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## Views and Opinions.

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### The Meaning of Materialism.

So far, we have been trying to make clear just what it is that Materialism has stood for in the history of thought. Historically it commenced as the first clear and definite enunciation of the principle that in our own days has come to be known as the Mechanistic—the belief that every change in nature, from the simplest to the most complex, can be explained as a composition of natural forces. When Democritus seized on the atom as the ultimate form of existence, he was reducing every phenomenon to its ultimate terms. The name matter, or atom, was merely incidental to this main conception. "Matter" stood as the name given to something ultimate in nature, as the substance from which the world of phenomenal appearances was made, and no change in our conception of "Matter" could affect that underlying principle. If matter is conceived at one time as made up of solid particles, at another as so many knots in a universal ether, and at another as mere centres of force, the Materialist can be content to take whatever conception contemporary science shows to be most justifiable by existing knowledge. The Materialist can rest content with either view. To him the word is no more than a symbol, useful to summarise his experiences and to render them intelligible. It is the function of science to say in what way matter may be best conceived as a means of understanding phenomena. So long as the Mechanistic conception is not impugned Materialism is unaffected.

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### The Conquest of the Cross.

Along with other scientific conceptions the Materialism of antiquity underwent an eclipse with the reversion to savage and more primitive methods of thinking of which Christianity stood as the triumphant expression. Until the period of the Renaissance Materialism was either extinct or survived in secret. The Greek thought could not be altogether destroyed, but it was distorted and overlaid by the philosophy that enjoyed the sanction of the Church. But many of the positive results of

Greek science were lost altogether for many centuries—so far as Christendom was concerned. This was the case with the advance made in medical science, and with the Pythagorean astronomy, to be revived many centuries later under the name of Copernicus. Tertullian declared philosophy to be the parent of all the heresies, and heresies the Church would not have. For something like seven hundred years the human mind trod its weary round of theological word-spinning, and at the Renaissance it was left for Materialism to do again what it had done in the days of ancient Greece, to bring back the human intellect to a more fruitful line of speculation and enquiry. It brought men's minds back to the contemplation of facts, facts that could be grasped by all, tested by all, verified by all. And like the waves of an incoming tide each advance became more assured. This time the advance of Materialism was strengthened by the progress that had been made in the schools of Mohammedan Spain. Along with progress in mathematics, medicine, and other sciences the Mohammedans had transformed alchemy into the science of Chemistry, and that more than anything else served to make thinkers familiar with the conception of force as something inherent in matter rather than as something external to it. The ideal of phenomena as a consequence of the play of natural forces was slowly but surely establishing itself.

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### Revival of Materialism.

The causes that led up to the deeply rooted modern Mechanistic, or Materialistic conception, may be briefly indicated. In astronomy the Copernican theory effected a complete revolution in human ideas concerning man's place in the universe. As Dean Inge pointed out, it took the ground from under the essential Christian doctrines, and as he would have pointed out if he had not been a Dean, reduced the conceptions of the New Testament Jesus to sheer delusions. It was a sure instinct that led the Church to oppose Copernicus, but they were days when the Christian Church was strong enough to pay some regard to logic in the affirming of its position. Following this, Galileo and Newton, in formulating the laws of terrestrial and celestial gravitation, made the important advance of reducing all mass motion to a consequence of a force belonging to matter itself. This had, as a matter of speculation, been done by the Greeks, but the Newtonian generalization gave it an experimental and verifiable basis. In turn Newton was attacked for Atheism and Materialism, and so far as his theory eliminated the action of deity the attack was justifiable. It is curious also that Newton should have illustrated what we recently said about "God" being an asylum for ignorance. Writing in reply to a criticism by Bentley, and dealing with the motions of the planets, he said:—

I answer that the motions which the planets have now could not spring from any material cause alone,



but were impressed by an intelligent agent. To make this system.....required a cause which understood and compared together the quantities of matter in the several bodies of the sun and planets and the gravitating powers resulting from thence .....to compare and adjust all these things together .....argues that cause to be not blind and fortuitous, but well skilled in mechanism and geometry.

Unfortunately for Newton's well-skilled geometer-god, it was not long before Laplace by utilising the known laws of the dissipation of heat and of moving bodies was able to explain that the structure of the solar system was an inevitable consequence of non-intelligent forces. Knowledge had once again given the god notice to quit.

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#### Science and the Supernatural.

That, indeed, is substantially the history of every branch of science. First everything accounted for by "God," later, and last, God ruled out as a totally unnecessary hypothesis. But how recent most of our best scientific knowledge is, and how rapid the advance has been once the strangle hold of the Gods was relaxed few consider. Yet it was not until 1788 that Hutton, the real founder of scientific geology, formulated his theory. Other investigators—Werner, Hall, Humboldt, Sedgwick, Murchison, made important contributions to our knowledge of geologic phenomena, and at last Sir Charles Lyell, in his epoch-making *Principles of Geology*, established the truth that the uniform, continuous, and permanent action of known chemical, thermal, and other forces were enough to explain the whole of the facts that came under the head of geology. Chemistry trod the same path. When Dalton, in 1808, propounded the atomic theory, he brought back the idea of the older Greek thinkers. The difference was the many kinds of atoms, in place of one kind only. But the atom has remained a basic conception in Chemistry, and one of the most fruitful ever suggested. The principle of the Conservation of Energy was another strictly materialistic idea, and when to these things we add the establishment of the hypothesis of universal evolution, we are presented with the picture of a world in which the supernatural has no place whatever. The whole of the phenomena of nature, from atom to planet, from the tiniest speck of protoplasm to man, exist as the consequence of force inseparable from the raw material of existence. Henceforth, whatever the clash of scientific theories, the problem becomes that of deducing the known universe from the play of known or knowable forces. The supernatural had received its death blow.

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#### Materialism.

So far we have not given any exact definition of Materialism, although it will not be difficult for a reader to see what is the meaning we attach to that term. And it should be clear that, primarily, it stands for the challenge of Naturalism to Supernaturalism. The fight is as to the possibility of explaining the operations of nature as so many consequences of the composition of forces. This was what Materialism stood for in the days of Democritus, and it stands primarily for that to-day. If nature can be so explained, then the truth of Materialism is admitted, even though we may disguise our Materialism under other names. If we give up the possibility of this explanation then there is an opening for Supernaturalism, but an opening only. There would still be needed positive proof of its correctness. Next, Materialism is not tied down to any particular conception of "matter." How we are to regard that is wholly a question for contemporary science

to settle. The truth here is, as we shall see later, that a great deal of the discussion about matter is an heritage from the long reign of metaphysics. People assumed, as many still assume, that apart from the world as represented in consciousness, we have knowledge of some other world which is dignified by the name of reality. Under various names, noumenon, thing-in-itself, unknowable, this has been a veritable bugbear in the history of scientific philosophy. Of a world outside consciousness we can know nothing, not even whether there is anything to know about. The phenomena covered by the term "Matter," and the phenomena covered by the term "Mind," are, for us, never more than two aspects of the same fact or set of facts. Modern psychology, if it has done nothing else, has at least made this clear. A genuine Materialism is committed to none of these metaphysical nightmares. Its sole concern is the establishment of the simple principle that natural phenomena results from the composition of natural forces. Once this principle is grasped in all its simplicity, and once it is applied with a moderate degree of logical acumen, the confusion which has gathered round the subject disappears. The Metaphysical Spiritualist and the Metaphysical Materialist are left floundering in a fog of their own making.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

### "The Religion of Jesus and the Religion About Jesus."

SUCH is the title of a characteristic address delivered by Dr. H. E. Fosdick, in the Central Y.M.C.A., Cairo, notes of which appeared in the *Christian World* for December 31, transcribed from the *Egyptian Gazette*. Dr. Fosdick is an exceedingly popular American preacher, who has been cruelly and persistently persecuted by the Fundamentalists. He is not exactly a Modernist in the sense generally attached to the term in this country, but as contrasted with the Fundamentalists he may be accurately described as a Liberal theologian. He belongs to the same school as Professors Foakes Jackson and Lake, with whom he has been associated for years at the Union Theological Seminary, New York. At present he is on a year's tour around the world, and while in Egypt he was induced to give the address just mentioned.

In Apostolic times there was a bitter feud between two entirely different types of the new religion. The difference was so fundamental as to justify us in regarding each type as a distinct religion, with the result that we can use the phrase, "the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus." We owe this phrase, however, not to Dr. Fosdick, but to another and older American scholar, namely, Professor Benjamin W. Bacon, D.D., of Yale University, who contributed to the Home University Library an invaluable little book entitled *The Making of the New Testament*. On page 246 of that literary gem we find the following passage:—

As we look back over the two leading types of Christian thought, Pauline and Apostolic, the Greek Christian gospel about Jesus, and the Jewish Christian gospel of Jesus, the gospel of the spirit and the gospel of authority, we cannot fail to realize how deep and broad and ancient are the two great currents of religious thought and life that here are mingling, contending, coming to new expression and clearer definition. Each has its various subdivisions and modifications. Pauline



Christianity in the Greek world has its problems of resistance to Hellenistic perversion on the one side, to reaction towards Jewish external authority on the other. Apostolic Christianity, whether in its more conservative form at Jersulam, or in broader assimilation to Pauline doctrine at Antioch and Rome, has also its divergent streams, its more primitive and its more developed stages.

A more truthful account of the rise and growth of the Christian religion could not possibly be given, and Dr. Fosdick erects his Cairo address upon it. He says:—

There is the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus. The religion of Jesus consists of his own life with the Father, his deep entrance into the secrets of prayer, his sincerity, kindness, love, humility. And then the religion about Jesus; that is, the various explanations about him, the various ecclesiastical and ritual expressions of him which have come to occupy men.

It does not seem to have occurred to either of these eminent doctors of divinity that in presenting his conception of the origin of Christianity he is cutting off the ground from under the belief in its supernatural character. Its original founders consisted of two essentially antagonistic parties, always at wildest and angriest conflict with each other. In the Book of the Acts and the Pauline Epistles we still hear echoes of that sad and calamitous contest, with the inevitable discovery that there is no more groundless and futile claim than that made for the Divine origin and nature of the Christian religion.

Of course, Dr. Fosdick does not face that problem at all. He frankly recognizes the existence of the two Christianities, the one Apostolic and the other Pauline, and he quite as frankly expresses his preference for the former. He says:—

It is estimated that there are five hundred and seventy-six millions of Christians on this planet, but we detect a feeling of depression in the statement following the hearing of that estimate, "we sometimes wonder where they live!" They have a religion about Jesus. They think that this is a religion which will stand the stress of life, but a man cannot have a religion about Jesus which will make him personally a Christian. Christ-likeness is the central criterion of Christianity, and to be anything else is to omit the centre of Christianity. There is just one thing in Christianity from which by no devices of thought can I escape, and that is Christ himself.

To simple Christian believers such eloquent talk would sound beautifully pious and profoundly true, but carefully examined in the light of modern literary criticism it loses all its charm. As a matter of fact, we possess no direct knowledge of Jesus, his very historicity being at least highly questionable. Unprejudiced students of the four Gospels are profoundly convinced that their hero is a wholly impossible being. No such personage has ever honoured this world by actually living in it. It is wholly inconceivable that a woman who had never known a man should have given birth to a child. A virgin birth has never occurred in the human race, for miracles have never happened. But even if Jesus actually existed and lived as related in the Gospels it would not be easy to tell what religion he enjoyed himself and taught to his disciples. No one who lived with him, hearing his words and witnessing his deeds, undertook to write his biography. No one wrote down the discourses which he is reported to have delivered; but a few men pretended to be able, after he was dead, to supply correct versions of them for those who wrote the Gospels. No one can tell to what extent such versions are reliable.

Consequently the religion of Jesus is of necessity a more or less uncertain quantity, and to walk in his footsteps is an absolute impossibility.

Whether we agree or disagree with Dr. Fosdick we always find him interesting. Take the following passage as a sample:—

Compare two such widely different men as Paul and Phillips Brooks. They were educated respectively at the feet of Gamaliel and at Harvard University; in the environment of pharisaical Judaism and of Puritan Boston. Paul's biology, psychology, and cosmology were those of the first century. Phillips Brooks was so modern even for the nineteenth century that he was publicly hissed in an Episcopal Convention. But if Paul and Phillips Brooks ever meet, as perhaps they have met, they find all the deepest things in common. Both found in Christ the satisfaction of the needs of their deepest manhood. Both found in him that their sins were forgiven. Both learned from him the source of power and the inspiration to live with a conscience void of offence.

We give both Paul and Phillips Brooks the credit of honestly and firmly believing what they preached and of being undoubtedly thoroughly good men; but there have been men equally noble-minded and philanthropical in Heathendom, and the names of some of them are conspicuous in history. Indeed, it is quite safe to affirm that Phillips Brooks would have been fully as splendid in character had he never heard of Jesus Christ. Dr. Fosdick has made it the supreme business of his life to be an enthusiast for Christ, and to find in him the sources of all the good things of life.

And yet the reverend gentleman is sorrowfully obliged to admit that this Divine-human being is not taken seriously even by the Church which bears his name. He says:—

When we look back over the various elements gathered up into religion, and when we say, whatever else is in Christianity, I am going to take Jesus seriously, we touch the heart of this vital subject. The Church sings the creeds and performs many religious acts. There were creeds in Christ's own day. It has been said: "To call Jesus Lord" is orthodoxy, but to call him "Lord, Lord" is piety; but ill-content with both, Christ said: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" As he looks down upon us to-day, I think the thing that he is wishing more than anything else is that people would take him in earnest. He said: "It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish." We are not taking him in earnest. He said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, because ye love one another." We are not taking him in earnest. He said: "Beware of covetousness, a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions," and Christendom is not taking him in earnest.

But why is Jesus Christ not being taken in earnest? Simply because he does not exist at all except as a creation of the Church. He is real only to those who believe in him, and the degree of his reality is in exact proportion to the strength and intensity of the faith in him. He is solely an object of faith and not in any sense whatever of knowledge.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christianity made use of the excessive longing for suicide at the time of its origin as a lever for its power; it left only two forms of suicide, invested them with the highest dignity and the highest hopes, and forbade all others in a dreadful manner. But martyrdom and the slow self-annihilation of the ascetic were permitted.—*Nietzsche.*



## Prelates and Politics.

Of what use are the Bishops in the House of Lords?—*Lord Shaftesbury.*

The lie at the lips of the priest.—*Swinburne.*

If we are happy in this world we should not feel the need of happiness hereafter.—*J. B. S. Haldane.*

WHEN an ordinary man sees a picture postcard of an Anglican Bishop, resplendant in ecclesiastical finery, he is usually amused. If he be artistic, his mind recalls some of the Pre-Raphaellite masterpieces in the National Gallery. If, on the other hand, he be commercially minded, he, probably, remembers that these quaintly-dressed priests get good salaries, ranging from the comfortable £15,000 yearly to His Grace of Canterbury to the more modest £2,000 of some brother bishop. Why these ecclesiastical survivals of the Middle Ages should be paid huge salaries in the twentieth century Mr. Everyman does not stop to enquire. He is too busy earning his own living to worry over such matters, and there are so few persons to enlighten him.

Yet, if Mr. Everyman but knew, these men, dressed like figures in stain-glass windows, have a profound influence on our national life. Unknown to the great public, they hold, as it were, the balance of power in the body politic, and actually are the deciding factors in matters of legislation. The wheels of progress have been stayed, and even stopped, scores of times by the hands of these lawn-sleeved prelates. The forty bishops wield despotic power in the House of Lords, an assembly notoriously on the side of reaction. And a bare recital of the votes of the Bishops over a period of a hundred years is a condemnation of the priest in politics.

This record of the Lords Spiritual is given in the pages of Hansard's *Parliamentary Register*, and the reading makes a sorry chapter of history. Religion is popularly supposed to cause men to do right, to act justly. Every one of these Bishops was not only a Christian, but was a teacher, an example to other Christians. Yet as law-makers these same Bishops were the despair, not only of politicians, but of plain, decent citizens.

These lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics were often cruel and stupid. With the words of the Sermon on the Mount on their lips, they did things as legislators which, had they been sincere in their religious professions, they would have scorned to do. For instance, these bishops could not be got to see that it was wrong in a civilized country to hang starving people for stealing over five shillingsworth of goods. They could not be made to understand that it was most unwise to exclude from all political power great numbers of law-abiding citizens. The bishops were narrow-minded, intolerant, and fanatical. They regarded all persons outside of their own Anglican Church as being accursed, and acted accordingly. They considered that Nonconformists, Jews, and Freethinkers did not deserve to sit in Parliament, to vote, or to enjoy the educational advantages of the Universities of their own native country. Nor is this all the indictment. In the humanitarian crusade for amending criminal laws the Bishops stood against Progress. In the slow building up of a system of national elementary education the Bishops were shoulder to shoulder with the aristocrats against the people. These Bishops acted always as Tory Peers; they were ever the hindmost of the reactionaries. They invariably resisted every innovation that might threaten the rights and privileges of a Constitution, of which they considered the Established Church was an integral part. They were as reactionary and stubborn in the face of reform as officials of a Govern-

ment Department on a question of economy, or reduction of staff. And all this mischief was committed in the name of God.

Throughout the conduct of the Bishops has been that of flunkeys obeying orders rather than free legislators. Time after time they have publicly swallowed their own principles. Essentially, a Christian should be a lover of peace. The Sermon on the Mount is nothing if not pacifist. One of the most solemn of the Ten Commandments contains the injunction: "Thou shalt not kill." Judging by their conduct, the whole Bench of Bishops might never have heard of either the one or the other. Wars have been waged by British arms in every quarter of the globe these last hundred years. Countries have been annexed, native races crushed. Statesmen have judged some of these adventures as crimes or blunders, but the Bench of Bishops never condemned one of them. Not only that, but they always shouted with the mob, and chanted "Te Deum" at victories which often troubled the hearts and consciences of even the generals engaged in the warfare. "O the sorry trade!"

The entire humanitarian movement of the nineteenth century, resulting in prison reform, suppression of cruelty to animals, kindlier treatment of the insane, and scores of other ameliorative measures, were never initiated by Bishops, nor supported by the Episcopal Bench. On the question of the Marriage laws, the conduct of the Bishops has been "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." As Churchmen they should uphold what they call "the sacrament of marriage," and they have invariably done so in the case of poor people. But when Royalty's gilded hand desired to untie the marriage tie, the obsequious priests obligingly forgot two thousand years of Christian teaching and assisted their royal master. No opposition came from the Bench of Bishops against George the Fourth's divorce of Queen Caroline, showing that the temper of the Bishops had actually changed for the worse since the days of "Bluebeard," Henry the Eighth, the "Defender of the Faith," who set England alight with his amours, and made his name a hiss and a byword.

Columns might be filled with details of the legislative sins of the Bishops, but it is all written in the pages of "Hansard." This is fortunate, for, otherwise, the clergy of to-day would deny the impeachment. They are past masters of camouflage, and not above imitating the political activities of Mr. Facing-both-ways, always a conspicuous figure in politics. The Bench of Bishops has never had any more real sympathy with Democratic ideals than the Sultan of Zanzibar's chief eunuch. The Bishops have ever been against the best spirit of the age. The aspirations and desires of Democracy have ever been anathema to them.

What is to be done? Whether the bishops are to be taken away from the House of Lords, or whether the Upper Chamber of Peers is to be abolished altogether, are questions for the future. What we are concerned with now is the present position of these petticoated priests in Parliament in the Legislature of this country. Parliament put these priests there, and it follows that Parliament can take them away. With a tame Labour Opposition, nothing drastic is likely to be done yet awhile. But it is useful to know the method of appointment of these Bishops, who can cast forty votes in a division whenever necessary, and this in a House known to be ill attended. They are nominated by the Prime Minister, who may or may not be a member of the Anglican Church. He may be a Jew, a Chinese Presbyterian, or a mere man of the world. In return for



his patronage, the Prime Minister naturally expects support from the prelates selected. In so mundane a manner are the successors of the apostles selected to-day.

The day will surely come when the people of England will pass judgment on the Bishops of the State Church, and in that day strip them of power and place. In that hour of trial who will bear witness to their usefulness? Will it be the working people who were denied political representation by these same priests? Will it be the children cheated of their intellectual birthright? Or the vast numbers of citizens, outside the pale of the Established Church, who have been treated as pariahs, and things accursed, by these purse-proud prelates? Years ago these Christian priests rallied to the hangman, and jealously guarded his vested interests. Perhaps this public functionary will come to the rescue of his friends, so attached to the rights of property, and so indifferent to the interests of Democracy. The Bishops of the State Church have not only failed as legislators; they have failed altogether in understanding the ideals of the people of this country. They are a mediocral anachronism.

MIMNERMUS.

## Is This the Real Jesus?

(Concluded from page 27.)

IN the previous article I tried to describe the social conditions and mental atmosphere of the people in Anatolia and other parts of the Roman Empire at the period when the Christian faith originated. And I said there perhaps existed (the echo "Perhaps!" pursues us all along the road) a story which might supply believable details concerning Jesus, whom faith has since called Saviour and even God.

### II.

Josephus, a Jew, who added the Latin "Flavius" to his name, was born in 37 of the Christian era, and died after the year 100. As a young man he accompanied in a desert place with an Essene hermit for three years. So he knew something of the hard fare and devout life which prophets in that age gained a reputation by. His after career, however, was spent in politics and administration, and had enough tumult in it to furnish exciting pages to his *Autobiography*. Besides the *Autobiography*, he wrote a history of the Jewish Wars, and this book contains a variety of notices of personages and social events beyond the records of battles. The book was written in Aramaic first, but this edition has disappeared. It was also written in Greek at the date 75 to 79. Some fifteen years afterwards, Josephus composed, in Greek, a history of Hebrew *Antiquities*. In this *Antiquities* book occurs a reference to Jesus which has so obviously been touched up by Christian pens that nearly everybody classes it as worthless. Yet it has in it a few secular details (I mean non-supernatural) which are not, in themselves, absurd, such as the remark that Jesus was a wise man, or that he originated a "tribe of Christians not yet [say in 93] extinct." But, in 1906, an industrious German issued a translation of a Slavonic version of the "Wars" book which has in it passages about Jesus. These passages are evidently tampered with in the same improper way as the supposed passage in the *Antiquities*. Nevertheless, it embodies new secular items which are not difficult to separate out. This separation has been neatly done by Dr. Robert

Eisler in the *Quest* magazine for October, 1925.<sup>1</sup> As I am not writing for the select persons called "scholars," and as those who are peculiarly interested can search the *Quest*, I shall only venture to cast the stories of the *Antiquities* text, and the *Wars* (Slavonic) text into plain English of my own, joining the two stories into one as well as I can (omitting the suspicious Christian bits), thus:—

At that time arose a wise man, Jesus—a so-called "man" who, as a rabbi, made a show of working miracles by some unseen power. In view of his character, I am not prepared to call him an Angel (Messenger). Some folk said Jesus was Moses, risen from the dead, and effecting cures; though others declared him to be the Shiloh (One Sent). In a variety of ways he opposed the Mosaic Law. For instance, he did not keep the Sabbath in the ancient style. But this is not to say he did criminal deeds. Many from among the masses followed him and accepted his teaching, and they had an idea that he would liberate them from Roman rule. It was the custom of Jesus to spend much time on the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. In that spot he professed to cure the infirm. A crowd collected about him, including a hundred and fifty slaves. Many were Jews, some were Greek Jews. They besought him to raid Jerusalem, cut down the Roman soldiers, and cut down Pilate, and make himself ruler. When the Jewish authorities in the city became aware of this plot, they said: "Such an attempt will bring ruin and death to us folk of Israel, and we had better reveal the affair to the Governor Pilate." Thereupon, Pilate sent troops, who slew many of the mob, and arrested the "Wonder-worker." Jesus was tried, condemned, and crucified in Roman style. Subsequently, a number of people were detected who had acknowledged themselves to be "subjects" of the "Wonder Man." These "subjects" declared that Jesus was still their rabbi, and still alive, for he had appeared alive the third day after his death; and they expected him to set them free from the Roman oppression. In this gang were cobblers, sandal-makers, and such-like. The Roman authorities, after consulting with the loyal Jewish leaders, packed off some of the "subjects" to the Emperor, some to be put on trial in Antioch, and some into distant exile. But some of this sort of folk still survive [that is, about 93].

Though anybody who looks at Dr. Eisler's version will, I hope, agree that I have given the broad meaning of the texts, I wish to repeat that no pretence is here offered at precise phrasing.

Is this, then, the real Jesus? It may be so. On the face of it, the account just set out is in no degree confused with things supernatural. The incidents related cannot even be called important. Pilate, who was very likely a quite ordinary type of Roman official, acted as governor of Judæa, Samaria, and some of the adjoining country for ten years, 26 to 36. He would, in the usual course, see other examples of mob leaders and swift executions; and he would not pass sleepless nights in consequence.

One other reference to Jesus by Josephus, in the *Wars* book may be quoted. It is very short, but very significant. Josephus tells that people eagerly hoped for a world-ruler, and the Slavonic text explains that some thought this illustrious Person would be King Herod; some fixed on the crucified Wonder-worker, Jesus; and some even talked of the Emperor Vespasian. Here, again, nobody will dis-

<sup>1</sup> Edited by G. R. S. Mead, the able writer of various works on Christian origins; and here may be particularly named his *The Gnostic, John the Baptizer* (published J. M. Watkins; 1924), which gives the full Slavonic passages about Jesus. The *Quest* for January criticises Eisler's views.



cover occasion for disputing the likelihood of the tale.

Now let us assume that the narrative thus published by Josephus was, in effect, true. What reflections are in place? For one thing, I should draw the conclusion that the man Jesus was, so far as the Jewish and Roman authorities were concerned, somewhat obscure. He gave no lengthy trouble; he was soon disposed of. We need not be surprised that the upper class gentlemen, who generally wrote the books now regarded as Greek and Roman "classics" (say Plutarch or Tacitus), should never give a biography or anecdote of Jesus. On the other hand, common-sense will allow us to suppose, if we are so inclined, that Jesus was as good a man as Socrates, or Francis of Assisi, or Savonarola, or Vincent de Paul. And those who please can imagine that he had also as many faults as the historical characters just mentioned. In any case, again, common-sense does not forbid us to add that he may have been the sort of man who could win the devoted admiration of crowds of simple workmen, peasants, and women, not forgetting slaves. We who live in the age of the Grotto of Lourdes, or the zealous believers in the Christian Science of the admirable and ingenious Mrs. Eddy, will not stop to question the possibility of multitudes of such folk putting the sheerest faith in the "miracles" of Jesus. And that people should believe Jesus rose from the dead was not more astonishing for 93 than it is for 1926. Perhaps it was less.

A noteworthy point is that the Christian gospels are written in Greek, just as they might be written by the earnest Greeks or Greek-speaking, travelled Jews whom we have already met in Anatolia and elsewhere. The New Testament itself informs us that the disciples (those "subjects" we have heard of) were first called "Christians" in the sea-port of Antioch, a Greek-Syrian city. They were not, it seems, first called Christians in Jerusalem, or Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or Capernaum, or anywhere else in Palestine. Antioch lies some 200 miles north of the Palestine border. It looks as if reports about the sort of Jesus I have described had floated this way and that, but especially along the trade-routes that led to the Greek cities of Syria and Anatolia, and across the Ægean Sea, and had been gilded and emblazoned into legends of our Four Gospels, and many other Gospels such as those of "James," "Peter," and "Hebrews." A really sound Bible (that is, New Testament) would contain all the books now known as "apocryphal." The reader would then have, in one volume, all the curious stories told about Jesus by a great diversity of believers; and the result of such reading would be somewhat decisive. But nobody who has a fair working-knowledge of human psychology and the evolution of religions would be bewildered by the miscellaneousness and mutual contradiction of these evangels. I, for one, should never deride the simplicity of the original legend-makers, or perchance poets. I usually reserve my reproaches for the professional theologians who have transmuted the naïve drama and poetry into leaden creeds and deadening sermons. And since I have just used the term "drama," I may remark that I regard, as very natural and credible, Mr. J. M. Robertson's theory that the scenes of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus were probably presented in ethical plays, or "Mysteries" before audiences of impressionable and unlettered people. The legend would adorn the drama, and the drama would give new qualities to the legend.

Just one other point, and that is connected with the Apostle Paul. Perhaps (that echo of "Perhaps" still follows us!) a group of writers united in composing what are known as the Pauline Epistles. It

matters little. For my part, I think a vigorous, sincere, and valiant pioneer named Saul (Jewish name) or Paul (Greek) did really exist, and did really write the letters to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians. But, let that be as it may, the fact is plain that the Epistles show singularly little acquaintance with the details of Christ's career. Read the Pauline letters and judge. If Jesus was the obscure kind of teacher that I have suggested, his personality would provide as much, or as little, material as the many Christian temperaments might select. "Mark" gave one picture; "Matthew" another; "John" another; "Peter" another; "James" another; "Hebrews" another; and "Luke" (which I consider the best-written and most beautiful book in the Bible) yet another; while Paul was content with a Christ whose outlines were extremely shadow-like; though, on the vague basis, Paul built up a vast ethic and theology. Indeed, Auguste Comte used to class Paul as the true founder of Catholicism. F. J. GOULD.

### Acid Drops.

There is a quaint illusion current that we Europeans are civilized. Judging by what we read the other day we think the evidence in support of that opinion is none too obvious. It appears that some members of a new sect, the Order of Our Lady of Tears, accuse a French parish priest, the Abbé Desnoyers, of being possessed of the devil and of practising witchcraft. They believe the reverend father is responsible for certain misfortunes that have befallen some of the Order. Accordingly a deputation composed of four men and ten women and girls, waited upon him and gave him a good drubbing. Evidently the modern way of chasing out devils is to apply a hefty stick to the body in which the devil has taken up its habitation. A drastic remedy, that. But a little rough on the priest's hide. Still, if this celibate father, with others of his cloth, will persist in teaching ignorant men and women what the Bible says about witchcraft, he must expect people to look about them for instances of it in their daily life. We shouldn't be surprised if the Abbé after this mishap turns liberal theologian.

Things in general are in a pretty queer condition, and several of our foremost thinkers have suggested causes for this and have proffered various solutions for getting matters right once more. But it remains for a profound Methodist thinker to supply us with the correct explanation and remedy. Listen to Mr. R. H. Brown: "Things are wrong in the Church, the nation, and the world, because we centre wrongly; but when we find the true centre, and revolve round Jesus, all will spin smoothly; and in happiness and peace all men will dwell together." Now we call that real cute. It had never occurred to us that it was necessary to learn to revolve like a top in order to find solutions to weighty problems. We had always found that spinning round and round tended to produce dizziness, and that state is hardly conducive to clear thinking, though we admit it may be helpful to religious thinking. Perhaps this spinning round Jesus business may be responsible for Christian apologetics being so very muzzy and explain why the pious have a tendency to say that which is not.

Once upon a time the medicine-man performed a triple function in society. He was priest, law-giver, and doctor. But though to-day these functions are separated and carried on by three distinct professions, a vestige of the medicine-man's attitude to the ordinary man still lingers in these professions. All three appear to believe that the layman should not be permitted to know too much, that he should be content to accept only so much knowledge as they choose to dole out. Thus the priest has consistently opposed enquiry into anything concerning the Bible, and all enquiry likely to undermine his autho-



ity and his creed. He has obstructed science because it appeared to threaten to do exactly that. The lawyer frames laws so that they are practically unintelligible to the lay mind. The doctor does not go out of his way to impart knowledge that will enable the layman to avoid disease. This assertion, of course, is not true of all doctors, but it applies to the majority of them. The attitude of mind of all three professions is in essence much akin to that of their forerunner, the primitive medicine-man, whose aim was to keep his people ignorant that he might not lose his power over them, and to preserve an air of mystery in regard to his practices.

The profession that concerns us now is the medical, and particularly the Medical Council. This body would appear to have no great love for freedom of thought expressed in speech, writing, or action. It seems to have no particular fondness for unorthodox theories or practices even when there is clear evidence of the latter's having achieved success where orthodox methods fail. It does not exactly encourage the dissemination of information that will enable the man-in-the-street to avoid disease and to preserve his health. And so we find it penalising the doctors who assisted manipulative surgical operators like Sir Herbert Barker, in the same manner as it penalised that cheery Agnostic, the late Dr. T. R. Allinson, pioneer of vegetarianism and natural-cure methods. It prohibits the signing of popular articles on health topics and medical treatment.

However, in this age of Freethought such dragooning methods are becoming abhorrent to the broader-minded and more altruistic type of doctors. And we now see founded an organization called the New Health Society, composed of doctors and influential laymen, whose object is to fight against the tyranny of the Medical Council, and to advocate the imparting of knowledge which will help the man in the street to understand his own body and how the different organs function, and how he can ensure they function healthily. We think the founding of this Society a step in the right direction.

Since writing the foregoing we note in a daily paper a letter commenting on the new Society from the Rev. J. C. Dalrymple, of Southport. One of this gentleman's remarks is: "Religious tyranny is dead; but medical tyranny is very much alive." In regard to the former portion of his statement we think the reverend gentleman must walk through life with his ears and eyes closed. Has he never heard of the teacher at Bootle who was gently warned not to teach evolution? Is he blind to the fact that Blasphemy Laws still tyrannise unbelievers? Does he know nothing about our beautiful English Sunday—how clerics prevent games and other rational recreations on that day, how clerical influence suppresses the broadcasting of secular items during Church hours, how pious magistrates in the provinces do not grant permission for Sunday concerts unless these take place after 8 o'clock? So religious tyranny is dead, is it, Mr. Dalrymple! We think it is very much alive, and we shall be glad when we can write its obituary notice.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle believes that Spiritualism will take the place of conventional religion; "the churches are disintegrating and the whole framework of their senseless dogmas will soon be destroyed." We doubt if these dogmas will soon be destroyed. They certainly are gradually disappearing as the result of Freethought propaganda, but the Spiritualists have little hand in the good work, for they are merely substituting a new set of "senseless dogmas" for the old ones. Sir Arthur next says, "We shall have a revival of real religion, based on the Sermon on the Mount interjected by angelic revelation." The saints preserve us! The outcome of man's interpretation of the Sermon has been deplorable enough, and Heaven forbid that we should have it interpreted by "angelic revelation," if some of Sir Arthur's asylum wisdom is a specimen of what we are likely to learn from the angels.

But as there appears to be malignant spirits as well as benign ones, how does Sir Arthur judge whether the "revelation" he received is the work of the good or the bad spirits? It would seem that ultimately the spiritualist is obliged to fall back on reason in making his decision. And we hazard a guess that this judgment varies according to the culture and ethical standards of the individual who receives the angelic messages. But if reason is ultimately to be the guide, common-sense people will prefer to rely on it altogether and to cut out the angelic revelation. And as reason condemns the Sermon on the Mount as being a guide to conduct of exceedingly doubtful utility, we fear Sir Arthur's "revival of real religion" will remain merely a pious hope.

Says this Spiritualistic High Priest: "People complain of general unrest. Nothing will ever be put right .....until religion has been put right. We will put it on a basis of provable fact." We think the best way to put religion right is to bury it. Only when its interment is a "provable fact" can we hope to establish a system of ethics based on common-sense and experience. Judging by Sir Arthur's outpourings, the religious dead horse the Freethinker is alleged to be flogging is very much alive. The work of the *Freethinker* is really only half done. And that thousands of new adherents to Freethought which our readers intend getting during 1926 will help to make our flogging more effective by placing the paper on a paying basis.

In the present religious outlook, the Superintendent of the West London Methodist Mission believes there is much to cheer up Methodists. "People are quite prepared to listen to talk about religion; the modern attitude is one of expectancy," he says. We presume he means that people go to church expecting to hear something intelligent said. It's a vain hope, though. The Superintendent then rather lugubriously confesses that though people are interested, yet they have no passion for religion—it doesn't "grip their souls." What the churches have now to do is to bring home to people that "religion is something of vital importance in their lives." That, we think, is a task beyond the power of the churches; for the modern mind believes that religion is not worth bothering about. And the feeble flickers of the one-time fiercely-burning Hell-fire are no longer impressive enough to scare people into thinking otherwise.

According to the Superintendent, the two factors responsible for the superficial interest in religion are: (1) the educational work of the churches of late years "has tended to place religion too much on the intellectual plane"; and (2) "there has been a great deal of teaching of an ethical character." If this were indeed the fact we should see nothing in that for any man to weep over. But probably all our godly friend means is that the more repulsive aspects of the Christian creed have been quietly put away out of sight. What the church has now to do, asserts the Superintendent, is "to discover a form of evangelism that will stir people to the very depths." In other words, preachers of this creed of Divine Love and a Gentle Saviour are being advised to inoculate their congregations with a stronger dose of Fear of the Big Bogey and his Swizzling Grid for sinners. But that treatment for the churches' present malady is more likely to empty pews than to fill them. Just to cheer the Superintendent on his pious way we will add: Devils or gods, once they are defunct, don't nowadays rise from the dead.

Occasionally, very occasionally, the Bishop of London has glimmerings of common sense, and he is even developing a faint semblance of fair play in speaking of pre-Christian peoples. In a recent sermon, after declaring that his hearers did not realize what a dark cloud rested upon the world before the first Christmas Day, a sad condition which only students of history could understand, he adds: "Of course, Christians must not exaggerate. I often think Christians must be accurate in



what they say." He then warns them that they must not speak as if there was no love for children, no nobility and self-sacrifice, before Christ came. Thank you, Mr. Ingram. You are a little belated in doing justice to the pagan world, in that you have waited for Freethinkers to say first what you now say. Nevertheless, your warning to your Christian congregation is better late than never, even though you do still find it necessary to insinuate that the pagan character was of inky blackness so that the Christian character in contrast will show up lily-white. Still, one must not expect too much from a Christian, and especially from a professional one. If the Bishop would like a New Year motto to hang over his study desk, we can supply one from his own brain-box. And that is: *Don't Exaggerate!* Let him recall that whenever he has to speak; then people will say he is not really so foolish as he looks when in full ecclesiastical regalia.

"Is there any father who does not believe that life will somehow be a better and happier thing for his boy than he has managed to make it for himself?" asks Canon Peter Green. The answer is in the affirmative. One such parent is recorded in the New Testament. And his is God the Father. He obviously didn't believe that His Son's life would be happier and better than His own; for did He not stage the Crucifixion and its preceding events?

We learn from a report issued by the Press Bureau of the Church of England that great advance has been made in finding solutions for such urgent problems as clergy pensions, patronage reform, and Prayer Book revision. This is indeed good news. And Englishmen concerned for the welfare of their country will doubtless heave a sigh of relief at hearing that these grave problems have been successfully dealt with. For we have now only the minor problems of housing and unemployment to tackle: and the brains that can solve the greater problems should find little difficulty in finding solutions for the lesser.

Religion should be advertised, declares the Rev. J. Lockhart (President of the Primitive Methodist Conference at Northampton); "people are appreciating the utility of advertising." But, unfortunately for our primitives, people are not at present appreciating the utility of *religion*, even though it gets more advertising than any other commodity on the market. An axiom in the publicity world is that advertising to be successful must be backed up by sound goods. But the wares the Churches are trading in don't come under this category. People dislike getting nothing for something. Hence the empty Church collection-plates, and the whimpering parsons.

It is sometimes good for us to think what a town would be without its parish church, says the Vicar of Ashford (Kent), in his parish magazine. He then looks back over the past year and instances the baptisms and marriages, the services for Confirmation, Armistice Day, Empire Day, Sports Day, and services for Intercession. He then adds that within the church are to be found all the opportunities of supplying what we need at every turn of our everyday lives. Fancy that, now! It's a great game is this professional religion business. First the parson teaches people from their cradle upwards that all this hocus pocus is of vital importance, and teaches it until his sheep-like congregation accept it unquestionably and until it all becomes a part of their lives. Then the parson invites the people to imagine what the town would be like if nothing of the sort were going on. No doubt the pious respectables shudder at the prospect.

We, too, believe it is good to think what a town would be like minus its usual routine of pious savage imbecilities. In place of these the parish church could be utilised for popular informative lectures, readings from the great humanist writers, and good "secular" music. In the town generally, there could be debates

on questions of the moment, entertainments, healthy games and pastimes. Just imagine what a difference, what an improvement, in the people's mentality there would be if such things as these took place instead of the usual puerilities associated with the Christian religion concerned only with the savage rites and speculations of an ancient race of semi-barbaric shepherds. With the enormous monetary resources at the back of the Churches, the things we have suggested could be available for the people at a very low cost to them. Yes, we certainly think it a good thing to picture a town without its usual ecclesiastical mumbo-jumbo. When the masses are able to do that, perhaps they will demand and seek things that are more in keeping with what cultured people regard as civilized.

A *Times* Tokyo correspondent says it was interesting to note at a recent Buddhist Conference in Japan the extreme tolerance of Buddhism towards Christianity. The comment is a confession of ignorance. Otherwise, it would have been recognized that Buddhism is always tolerant, and no surprise would have been manifested. But Christians are so in the habit of displaying intolerance towards others, they are naturally surprised when they find it manifested towards themselves.

There was an appeal lately in the *Times* for funds to promote the education of the sons of clergymen. We fancy there is a real need for a fund for the education of the fathers of the sons of clergymen—genuine education, that is. What usually passes muster for education in that direction is a process by which those who are mentally weak by nature are made incurably so by a course of education.

Most of us have heard of the little girl who told her mother that God was a Presbyterian, because the family belonged to that sect. We fancy that this girl has grown up in the person of Mrs. Leonora Eyles, who is writing a series of articles on religion in the *Daily Herald*. This lady says she is prejudiced against any Church that will not stand the test of Socialism, "which implies comradeship between God and Man." God the Son has long been made a member of the Labour Party, and now God the Father is roped in. All that is required is to issue a card of membership to the Holy Ghost and the family will be complete. What a pity some of these religious people are not blessed with a sense of humour!

The world is not organized or prepared for a much higher level of intelligence than it has already got, declares Mr. J. F. Duff, lecturer on Education. Well, if the world waits for Christianity to evolve a higher grade of intelligence than that which we now see, the world can postpone its preparations *sine die*.

At the annual conference of the Educational Association, Mr. George Morris declared: "I do not suppose there is any occupation more conservative than that of the schoolmaster. The dead hand of the past lies heavily on our educational system." Probably one cause of this is that Christian ideals of how a child should be taught and what it should be permitted to learn are still exerting a baneful influence on education. In a country where people are led to believe that all the wisdom and knowledge they need can be had by memorizing passages from a book of ancient Jewish legends, there is likely to be bred an instinctive dislike of new methods, new ideas, scientific knowledge. And so there is likely to be in the schools little encouragement of the child to investigate and reason on the lines adopted by scientific workers. The art of study is, according to the belief and practice of most school-teachers, mainly a matter of memorizing. And this harmful notion is no doubt a relic of the days when education was mainly in the hands of priests. The "dead hand of the past does indeed lie heavily on our educational system." Educational methods are still too Christianised to be really progressive.



## "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE purpose of this Trust is to acquire sufficient funds which, by investment, will produce an income of £400 annually, the capital remaining intact. It is an endowment secured by legal Trust Deed, administered by five Trustees, of whom the editor of the *Freethinker* is one. It means giving the *Freethinker* permanent financial security, and is thus a businesslike and sound scheme, which should commend itself to all supporters of the Cause. A full explanation of the Trust was given in the issue of the *Freethinker* for October 4, and further information will be given to anyone interested.

Previously acknowledged, £3,528 6s. C. F. Simpson, £2 2s.; R. W. Cracklow, £25; W. K. H., 10s.; F. Dent, 10s. 6d.; W. Simpson, 2s. 6d.; H. H. Hurrell, £2 2s.; "Hair Splitter" (Glasgow), £1.

Per Mrs. R. H. Rosetti: West Ham Branch N.S.S., £5; Mr. T. Thurlow, 5s.; Mr. Walter, 2s. 6d.; Miss Wehrle, 1s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. High, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. Ventnor, 5s.; Mrs. Bogg, 5s.; Mr. W. Scott, 5s. Total, £3,566 7s.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the "Freethinker Endowment Trust," and crossed Midland Bank, Limited (Clerkenwell Branch). All letters should be addressed to the Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**The Special Appeal on behalf of this Trust will close on January 31.**

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

I. SMEDLEY.—(1) Pleased you find the articles on Materialism useful. Several readers have raised questions concerning the subject, and we intend dealing with these in their proper place in the series. (2) It is as well to keep Atheism to its proper significance, that of without belief in God. Its positive aspect lies in the criticism it brings to bear upon accepted and defined ideas of deity.

(MRS.) R. H. ROSETTI.—We quite appreciate the interest you and the West Ham Branch take in the Endowment Trust. We are convinced it is the best thing yet attempted for the maintenance of the paper.

H. W. STEVENS (Winnipeg).—Sorry that your reply to the article in question is rather too far off the date of publication for use.

M. BIRKS.—Your communication has two addresses. Will you be good enough to let us know to which we are to return it?

H. MELTON.—Pleased to hear of your enjoyment of the Stratford discussion. Mr. Cohen would have no objection whatever to meeting a number of leading clergymen in debate, if they could be brought to the sticking point. But the vast majority of them prefer to argue from the pulpit, where no one is allowed to talk back. Mr. Cohen has never asked any of them to debate, but he has never refused a discussion where he considered an opponent worth meeting.

J. BRESE.—Thanks for cutting. It will be useful although want of space prevents our dealing with it this week.

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

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all com-

munications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

## Sugar Plums.

West London Freethinkers and their friends might make special note that the Coronet Theatre has been booked by the N.S.S. Executive for January 31 for a special lecture by Mr. Cohen. The Coronet is in Archer Street, Westbourne Grove, and is very easy of access from all parts. It is near the Royal Oak and Bayswater Tube stations, bus routes 15 and 22 pass the door, while routes 27, 2831, and 46 go quite near. We hope that our friends will lend their aid in advertising this new venture.

A number of advertising slips will be printed, and volunteers who will undertake, if possible, a house to house distribution, are required. A certain number of stewards will also be needed. Those ready to help are asked to write to the N.S.S. Secretary as early as possible. Mr. Cohen will take for his subject, "When I Am Dead," and will deal with the *Weekly Dispatch* articles and other aspects of the question.

We have often pointed out, in connection with the number of articles that have appeared in the press professing to deal with religion, that the writers are carefully selected, and have suggested that it would be a pleasing innovation to have a contribution from an avowed Freethinker. We also suggested the name of the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson as a fitting person. We don't know whether our hint has had anything to do with it, but we see it is announced that Mr. Robertson will contribute an article to the "When I am Dead" series running in the *Weekly Dispatch*. As we have great admiration for Mr. Robertson's qualities as a writer and thinker, we shall look forward to his article with considerable anticipation. It should give the believers in a future life something to think about.

When some time ago we saw that Mr. Robertson was to lecture on Bernard Shaw's *Joan of Arc*, we much regretted that we were unable to hear the address. We felt that he was just the man to knock on the head, not merely a great deal of the nonsense that has of late been said about Joan of Arc (part of this resulted in the Ethical Church putting in a stained glass window which Mr. Shaw shares with Joan and Anatole France), but also to give a helpful criticism of the play itself. Now we have received a copy of *Mr. Shaw and the Maid*, by Mr. Robertson, which is, we presume, the lecture expanded, and it is a first-rate piece of critical work. It knocks on the head the rubbish talked of Joan as a military genius on the one side, and as a semi-supernatural person on the other. The picture of the times, in which the superstitious fears of the relatively small English forces and the superstitiously created courage of the much larger French forces, working together as a consequence of Joan's appearance on the scene is very well done. The analysis of Mr. Shaw's



performance as having lost altogether an interesting historical figure, and giving us instead "a mere whimsical contraption," puts a great deal in a few words. The weakness of the English in France, the undeveloped strength of the French, with the atmosphere of superstition which worked to exalt the one side and to depress the other, helps us to understand the position. Mr. Shaw's play does nothing of the kind. Perhaps, not the least value of Mr. Robertson's essay is that it helps us to understand Mr. Shaw. Mr. Robertson's description of Mr. Shaw as one who "under the guise (for the young) of champion of a new enlightenment..... carries on a campaign of a new obscurantism" is cruel but effective in its stressing of a pronounced side of Mr. Shaw's work. One ought not to let Mr. Shaw's skill in stagecraft obscure this rather important consideration. The book is published at 5s., by R. Cobden Sanderson, and we commend it to our readers.

A debate on the subject of "Is There a God?" has been arranged between Mr. Clifford Williams and the Rev. John Lewis, B.Sc., Presbyterian Minister of Broad Street, Birmingham, at the Working Men's Club, Whitmore Road, Small Heath, to-day (January 17). The discussion will commence at 8 o'clock. Freethinkers may rely upon Mr. Williams stating their case well and defending it with ability, and we hope to hear of a crowded meeting. We understand there are other debates in prospect, so that Birmingham Christians are evidently in a fighting mood. They will certainly not find Freethinkers backward in accommodating them.

## Religion and Pantomime.

No doubt some of my readers will think that religion and pantomime are a strange mixture; but at the "Old Vic" at Christmas time they invariably give us a "Nativity play," which is sometimes followed by Dickens's charming comedy of "The Christmas Carol," or some other play of like character. What more natural than to follow a nativity play with pantomime, both of which deal with fairy land and the supernatural? At the end of the year just closed we were favoured by a "Nativity play" by the accomplished playwright, Miss Cicely Hamilton, entitled "The Child in Flanders," followed by an old-fashioned pantomime, entitled "Harlequin Jack Horner and the Enchanted Pie"; this, again, was followed by a harlequinade—with a clown, pantaloons, and policeman up to their old games, that used to afford so much amusement to the children of a bygone age. Undoubtedly religion and pantomime placed in such proximity do constitute a strange mixture, and rather tend to show the unreality of them both.

Cicely Hamilton's "Nativity" play, though very good of its kind, is full of improbabilities; and the vision of the Adoration with angels walking about the stage with great wings, as though they were just getting ready for flight, is too much like fairy scenes of pantomime than a serious scene from a religious play. The story tells of three soldiers in Flanders—an Englishman, an Australian, and an Indian trooper, calling upon a French peasant and asking him to put them up for the night. The French peasant tells them that his wife has just been confined and that there is really no room in the house for them.

However, after some further talk he lets them lie upon the floor before the fire. During the night—it is Christmas Eve—they all have the same dream, which, of course, is very improbable; and in a vision they see the Virgin Mary with the young child Jesus, and Joseph, the Angel Gabriel, another angel,

three shepherds, three kings, and others, who have come to pay homage to the young Christ—the Saviour of mankind. Several Christmas carols are sung by an invisible choir; and on the following morning when the young soldiers awake, the French peasant shows them the child that has been born to his wife, and they bow before it and bestow presents upon the parents in gratitude; and amid the booming of guns in the distance they depart. The little play was very well acted, and certainly pleased those among the audience of a religious turn of mind.

Then followed the pantomime of "Little Jack Horner and the Enchanted Pie," in which somehow or other the story of the twenty-four blackbirds that got baked in a pie, got mixed up. A prologue specially written by G. K. Chesterton, was admirably delivered by Baliol Holloway, and the pantomime itself, which was concocted by Andrew Leigh, the producer, and others, was most efficiently performed by the members of the "Old Vic" Shakespeare company. The book of the pantomime was well written, in cleverly devised rhymed couplets, which were not only witty and smart, but provoked roars of laughter among the audience. On the whole, the "Nativity" play and the pantomime proved an excellent entertainment, especially for the children present; of which there were a good many, for such plays telling of the incredible story of the Virgin Birth, how the wise men of the East came and bowed down before the newly-born babe, while surrounded by angels, is only fit for the child mind; and, like the pantomime, made up of fairy tales, and other absurd stories which have played perhaps a useful part in the nursery, and which, for all I can see to the contrary, will continue to do so for many years to come.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## "The Treatment of Crime."

It would be inaccurate to deny the existence of a number of reformers, working inside the narrowing limits of the churches, aiming at genuine humanitarian reforms.

For instance the question of Prison Reform is again to the fore. Even the Christian Church feels called on to issue a Report on "The Treatment of Crime." The "C.O.P.E.C." Commission, consisting of sixteen Christian magistrates, barristers, chaplains, etc., has produced a volume which certainly recognizes the civic and moral failure of the present system and recommends a wiser and more humane consideration of the subject.

It seems as if very much of the religious attention to reforms is stultified by such nonsense as "the teachings of Our Lord." I do not impute any evil motive, although motives of proselytizing have often accounted for an apparent zeal for reforms. I prefer to draw attention to the barrier artificially set up by having to interpret modern problems in the light of an ancient religion.

The "Copec" report is first of all up against the absurd distinction between "sin" and "crime." The real distinction is between "legal offences" and "wrong-doing"—quite a sufficient problem without harking back to so-called "sin."

Christian reformers would agree with other reformers that retribution is evil, and a bad basis for social treatment of crime. But Copec cannot, of course, overlook "that retribution is not absent from the teaching of Christ" or suggest "that it has no place in a Christian system of criminal jurisprudence." Christians cannot therefore oppose the idea of retribution and to that extent they are opposed



to the modern philosophy based on fact and experience.

Copec is hardly more in keeping with the needs of the case to say that "Retribution must be the servant of Redemption." It suggests the old rack and thumbscrews torturing a body in order to redeem a soul. For Christians cannot use the word "redemption" without suggesting ideas they possibly do not imply. It is an unfortunate word for Christians to quote in connection with prisons.

This volume uses the word "love" too glibly. "Punishment is only permissible when it subserves the purpose of love." "Punishment can never be tolerated for its own sake." All these phrases are quite meaningless and were no doubt used by Torquemada.

Our Christian friends are much more at home when they quote approvingly that in relation to crimes they particularly abhor: "Better for a millstone to be fastened round the neck of such a miscreant and that he should be cast into the depths of the sea," the punishment no doubt that subserves the purposes of love, and improves in abusive epithets even the language of the Bible it is supposed to quote.

Christ's alleged teaching about non-resistance is put into its proper place by these reformers. Ah! quite so....."the daring paradox about the two garments and so on.....all these refer only to our personal relationships as members of the kingdom of God, but Jesus has not touched upon the solemn duty of safeguarding the rights of others." Exactly. Jones must not resist evil if it take the form of robbing Robinson, but Jones can avenge Robinson, and Robinson avenge Jones, and thus fulfil the whole law of Christ.

"Copec" sits on the fence in regard to capital punishment. "Our Lord" apparently only helps the Copec people when the Copec people are unanimous. He does not help them to become unanimous. "Our Lord prayed for his murderers, and as Christians our first aim should be the prevention of murders which would render discussions of the penalty needless." This reads like a burlesque, but it is a literal quotation of a paragraph which commences with the obvious cause of the fence-sitting policy: "We find a difference of opinion upon the subject amongst our contributors." So "Our Lord's teaching" fizzles out in "pros and cons" and no decision if the "contributors" disagree with "Our Lord."

The Copec "thinkers" as citizens have several ideas in common with other citizens who have given consideration to the problem of crime and its causes. But the puritanical outlook of most Christians is frequently in evidence. What for instance could be more ridiculous than the suggestion, "Might it not be made illegal to sell or supply alcoholic liquors" to persons convicted of assault? As if the "Black List" had never been tried and discarded as impracticable.

There is also a spiteful allusion to "the bogey of personal right and liberty." It is not to be wondered at that if an organization for the study of "The Treatment of Crime" is inspired by "Our Lord's teaching," there will be more instead of fewer outrages on "the bogey of personal right and liberty."

The *Howard Journal*, official organ of the Howard League for Penal Reform, in its latest issue, in reviewing the "Copec" Report, feels itself bound to call attention to another particularly objectionable phase of the Copec recommendations. It says:—

The statement of the duty of the citizen (that if he sees anything wrong he is bound to report it) ap-

pears to us to be the apotheosis of the busybody. Appearances are not always trustworthy, and we recommend our readers before adopting this suggestion to bear in mind that there is such a thing as "malicious prosecution."

That the Copec group fails so signally must not be taken to imply a similar abortiveness in the reform work of individual Christians. Far otherwise. But it is a pity that admirable teachers like the Rev. A. R. L. Gardner, who preached the "Howard" sermon on the last anniversary of John Howard's death, should voluntarily limit his own efforts by a very unprogressive creed. In a sermon witty, wise, and worthy of its subject, Mr. Gardner has to eke out "Our Lord's teaching" by such subterfuges as "Jesus replied that he must be born again and grow up under a different system of education to that which had given him his present mental outlook." As an admirer of Mr. Gardner's admirable zeal for a great reform I deplore his stultification.

It is just as well to remind the Howard League, in conclusion, that the National Secular Society has for its object (inter alia):

The substitution of the idea of reform for that of punishment in the treatment of criminals, so that gaols may no longer be places of brutalization or even of mere detention, but places of physical, intellectual and moral elevation for those who are afflicted with anti-social tendencies.

The abolition of capital punishment.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## "Should We Believe in a Personal God?"

A DEBATE BETWEEN

CANON STORR AND MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.

II.

(Concluded from page 28.)

CANON STORR's second speech opened with the admission again of his difficulties with regard to personality. He also admitted that science has no degrees of value, but we had man's ideals—the good, the beautiful, and the true. He then explained Darwin's theory of Natural Selection at some length—particularly dwelling on the survival of the fittest, and asked if religion wasn't true, why had it not been wiped out by Evolution? He wanted an answer. He personally couldn't see that religion was dying. Of course there were great difficulties but the hypothesis of a Personal God was the best explanation of the universe. Religion was the great need of man—that was why it survived. If religion is a delusion, then man's intelligence had taken a wrong turning. In any case, man considered himself a spiritual being, and this he either is or is not. Man had free will—the verdict of humanity was with him in this. If, therefore, man is really free—then evolution has a richer meaning—it produces spiritual beings like ourselves. Moreover, we had to account for Christian experiences—were Christians wrong when they said they had experience of God?

Man is something more than what mathematicians, physicists, and chemists said he was. Religious experiences were as true as the Stratford Town Hall. Why rule them out? He threw out the challenge to Mr. Cohen to explain the sense of God that man has.

Mr. Cohen, in his second speech, pointed out that nature does not necessarily eliminate unsuitable things, and instanced the appendix and the tail, and, therefore, just as there were rudimentary structures in the physical state, so there were rudimentary qualities in the mental world which accounted for the belief in religions.

But religion was certainly dying. At one census taken in France seven millions returned themselves as Atheists, and there must be nearly that number in this country. We were outgrowing religion as we had outgrown the belief in witches, and as children outgrow



the belief in Santa Claus. In primitive times the gods were everywhere and did everything. Then a decline set in. The astronomer came along and said he had no use for God, but perhaps the physicist had. The physicist said he had not either, but perhaps the chemist could find a use for him. The chemist passed him on to the biologist, the biologist to the sociologist, and so on. The forces of nature were constant and uniform, and upon that we relied. Not so long ago the presence of a plague brought religious processions and days of prayer for intercession. To-day we pay more attention to sanitation, and we have fewer plagues. We are outgrowing our religious beliefs. Even Canon Storr illustrated that, for fifty years ago he would have been far more religious than he appeared to be to-day. Earlier still, men had their ears nailed and poor Peter Annett was condemned to stand in the pillory for denying the truth of the Bible. And now we find the Christian God reduced to a mere working hypothesis, something that may help us to explain things, and part of that explanation is that all the suffering and cruelty displayed in the story of evolution was necessary for God to produce a perfect man! If God was aiming at a perfect man, why in the name of all that is sensible did he not make a perfect man at once and have done with it?

Mr. Cohen concluded his speech with a brief criticism of free-will and remarked it was obvious that Canon Storr did not understand the question of determinism.

Canon Storr then gave his final reply. He disagreed with Mr. Cohen's remarks on the problem of determinism as he (Canon Storr) had taught philosophy for ten years in the University. He claimed that sin was the deliberate wrongdoing of a free being, but he admitted it was all very difficult to explain. What meaning has the universe for man? Merely a good time? The great purpose, in his opinion, was to produce moral characters. He believed in the goodness of pain and insisted that some of the finest characters that ever existed were so through pain.

It was Jesus Christ who understood God and he came to man to share the burden of the world's pain—though how exactly Jesus (or God) suffered he didn't know. The Christian metaphysic said that behind all this is a God who is suffering with the world.

You must get Jesus Christ into the scheme, and the problem is, what he is doing now? Where would the hospitals be if it had not been for Christianity? As for the war—he repudiated it; it was not Christian.

Canon Storr spent his last five minutes in giving the Christian point of view, and insisted that our freedom which we got from God, was our guarantee against retrogression. And it was along these lines, the lines of freedom, that Jesus Christ showed the way.

The Canon sat down amid great applause.

In replying, Mr. Cohen remarked that he was not impressed by the information that Canon Storr had spent ten years in a University teaching philosophy. Ten minutes of the right kind of thinking was far more to the point. No one disputed the fact of choice. The question at issue was its determination, and he submitted that why a man chose one course rather than another was to be explained in terms of organism, education, heredity, and environment. It was said that pain disciplines. That may be true in a few cases, but one of the commonest of experiences was the degradation of character under the influence of pain and disease. In dealing with God Canon Storr said that much about God was a mystery. Well, mystery was not a matter for debate, and one must leave it at that. But there was no mystery about the belief in God. It was common ground with anthropologists that the belief in God began with primitive man in a delusion. The gods were once a very numerous family, to-day they had declined in both numbers and in power, and Canon Storr's deity was only an attenuated representative of this once numerous and powerful ruling family. Nor did people believe in God as a result of any of the reasons for the belief; they were merely excuses why the belief should not be given up. As for Christian experiences, we do not dispute it; we explain it. All the facts of human nature and of nature at large are common property, but we have a different and a better explanation. The fact was

that the Freethinker could explain Canon Storr, Canon Storr could not explain the Freethinker. He denied altogether that good had been done by religion. The assumption was due to a wrong interpretation of the facts. What religion did was to take the social qualities of man, misunderstand them, abuse them, and pervert them. There was no single belief in the history of mankind that had been responsible for so much harm as the belief in God had been. It had carried devastation in its train. It was not true that God had civilized man, it was man that had civilized the gods, and by his own intelligence and industry had built up at least the semblance of a civilized human society.

Mr. Cohen sat down amid thunderous applause, after which he proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman in his usual happy manner. Canon Storr seconded the motion.

The Chairman (the Rev. J. Merrin, M.A.), replied, and said he knew many great scientists who were humble Christians. We mustn't blame religion for the cruelty and wrongdoing done in religion's name, and he concluded by pointing out that religion was not only of the intellect, but of the heart.

And we all filed out of the hall feeling more strongly than ever the impregnable position of modern Free-thought, especially in such able hands as Mr. Chapman Cohen.

H. CUTNER.

### An Impression.

THE subject of the debate between Chapman Cohen and Canon Storr, on Sunday, January 3, at the Stratford Town Hall, proved, as one expected, interesting and profitable. All it denied me from my usually restful day on Sunday was my armchair by the fire, and a book, and, most likely, grateful slumber. It was a wet day, yet, withal, a pleasant Sunday afternoon, and surely to gather in a public hall with Christian and non-Christian, with believer and non-believer, is a unique and memorable affair. As I entered the hall there was on all hands the usual inarticulate buzz and excitement of animated voices, each expounding to the other either the futility of the whole affair or proving, before the protagonists had begun, the verdict that would be found. The Christian that God was triumphant, the non-Christian that the Editor of the *Freethinker*, to put it—well, vulgarly, "would wipe the floor with him."

To me who, from a Christian point of view, am a damned sinner, and from a Freethinking point of view, a doubtful stayer, the prospect of the meeting gave pure delight, and to give to the West Ham Hospital a small donation for the exercises in logic, in reason, tinged, as it should, and must be, with a vein of emotion, provided all that I wanted on a wet Sunday afternoon.

Canon Storr, bless the man, did very well. About his mouth there were lines of playful humour, and he knew part of his book very well, and gave it agreeably, and the applause meted out was generous, as it should be, by God believer and God unbeliever alike. He did as well as any other priest of the Church could do, except perhaps Dean Inge; and the Church would not put him up. Nor would he himself care to meet Chapman Cohen on such a subject as "Should We Believe in a Personal God?" and for reasons known both to us and to himself, and these are that it is a thousand to one against the contention.

My impression of Chapman Cohen was that he never spoke better. He was playful, satirical, humorous, but, withal, intense. There was neither camouflage or padding in what he said. He met the Canon on equal terms on an equal platform, with a tolerant unbiased audience, ready to acclaim when the point set up was stated clearly and proved.

Mr. Cohen upheld his case in a masterly way, proved always his point, and then gave a little makeweight in satisfaction, until the measure was filled and ran over.

To me the meeting had another use. It showed at least what Freethinkers are. Freethinkers, with dignity, with human charm, and with a loftiness (a human



loftiness), which, alas, Christians do not yet concede us in any way. But more, my memory went back to that hall, some months before Bradlaugh died, when I heard him make a memorable speech from the same platform, and then, years later, on the same platform, G. W. Foote. And now Chapman Cohen, who stands for both—and what of that? Only this, in tone, in temper, in allusion graceful and melodious, the representative stands for us, who truly are but a little band of Freethinkers, in comparison with the mass of seeming Christians, and upheld our claim, our contention, with all the power and charm of any who have gone before. We were all well content. G. S.

## Correspondence.

### A CORRECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Despite the valuable essay that he bases on a supposed remark of mine, Mr. H. B. Dodds' memory has betrayed him. If he will turn to page 33 of *The Beardsley Period*, he will find that he has unintentionally misquoted. The printed sentence, referring to Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam*, runs: "There is no more joyless poem in the language." This is a very different thing from calling it, as Mr. Dodds would have your readers suppose that I did, "the most gloomy."

Joyless, I need hardly explain, is a negative term: it means the absence of joy; the state of emotional anaesthesia, or centre of indifference. Gloomy, on the other hand, is a positive adjective: it means dark, explicitly sad. The mistake, indeed, is a trifle gratuitous, for in the very next sentence but one I was careful to point the difference. *The City of Dreadful Night*, runs the passage, so far from making us sad, is a poem in which "the energy of the rhythm defies the gloom that it describes." Its disillusion is sung with such confidence of rhythm that the effect upon the reader is inspiring.

Both *Omar Khayyam* and *The City of Dreadful Night* are beautiful poems, but whereas the rhythm of Thomson has the clangorous beauty of a trumpet call, the rolling rhythm of Fitzgerald's linked quatrains was exquisitely chosen to give us the percussive, tum-tum beauty of a drum. *Omar* has a beautiful sound: the sound, deliberately, is hollow, in order, of course, to enhance the hollowness of the mood celebrated by the poem. Fitzgerald was a rare artist: a master who knew perfectly how to harmonise his theme. I should not trouble to correct Mr. Dodds' inadvertent slip had he not kindly gone out of his way to make me the springboard for his own very interesting article.

OSBERT BURDETT.

### ON THE HURLING OF PINT POTS.

SIR,—This is a pastime that, for the moment, I particularly enjoy. The limits of an occasional article on the drama must be well known and, as no writer, to paraphrase Sterne, would presume to write all it would be the best plan to amicably halve the matter and keep the reader's imagination busy. That was an idea which I wished to convey, and as it was not clearly stated for Mr. Irving in my note on "White Cargo" a drinking vessel is heaved in my direction.

Tragedy, as I conceive it for myself, and not from loads of text-books and lectures, makes us look up. There is nothing to look up to in "White Cargo." Wireless, quicker transport, the Great War, and the intermingling of nations have brought about a dispensation in which one fact emerges; this side of the world, including Africa, has an opportunity to practise fraternal deference. "White Cargo" does not embrace it, and as I am chiefly interested in the growth of mankind it seemed a pity that the author of this play should think it necessary to give us a picture of a black prostitute, which, in my opinion, might be mistaken for a tragedy. As I took pains to point out, I am no authority on the question of whether or not a white man should marry

a black woman, but it is plain that English people should realize that their standards of morals are only their standards.

For good or bad the countries of the world are now huddled closer together. The Freethinker has not the colossal conceit of the Christian who wishes to save the soul of each individual of all nations, but he can at least say, "I desire to understand you." We must start fair. For that reason I will not commence my education in the knowledge of black womanhood with "White Cargo" at this time in the world's history. The play confirms ecclesiastical prejudices, but we are not caught with that chaff in spite of the straight lefts received by the missionary.

Dramatists are myth-makers; their efforts in raising or quickening the public level of thought cannot be denied; when they are panders to the market-place of thought they are no better than parsons and newspapers. Mr. Irving and myself must agree to differ on the dramatic value of "White Cargo." We are children of chaos and the world is our fatherland (not fatherhood, Mr. Printer). Fundamentally and physiologically there is no difference between a black woman and a white woman, except colour, and the author of the play takes up the line of least resistance with his central character, the black woman. After the convulsion of the world war when people have hissed and hated themselves black in the face, when the colour question is now a problem passed on to governments by missionaries, when we may soon listen in to even a distant place like West Africa, when the voice of humanity cries out for peace and understanding—we get "White Cargo," which in effect says to mankind, "You shall not grow up." It is the doctrine of original sin on the stage, and as such it cannot be met with compromise by one who has no use for the swaddling clothes of orthodoxy in religion, politics, or any other crystallization that means the end of growth.

WILLIAM REPTON.

P.S.—"White Cargo" was included in a list of plays recommended by the *Church Times* to its readers.

### THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

SIR,—In your issue of November 8 you point out to me that Spencer's phrase, "Survival of the Fittest" does not mean the survival of the best. But this is exactly what I pointed out in my letter, so I infer you could not have read it. I mentioned that I had recently to put the local paper right in this connection.

My objection to Mr. Herbert Spencer's phrase is that it is misleading, because *most people* understand fittest to mean the best. This is what I said before, and what you pretend to reply to.

When you answer a correspondent you should not deliberately put him in a false position, especially when you give his name in full. Like yourself, I am an Atheist, and I very much admire your whole-hearted policy of No compromise with Christian humbug.

I used to take the *Freethinker* when it first came out and contained amusing illustrations by W. P. Ball. It was for one of these that Mr. Foote was imprisoned for blasphemy. J. E. ROOSE.

Guimbi, via Kafue, Northern Rhodesia.

[We are sorry that we should inadvertently have placed Mr. Roose in what he calls a false position, and offer him our apologies for having done so, even in appearance. For the rest, we can only repeat that Spencer's phrase is, in our judgment, much preferable to Darwin's, and if people will confuse "fittest" with best, the only reply that can be made is in every case there are some people who will misunderstand terms, no matter how carefully they are selected and used.—ED.]

### R. L. S. AND SPIRITUALISM.

SIR,—A brief note of thanks, etc., to Mr. E. W. Oaten for his interest in and comment on my article of January 3, especially for the sidelight on Stevenson—which I have not before seen in the biographies. It is not so very surprising that the mind of a genius in a consumptive body should be inclined to Spiritualism. To mention things remote, the infinitely more delicate mind of Leopardi was particularly immune from all such



"spiritual" aberrations or hauntings. Is it suggested that Lincoln and Owen were "psychists" also? If the strong are so deceived, one should cease to wonder at the weaker brethren.

ANDREW MILLAR.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON  
JANUARY 7, 1926.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Moss, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, Samuels, and Silverstein, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed. The Monthly Cash Statement was presented and adopted, and the Pass Book produced.

New members were received for South London, West Ham, and the Parent Society.

A letter from the Birmingham Branch *re* future propaganda was dealt with and instructions given as to minor correspondence.

Reference was made to the recent interesting debate held at the Stratford Town Hall, and it was resolved unanimously:—

That this Executive expresses the highest gratification at the able and efficient manner in which Mr. Cohen conducted the debate between Canon Storr and himself at the Stratford Town Hall on January 3, and feels that the cause of Freethought would be still further benefited by a lecture from Mr. Cohen in the same hall at an early date.

The result of Mr. Whitehead's recent visit to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Branches was reported, also that the Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, has been engaged for a lecture by Mr. Cohen on January 31, and that the Social Gathering on December 8 had been well attended.

Final arrangements for the Annual Dinner on January 12 were made, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE,  
General Secretary.

N.B.—Secretaries are reminded that the Annual Subscription for Branch members become due on January 1 and should be remitted at once.

## North London Branch N.S.S.

Dr. Arthur Lynch gave us a delightfully humorous lecture on the sanity, or otherwise, of Bishops, which was immensely appreciated, our only regret being that our room could not accommodate a larger audience to enjoy the treat provided for them. Many questions were asked and a brisk discussion followed, and altogether we felt that our Spring Session opened most favourably. We are all most grateful to Dr. Lynch for sparing us an evening out of his busy life. To-night, Mr. H. Cutner and Mr. W. Wash debate the question, "Would Communism benefit the Workers?"—K. B. K.

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Anthropology (Topinard), from C. Bradlaugh's library; Bible Handbook; original edition; what offers?—Box 65.

ENGLISH Concertina; Lachenall's patent; mahogany case; as new; 2 guineas.—Box 67.

### WANTED.

BOUND Volumes of National Reformer prior to 1866; also vol. for 1875; purchased or exchanged for modern Freethought works.—Box 64.

FOOTE'S Crimes of Christianity, Freethinkers' Text Book, Part ii. (Annie Besant), The Prophet of Nazareth (Meredith), At Random (Saladin).—Box 65.

The Glory of the Pharaohs (Weigall).—Box 81.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

### LONDON. INDOOR.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. Howell Smith, "Is Christianity a Human Product or a Divine Revelation?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"Would Communism benefit the Workers?" Affirmative, Mr. W. Wash; Negative, Mr. H. Cutner.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "What is a Man Worth?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Pleasures and Pains of Authorship."

### COUNTRY. INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. W. M. Thorn, "A Philosophy of Life that does not require Evolution or Special Creation in the Light of Relativity." Questions and discussion. (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street): 7.15, Mr. Youngman, "Ingersoll." Questions and discussion invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Monkeyville, Evolution, and the Bible."

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Well, the Society now asks all non-attached Freethinkers to consider this advertisement as a personal and cordial invitation to join, and those who have not thought about it to give the matter their earnest and serious consideration.

For more than sixty years the National Secular Society has been fighting the cause of every Freethinker in the country. Its two first Presidents, Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote, were the most brilliant Freethinkers of their time, and they gave themselves unstintingly to the Cause they loved. It is not claiming too much to say that public opinion on matters of religion to-day would not be what it is but for the work of these men and of the Society of which they were the successive heads.

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*General Secretary:* Miss E. M. VANCE.

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