

# The FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Freedom and Religion.

The story of the fight for mental freedom is at once the most inspiring and the most depressing chapter in human history. No battlefield has witnessed more signal victories, none have seen more sensational defeats. In the field of political, religious, and even in that of scientific life, one may find illustrations of this. Authority in each direction has resented criticism and independence of thought, although it may be said of two of these departments that it has seldom ventured to justify the denial of freedom of thought on ethical grounds. It is religion alone that has consistently done this. Here it has made criticism an offence, and heresy of speech a crime. Nor would it be difficult to show that the reaction of religion on social life has been to intensify whatever intolerance might otherwise have existed. Other departments have admitted that the way to truth was that of experimentation and research. The dominant religion of the Western world for many centuries met every move in either direction with a revelation which denied that there was any truth of importance to mankind to be discovered outside its message. Nor is this quite worn out to-day. For in the plea that it is Christianity alone that can teach us how to solve the problems that vex us most, we have the ghost of the claim that once faced the world boldly and unashamed. Vested interest dies hard, and when conditions make it difficult for it to express itself in one form, it not unusually assumes new ones. But the spirit remains the same.

### This Freedom.

Now that the right to mental freedom is generally admitted in theory, even though it may be denied in practice, one is not altogether surprised to find one of our religious weeklies supplying us with the information that our ancestors were wrong in their dislike to freedom of thought as threatening the life of religion, because experience has shown that religious freedom has made us increasingly religious. One suspects that all the writer means by religious freedom is the right to choose which religion a man shall have, and not the right to reject all religions, and at the same time to have perfect freedom in stating one's reason for rejecting them. Far from this representing the state of things at present, there

is a fairly strong belief still current that if a man does not accept some religion or other he ought at least to have grace enough to keep silent about it. And even with those who do not go quite so far as this there is the belief that greater consideration should be shown towards people's belief in religion than to their belief in other subjects. If there were no penalties attaching to outspokenness in matters of religion, there would be many thousands of men and women, who are now silent, voicing their real beliefs about Christianity. Full and complete freedom in matters of religion must involve the right to reject, and the right to speak, without suffering any penalties, legal social, or financial. No one can say that this is really the case to-day.

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### Heresy as Treason.

What, now, is the relation of religion to intellectual freedom? It is not very difficult to show that freedom of thought is a direct consequence of a weakening of religious belief, and it approaches nearer being complete as the conviction of the uselessness of religion becomes more general. To begin with, it may be noted that in the earlier stages of social life such a thing as religious freedom does not exist. It is not so much denied as it simply is not there. No one asks for it, and no one dreams of giving it. It is as foreign to the environment as wireless telegraphy. If everyone is religious, everyone is convinced of the necessity of maintaining religion. To doubt the truth of religion is not so much an intellectual offence as it is a social one. It is an offence against tribal well-being, and to fall short of doing what one is religiously expected to do is so dangerous to the rest of the community that anyone breaking the tribal taboos is rewarded with prompt punishment. It is this fact that lies at the deeply-rooted dislike of heresy, and the social stigma that attaches to it. The heretic is hated, not so much for his opinions as for their supposed consequences to others. That social stigma persists after the circumstances which created it has passed away, and we have it to-day in the belief of the more ignorant religious class that social disasters are a consequence of our "forsaking God," and the attitude of the more timid heretics who veil their unbelief under a professed respect for religious beliefs they have outgrown.

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### Profit in Diversity.

Later stages of religious history show that wherever religious belief is fairly uniform there is always an agreed intolerance to whatever heresy happens to show itself. One may lay it down as a sound historic generalization that there is no instance known of a community in which there existed uniformity of religious belief, or even an overwhelming majority of believers in one form of religion, where religious differences were tolerated. Where religious bodies show something like an equality of numbers, the position is different. One tolerates the other because neither

is able to destroy the other. Sects may tolerate religious freedom, but none of them desire it. And these differences in religious belief are set up, not by a growth in religion, but by forces that are quite outside it. The Protestant Reformation is an illustration of this. It is sometimes said that the Reformation was a product of religious belief, the desire for a truer form of religion, etc. This is far from the truth. The convinced Protestant leaders were quite as intolerant as were the Roman Catholics. The young Church agreed with the older one in its hatred of heresy and in the desire to extirpate it. They differed only as to the heresy that was to be wiped out. New Presbyter was indeed only old priest writ large, and devotion to minute details of absurd religious doctrine was even more pronounced with Protestants than it was with the Roman Catholics. And what was still more important, heresy hunting from being mainly the concern of an official priesthood became a vital concern of the individual. Heresy hunting became everybody's business, a domestic concern, with a pronounced intolerance one of the hall-marks of sincere religious conviction.

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#### Protestantism and Toleration.

The true significance of the Reformation was intellectual and social, rather than religious. It was an indication of a struggle between the secular and the religious forces for the control of life—a struggle that is still proceeding. The arrogance of the Roman Church had become intolerable to many of the European rulers. The intrusion of the Church in all the affairs of life had reached a point that left no room for the operation of the new powers that were then coming into existence. The rediscovery of the almost forgotten culture of antiquity set in motion forces that made for the weakening of Christianity with the better minds of the nations. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were notoriously areas of widespread scepticism in matters of religion, and while much is known it is fair to assume that much more veiled itself in a discreet silence. The nature of religious controversy was gradually changing from a difference about something that threatened the health and safety of the community to a mere difference of opinion. And although the Protestants championed an intolerance quite as bad and easily as ferocious as that of the Roman Church at its worst, the prospect of rival religious bodies quarrelling familiarized the general mind with the existence and gradually the normality of religious differences. Religious freedom was not a consequence of Protestantism; at most, it was no more than its accompaniment, and to the leaders a very unpleasant one.

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#### The Decay of Faith.

The fact really governing the growth of freedom in religion is the gradual realization of its comparative unimportance. So long as right religious belief is held to be essential to the proper ordering of life, toleration of heresy is a practical impossibility. The community which says that men may have what religious opinion they please, or even go without it altogether, is saying that it does not really matter whether they are religious or not. The measure of religious freedom is thus the measure of religious indifference. Religious freedom may be historically traced to a number of easily discernible factors. There is, first, the growth of religious sects which makes coercion by one of them increasingly difficult; second, the development of social life which liberates secular affairs from theological control, and reduces theology to a special form of opinion with which the

State has no real concern; and, third, the growth of knowledge which by offering a rational and a verifiable explanation of one group of phenomena after another leaves religion without any useful function in life. In actual affairs these forces are intermingled and act and react on one another, but their working in history all may see. Freedom in religion and indifference to religion are two sides of the same fact.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Chips from Anatole France's Workshop.

*Under the Rose*, by Anatole France, published by John Lane, the Bodley Head, Limited, 7s. 6d. net.

THIS interesting little volume has just been published a little over a year after the distinguished author's death. It is a work to which he lovingly devoted the closing years of his labourious life; and our warm thanks are due to M. Michel Corday for so carefully arranging and annotating it for the press, which to him, it is evident, has been a pure labour of love. About a year prior to the close of the Great War Anatole France resolved to write a Dialogue on the Existence of God. He was exceedingly tender-hearted, and nothing pained him so poignantly as the brutal sacrifice of so many millions of innocent lives in the long-continued conflict between nations, every one of which believed firmly in a God of justice and love. In solemn contemplation of the indescribably humiliating European situation then daily confronting him, he fell into the habit of saying: "I should like to write a dialogue concerning God, in which I could develop the following idea: 'If God exists, He must be the most abominable of creatures, since He has permitted this war to be.'" Readers of his *Garden of Epicurus*, *My Friend's Book*, and other works, are aware that he was particularly fond of the Dialogue form of writing, and M. Corday informs us that "a note discovered in the 'Dialogue portfolio,' one of the countless notes he jotted down on any scrap of paper that came to his hand—the back of a letter, or a bill, the cover of a catalogue—throws a light on this predilection":—

Montaigne had no need to write dialogues in order to present the different facets of a question. He himself was equal to that manifold task, so many-sided was he, so diverse, so fertile in antitheses. But I—I am not several people rolled into one, and I have need of your contradictions.

What a beautiful tribute by a great man to a greater!

Christian opponents of Anatole France are accustomed to call him a universal mocker, a dilettante, a mere "player on the flute"; but no aspersion could be more unjust. France was a profoundly serious thinker, although he delighted in innocent banter and satire. *Penguin Island* is one of the finest satires in literature; but there is no bitterness in it. Hatred and malice were foreign to his nature. In *Gods Are Athirst* he says, "the rule of life should be indulgence and kindness of heart," and in none of his books does he give expression to anything in contradiction of that golden rule.

Even in his eighties Anatole France was rich in plans and projects for future works. He experienced an irresistible urge to write another novel to be called *The Cyclops*, which, according to M. Corday, was to be "a tragi-comic satire on humanity after

the style of *The Revolt of the Angels* and *Penguin Island*." It was in his heart to compose a novel on Napoleon. For this projected piece of work he gathered material from every conceivable source. He even visited the Golfe Juan and Grenoble, and at Bechellerie he collected two hundred volumes dealing with the Emperor's sojourn on the Isle of Elba and his return to France. But this novel was never written, and many other projects died with him. *Under the Rose* contains all available material for a book that the master left behind him.

The first Dialogue in *Under the Rose* is on Metaphysics and the Existence of God. It is between Thémine and Floris, Thémine being the objector and Floris France himself. Thémine opens by expressing a desire to learn whether or not "this world, into which we are cast in a state of tragic ignorance as to what it is and what we are, will always remain beyond our ken, seeing that our senses, whose testimony is governed by our reason, bring us into touch with external objects?" To this question Floris returns the following emphatic reply:—

Alas, this physical machine which puts us in touch with the things that encompass us, is a clumsy machine which bumps blindly against the things it encounters, but never penetrates beneath their surface. All things are proof against its impact. It comes to a halt at the surface, and the substance, however finely it may be sublimated, always remains hidden from us. As for our reason, it is a vague, indefinite, uncertain, confused, and changeful thing. It varies in the same individual, from year to year, from day to day, from hour to hour. It flares up and dies down with equal suddenness and does but produce perplexity and countless contradictory notions. The lower animals are endowed with an apparatus, not greatly dissimilar from that of man, for taking cognizance of the external world. They are also furnished with reasoning faculties, far less extensive than ours, but similar in kind. Thus a dog and a man, to all intents and purposive, entertain, broadly speaking, the same idea of nature. Poor Mitzi, lying there with his nose between his paws and turning his beautiful gold-brown eyes upon me, knows as much—and as little—as his master about life and the world (pp. 12, 13).

We can easily imagine how frightfully offensive such a passage will be to an orthodox divine who believes that there is a difference *in kind* between an animal and a man. To the scientist the difference is one of *degree* only, and not at all of *kind*. The theologian is a metaphysician who ignores all the discoveries of biology and psychology. Even the Bishop of Birmingham, who glories in his scientific attainments, and once won the degree of D.Sc., repudiates the teachings of science and becomes an old-fashioned theologian when he treats of the difference between man and the animals. It would do his lordship and all who agree with him, incalculable good if they thoughtfully listened to and heeded the following declaration by Anatole France:—

Doubtless we attach a meaning to the words we employ; but only to those which denote a definite, tangible object, and are attached to it like a label, as it were. Words whereby we imagine we represent something that cannot be pictured, have no significance whatever. They have nothing to attach themselves to; they float in the void. However we may attempt to define them, they will remain for ever undefined. The words by which a metaphysician imagines he is labelling his abstractions did not exist in the beginning of language, or if they did, they connoted some definite object from which they have since become detached. For example, the spirit, *l'esprit*, *spiritus* meant "a breath"; *l'ame*, the soul, meant "breathing," "respiration." And when people say that animals have no soul, it is exactly as if one were to say that

beings which breathe have no breath. In metaphysics they speak, I don't remember in what connection, of pure mind, pure spirit. Of what can we predicate purity in a world where all things are intermingled and combined? The word "pure" signifies, originally, something that is washed. It becomes meaningless if it is employed to qualify a spirit, a breath (pp. 17, 18).

There is nothing new in that paragraph. We find the same truth clearly expressed in the Genesis story of the creation of man, a story, by the way, the historicity of which the Bishop of Birmingham definitely denies. In Genesis ii. 7, we read: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Later on, vii. 21, 22, in the account of the flood we find these strange words: "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both fowl and cattle and beast, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man; all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." To the writers of Genesis man and animals alike shared the breath of life, and were in consequence living souls together. Anatole France's great point is that metaphysical abstractions lack objective reality. Very illuminating in this connection is the Dialogue between Aristos and Polyphilos on the Language of Metaphysics in the *Garden of Epicurus*, pp. 207-240. Now, Metaphysics are the things which are supposed to come after Physics, things of which science is utterly ignorant. The physical universe is the only one concerning which we possess the slightest knowledge. With all these denunciations of Metaphysics in mind Thémine suddenly asks, "Floris, do you believe in the existence of God?" At first Floris plays rather satirically with the question instead of answering it. "Nevertheless," says Thémine, "He (God) has been made the subject of definition," whereupon Floris observes: "The philosophers call Him the Infinite One. In so doing they do not define Him; they 'underfine' Him. To affirm Him thus is, in reality, to deny Him. Everything predicated of Him is contradictory." Then he enumerates several of such obvious contradictions, ending by saying that the philosophers "invest Him with the physique of a child and the moral code of a savage." "Nevertheless," contends Thémine, "successive generations retain their faith in Him." Here Anatole France gives free scope to his satirical humour, and the passage is eminently worth quoting:—

Yes, successive generations retain their faith in Him, and the reason for that is abundantly clear. The worthy Kant, who was given to meditation, discovered the principle of human knowledge and the reconciliation of the various conflicting philosophical systems, in the smoke that curled up from his porcelain pipe; but he did not find God there. Having, with great assiduity, searched for Him in vain, he had made up his mind to do without Him, when, taking a walk one day through the streets of Königsberg, that rich and populous city, he observed many scenes of disorder and sedition. Amid this tumult, at which the mind of the sage revolted in disgust, God suddenly appeared to him, and the good philosopher immediately entrusted Him with the task of policing the world. That, in popular parlance, is what we mean when we say, in philosophical terminology, that Kant's belief in God does not result from theoretic, but from practical, reasoning. Thus, mighty intellect as he was, the Sage of Königsberg fell back on the common belief of mankind who, in their thirst for happiness and life, cling to an Omnipotent Being at once just and merciful, to whom they look for eternal happiness and the punishment of their enemies. Such, then, is the fundamental basis of the belief in God.

It rests upon self-interest, like morality and all the rest of mankind's most sacred beliefs. Man does not believe in things as they are, but in things as he wishes them to be (pp. 25-27).

That is satire at its highest and best, and its chief beauty consists in the fact that there is no trace of bitterness in it. It is an amazing feat of genius so powerfully to attack superstition without the least show of anger. Anatole France's greatest gift is that of wholesome laughter.

J. T. LLOYD.

(To be Continued.)

## Wolves in Sheep's Clothing.

The pillars of society are truth and freedom.—*Ibsen*.  
I don't believe in principle, but O! I do in interest.—*Biglow Papers*.

Thus do I make my fool my purse.—*Shakespeare*,  
"Othello."

SOME people are said to "do good by stealth, who blush to find it fame." Priests are not usually addicted to blushing, but they have a decided partiality for doing things by stealth. When doing so they are as bland and child-like as the Heathen Chinee, portrayed by Bret Harte. Recently, the general public was astonished at the sight of Anglican Bishops and Church leaders actually offering their sacred selves as peacemakers in the Coal dispute. For a hundred years the Bench of Bishops has been hostile to progress in all its forms, and particularly to the emancipation of the working classes. The votes of the bishops in the House of Lords prove it beyond cavil and dispute. It mattered little what the measure was, provided that it was intended to benefit working people. The Bishops showed their hostility to every extension of the franchise; to woman suffrage; to the provision of seats for shop assistants. They even voted against a Bill for the abolition of flogging in the Army and Navy. Indeed, scores of measures for the benefit of the nation have been held up by these lawn-sleeved prelates. Hence the sudden sympathy of the bishops was so extraordinary and so surprising. It was almost as exciting as the spectacle of a man-eating tiger professing his conversion to vegetarianism.

The proposal of the Bishops was as fatuous as surprising. It was hardly reasonable to expect theologians who never can agree among themselves as to doctrines and dogmas to effect a settlement in a great industrial dispute threatening the very existence of the nation. Moreover, the scheme was vitiated by the narrowness and pettiness of the clerical mind, which is always saturated with theological nonsense. These bishops actually proposed reparation for what they professed was wrong at the expense of other people. It was simple attempting to solve an economic problem in the terms of vicarious atonement. The bishops' scheme, reduced to hard facts, simply meant a return by the miners to the former conditions, with a subsidy from the taxpayers of the country.

A critic might well ask what all this anxiety and professed philanthropy meant on the part of the bishops. The answer is not far to seek. The bishops were really anxious that the coal crisis should end, and end speedily. For the Church of England is one of the principal coal-royalty owners in the country. Some idea of the money involved may be gained from the fact that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners draw no less than £30,000 annually in royalties from the coalfields of the county of Durham alone. And this is only a portion of the Church's enormous income. What the Bishops feared was

that, should the struggle be unduly prolonged, a public enquiry might be held as to the royalties levied on the collieries, and the Church's share of the plunder be brought into the light of public opinion.

It may be urged that the public is acquainted with these facts, but it is not the case. All the newspapers in the country from the *Times* to the *Daily Herald*, ignore these things. The *Herald* denounces dukes daily but it does not attack the Anglican Church, even if it be a bigger sinner than the ducal culprits. Further, the facts are buried in blue books and works of reference, and these are dull reading except for those specially interested. Indeed, public opinion on these matters is lamentably lower than it was fifty years ago, when Radical newspapers existed, a Republican party was actually in existence, and Disestablishment and Disendowment of the the Anglican Church were the avowed objects of one of the political parties.

Some leading Nonconformist ministers have associated themselves with the Bishops in these political moves, but it seems as if they were innocent cat's-paws used by the prelates to achieve their ends. It is doubtful, indeed, if the Nonconformists know the inside history of their hereditary enemy. Churchmen are chary of wearing their hearts on their sleeves, and camouflage is the order of the day. Let bygones be bygones, they murmur, and pursue their ancient ways. And so we have the pleasant spectacle of seeing the Nonconformist leaders sitting with their most formidable enemies as a band of brothers, and helping them to keep their hold upon the people of this country.

Nonconformists have nothing to thank the Anglican Church for. According to the Church's teaching, every Nonconformist is a heretic, and destined for eternal damnation. It is only the large numbers of the Nonconformists that prevents their persecution to-day. The Anglican Church never became humane. The Nonconformists became far too numerous to be imprisoned and persecuted. When the Nonconformists were less powerful they were thwarted and harassed in every way. When they wished their sons educated at their own expense at the Universities of their own country the Anglican Church blocked the way. When they wished to bury their dead in their own manner the Church would have none of it. When Nonconformists refused to pay Church rates their homes were distrained upon. So, one could quote instance after instance of the way these Christians loved one another, and, in the quoting, make their present familiarity appear wondrous, if sincere. Clifford, Parker, Spurgeon, Newman Hall, had sufficient sagacity to know their friends from their enemies, and they would have been somewhat astonished at the lukewarmness of their degenerate descendants.

In its virile days, English Nonconformity was opposed to Priestcraft in all its forms, Anglican or Roman. To-day they fraternise with their bitterest enemies. It is another proof that present-day religion is an invertebrate thing, with neither principles nor prestige, but only an anxiety for a comfortable existence. The present is an age of compromise, and far too many people would sympathise with the American orator who concluded an hour's impassioned speech with the affecting words: "These, gentlemen, are the convictions of a lifetime, but if they don't suit they can be altered." Few greater tributes could be paid to any body of men than that in an age of commercialism they sought for truth, in an age of compromise they stood for first principles, and it is a great pity that such people are so few in a great nation which so prides itself on its love of freedom and idealism.

MIMNERMUS.

## Science and Religion.

I TAKE it there must be few readers of this journal who have not read Draper's famous work, *Conflict Between Religion and Science*. Those who have the misfortune not to know it, are strongly advised to add a copy of the edition published by the Pioneer Press to their library. It is far more fascinating than a novel, brilliantly written, and one of the most terrible indictments ever made against Christianity. The companion volume, written by A. D. White, is *Warfare of Science with Theology*, and its great advantage over Draper's is that it gives full references for every statement that matters. Both works are uncompromising in their attacks on historical Christianity and, as such, form a gold mine of arguments for those who wish to prove how Christianity opposed every reform for the amelioration of mankind and every advance in science and knowledge. They form bitter reading for Christians, particularly those who cannot get away from facts, but who still persist in declaring that it was the *wrong* Christianity that was responsible, while what they are advocating is the *right* Christianity—that taught by Jesus, of course.

That religion and science are really complementary to one another, that they are absolutely in agreement, is the cry of quite a large number of bishops and religious men of science to-day; and they are making the most strenuous efforts to get everybody to agree with them. People are absolutely athirst for religion, they repeat on every possible occasion. And there is nothing in evolution—rightly conceived—nothing in any modern discovery which can in any way be contrary to the soul's attempt to get at one with its Maker. On the contrary, the more modern science is discussed, the more discoveries are made, the more one sees how inscrutable and mysterious are the ways of the Living God working through Jesus Christ, His Son. I think this type of argument is wholly delicious, but it is used all over the country in hundreds of books and thousands of articles.

As a particular example let us take *Landmarks in the Struggle between Science and Religion*, by J. Y. Simpson, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.E. Dr. Simpson is an able man and his book is a clever piece of work. But it is the finest specimen of two voices speaking at the same time I know. One can imagine Dr. Simpson meeting Professor Ray Lankester, or even Dean Inge, and joking about the naïve accounts of origins and of processes in the Bible and how far we men of science have advanced since they were written. While, on the other hand, he would meet General Booth or some of the members of the Christian Evidence Society and solemnly assure them nothing in modern science can surpass the beautiful descriptions, given in God's Holy Word, of creation and evolution—Christian evolution—and progress, and how marvellously right in everything he says, is Christ Jesus, who flooded the dark ignorance of Man in his relation to the Universe with the Light of His Wonderful Intuition (capitals please). Dr. Simpson does not hesitate to quote Draper and White, nor, for that matter, any other anti-Christian, but he does not like them. "No one," he says,

can rise from the study of these volumes (the works of Draper and White) without a strange feeling of how easily a profound knowledge of the theology of the day may be accompanied by an utter lack of understanding of what Christianity is in practice, as also of the wantonness with which, again and again throughout the ages, the cause of Christ has been misrepresented by self-appointed agents ..... At the same time it is open to some question

whether the severe strictures passed on official Christianity in these books have been justified as a whole.....

It would, I know, be futile to point out to Dr. Simpson that his own view of Christianity is just as hopeless as anybody else's, and that it has just as much, or just as little, justification. To give an epitome of some of the latest theories of Evolution or Natural Law or "Creation" or Human Origins, and then finish up with a pæan of praise to Almighty God or "Our Lord" Jesus Christ, has not a scrap of justification in modern science. But the thoroughly religious person to whom Dr. Simpson is making primarily his appeal, will rise up after reading each chapter with a devout prayer and hymn of thanksgiving that, after all, on the word of an eminent Doctor of Science, Evolution, Physics, Astronomy, and all the other sciences, material or psychological, are absolutely at one with true Christianity. Here is how Dr. Simpson finishes up a fine article on Human Origins:—

Yet nothing that she (science) discloses goes contrary to those profound glimpses into Man's destiny and the meaning of human life that have been given to their fellows by those who have thought most worthily of man because they have lived closest to God and especially to that estimate that was once revealed, lived up to, and died for, by Jesus Christ.

All the chapters have similar endings—some even sillier—and they are all written, let it be properly noted, by a man who will talk interminably and learnedly on the most difficult problems of science. He wants us actually to believe that the "evints" for example, can tell us about "origins," if not more, at least as much, as, let us say, Sir Arthur Keith! A man like St. Simon, the Stylite, who was certainly nearer to God than Agnostic professors of Biology, and who regularly preached from surroundings—let me put it frankly—of excrement, is quite as good a guide in trying to solve the riddle of man's origin as Professor Julian Huxley! And there are Christians who will applaud that kind of egregious nonsense.

Dr. Simpson is never so happy as when he can find a hint or a reference in some early Church Father or Christian writer that we must not take scripture too literally, and he is very sore against Draper and White for not admitting that there were some such. But why? No one imagines that a gleam of sense did not occasionally pierce the dense ignorance of Christ's followers. They were not wholly so idiotic as to swallow continually without some little revolt, scripture statements. Thus we can quite understand that even St. Augustine had to boggle at accepting some parts of Holy Writ literally, and it is as well that even such a thorough believer as Dr. Simpson should point out to his too credulous followers that every word of God's Book is *not* inspired. He quotes, as a matter of fact, a long passage from St. Augustine to show "in studying his conception of creation, how remarkably modern it is." Well, I have read the passage carefully and can only say, it is so much twaddle. The end of the extract is as follows: "God," St. Augustine urges,

does not work with temporal movements as if of His mind or body, as a man or angel works, but by the eternal and unchangeable and stable methods of His word, co-eternal with Himself, and by a certain fostering as I would say, alike of co-eternal Holy Spirit.

I am sure professors of modern science will be very thankful for that clear-sighted view of Creation.

They ought to be able to tell us something quite definite and irrefutable now about "God in relation to the creative divine fiat," as Dr. Simpson says.

Every now and then we get footnotes to show how mistaken the translators of the Bible were in their interpretation of the "original" Hebrew and the "original" Greek. They make quite racy reading and show how Dr. Simpson, though most anxious to write something new, follows on the dear old familiar lines. Unlike other Christians, however, he does not insist that the word "love" in "Love your enemies" means love—at least not "that emotional affection which we instinctively associate with the use of that term to-day"—which puts those Christians who were asked to love Zeppelin bombers out of their awful dilemma.

Dr. Simpson devotes a whole chapter to "Jesus's view of the universe." It seems incredible that any scientific man with even an elementary knowledge of economics, could have penned the almost childish adoration evinced in its every sentence. He has certain ideas on man and the universe, and he looks through the Gospels and everything Jesus is supposed to have said which supports his own view is triumphantly produced as an example of the finest confirmation of such views the world has ever seen. Dr. Simpson actually brings this sort of thing forward: "With regard to *Man*, Jesus gave to the world a new conception of the value of the individual human life. 'How much then is a man of more value than a sheep?' 'Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.'"

Before Jesus, nobody thought for a moment a man was of more value than a sheep or many sparrows, and if he hadn't pointed it out, we should have still been left in the darkness. How sublimely wonderful! And what, think you, are "the boldest words that ever passed human lips"? "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect!" Remember, Dr. Simpson is not a mere nobody "lecturing" for the Salvation Army or a similar body. He is a man with University degrees and he can write like that and "get away with it." It seems incredible. As for prayer, "even the wild village dogs never stirred as the Saviour of men passed firmly yet quietly down the streets to pray for the sleeping world." Well, if it were a *sleeping* world, the village dogs would have been asleep, too, so it would not be astonishing if they never stirred, but what nonsense it all is!

"The teaching of Jesus," says Dr. Simpson, "as preserved for us in varying degrees of authentication could be put into a brochure of a few pages," and he then proceeds to quote anything he chooses for his purpose as if every word in the Gospels were actually used by Jesus in the "original" Greek. "Higher criticism" he pooh-poohs in this matter. And of course he most carefully refrains from any discussion on the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the miracles, the devils, and all the other beautiful appendages to true Christianity.

I can fancy no book so utterly useless to a serious discussion as these *Landmarks* of James Y. Simpson, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S.E. He believes in Christ Jesus as the Son of God. Could he come out of his shell and sustain in a real debate any conception of *God* that science as science would agree to? Could he sustain the thesis that the Heaven of Jesus and his Hell, his devils and miracles, are thoroughly scientific? Could he even point out how the conception of Jesus of man's relationship to the universe would help us to build more houses and grow more food? Help us to fight cancer and plague and war?

I only wish we could get Dr. Thompson to answer in these pages.

H. CUTNER.

## The Soul of a Secularist.

### II.

(Concluded from page 475.)

THE soul of a Secularist differs from the soul of the Believer in that the former knows itself to be human, human in birth, human in expression, and human in all the range of its activities.

If there were no soul, pious editors would have nothing to sell. It must be a singularly poor investment of anybody's capital. One finds oneself guessing on how many London editors' souls a sane man would waste half-a-crown. I have never seen the Devil's side of the Faust bargain. Faust's profits were obvious, where the Devil did the Devil stand to gain anything? Well the soul of a Secularist is a contrast to Faust's.

The Secularist is not a "Save His Soul Alive oh." He has ignominiously cast aside the adjective "immortal." His soul is not something lent to him by deity to return to the God who gave it; from which I reach my first point, that the Secularist's soul is his own. It is a curious fact that the Secularist, by shattering the belief in immortality has materially minimised the importance of death. Holbein's quaint cartoons, "The Dance of Death," could only have been conceived at a period when the immortal soul had to be our lifelong study. Nuns retired to convents, men and women were immured in religious slavery all their days to prepare their immortal souls for death. My second point, then, is that the soul of a Secularist concentrates on life and *its* concerns, because the Secularist view is that all we have to do must be done now—not in a non-existent post-mortem world.

When we speak of whole-souled devotion, we invariably mean devotion to a cause, even if it is a bad cause. It is never a mean devotion, it never applies to a man's devotion to his shop or his food, or to the narrower interests of his life. It is a synonym for the quality of *public spirit*. Our daily conversation reveals the unhappy fact that most of the people we meet are essentially private-spirited. Everybody knows there are times when we must look after our health, our diet, and the happiness of our dependents. But every Secularist finds himself in constant contact with those who have no other topic of conversation than their work, their amusements, their bets, and the least important of their recent experiences. The Secularist would prefer the man who advocates a religion he hates, a political system he detests, a foreign policy he considers disastrous—anything on earth which proves his fellow citizen to be a citizen. I claim that the soul of the Secularist is essentially public-spirited.

I repudiate the ignorant accusation of the orthodox that the religious soul possesses any superiority to that of the Secularist. All the charm even of ritual, music, stained-glass and glorious architecture appeals more finely to the *Secularist's* soul, because in so far as any of these things are sometimes exquisite and delightful, the Secularist's enjoyment of them is purer and more truly artistic. The most cultured of all religionists, to say nothing of the wretched literalist soul of the average believer, must feel even at their best and highest, some subtle mis-giving as to the real source of their appreciative homage.

To a Secularist it is nothing that an inferior picture portrays Christ's Agony in the Garden. He can well distinguish between Beethoven at his best and Beethoven at his holiest. The Secularist loves a fine building whether it be a cathedral, a hospital,

or a theatre. The soul of a Secularist is broad because the outlook of a Secularist is unbiased.

Physical courage is neither rare nor undesirable. Mental courage is always associated with a fine type of soul. Mental or moral courage has always been a special attribute of the Secularist. Persecution strengthens all persecuted causes, the blood of the martyrs is always the seed of their church; but the Secularist has no church, and he is not swayed and stayed by the assurance that every wound received here earns a cosier throne, a better harp, or an extra hour or two in eternal heaven. The soul of the Secularist is a *really* courageous soul. Mental courage is noticeable in days like these when one rarely meets a Christian who boldly stands up and says he is a Christian, or that he believes anything in particular; mostly he claims to be a "higher thinker," and accepts all the discredited myths as "conveying such splendid moral truths."

Whatever curious combinations of elements have joined during the course of uncounted ages to produce the souls we are familiar with to-day we must study, compare, and contrast soul with soul. "Birds of a feather"? Yes, we shall find congenial souls drifting towards one another. Naturally those who consider themselves immortal will put on the airs of intolerance. The soul of the Secularist is the soul of Liberty. Judged as the behaviourists judge, this is no empty boast. Thomas Paine's remark was characteristic of the Secularist's soul when he claimed that "where liberty is *not* there is my country." Tested by many recent incidents familiar to us all, there is no party in the State which understands or values liberty except the Secularists. The Secularist understands liberty to be an inseparable ally of justice. He values liberty because it is just, not because it is popular.

It would be strange if the soul of a Secularist were not *adventurous*. He seeks truth in curious places, he sees goodness and virtue in unsuspected, defamed, and outlawed beings. Fools and angels rush out where he does not fear to tread.

In conclusion, I am quite willing to surrender the word Soul, but we want a word to describe the sum of our emotional experiences, the impulse within; not "something *not* ourselves," but something essentially ourselves, which makes for what is our contribution, good or bad, to the world's progress.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### Acid Drops.

After all, women are not to be allowed to enter the Wesleyan Methodist ministry. After the issue of last week's *Freethinker* another, and a superior meeting of the Wesleyan body decided that in view of the narrow majority to reject the proposal. So either the Lord must not "call" women to the pulpit, or if he does "call," no notice will be taken. Until the Wesleyan Methodists give the Lord's permission he must call only men. On the whole, we should say that if the Wesleyan Methodists consider that women are not equal to preaching the average sermon, they have launched the most deadly insult at the intelligence of one half of the human race we have ever heard.

The *Church Times* naturally rejoices at the result. It also "rejoices" that a protest was raised against women being in the pulpit on the ground that Apostolic authority and Church tradition were against it. In addition no one attempted to prove that the proposal had the sanction of the New Testament. Quite so. The New Testament and the Christian Church have been quite consistent in declaring woman to be the inferior animal,

and it is impudence on the part of anyone to assert the contrary. If Jesus the celibate had wanted women to belong to his ministry he would have selected one for his disciple. Christians never thought otherwise than that woman was the inferior of man till Freethought made the equality of the sexes an idea fairly common. Then the more artful ones in the churches began to hedge. The more honest and the more logical ones remained as they were.

Since Gipsy Smith landed in Australia he has netted over 35,000 people who have signed decision cards for Christ, and hundreds more are signing—so we are told. Now the population of Australia is not so very large, and at the Gipsy's present rate of progress, if he stays a twelve-month he ought to have captured nearly half the total inhabitants. Yet we hazard a guess that when he returns the parsons there will be bewailing the fact that nearly all the people are given over to godlessness. The worst of this soul-saving business is that it invariably muddles the revivalist's arithmetic.

A righteous contemporary which goes to press every week cherishing the hope that Jesus has turned up again in time to be mentioned "in our next," has a correspondent in Scotland deeply concerned about safeguarding the Sabbath. Socialists, Materialists, and Agnostics, says he, are combining to abolish the day of rest. Godlessness must not be allowed to triumph. We must not permit this wilful, defiant desecration of the Lord's Day to continue. Let us make a united appeal to the Prime Minister to put a stop to it. What is an astonishing thing about these Sabbatarian fanatics is the small faith they have in prayer—which they claim can accomplish all things—when they desire to achieve some pious end. Invariably they howl for secular prohibitions enforced by the secular powers such as laws, magistrates, and police. While the righteous exhibit in practice is so feeble a belief in the power of prayer, how can they possibly expect the wretched Freethinker to think much of it?

One of the busiest women in England is Miss Maude Royden, declares a pious contemporary. She always seems to be preaching, lecturing, writing books or articles, and it is extraordinary how everybody likes what she thinks. We don't agree with this last statement. A large section of the more progressively pious may like what she thinks. But, if one may judge from a perusal of some few of her articles and sermons, they like it because her favourite trick is to dish up a concoction of pagan and non-Christian notions now becoming popular, and then induce her readers and hearers to fancy these notions are purely Christian in origin. That is the secret of Miss Royden's popularity. But she is not the only preacher working this stunt on a semi-educated public. Other popular modernists have discovered it "draws." And they all have one thing in common—a hazy sense of intellectual honesty.

A Board of Education report on the teaching of English in London elementary schools declares that the constant practice of imaginative composition without proper training in the control of the imagination tended to make children unable to record actual facts or experiences without the importation of a large measure of absurd invention. This comment of the Board gives us a clue as to what was wrong with the writers responsible for that unpleasant collection of imaginative literature known as Holy Writ.

It is reported that Mussolini's last move is to declare war on miracles—that is, unauthorised ones. Many miraculous cures are being reported all over Italy, and the Dictator has taken stringent measures to prevent their recurrence. The Pope, it is said, supports Mussolini in what he is doing. We can quite believe this. The Pope naturally does not like unauthorised people going about performing miracles. That would

be to rob the business of its advantage to the Church. But we wonder what would be done in Italy to some of the religious fakirs we have in this country who are working their miracle cures?

The Dean of Manchester says we fail to arrive at any reasonable view of the universe if we assume that its purpose is to create happiness. The worst of these Christians is that to escape one absurdity they invariably create another. First it is plain that the Dean admits that the old argument for the justification of "God's work to man" he sees will not stand. So he says it is not the purpose of the universe to make people happy, but to create character, goodness, beauty, truth, etc.

But beauty, goodness, etc., must eventuate in some state of mind, and that state of mind must be either pleasurable, painful, or negligible from either point of view. The Dean will hardly say that being good, or learning to appreciate beauty and truth makes us experience pain, nor will he say that it produces indifference. What, then, is there left but happiness? And to make the absurdity of the Dean more glaring, he believes that we shall get happiness in the next world. So that, after all, the universe does produce happiness to us, but in the next world. The end he declares unreasonable is reached after all. What a fortunate thing it is for the Dean that those to whom he preaches do not think out the implications of what he says. The Dean was certainly wise in declining the invitation to debate with Mr. Cohen when he had the chance. A fool might have taken it. Evidently the Dean is not a fool.

Several five pound notes have been sent to the Rev. J. Shelton, vicar of Woburn Sands, to enable him to take a holiday. Probably the givers think they also will get a holiday if the good man absents himself from his parish for a time.

In a recent article in the *Sunday Times*, Lord Asquith remarks that Bradlaugh became one of the most respected members of the House of Commons. We welcome the testimony, but would point out that nothing but Christian malice and untruthfulness prevented his being that from the outset. It ought never to be forgotten that it was Christian lying and Christian villainy that spent years spitting its filthy venom over Bradlaugh. Every decend-minded person was pleased when justice was at length done the great reformer, but that ought not to lead us to forget that the root of the injustice was religion, and nothing but religion. To loose sight of that is to miss the moral of the situation.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's quest in spirit adventures is not exactly smothered with roses. As Freethinkers and with Voltaire we would defend to the death his right to his opinions although we disapprove of them, but the following extracts demonstrate to us the folly of half-way houses on the journey from superstition to truth. Madame Blavatsky was good at this sort of thing, but only in order to supplant one illusion with another. The shade of Sherlock Holmes in writing of the churches sums up as follows:—

They have become to the last degree formal and worldly and material.....they are content to refer everything back to ancient days and to pay a lip-service and an external reverence to an outworn system which has been so tangled up with incredible theologies that the honest mind is nauseated at the thought of it.

That is a fair estimate, but hear the new sect as they hug their new chains:—

I find my "spiritual" friends nowise less bigoted, less intolerant, than the devotees at other shrines. They do not allow me to see through my own eyes, but insist that I shall see through theirs. If my conclusion from certain data differs from theirs they will not allow my stupidity to account for our difference, but insist on attributing it to hypocrisy or some other form of rascality.

Tut, tut, Sir Arthur! If you accuse us of not minding our own business we point to great minds in Parliament that can only suggest "killing" for the superfluous pigeons in London. And use your gifts to teach those mental babies to walk, Sir Arthur, and as there is no scramble for places in the next world give it a rest.

Mr. Reginald Cock has dedicated a book to the late Mr. W. J. Bryan. Entitled *Genesis v. Evolution*, the author rides his horse fast and furious, and the preface breathing the spirit of intolerance that has even a smell, states "that 'the evolution theory is a potent weapon against all that is best and noblest in man,' and that 'Hun theology and Darwinology are founded on gross misrepresentation.'" The author does not state precisely that the evolution theory is responsible for earthquakes or the fashion of bobbed hair for women, but perhaps he will include these in his next book dedicated we trust to a clothes horse.

Psychologists will have an easy task in understanding of the mind at the back of the title of the Rev. E. M. Vaughan's book, *A Gaping Wound of the Church*. It is a plea for the continuance and extension of the practice of priests visiting members of their communities. One wonders how the reverend gentleman would describe the enormity of the crime of Jack Horner.

As an illustration of the mutton-headed intelligence at large which has a theological ancestry, commend us to the following sample of the savage in our midst; it is an advertisement recently inserted in the *Times*:—

Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Peace and damnation in one breath is only possible in a vocabulary that is serenely remote from the A B C of life. Why not substitute gramophones for priests?

At the theatrical luncheon of the Lyceum Club Mr. Lyn Harding stated that he had been rehearsing the part of a "bishop in love." Mr. Basil Dean did not believe his actor brother, as, after what the Bishop of London had said about the stage, he was quite sure that bishops were never in love. Mr. Horace Hodges tried to prove that actors were respectable, when everyone knows that they are no different from anyone else—no better and no worse. We advise the theatrical brotherhood to get on with their jobs.

"By all means take the account of Elijah's death literally if it helps you to do so," is the advice of the editor of a pious weekly to a sorely worried reader. "But you must allow others to take a different view if it helps them." The editor then explains that the modern interpretation of the English narrative is this. The people held the prophet in great reverence and awe and could not imagine so great a man being conquered by death. Hence the legend of his ascension in a chariot of fire naturally grew up. What strikes us after reading this editor's remarks is how wonderfully helpful is the good old Book. Whether you take it all as literally true or whether as sheer invention, doesn't matter in the least! No wonder many Christians have such very hazy notions about truth and value its importance so poorly.

Dr. Campbell Morgan, who is now in England, recently asked "What is Rest." To illustrate his conception of it he said that in America many hotels where he has to spend a good deal of his time have orchestras that play during meals. Sometimes the music stops. That is rest! Our own notion of rest is, when a Salvation Army meeting has ceased blaring and ranting about the Peace that surpasseth all understanding.



## The National Secular Society.

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

### To Correspondents.

E. T. RASCOTT.—Thanks for cutting. It is very cheap to ask what kind of Atheistic organization has produced the results of the Salvation Army. One need only reply that the evils dealt with were the products of Christian rule, and when good was done it was done by methods that had been forced on Christians by Freethinking advocacy. And we should just like to know where the good results of the Salvation Army are so far as removing any social evil is concerned.

E. EATON.—Shelley's letter to Lord Ellenborough was published some years ago by the Freethought Publishing Company, but is now out of print. It should be found in any collection of Shelley's prose writings.

L. M. WERRY-EASTERBROOK.—Thanks. Next week.

W. CLARK.—We hope to publish in a week or so.

G. G. PORTER.—Cannot find space this week. Will appear in our next.

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.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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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.

At its last meeting the Executive of the N.S.S. decided on a letter to be sent to the Home Secretary protesting against the new regulation of the L.C.C. prohibiting the sale or distribution of literature in the London parks. We are not sanguine of its having any effect, but it was an obviously right first step to take, and we shall see later what will happen. Three times, thanks chiefly to the N.S.S., the attempts of a party on the L.C.C. to interfere with the liberty of public propaganda have been

frustrated. This time the attempt is made along new lines, and the legal position is not quite so clear. But what can be done will be done.

It is stupid to talk of this prohibition not being an attack on the right of public meeting. The circulation of leaflets and pamphlets is part and parcel of the general work of all propagandist bodies, and to interfere with one is to interfere with the other. There can be no annoyance, since the distribution of the literature is confined to the meetings themselves, and the people attending them must be interested in the questions discussed, or they would not be there at all. There is always a certain section of the Council who do not wish to see public meetings in the parks, and for the time being they have the upper hand. If successful in this matter, it would remain for a new Council to reverse the procedure.

Mr. Cohen's articles on Spiritualism in the *Manchester City News* are to cover three issues of the paper, and not two, as stated. The final one appeared in the issue for August 7. The editor states that he has received numerous letters, which he will publish when the articles are completed.

In response to enquiries we are glad to be able to say that Miss Vance is now very much better, and it is possible that by the time the date on this issue of the *Freethinker* materialises she will have left the hospital. She will need attention for some time at home, but her complete recovery should now proceed regularly.

We are assured by Holy Writ that it is a terrible thing for a Freethinker to fall into the hands of the Lord. On the other hand, it seems just as bad for the Lord to fall into the hands of a Freethinker. The Lord preserves the Freethinker to get level with him throughout eternity, whereas the Freethinker simply annihilates the Lord and leaves it at that. We base this conclusion upon what has just occurred at Swansea. The N.S.S. sent Mr. Whitehead down to Swansea on a "mission." The result was that at a Conference of the Rural Deaconry, presided over by Canon Wilson, the big guns went off in fine style concerning the horrible blasphemy that was being poured out on the Sands, and Mr. Sid Solomons—rather a striking Christian name—said that if a man could be found capable of replying to this blasphemy he would see to it that the money was forthcoming to pay him. If we know anything of the average Christian Evidence speaker, that ought to fetch someone who will try to rescue the Lord from the hands of the Freethinker.

The big gun of the meeting was, however, Canon Watkin Jones. He said he was prepared to do all that was possible to combat this "terrible thing." "He was surprised that the police allowed such a scoundrel to pollute the morals of the people." Canon Watkin Jones has unlimited faith in God—backed up by a policeman. And it must be remembered that the Lord deliberately called Canon Watkin Jones to his job. He looked round the world and could find none better for the work. And Canon Jones returns thanks by informing the Lord that unless he can get strong police support soon, he will find the backing of Swansea grow less. Which is why we say that if it is unpleasant for the Freethinker to fall into the hands of the Lord, it is bad for the Lord to fall into the hands of the Freethinker. Torment in the one case, annihilation in the other—and Canon Watkin Jones among the unemployed! No wonder the Canon squeals.

From August 9 to 15, Mr. Whitehead will be campaigning in Blackburn. He may encounter another Canon Watkin Jones, but the probability is that in the North the Church officials are a little nearer civilization than they are in South Wales. At least, they will be a little more cautious in their speech.

## Agnosticism: A Rejoinder.

MR. VINCENT J. HANDS would make a fine Pope. His series of *ipse dixit*s on my point of view have all the flavour of an Encyclical, or, perhaps more appropriately, a Major Excommunication. Mr. Hands out-Vaticans the Vatican. He is "afraid" that my reply is "merely a reiteration" of my "former fallacies"; I gave (he "repeats") "two distinct and contradictory reasons" for professing Agnosticism (and I *repeat* that I did *not*); Ingersoll—though he wrote a special pamphlet telling people why he was an Agnostic—was only an Agnostic "in theory" (whatever that means), and, *of course*, agreed with Mr. Hands "in practice"; my "Agnosticism as to the nature of Ultimate Reality" has no "scientific value"—and so on. Really one may pertinently wonder what is the "scientific value" of all these pontifical assertions. If, by chance, Mr. Hands should ever penetrate to a scientific atmosphere himself, I fear he would be sternly reminded that science has no use for question-begging, phrase-manipulating pontiffs of any kind and that only reasoned argument from experimental fact counts.

What is Theism if it is not essentially a question of ultimate fact? Does, or does not, the Theist profess to explain all the phenomena of life on the basis of one cosmic generalization? Does Mr. Hands think this is vitiated if Theism is a "question of elementary common-sense"? Does he hold that questions of ultimate existence are not to be decided by common-sense, if at all? Or, if not, what *does* he mean? To be Agnostic as to the nature of ultimate reality is, *ipso facto*, to reject Theism. The Theist professes to define and elucidate ultimate reality. The Agnostic holds it to be beyond our powers. Agnosticism and Theism, therefore, cannot co-exist. And if Atheism means just a rejection of Theism and no more, it is a perfectly legitimate deduction from the Agnostic position.

Mr. Hands says I am "contradicting" myself when I say to the Theist, "If you can offer me reasonable grounds for your belief, I will accept it," and then reject Theism because I cannot conceive of there being any such grounds. Where is the "contradiction"? To say that I profess Agnosticism "because, presumably, these problems belong to a region where the ordinary *canons of evidence* have no applicability" is only partly true. Theistic Spiritism—the backbone of Christianity—professes, at least partially, to solve problems which are necessarily *outside human experience*. All our knowledge is of facts of conscious experience; any problems that go outside it are ultimately insoluble, and the question of "irrelevant" and "inadequate" evidence is illusory. Irrelevance is absolute inadequacy, as far as evidence goes. And, in any case, taking "irrelevant" to mean "absolutely unconnected in any way," I do not assert the evidence concerning Theism to be "irrelevant" in this sense. If we do not know the solution of a problem, obviously we do not know whether a particular set of facts is relevant or not—in this sense.

To sum it all up, I disbelieve Theism and suspend judgment as to the ultimate answer to the problem of ultimate origins. I do not deny Theism to be true; I confine myself to saying that I can find no reasonable grounds for the belief. That is the Agnostic position as defined by Ingersoll in Mr. Cutner's quotation.<sup>1</sup> It is also what Ingersoll con-

ceives to be "Atheism." It is, I understand, exactly what Bradlaugh meant by "Atheism." If it is accepted by Atheists as a statement of their position, I have no quarrel with them. Mr. Cutner is an Agnostic *malgré lui*; I am an Atheist *malgré moi*. Why not call it quits? I prefer the word "Agnostic" because it implies, etymologically, a reasoned philosophic standpoint from which the mere rejection of Theism is but one corollary. Personally, I care little as to what label I adopt. (Mr. Hands' objection to me and all my works seems to be mainly due to the fact that I do not use *his label*!) Agnosticism, in its essence, is applicable only to the purely philosophic aspects of Theism. No sensible person would trouble to suspend judgment on Jehovah—he is not worth it. The God of the Old Testament is as mythical as the God of "incarnate imbecility." I deny the existence of Jehovah on precisely similar grounds that the orthodox Christian denies the existence of Jupiter. But philosophic Theism—as expressed, say, by Unitarians, Modernists, or by Dr. Walter Walsh, comes into an entirely different category. So does the pseudo Theism of Bergson and the Pantheism of Bruno.

Turning to the letter of "Medicus," I am not at all sure that I appreciate this correspondent's position. "Suspension of judgment," as far as I am concerned, implies the rejection of all propositions—*i.e.* the rejection, in the particular case he mentions, of the miraculous and the supernatural. In saying that I suspend judgment on a particular problem, I mean that, whilst not accepting any particular proposition professing to solve that problem, I make no such proposition myself—either of denial or assertion. To suspend judgment on the supernatural means to reject it—in the sense of unbelief rather than of denial.

I have already pointed out that there are some theological propositions which I do definitely deny. "Medicus" quite fairly asks "wherein lies the essential difference between one theological proposition and another, in virtue of which we are now able and now unable to judge of its truth." I think, after what I have said, that the answer is obvious. I divide "theological propositions" into two categories:—

1. Those which assert alleged events and truths concerning matters which fall, at least partly, into the domain of human experience, *e.g.* the Infallibility of the Bible, the sinlessness of Christ, miracles, etc.

2. Those which do not directly intrude into human experience but are propositions concerning the reality that may or may not lie beyond and above human experience, *e.g.* Theism, Spiritism, etc.

Now those under 1 may obviously be tested—we have the evidence and can decide whether they are true or not. For example, if I am asked to believe that a certain individual, Jesus Christ by name, turned water into wine at Cana, Galilee, some nineteen hundred years ago, or thereabouts, I ask for evidence. And when I learn that the sole evidence is an entirely anonymous document, originating nobody knows how or where, and not heard of until about one hundred and fifty years after the alleged event, am I unduly sceptical in dismissing the whole story as a fable?

Now as to the lump of lead which "Medicus" dramatically casts on the troubled waters of our little controversy, my judgment—which he solicits—is that there is an extraordinarily strong probability, *practically* a certainty, that it will sink and remain sunk. That would be the judgment of any intelligent Christian. It is not a part of Christian doctrine that lead need not necessarily sink in water. It is

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hands' quotation obviously cannot be taken literally—it clearly conflicts with Ingersoll's statement as quoted by Mr. Cutner.

a belief among *some* Christians that, on one occasion, a similar occurrence did take place. This, as I have said, is purely a question of evidence. I may add that I entertain no convictions as to the impossibility of the flotation of lead. Nothing is impossible which can be distinctly conceived and implies no contradiction. Floating lead is exceedingly improbable—but not impossible. It *can* be conceived and implies no contradiction. The immortality of the body is impossible just because it *does* imply a contradiction and *cannot* be conceived. Even Almighty God cannot make a human body immortal at the *same time* as he causes the *same* body to undergo decomposition and decay into its constituent elements. The "soul" may get another "etherial body"—perhaps even just like the old one—but this is a different thing. The immortality of the "soul"—supposing it to exist—is distinctly conceivable and does *not* imply any contradiction. Nobody can prove man has no soul. He may have dozens for anything "Medicus" or I can prove to the contrary. But the evidence for Spiritism is totally invalid, as I am at present attempting to prove in the columns of *English Mechanics*.

Finally, with a view to ending this discussion, may I solicit a clear statement as to what "Medicus" and Mr. Hands mean by "Atheism"? Do they accept Ingersoll's version or not? If so, why do they disagree with me when my opinion is exactly the same as that of Ingersoll?

EPHPIATHA.

## The Kindly Wayfarer.

(Luke x. 30-35.)

EVERYONE knows this touching and well-told tale. There are few details that call for special attention. Jericho was largely inhabited by priests and Levites. The distance from Jerusalem is twenty-six miles or thereabouts.<sup>1</sup> The road zig-zags down a mountain side, and passes through a terrific gorge. Robber bands infested the district, which, of course, admirably suited their operations. Oil and wine, well mixed, was employed by the ancients as a remedy for wounds. The money, stupidly given in our versions as "two pence," is really two denaries, which amounted to one shilling and five pence, and would exceed that sum in purchasing power. Life in Palestine was, and is, very simple. The mutual hatred of the Jews and the Samaritans is well known; and, according to Raumer,<sup>2</sup> it was observed to be still lasting vigorously a century ago. The story has no meaning except that which it bears upon its surface; and to give it tortuous significations is an insult to the artist who conceived it.

Luke, to whom we are indebted for recording this parable, states that, as Jesus was on his last pilgrimage to the Holy City, a certain lawyer enquired of him how he might live for ever, to which Jesus replied by asking him how he read the law; and, on hearing him quote the commandments to love God and our neighbour, He said: "Thou has answered right: this do, and thou shalt live"; whereupon the man, "desiring to justify himself," asked: "Who is my neighbour?" to which Jesus answered by relating unto him the story of the kindly wayfarer.

This is certainly a plausible connection, but from Mark<sup>3</sup> and Matthew<sup>4</sup> we learn that at Jerusalem shortly before the death of Jesus, "one of the scribes," or "a lawyer," asked of Him which is

the chief commandment? and that in reply He quoted that one about loving God, and also added that about loving our neighbour, which are the same that "the lawyer" quoted in reply to him on the occasion mentioned by Luke. Mark adds that "the scribe," after commending Jesus for His reply, repeated the two commandments with emphasis; and that Jesus said: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." This conversation Luke does not record, although he gives two interesting incidents which Mark and Matthew give before it, and one which they give after it. Moreover, when recording the incident which Mark and Matthew place next before the conversation, Luke differs from them by stating that certain "scribes" then observed to Jesus: "Thou hast well said"; whereas according to Mark this observation was made to Jesus by the "scribe" during the conversation itself. Thus it seems clear that Luke, whose work often betrays his capricious methods, took the present incident from some one, or both, of his predecessors; but gave it a different allocation, and made Jesus put the question about the commandments to the "lawyer," instead of making the "scribe" or "lawyer" put it to Jesus like the others have done. As the frequent indebtedness of Luke to Mark is now generally admitted, whereas the dependence of Luke upon Matthew is still widely doubted, it might appear safer to conclude in the present instance that Luke borrowed only from Mark; but there are traces that he borrowed also from Matthew. Thus whilst Mark calls the man "one of the scribes," Matthew and Luke call him a "lawyer"; and whilst they agree that his object was to tempt Jesus, Mark, so far from saying this, seems to imply the contrary. Finally, both Mark and Luke have the clause "and with all thy strength"; but whilst Mark makes it the last, Luke makes it the last save one, and ends as Matthew ends, "with all they strength"; besides which he uses Matthew's word in the case of "mind," where Mark's word is different, the difference being concealed in our versions by the use of the same term on all three occasions. It is also worth noting that as regards "teacher" Luke repeats the phrase of his predecessors instead of using that which he habitually uses, and which is peculiar to his Gospel. The displacement of the conversation with the scribe, and the addition thereunto of the present story is not a thing unparalleled in Luke's work. The visit of Jesus to the synagogues at Nazareth which Mark<sup>5</sup> and Matthew<sup>6</sup> refer to the middle of His public career, Luke<sup>7</sup> refers to its commencement; and the anointing of Jesus by a woman which Mark<sup>8</sup> and Matthew<sup>9</sup> put two days before His death, Luke<sup>10</sup> puts several months at least before that event. In each of the above instances, Luke not only displaces the episode, but also provides it with circumstances of an imaginative character, and makes it give rise to speeches nowhere else recorded. This is exactly what he has done in the case of the above conversation, and the present story which he therewith introduces. As regarded his motive, it would seem that he made the displacement because he wished to connect the parable with the conversation, and where this originally stood tradition was strongly against the connection. Indeed, the opposite would have been surprising, for the parable is of such a nature that no Jewish lawyer would have heard it without protest, much less with acquiescence. But the unhistoricity of its alleged circumstances does not prove the unauthenticity of the parable itself. Let us now consider the internal evidence. As it stands, the

<sup>1</sup> *St. Luke*, by the Rev. F. Marshall, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Palestina* (Liepzig, 1860), p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> xii. 28.

<sup>4</sup> xxii. 34.

<sup>5</sup> vi. 1-6.

<sup>7</sup> iv. 16-30.

<sup>9</sup> xxvi. 5-13.

<sup>6</sup> xii. 54-58.

<sup>8</sup> xiv. 3-9.

<sup>10</sup> vii. 36-50.

parable is both anti-clerical and anti-national, for, although the Jews greatly respected their clergy, and greatly despised and detested the Samaritans, it, nevertheless, credits a Samaritan with having performed an act of humanity which two Jews, the one a priest and the other a Levite, had callously avoided. It is hard to think that a Jewish audience, to say nothing of a Jewish lawyer, would listen patiently to such a tale. The importance of the two elements above noted makes it desirable to examine each of them thoroughly.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be Concluded.)

### An Alarming Situation.

The Science League of America, which has an Advisory Board comprising a number of distinguished American scientists, heads of well-known colleges, etc., publishes the following. It will be of interest to English readers as showing the reactionary forces at work in the United States, and perhaps as an indication of what may happen in this country if reaction in intellectual matters gains ground. At present avowed Freethinkers in this country appear to be the only body of people who are seriously concerned with maintaining real liberty of opinion. And in the whole world of politics the present policy appears to be to use power to hinder opposite sides getting a hearing. Its reaction on other phases of thought is almost inevitable:—

MISSISSIPPI has taken the definite step toward outlawing evolution; Kentucky will probably be next; the Atlanta, Georgia, Board of Education has forbidden the teaching of the theory in that city. These are straws showing the way the wind of anti-evolution agitation is now blowing.

Mr. Frank R. Kent, famous newspaper correspondent, who has recently crossed the country "from coast to coast, stopping in each state to talk and learn," found that there were only two political issues that were "deeply stirring" the people—Prohibition and "the Bible issue," especially the latter. By "the Bible issue," Mr. Kent means the nation-wide efforts of the Fundamentalists to have the teaching of the theory of evolution made illegal in our tax-supported schools. "Perhaps," he says, writing in *Harper's Monthly*,

the question would have come into politics without the Dayton trial. It was on the way, but the Bryan-Darrow battle.....[and] the fight between the Fundamentalists and the Evolutionists which is continuing in nearly every community, have thrust this issue deep into our politics.

Mr. Kent finds in this battle against evolution an

issue which reaches the hearts of the people and on which politicians will straddle, seekers for office trim and pose—another issue that will promote hypocrisy and deceit.....It is easy to imagine its progress.....to the point where in many States sentiment will be so strong that it will be necessary to nominate Fundamentalist against Fundamentalist, Evolutionist against Evolutionist, in order to avoid the blind wrath of the voters who feel but do not think such questions.

A lobby has already been provided for at Washington with no other object in view than a Federal anti-evolution amendment to the Constitution. Recently, on his return to Los Angeles from Minneapolis, Dr. William Bell Riley, Executive Secretary of the World Christian Fundamentals' Association, announced that "within twelve months every State in the Union will be thoroughly organized" for the express purpose of forcing through the Congress such a constitutional amendment, outlawing the teaching of evolution in our tax-supported educational institutions. Sufficient funds for this crusade have already been raised, and organization of a number of States is in progress.

In January, 1926, a new national attack upon evolution, headed by Edward Young Clarke, formerly a high official of the Ku Klux Klan, was launched in Atlanta,

Georgia, at a meeting presided over by Roscoe Carpenter of Indianapolis:—

The new organisation has for its objects the elimination of the teaching of the evolutionary theory in all American schools and colleges and the dismissal of all teachers expounding the theory. National headquarters will be established in Atlanta, a national centre in Indianapolis, and a recreational centre and home for aged members, who grow old in the battle against evolution, in Jacksonville, Florida, Clarke announced.

During the same month, the Bible Crusaders and Defenders of the Faith issued from Clearwater, Florida, a challenge to the Evolutionists, accompanied by an enthusiastic proclamation by Dr. T. T. Martin, editor of *The Conflict*. He states that

when the great Bryan fell and died leading the charge, the standard was caught up by a quiet God-fearing business man of Boston, Massachusetts, and Clearwater, and to-day the Flag of Fundamentalism is borne aloft and the hearts of every Theophilus (God-lover) and every soldier of the Cross and every lover of Religious Liberty[?] are stirred as never before, and everyone is nerved for the battle that will never end till every Evolutionist is driven from the tax-supported schools of America.

Mr. Charles F. Washburn, the "quiet God-fearing business man" referred to, is sustaining the "Flag of Fundamentalism" by a material contribution to the cause: "To secure the triumphant success of this great movement, I hereby dedicate my fortune, my family and myself to its success, and I will underwrite this movement to the extent of \$100,000." Dr. Riley stated to a member of the Science League that he had personally collected \$600,000 for the fight against evolution.

In Kansas the Fundamentalists are being organized for "the Conflict" under the name of The Defenders. In Kentucky they are the Fundamentalists' Association. In California they are known as the Bryan Bible League. Active branches of these and similar organizations have been established in Minnesota, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Oregon, besides the States mentioned. "The movement is sweeping from coast to coast," announces Dr. Riley, the chief proponent of Fundamentalism in the west. He states that he intends to institute a test case in Missouri to determine whether "any kind of religion may be taught in the tax-supported Schools"—evolution now being classed by Fundamentalists as a "religion."

A Kansas City, Missouri minister, speaking at a Christian Endeavour meeting in Denver, announced: "Worse than an assassin who kills the body is he who shatters the faith of youth"—in which characterization he included the Modernist and the Evolutionist, whatever their personal religious views. He went on to say that rape-fiends are burnt, but they are saiths in comparison with the teachers of modern science!

The campaign methods of the anti-Evolutionists are indicated by the following newspaper advertisement: "Wanted, Anti-Evolution Club organizers in every county. Good money for hustlers. Address Modern Science Press."(1)

A church convention was told by a Texas clergyman that the higher schools are teaching "blasphemous, Bible-undermining, God-denying, Christ-cursing and faith-robbing evolution." His tirade was followed by an anti-evolution resolution, unanimously passed.

Since this convention, the State Text Book Commission of Texas evaded the formality of legislation by eliminating from a text book on biology three chapters in which the doctrine of evolution and the descent of man from "a lower order of animals" were mentioned. When questioned about the order, Superintendent of Schools Marshall Johnston replied that "the old-time religion" was good enough for him. A correspondent of the Science League writes that there had been no general demand on the part of the public for such a step, yet Mrs. Ferguson—whose fight for the governorship was warmly contested by the Fundamentalists only a year before—"has done exactly what they wanted..... Not one teacher, not one politician, not one office-holder in Texas raised his voice against this infamous act of a set of common politicians. Lacking organization, we remained quietly in our offices or in our homes, and

allowed the fanatics to capture the public schools. We are a helpless, disorganized army, and as long as we continue to drag along as we have, we shall be defeated in every contest." (The Science League now has an organizer in Texas, but not sufficient funds as yet for doing very effective work.)

A member of the League writes us that last winter they had at Morristown, New Jersey, the county seat, "a bonfire of scientific books, and not one county newspaper, and there are many, adversely criticized their actions." Morristown, it may be recalled, was where C. B. Reynolds was tried for blasphemy in 1887, and although most ably defended by Robert G. Ingersoll, was convicted.

A New Jersey minister announced recently: "We are not going to stop until we have driven every Modernist out of our pulpits and seminaries and editorial chairs. We are going to put them out if it takes our lives to do it."

Congressman Blanton was quoted in the daily press as saying that the local District of Columbia law forbidding "teaching of disrespect for the Bible"—whatever that may include—"will be made a law all over the country"; and the Rev. John Roach Straton, foremost Fundamentalist spokesman in the east, says: "Better wipe out all the schools than undermine belief in the Bible by permitting the teaching of evolution."

The present spirit of reaction is conspicuously illustrated by the trial, in February, 1926, of Anthony Bimba, in Brockton, Massachusetts, under a Puritan blue law enacted in 1697, which prescribes imprisonment for not more than one year for the crime of "exposing to contempt or ridicule the Holy Word of God." Such a law might easily, from the Fundamentalist viewpoint, be invoked against the teaching of evolution.

Only nine State legislatures are in regular session this year, but 1927 will undoubtedly witness a flood of anti-evolution bills. The Free-Will Baptists of Arkansas have announced that they will force the introduction of such a Bill at their next State legislature; a committee has been formed in Virginia for the same purpose; and Oregon will also probably be among the States under earliest attack. Oklahoma Fundamentalists are agitating for a re-enactment of the State's repealed anti-evolution law.

In California the State Board of Education commands that evolution be taught *merely as a theory* (obviously a question for scientific experts themselves to decide); and local boards (e.g. Long Beach) have interpreted this as applying even to *private conversations between teacher and pupil*.

California Fundamentalists are to begin immediately to circulate throughout the State a petition for an anti-evolution initiative measure at the next State election (November). The petition will attack evolution as "having no basis in fact." The Science League of America will hold protest meetings as soon as the petitions appear. We are now organizing branches throughout the State, and as soon as funds permit will send out speakers and issue pro-evolution literature.

The Baptist Fundamentalist (Sacramento, California) says: "The Germans flew over Belgium and Northern France and dropped poisoned candy for the children to eat and men said they were damnable demons. They were saints [compared] to such teachers in our schools"—specifically, to those who teach that birds were derived from reptiles! The King's Business, published by the Los Angeles Bible Institute, in denouncing a murderer, asks that he be hanged, and then goes on to attack "these highly educated preachers and professors, who are a thousand times more dangerous to our country," and to ask that "equal justice be meted out to the criminals in school and church."

Anyone who has faced, as the president of the Science League has done, 5,000 furious Fundamentalists, who laugh aloud at the simplest scientific statement, and roar and howl their rage at the slightest opposition to the ignorant and prejudiced statements of their spokesman, will realize the grave danger involved in such utterances as those just quoted. Every one of these Fundamentalists is a voter, and they will all vote against evolution. We shall be fortunate if they do not

carry the lynching spirit indicated by their speakers and writers to an even more extreme point than the passage of anti-evolution laws.

Together with such incitements to violence as those given above, the Fundamentalist anti-evolution propagandists have also a huge arsenal of half-quoted and misinterpreted statements from genuine scientists, which they fire at auditors unable to discriminate between disagreement as to the validity of an entire theory. These and their other "scientific" arguments have a tremendous effect on untrained, uninformed and frequently prejudiced minds—all belonging to voters in whose hands the future of scientific instruction in this country rests.

The Fundamentalist "geologist," George McCready Price, has even gone so far as to attack the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, as "a wholesale official propaganda in favour of the evolution theory," and to suggest thus a new means of assault on science. The Smithsonian Institution and the Bureau of American Ethnology have also been under Fundamentalist fire on the same grounds.

Besides the avowed Fundamentalists, there is to be considered a vast "unconvinced multitude hidden in the intellectual byways," long silent or indifferent, but now vocal and more or less militant. "The condition in which we now find ourselves" recently remarked the President of Columbia University,

is due to what I once ventured to describe as the revolt of the unfit—if in these persecuting days one may venture to use even the language of the proscribed doctrine of evolution. In modern terms, it is due to the inferiority complex....The inferiority complex leads its victims to strive by brute force to establish conformity to type and to establish some quite irrational doctrine of thought or of conduct.

That the menace to freedom in teaching in the tax-supported schools of this nation is a real danger is now better understood than it was only a year ago. Dr. Herbert S. Hadley, Chancellor of Washington University (St. Louis, Mo.), in a recent address to Harvard alumni, said:—

I believe that with a vigorous effort such a law or proscription can be and will be established in fifteen or twenty States. The next step will be to banish such teaching from all schools; and we may witness the spectacle in this country of men and women facing prosecution who decline to accept the literal statement of the Old Testament upon geography, geology, and astronomy and the origin of human life, and to construct their theology on the foundation of a flat earth.

A year ago the Science League of America predicted that the Fundamentalist attacks upon freedom of teaching, particularly in science, would become increasingly more dangerous until they menaced every part of this country. This prediction is, unfortunately, becoming only too well fulfilled.

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#### IMAGINATION.

Indeed, the need for thrills, for stimulation of our torpid attention and thick-skinned sympathy, and for narcotic production of blissful dreams, is at the bottom of all such art as Nietzsche aptly called *Dionysiac*. And it is only little by little, as man emerges from brutish darkness to some far-between moments and places of safe and lucid life, that art sheds its *Dionysiac* emblems and instruments, becoming, instead, *Appoline*. Now to bring about that change, while itself that change's effect and symbol, is largely the work of what I have called, adopting Ruskin's beautiful expression, "Imagination Penetrative," since such imagination is indeed as the light of the Sun-god, of the divine musician and healer. Penetrating through our surroundings, it lets us see more and more of the universe whereof we are a trifling little portion. And dispelling, for a moment, the dark fumes of our animal instincts and our visceral life, it allows us to witness even the drama of our own life as if it were the drama of others.—Vernon Lee, "The Handling of Words."

## Correspondence.

## THE FOURTH AGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Just a line or two on my friend William Repton's booklet. It is the sort one reads at a sitting, and with a single thrill. Written with restraint and taste it is, of course, too short—500 pages would not contain all the soldier felt and saw—a small grumble for enormous provocation, but rich enough in incident, suggestion, and philosophy to satisfy the most exacting and refined taste. But, I fear, the true philosophy of this sacrifice for this, or that, country has yet to capture the rulers, the generals, and the pervervid patriots.

A certain Staff Colonel Bonham-Carter lately stiffened up the Chaplains thus:—

Human nature changes slowly, continued the Commander-in-Chief's message. Why should we dare to think that we can change human nature in a few years because war has become more terrible than it was in the past ages? Wars will not cease, and cannot cease so long as human nature remains as it is, and no human agency can possibly change the main characteristics of human nature. If God wishes to change human nature He is hardly likely to do so by playing upon our weaknesses—fear of death and the horror of pain and discomfort. What we must eliminate is the possibility of undertaking war for a bad cause. If our cause be righteous then it is right and Christian to fight for that cause. It would be wrong and unchristian not to do so. Therefore it is the duty of chaplains in the army so to teach us to live that we will only undertake wars in righteous causes. They must teach us also how to die with courage should we have to fight in defence of the right.

So speaks an honest man, say, a rough soldier, who knows what war is, who would dwell not on the "hideous and revolting facts of the Great War," but on the "unselfish devotion, the noble sacrifice of our fellow citizens when called upon to fight for the very existence of our country." That, after all, is the view of statesman, general, and patriot. But it is not human nature but human nature that is at fault. There is always the moral equivalent for even "righteous" war, with its devotion, sacrifice, etc. The real "forlorn hope" of the world is the elimination of the war spirit from the nations. Human nature is not "what it is" in the mind of the high command and the million others. Still, it may be "wars will not cease"; and if they will not, and, as they will be "ever more terrible," the noblest soldiers will die in vain; and what of all this nobility when the people are decimated, and over all the country war memorials are thick as tombstones in a cemetery? But, so far, war politics and religion are not reasoned things, hence calamity is of so long life. Hence one welcomes Mr. Repton's earnest, suggestive, and attractive little volume. May his tribe increase.

A. MILLAR.

## THE REV. J. E. RATTENBURY AND WOMEN PREACHERS.

SIR,—Your note in "Views and Opinions" on the above leads me to inform you as follows: A week or two ago I saw the announcement that the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury was to preach in Manchester. It was over twenty years before since I had heard the reverend gentleman, so I went. I won't recount to you his sermon, except to say it was composed of some excellent sense, even wisdom, but also the most awful nonsense.

Incidentally he prayed that God would guide them to right decisions in the "profound" questions to be considered by the forthcoming Congress of their Church.

If this "guidance" was granted to the Congress, then God is against women ministers, especially married ones. Why not against married men? I suppose the rather large minority who voted for the admission of the women to the ministry were inspired by the "Devil." Oh, Mr. Rattenbury, what rubbish your beliefs have led you to!

T. A. WILLIAMS.

The great sophism of all sophisms being equivocation or ambiguity of words and phrase.—Bacon.

## 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.  
OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. Marshall, a Lecture.

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. H. C. White, "Good God!"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3 and 6, Mr. S. Hanson will lecture.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Lambourne, Theydon Mount, and Epping. Conducted by Mr. Robert Snelling. Train Liverpool Street, 10.30 a.m. Cheap return to Grange Hill rs. 2d., change at Woodford.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. H. Constable, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.  
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LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Square): 7.30, Mr. L. Davis, "Freethought in Everyday Life."

NELSON.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission, August 2 to 8.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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