion." And in this Act was set forth what a good Christian was obliged to believe.

First, that in the sacrament was the real body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Second, that the body and blood of Jesus Christ was in the bread, and the blood and body of Jesus Christ was in the wine.

Third, that the priest should not marry.

Fourth, that vows of chastity were of perpetual obligation.

Fifth, that private masses ought to be continued.

And sixth, that auricular confession to a priest must be maintained.

This creed was made by law, in order that all men might know just what to believe by simply reading the statute. The Church hated to see the people wearing out their brains in thinking upon these subjects. It was thought far better that a creed should be made by Parliament, so that whatever might be lacking in evidence might be made up in force. The punishment for denying the first article was death by fire. For the denial of any other article, imprisonment, and for the second offence—death.

Your attention is called to these six articles, established during the reign of Henry VIII., and by the Church of England, simply because not one of these articles is believed by that Church to-day. If the law then made by the Church could be enforced now, every Episcopalian would be burned at the stake.

Similar laws were passed in most Christian countries, as all orthodox Churches firmly believed that mankind could be legislated into heaven. According to the creed of every Church, slavery leads to heaven, liberty leads to hell. It was claimed that God had founded the Church, and that to deny the authority of the Church was to be a traitor to God, and consequently an ally of the Devil. To torture and destroy one of the soldiers of Satan was a duty no good Christian cared to neglect. Nothing can be sweeter than to earn the gratitude of God by killing your own enemies. Such a mingling of profit and revenge, of heaven for yourself and damnation for those you dislike, is a temptation that your ordinary Christian never resists.

(Reprint) R. G. INGERSOLL

(To be continued)

If my soldiers were to begin to think, not one would remain in the ranks.—*Frederick the Great.*

War is kindled by minorities; the majority is usually not inclined for war.—*Bismarck.*

Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth.

Bertrand Russell

Correspondence

THESE "DAYS OF PRAYER"

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The record of the "Days of Prayer," which have been observed so far—four of them—is interesting. Here it is:—

May 2 6, 1940.—"Day of National Prayer."

May 28, 1940.—Capitulation of the King of the Belgians: Belgian Army lays down its arms.

June 9, 1940.—"Day of Thanksgiving" for the escape of the British (or was it "Allied") troops from Dunkirk.

June 10, 1940.—Italy enters the War.

June 16, 1940.—"Day of Prayer for France."

June 16-17, 1940.—Almost before the echoes of the "Amens" had died away Marshal Petain was suing for Peace.

You will note that the tempo of events was accelerating with each effort of the clergy: May 25-28: two days; June 16-17: a few hours. September 8, 1940.—"Day of National Prayer."

It appears that the "President of the Immortals" referred to by Thomas Hardy in the last paragraph of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" was getting really annoyed with the Archbishop, the Cardinal, and the rest of them by this time. He stole a march on them—Hitler's planes bombed London all through the previous Saturday night!

THOMAS OWEN

Obituary

COLIN MCCALL

THE remains of Colin McCall were cremated at the Manchester Crematorium on Wednesday, September 11. Mr. McCall had been associated with the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S. for many years, and held the position of Branch Librarian until his death. His illness prevented him from being present at the N.S.S. Annual Conference this year, but Mr. Cohen visited him at his home.

A Secular Service and tribute was conducted by Mr. W. A. Atkinson, who was a personal friend of the deceased for many years.

Mr. McCall leaves a widow, son and daughter.

[We regret to say this obituary has been delayed owing to air raid troubles.—EDITOR.]

MR. E. KEMP

WE regret to announce the death of E. Kemp, one of the original members of the Southend-on-Sea Branch of the N.S.S., and an enthusiastic worker in the movement. Although in his 77th year he was always keen and ready for service in the interest of the cause. On the outbreak of war he took up residence at St. Albans. His death took place on September 7, and the remains were interred on the 11th.—R.H.R.

ALBERT GEORGE DUNN

THE many London Freethinkers who were acquainted with the kind and gentlemanly figure of Albert George Dunn at the meetings of the West London Branch N.S.S., will regret to hear of his death under tragic circumstances. Taking up residence in the S.E. District of London for greater convenience in a business appointment, the house was destroyed during an air raid, and he was taken out dead several days afterwards. He came to the Freethought movement in the later years of his life, and often expressed his deep regret that so many years had been wasted in orthodox circles. He was keenly interested in his Freethought, and was librarian of the West London Branch N.S.S., of which he was a member, he began to speak from its platform, and to contribute to the pages of the *Freethinker*.

The remains were interred in the Camberwell New Cemetery on Monday, September 23, and a Secular Address was read by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.—R.H.R.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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.

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

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.0, Mrs. M. I. Whitefield.

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

Freethinkers and the Forces

FREETHINKERS liable for services in H.M. Forces should clearly understand their rights with regard to religion.

They should insist upon their own statement of Atheist, Agnostic, Rationalist, or non-religious being accepted, without modification, and duly recorded on the official papers.

If the person recording—usually an N.C.O. is not aware of the recruit's rights and refuses to accept the recruit's own statement, he should insist upon the matter being referred to the officer in charge. If the recruit's legal right is not then admitted, information should be sent to the General Secretary N.S.S. without delay. In all cases hitherto reported by the Society to the Army, Navy and Air Force authorities a satisfactory reply has been received.

Finally, a man serving in any of the Forces has the right at any time to have the description of himself with regard to religion altered should any change of opinion on his part have taken place.

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