

# THE DISCONSOLATE ATHEIST.

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLVII.—No. 25

SUNDAY JUNE 19, 1927

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| <i>The Disconsolate Atheist.—The Editor</i> - - -      | 385  |
| <i>The Ascension.—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - -                | 386  |
| <i>That Destitute Vicar.—Mimnermus</i> - - -           | 388  |
| <i>The Untectotal Way to Heaven.—F. J. Gould</i> - - - | 389  |
| <i>The Preying Parson.—C. W. Mente</i> - - -           | 390  |
| <i>The Gift of Tongues.—Bayard Simmons</i> - - -       | 394  |
| <i>Report of Annual Conference N.S.S.</i> - - -        | 394  |
| <i>The God Idea.—Stanley Lloyd</i> - - -               | 397  |

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

## Views and Opinions.

### The Disconsolate Atheist.

It is not really a difficult thing to find out what Atheism is. Neither does it require a superhuman degree of intelligence to understand it. A little careful study of what any representative Atheist has to say about it is enough, and a person of normal mental capacity will know precisely what is the Atheistic position. I do not say that he must agree with it; that is an entirely different matter. He would be quite within his rights in calling it stupid, or inconclusive, or to prophesy dreadful consequences if the atheistic frame of mind became general. All these things are matters of opinion, and in matters of opinion each individual must judge for himself. But what Atheism is can hardly be a matter of opinion, any more than what gravitation is, or what Natural Selection is, is a matter of opinion. They are all primarily matters of fact, and every writer owes it to himself and to those for whom he writes to take care that his facts are, in the first instance, correct. It may delay his writing, but that is another question. And in the case of Atheism, as a knowledge of what it is can hardly be discovered without some knowledge of the facts and arguments on which it is based, it might lead to him becoming an Atheist, and that, too, is another question. But perhaps that is why so many religious leaders warn their followers to have nothing to do with either Atheism or Atheists, and advise them of the terrible consequences that may ensue if they neglect the warning.

\* \* \*

### Sham Christianity the Better.

What has been said of Atheism, as a mental attitude applies nowadays with regard to the Atheist as an individual. Once upon a time, when Christianity had made it a matter of the gravest danger for a man to let his dissent from the established religion be

known, misunderstandings concerning Atheists as individuals were excusable. Christian lying and Christian malignity pictured him as a monster of wickedness, and as the ordinary person seldom came into contact with him, he took the mythical Atheist of the pulpit for the genuine article. But Atheists are not so uncommon nowadays; they are far too common, one would imagine, for even the ordinary journalist to present a caricature instead of the real article. Yet in glancing through a batch of Sunday newspapers I came across the following, which was evidently written in what the writer took to be a spirit of good-will towards the Atheist:—

I have known many Atheists, but in nearly every case they reluctantly left the fold because they could not reconcile the teachings of the Church with their ideas of truth. They were seldom up against genuine Christianity, but always against "Churchianity" and shams.

If that is the best that anyone can do in the way of amiability towards Atheists, the less we have of it the better. Every Freethinker, who understands his Freethought is "up against" "genuine" Christianity, even more than he is up against the adulterated article. For the adulteration consists in mixing up with Christianity a number of things with which it has neither historical nor logical connexion. Genuine Christianity is orthodox Christianity. It embraces the belief in hell and heaven, in miracles, in angels and devils, and many other things that are an insult to a civilized intelligence. The Christianity that is genuine is not popular; the Christianity that is popular is not genuine. Christianity is bad when it is genuine, it is hardly less bad when it seizes humanitarian teaching and robs them of their effectiveness by mixing them up with a ridiculous theology.

\* \* \*

### Association v. Conviction.

The *Freethinker*, I am glad to say, has a number of Christian readers, and I would ask them how many Atheists they know answer to the description given above? How many of them look back upon their Christian days with regret? I cannot say anything about myself, because I chose my parents with so much judgment that I never had any Christianity to get rid of—for which I am duly and always thankful. But I do know that every Atheist I have come across feels happier and of more use to the world than ever he did as a Christian. Where do these miserable and regretful Atheists live? No one knows them, those who talk about them have only heard of them. But they repeat the story as though it were beyond question. Indeed I have the greatest difficulty in realizing how anyone can regret a discarded belief. I can quite appreciate that the giving up of certain



beliefs may be the occasion of much unpleasantness, but that is quite another question. What happens here is that the rupture of old associations, the break with old friends, etc., causes pain. And it causes pain because Christian intolerance would have it so. If his friends had not been Christians, if he had been brought up in a mentally healthy atmosphere, a man would feel no more pain in giving up a religious belief than he does in giving up any other belief. His friends being what they are, unpleasantness is certain. But the pain is not due to the giving up of a belief, but to the loss of all that Christian intolerance says shall be its consequence.

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#### Atheism and Human Nature.

Take another point. I have often been asked whether Atheism could ever satisfy human nature. I have invariably replied that it satisfied me, and so far as I represent human nature, it should satisfy others. I agree that what we are satisfied with will to some extent depend upon what we are looking for, and to the kind of human nature with which we are dealing. A whisky-soddened person will not be satisfied with lemonade, and a constitutionally unreflective and superstitious nature will not be content with Atheism. What such questioners are saying is, that while one is a religious believer he can never be satisfied with Atheism. That seems rather a silly thing to say, but so many religious deliverances are silly when one stops to analyse them. But if after a process of mental development the religious man outgrows his religion, he can quite as truthfully say that religion would not satisfy him. The one statement is just as true, and means just as much as the other. Naturally Atheism will not satisfy the religious person; with equal truth religion will not satisfy the Atheist. Both are satisfied with what they are, and when they arrive somewhere else they will experience the same degree of mental contentment. The mere fact that a particular belief has been discarded is evidence that it became irksome and less attractive than the new one. If ever an Atheist expressed regrets at having got rid of his one time religious beliefs, I can only conceive his doing so as a means of comforting his weaker brother who is still in the same mental state that he once was.

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#### Man and the World.

Why on earth should an Atheist feel his position comfortless, let go of religion reluctantly, or look back upon his earlier state with regret? As an Atheist he has all the qualities of mind and body that he had when a Christian. One does not cease to admire, to love, to venerate, to value truthfulness or honesty, or cleanliness because one has ceased to believe in religion, or has given up the traditional jargon respecting these things. As I have often had occasion to point out, there are no such things as religious feelings, there are only human feelings directed towards a religious object. What Atheism does is to strip these feelings of their religious covering and make their nature plain to all. It leaves the legitimate avenues for their exercise open and untouched. It does not deny the value of a single human quality. What it does is to emphasize their significance. It is true that the Atheist would arrange human qualities in an order of value different from that of the Christian scale. He would place more reliance upon reason and less upon faith; less upon self-sacrifice and more upon self-development. He would have less to say on the charity of mere

almsgiving, and more upon that of sympathy and intellectual hospitality. He would not prate about "our poor weak human nature," and he would not go about fearing lest each new advance in knowledge should bring the social structure about his ears. Wrong the Atheist may be, but his position is unquestionably hopeful. It is one of the curiosities of the situation that they who proclaim human nature to be too weak to stand alone, should charge those who take the opposite view with facing the world armed only with a cold and cheerless philosophy.

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#### A Strange Position.

Is it too much to expect religious preachers and catchpenny journalists to drop this kind of stupid chatter? I am afraid they will only drop it when it has ceased to pay. The only time that a preacher will endeavour to talk sense is when his congregation has had enough of nonsense. The only time that our newspapers will cease to print such twaddle is when the reading public will no longer buy it. Journalists and preachers are much of a kind. Each asks not what ought the people to know, but what do I wish them to know. So, I expect, that for a long time yet we shall continue to meet with the mythical Atheist wandering through life, looking with regret at his Christian brother happy in the conviction that he is a poor worm of the dust, and that when he is dead he has a warm welcome waiting for him. It is strange that having killed the legend of the dying Atheist shrieking for forgiveness on his death-bed, we should be confronted with the healthy one stalking through life, thoroughly depressed because he has more common sense than his Christian neighbour. Sterne thought but poorly of the man who could travel from Dan to Beersheba crying "All is barren"; and it would be equally surprising if with the whole world of art and nature before him, the Atheist regretted giving up the childish trumpery of the Christian creed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Ascension.

(Concluded from page 371.)

CURIOSLY enough, Bishop Gore, despite his stern condemnation of the language and policy of the champions of the Orthodox Church in history and to-day, boldly declares that he has absolute confidence in the future triumphs of the body of Christ. He affirms that "the sense of the glory of the Ascended Christ has passed into the Church and has inspired the great warriors of the Church with magnificent expressions of courage and confidence," and that "there is nothing finer than this strong and enthusiastic expression of confidence in the destiny of the Church Catholic which has come from the lips of our great champions of all ages and countries. They have believed in the unconquerable truth of the faith and the indefectibility of the Church." Undoubtedly the Bishop holds exactly the same beliefs, and gives no uncertain expression to them. He, too, dogmatically maintains that the Church is not subject to defect or decay. He writes:—

Church history, said Bishop Lightfoot, is the greatest cordial for drooping spirits. And his words are true in the sense that the reading of Church history refreshes our confidence in the indefectibility of the Church, and reveals to us its wonderful power of recovery.

The truth is, however, that upon the generality of people the reading of Church history has a most depressing effect. Of all stories known to us that



of the Christian Church is the saddest and most disquieting. To say that the Church possesses the "most wonderful power of recovery" is logically to imply that it is by no means indefectible. The Bishop himself admits that "from another point of view Church history makes discouraging reading." Indeed, the right reverend gentleman dwells in four paragraphs upon the defectibility of the Church. He says: "There is a great deal of orthodox ecclesiastical zeal, of which we can only imagine our Lord saying, as He said once of the misguided zeal of His disciples: 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of'; 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'"

Let us now consult Church history, just to see what it is like. Early in the fifth century Cyril became Patriarch of Alexandria, whom Dean Milman characterizes as follows:—

Cyril of Alexandria, to those who esteem the stern and uncompromising assertion of certain Christian tenets, the one paramount Christian virtue, may be the hero, even the saint; but while ambition, intrigue, arrogance, rapacity, and violence are proscribed as unchristian means—barbarity, persecution, bloodshed as unholy and unevangelic wickedness—posterity will condemn the orthodox Cyril as one of the worst of heretics against the spirit of the Gospel (*Latin Christianity*, Vol. I. p. 186).

Even Gibbon, the unbeliever, can say nothing worse of him. Cyril was the personification of orthodoxy, and he considered it to be the sole mission of his life to uproot and utterly destroy all heresies. His oppression of the Novatians, who, while holding peculiar views, were yet pure-hearted and noble-minded people, revealed the baseness of his character. His share in the cruel persecution of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was discreditable in the extreme. The only crime of which Nestorius was held guilty was that of refusing to permit the worship of the Virgin Mother in the churches over which he exercised authority. Possibly Cyril reached the lowest point in moral degradation in connexion with the unscrupulous murder of Hypatia, the teacher of Greek philosophy. On this point again we quote Dean Milman's words:—

All Alexandria respected, honoured, took pride in the celebrated Hypatia. She was a woman of extraordinary learning; in her was centred the lingering knowledge of that Alexandrian Platonism cultivated by Plotinus and his school. Her beauty was equal to her learning; her modesty commended both. She mingled freely with the philosophers without suspicion to her lofty and unblemished character. Hypatia lived in great intimacy with the prefect Orestes: the only charge whispered against her was that she encouraged him in his hostility to the Patriarch. Cyril, on the other hand, is said to have been superior to an unworthy jealousy at the greater concourse of hearers to the lectures of the elegant Platonist than to his own sermons. Some of Cyril's ferocious partisans seized this woman, dragged her from her chariot, and with the most revolting indecency tore her clothes off, and then rent her limb from limb. The Christians of Alexandria did this, professing to be actuated by Christian zeal in the cause of a Christian prelate. No wonder, in the words of the ecclesiastical historian, that by such a deed a deep stain was fixed on Cyril and the Church of Alexandria (*Latin Christianity*, Vol. I, pp. 190-1).

That is a specimen of Church history as related by a distinguished dignitary of the Anglican Church, and surely it cannot be regarded as "the greatest cordial for drooping spirits." How true is the adage, "Like priest, like people." Cyril was a monster, and his followers were a tumultuous mob.

Here is another sample of Church history—the

Crusades. The Crusades were a series of religious wars waged in the Middle Ages with the object of recovering the Holy Land from the power of the Saracens. Several regrettable circumstances led to those wicked campaigns. Christians were brutally persecuted in Palestine, which resulted in a savage persecution of the Jews in France. The ever increasing danger of pilgrimages to see and worship at the Holy Places, gave rise to a feeling of intense resentment and indignation in all parts of Christendom, with the result that at the Council of Clermont, in the year 1095, it was resolved to engage in a holy war against the unbelieving Turks. Mr. John M. Robertson says:—

The first effect (1096) was to collect several immense and almost formless mobs of men and women, who by all accounts, were in the main the refuse of Europe. "That the vast majority looked upon their vow as a licence for the commission of any sin, there can be no moral doubt." The devout exaltation of the few was submerged by the riot of the many, who began using their indulgences when they began their march, and rolled like a flood across Europe, massacring, torturing, and plundering Jews wherever they found them, and forcibly helping themselves to food where plunder was easy. Multitudes perished by the way; multitudes more were sold as slaves in Byzantium to pay for the feeding of the rest there; and of the seven thousand who reached Asiatic soil with Peter the Hermit, four thousand were slain by the Turks at Nicaea; some 300,000 thus perished in all (*A Short History of Christianity*, p. 274).

It is no present concern of ours what the consequences of the eight Crusades were, our only object being to point out that the reading of Church history is not "the greatest cordial for drooping spirits." It often is the very opposite of a refreshing cordial for those who indulge in it. Even Ranke's *History of the Popes* frequently makes heart-breaking reading, although some of the Popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were good men; but among them was Leo X, who was not even a Christian. He was a patron of letters and art, but profoundly ignorant of theology.

Indeed, the whole history of the Church clearly proves that the risen and ascended Lord of Christian preachers is nothing but an empty myth. Many of the "great warriors of the Church" have done wonders, but they have had no aid from a supernatural source, because the supernatural is a purely imaginary region, subjectively real to those who believe in it, but objectively non-existent.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Fool.

HE recked of nought beside the nut brown ale,  
And cheerful hearth,—with all the goodly store  
Of tale and song and long years counted o'er,—  
With honest laugh and jolly fellows' hail:  
I saw him as he left the tavern door  
And met a world renewed and circling round;  
"Alack!" said he, "for this unholy ground,  
Where all are one behind me and before:"  
Then one upbraided him, and called him—"Ass,  
A fleeting joy hath made thee sorely pay;"  
The fool replied:—"A lesson at this pass  
Then learn,—for Empires go the selfsame way:  
Is wisdom concentrated in the mass;  
They have their glorious hour,—I, my day!"

WM. J. LAMB.

Every man may claim the fullest liberty to exercise his faculties compatible with the possession of like liberty by every other man.—*Spencer*.



## That Destitute Vicar.

"Thou comest in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee."

*Shakespeare, "Hamlet."*

"Ring out a slowly dying cause."—*Tennyson.*

"Man is his own star."—*John Fletcher.*

THE clergy are still starving, and their awful sufferings are recorded in the newspapers. Of course, there are still exceptions to this alarming state of affairs. The two archbishops, the forty bishops, and the whole of the higher ecclesiastics, are not, so far, like Nebuchadnezzar, reduced to eating grass. Indeed, the vast majority of the clergy are in no immediate danger of devouring their bootlaces; and their wives do not eke out a precarious existence by taking in other people's washing. There are, however, some examples of the righteous seeking bread, and a terrible tale comes from Truro, where the Rev. M. O. Boyd, Vicar of a Cornish parish, applied for relief from the Truro Board of Guardians. The reverend gentleman heroically said he would rather have work, and was prepared to break stones for a living. His stipend was only a paltry £400 a year, but he had big expenses and a wife and two children. The Guardians decided to grant two guineas weekly to God's representative for relief by way of a loan. This is "a horrible example" of clerical poverty, and we have selected the case because the newspaper editors have referred to it in articles headed "The Destitute Vicar," and other heart-rending titles.

The Bishop of London has told us very often that many of the ordinary Church of England clergy are "starving." He even quoted the horrid instance of a parson who fed his entire family of four persons and a servant girl on sixpence a meal; and the still more distressing example of the unfortunate "man-of-God," who lost whatever brains he possessed for the want of a respectable bank-balance. It is all very sad, but there is always balm in Gilead, and "beyond you distant crest is Eden's balmier spring." The Bishop of London, who is said to be as generous as Sir Harry Lauder, has already collected over £50,000 from other people to protect the sacred persons of the clergy from the blessings of poverty.

The excellent Bishop of London is as remarkable a financier as Mr. Wilkins Micawber, and should be an authority on the subject of poverty. He is oppressed by the weight of his £10,000 a year, and is always painfully anxious to rebut the charge of wealth. Some time ago he explained, in full-throated tones, to a congregation bordering on apoplexy that, after drawing his episcopal salary of £200 weekly for fifteen years, and royalties from his many publications, he was £2,000 on the wrong side of the ledger, and actually worse off than when he started the truly awful experience of following in the footsteps of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth. On such methods of book-keeping it is abundantly clear that, had his lordship's salary been that of His Grace of Canterbury (£15,000 yearly, and three residences) he must have finished his career in a common lodging house, or on the seats of the Thames Embankment.

Whether the clergy are really starving is a very open question. That they are hard-up has been vouched for by Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons, and he is to be believed as much as the Bishop of London. Mr. George declares that the "men-of-God" are worse off than the miners. But Mr. George is a Welsh Nonconformist, and knows little of the Anglican Church and its enormous financial resources. Many Nonconformist ministers in country places officiate in tin tabernacles for a mere pittance, whilst earning an honest living during

the week. But these things simply do not happen to the clergy of the Anglican Church, which is the wealthiest Church in Christendom. A Parliamentary Paper, issued in 1891, showed that the annual value of ancient ecclesiastical endowments of the Church of England was then £5,469,171, exclusive of modern private benefactions, which amounted to £284,000 a year. This Church owns over 1,000,000 acres of land in the country; and draws about £400,000 annually in royalties from collieries in various counties.

Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see at a glance that the average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable livelihood, for the amount of income is placed against each entry. In addition, the average rector or vicar lives in a decent house, often nicer than the houses of most of his neighbours. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in household expenses. The higher ecclesiastics evade the blessings of poverty in a far more skilful manner. The two Archbishops share £30,000 annually between them. The Bench of Bishops, forty in number, share £184,000 yearly, and the Suffragan Bishops are nearly as fortunate. The blunt truth is that the Church of England possesses ample means. At the top are prelates with seats in the House of Lords, where they never do any good service for the democracy. At the bottom are a multitude of holders of benefices better off than the ordinary man. Within the narrow confines of the City of London £50,000 is spent each year in ministering to a small resident population of caretakers, policemen and Jewish people. The latter, who form by far the larger proportion of the total, never trouble the pew-openers. The Anglican Church has also property in the City of London worth at present over £3,000,000; and rapidly rising in value.

We fear that the Bishop of London's arithmetic will not entitle him to a membership of the Society of Incorporated Accountants. During the past few days four clerical wills have been proved, which show that some men-of-God are well above the poverty line. They were as follows:—

Rev. K. R. Hoyle, Blackburn, £102,935.

Rev. C. J. L. Cameron, of Stratford-Mortimer, Berks., £51,468.

Rev. M. Whiteside, Hereford, £30,695.

Rev. W. Leaf, Southwark, £24,136.

The Bishop of London's engaging candour in financial matters is rather embarrassing, unless his idea is to rouse the sympathies of the people in the pews with resultant freewill offerings. If men were really starving within the ranks of the clergy, the bishops could spare some of their money, and "show the heavens more just." That the Bishop of London should court approval as a lowly follower of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth is an amazing spectacle. Resplendent in a twelfth-century costume, costing £200, he attracts crowds by his quips and cranks in the cause of religion. Happily, he nullifies the effect of his own work by making his audience feel that nothing matters very much, and that the Christian Religion is a joke played on the people. When the suffragist agitation was at its height, and some excited women had damaged church property, the Bishop of London said, pointedly, with outstretched hand, "This is devil's work." It was a most illuminating confession for a man of reputation to make in the twentieth century, for it showed that a man may be ordained to the Christian ministry, and yet have never been converted to civilization. **MIMNERMUS.**



## The Unteetotal Way to Heaven.

I CANNOT think the readers of the *Freethinker* will wish my expulsion from these heretical columns just because (as I frankly confess) I entirely agreed with the view of a group of priests, in whose company I lately found myself. Ladies sat also at the long table, and the windows looked out upon the silvery— I should say coppery, Thames, which gleamed in the early summer's radiance. Happy was I for once to meet these Prophets of the Most High without feeling prompted to question the Biblical account of two she-bears killing forty-two "apaches" who derided the bald head of Elisha. We met on a common platform, if I may call the platform "common," when a peer of the realm honoured the assembly with his presence.

Students of ancient history will remember that, at Cana in Galilee, Jesus and his disciples attended a feast at which one of the objects was to drink wine; and the divine guest certainly approved of cups of alcoholic drink. And the priests, the ladies and I had come together in order to affirm that the taking of alcoholic liquor was no sin, and that it was contrary to public and social policy to pass Prohibition laws against the much-observed custom. When I entered the pleasant river-side chamber, nobody asked if I believed in Peter's discovery (by arrangement with his heavenly Master) of a piece of money in a fish's mouth. I knew, of course, that every soul in the room except myself (and two gentlemen to be presently mentioned) credited the story, and often meditated, especially on Quarter Days, on its significance. In this delightful summer hour, however, the Inquisition mood was absent, and no dispute on Christian Evidences brewed. Indeed, another species of brewing was much in harmony with the majority of the conference.

Some fifty years of my career have had no dealings with alcohol. At a point (1902) of my secretaryship of the Leicester Secular Society, I even assisted in clearing the Society's premises of beer, wines and spirits. This was a case of purely local option, and the step was taken (wisely, I judge still) for local motives only. I, for one, had no mind to disturb the hotels and inns of the City of Leicester generally. I am a strict teetotaler, for the special reason that I do not like alcohol, just as I do not like oysters, tomatoes, and asparagus. But it seems to me odious and vulgar to interfere with any fellow-citizen who desires to consume these precious things, so long as his tastes do not collide with the public peace. In other words, I am anti-Prohibitionist, and unfitted for the communion of saints and "pussyfoots" in the United States.

While I touch the subject of "temperance," I would like to say that temperance, or the "golden mean," should logically extend to eating, smoking, costuming, and motoring, and to many other spheres of enjoyment or spending. I would also like to say—perhaps to the amazement of some readers—that temperance, as such, is not a virtue. My favourite illustration of this unusual averment is that of the teetotal burglar, whose accuracy in safe-breaking, punctuality in arrival at spots before or after the passage of police, and general alertness of deportment are immensely aided by his total abstinence. In other words, his temperance eases his path to crime. From such considerations, it readily follows that temperance only becomes a virtue when it is part of the citizen's useful outfit for social efficiency and service. These reflexions are, I suppose, acceptable to ordinary consciences. Nevertheless, it is astonishing how novel they are to the average teetotal zealots, including teetotal pulpiteers. As a matter of fact, at

the charming conventicle by the silvery ("silvery" sounds best) Thames, one of my clerical friends distinctly stated that temperance was a virtue. I was in too beautiful a temper to rise and contradict him, for I felt so grateful at not being badgered about the two she-bears.

Anyway, the further the conference proceeded, the more clearly it appeared to me that the road to heaven is unteetotal. This does not mean that teetotallers need not apply. One of the priests, with tears in his voice, sorrowed over the "intemperate" language used by many Christian ministers (particularly Non-conformists) who advocated total aloofness from the bottles of transgression. But he did not hint that a teetotaler, as such, was excluded from even the best circles of Paradise. Only, all the eloquent priests gave us perfectly to understand that redemption and wine, salvation and ale, sanctification and vermouth, were not pairs of terms that mutually cancelled out. The listeners nodded smiling assent. My opinions on theology being what they are, it would evidently have been out of place for me to join in the brotherly nod. But it comforted me to see all my companions comfortable.

Towards the close of our joyous, unteetotal reunion by the silvery Thames, a rather startling element was introduced into the edification. Not that it stirred anybody but myself.

Two representatives of Synagogues rose up and spoke.

Each rabbinic gentleman made paternal and agreeable remarks. We bowed our acknowledgements; and the unteetotal banner (so to fancy) waved in benediction over the Christians, the Jews and me.

Yes, yes, but I secretly fidgetted. Not because of a reference to the Nazarites who figure in the Old Testament. These Nazarites (of whose sect the honourable and gallant Samson was a member) were total abstainers. But our Jewish comrade told us that this teetotalism was not counted as a virtue in itself, and the Nazarites offered "sin offerings" before the Lord in penance for their attitude towards wine! Some of us thought the Synagogue delegate was jesting; and some of us did not; and, for my part, I postpone the problem till the summer holidays. In any case, the rabbinic tolerance did not surprise me, for the Hebrew people have never exhibited a Puritanical animus against alcohol, and, at the same time, it may be confidently said that not the worst enemy of Judaism can accuse the Jews of leaning to intoxicants. To-day, and through history, they are, and have been, temperate in an admirable, though unteetotal, sense.

But the same rabbinic speaker observed that, while differences existed between the Jewish Faith and the Christian Faith, Jews were yet pleased to express agreement with the present Christian gathering on the temperance issue.

"Differences"!

\* \* \* \*

I mused, and my imagination flew back many centuries; and I heard a tremendous hissing and bellowing, and saw Jesus being flung out of a Synagogue at Nazareth, and dragged by Jewish hands towards a precipice.

And next, as the dust cleared away, I beheld Golgotha, and a blood-red sun that gave away to black eclipse, and Jesus crucified, livid, convulsed, vomiting, dying.

The darkness lifted, and I descried Peter in the Jerusalem Temple addressing a crowd of Jews whom he thus reproached: "You denied the Holy One and the Just, and killed the Prince of Life. Repent!"

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The Jews have never repented. If it is said that the scenes in my dream were legendary, I agree. But the Christians have for many ages believed the story.

So, after my musings, I came back to the chamber by the silvery Thames, and gazed in sheer bewilderment at the clerical-collared anti-Prohibitionists, the amicable ladies, and the two rabbinic guests. Quite sincerely, and on educational grounds, I coincided with their temperance doctrines. But what perplexed me was the fact that people who represented St. Peter's ideas, and people who represented the Jews—killers of the "Prince of life"—could sit genially at the same table, saying one to another:—"It is time that we differ with respect to the alleged central event in world-history—the sacrifice of the Son of God—and its awful consequences in the world's judgment and destiny. But we agree that it is absolutely proper to drink a glass of champagne; and the order of the day is a smile."

The silvery Thames seemed to be running backward.

F. J. GOULD.

### The Preying Parson.

ALTHOUGH categorically a member of the genus "Homo-Sapien," this creature of devastating habits is classed more truly by men and women of reason and education, as a member of the genus "Parasitus Skunkus."

An offspring of specimens still existent under diverse titles in other parts of the world (notably Asia), this parasite is of an unreasonably destructive nature in matters concerning modern ethics. It is for the most part guilty of an illogical sense of insanity.

The direct antecedents have from time to time, during periods of power, laid to absolute waste the lands which they have inhabited. Its ways are most peculiar. The mere mention of sex or romance and even at times the mere sound of amusement, or sight of beauty and art, cause it to strum violently upon the distant drum. Admitting the beauty of nature, it nevertheless detects traces of filth and immorality invisible to the ordinary human eye, and magnifies sheer fun into sinister evil.

The domestic habits of this pest are well worthy of study. Although professing interest for the spiritual welfare of others, for its own part it seems content with earthly accumulations. Figuratively, many have died resembling camels with enormous humps. Its habits of ranting unintelligible set sentences of hotch-potch, have left it little time to breed young of any ethical value. Those that have seen the light of day have proved themselves doubtful specimens after the thin epidermis has rubbed through, and have only survived through careful fostering by insane and eyewashed politicians.

The greatest natural enemies of this noxious pest are Freedom, Truth and Education, and despite its foxy ways, it has proved itself a cowardly opponent in open battle. Ridicule has often proved a worthy weapon when wielded and backed by Truth. Its total extinction will no doubt be publicly enforced, when Truth finally finds its way into our social structure, but until then "Human-welfarists" should recognize no close season or truce in combating this pest. Care should also be taken to further its extermination before it finds new lairs in other parts of the world.

The may often be found in the drawing-rooms of unsuspecting spinsters of doubtful vintage and considerable means, sipping four o'clock tea, seasoned with the spice of gossip and scandal.

Remove their sheep's clothing and prove with their own words that nudity *can* be shocking.

C. W. MENTE.

### THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

The priests discovered that a peasant girl who lived in Palestine was the mother of God. This they proved by a book, and to make the book evidence they called it inspired.—R. G. Ingersoli.

### Acid Drops.

Miss A. E. F. Horniman, of the Manchester Repertory Theatre, after telling an interviewer that she was reared amidst a pious and anti-theatre atmosphere, said that people to-day do not realize the enormous change that has occurred within the last 50 years. A much higher standard of good behaviour to-day, she declared, makes it possible for people to do things which they could not do without embarrassment and misunderstanding. What she seems to mean is that an enormous amount of pious prejudice, ignorance and intolerance has disappeared, and people are now able to enjoy wholesome and harmless amusements without being accused of being sinful or depraved. One might well say that the worldly have reformed the pious. They have certainly taught the unco' guid to be more broadminded, tolerant, and charitable. And for these mercies let us be truly grateful.

Two generations ago those whose nature was sensitive to religion were concerned about their sins, says Dr. R. C. Gillie, of London, and they wanted an absolution that covered them from the guilt of their past. Later on they were worried not so much about their sins as about Huxley and Tyndall; they were concerned chiefly about the truth of the religion they held; they sought the highest degree of probability that the foundations of their belief were trustworthy. Now, we are conscious of another change. Men are concerned not about their sins, nor the credibility of creeds, but about their conflicts and duties; they want to be sure of access to sources of power that will make them adequate to the calls and claims of life.

Otley Urban Council has decided, by seven votes to five, not to open the refreshment pavilion in the public park on Sunday. The local ministers have been up against the proposal, and have got their tools on the Council to see to it that if the people will go into the park instead of into the Church or Chapel, they shall have it as uncomfortable as they can make it. So the seven who do not want to get refreshments in the park, say to the five who do, that they shall not have refreshments either. That is their conception of freedom. And these people all have votes!

The danger of another European War, Signor Mussolini thinks, is likely to arise between 1935 and 1940. If that be so, it is the sabre-rattling dictators and primitive-minded politicians and diplomats who will be responsible. Still, there are eight or ten years available for educating the peoples and their representatives into thinking in terms of Peace, and for consolidating those institutions which the world now possesses that make for Peace. A few parsons are now, rather belatedly, preaching against war. Their propaganda, however, is largely ineffective because their arguments have an irrational basis. All their blather about war being "antagonistic to the will of God," and so forth, has little influence on peoples that have become indifferent to the God idea, and that are showing an increasing preference for rational bases for their actions. The Peace ideal is likely to take root only when public opinion all over Europe has been saturated with reasons against war that are bedded down in common-sense and rationalized social morality.

Canon Tissington Tatlow recently addressed some Congregationalists on "the Student Class and International Relationships." The modern education of the African in Western Universities, he said, had brought about a change in international affairs. This was noticeable in the African students in our own Universities. Thirty years ago they were docile people, reflecting on all matters the point of view of the Christian missionaries—whom they regarded as their guides in all matters.



To-day, that confident attitude had gone. The African was taking very much the way of the Indian student. Now, it is really very wicked of the African student to ignore his heavenly appointed guides like that. The proper thing for him to do is to be born docile and remain so, and to let the Christian priest do the thinking. What is happening, we suppose, is that the African student discovers that a large number of intelligent white people not only ignore the Christian guides, but get on remarkably well when they do so, and he thinks the example worth imitating. We solemnly warn the world that this sort of thing should be discouraged; for when men of colour get thinking for themselves, it means trouble for the missionaries, the Churches, and the "superior" races.

The Canon also said that a distinguished Bulgarian was asked what subjects the Military Academy students were discussing among themselves. The reply was:—

They are deeply interested just now in the question whether it is really necessary that the nations should settle their disputes by war, and whether it is not possible to eliminate war as something that is not worth gloryfying, but is really a gigantic evil.

When military students, of all people, get thinking in this wise, there would really seem to be some hope of Peace visiting a war-wracked earth, and of the practice of war-banner blessing becoming obsolete.

Five-and-twenty years ago, writes the Rev. Dr. Carlisle, the Free Church papers were very definite in their expression of Free Church principles: there was no question as to what they represented. Is the Free Church Press, he asks, now in danger of losing its definiteness in its breadth? Dr. Carlisle appears not to have grasped the situation. The Free Churches have each had to sacrifice or to tone down certain cherished and distinctive doctrines, in order to retain clients. This naturally means that the Free Church Press has, not so much lost definiteness and acquired breadth, as gained a general nebulosity of principles. What the Free Churches and the Free Church Press are in danger of losing are clients; for nebulous principles have a way of lessening religion's hold on people, and that means emptying pews and diminishing Press influence.

Canon Peter Green, of Manchester, writes in the *Baptist Times* on, "What I think about Re-union." There is, he says, no real danger of competing between the various denominations in England to-day. There is no danger that he will draw away worshippers from the various denominational churches in Manchester, or that they will empty his church. "The pressing danger for all of us alike is the growing secularization of life." The Canon is a far-seeing man. People are discovering that they can do without the parson. The Canon realizes that clearly enough, and is saying, in effect, to his brethren of the cloth: "What the deuce will become of us?" He appears to think that only by co-operation can the danger of wholesale unemployment among clerics be averted. We regret to say that the pressing danger is likely to press more hardily in the near future. And the only remedy we can suggest is that the parsons should ask God to inflict upon the people a plague of credulity.

The Christian Sunday is a wonderful heritage for Christians, thinks the Rev. A. D. Belden. It yields a legacy of Happiness, a legacy of Worship, a legacy of Fellowship, and a legacy of Moral Character and Conduct. And this heritage of "spiritual sunshine" must not be allowed to be filched away or ruined by neglect. It is indeed a wonderful heritage—for Christians. But a very large number of non-Christian people don't appreciate it, think it useless or silly, don't wish to share it, and get on remarkably well without it. More-

over, they don't desire to stop Christians from enjoying it, and they don't ask Christians to neglect it. All that they want Christians to do is to mind their own business, and to stop prohibiting others from enjoying Sunday in the way they may think fit. They don't ask for much—merely that Christians shall try to apply on Sunday the Christian Golden Rule.

Prof. Davey, of Assembly College, Belfast, is a desperate character. We are not sure whether, as a corrupter of youth and morality, he ought to be at large. He denies the imputation of the Atonement. He denies the deity of Jesus Christ. He denies the doctrine of the Trinity. He makes God the author of sin. At least, the cavemen of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland say he does, and the Presbyterian General Assembly, sitting at Belfast, is determined to find out if the Professor really has done these atrocious things alleged against him. We may add that if the Assembly finds him guilty, it will be presenting him with an excellent testimonial for intelligence.

A daily paper is to present a series of articles on "How I look at Life"—the philosophy of famous men of the day. The preliminary list of "famous men" is a rather scratch lot—it includes "Woodbine Willie" and Mr. James Douglas!—who can be fully depended upon to furnish a choice collection of "safe" and orthodox platitudes. We suggest the articles might prove more instructive and interesting if the daily paper had canvassed among some leading thinkers known to be unorthodox in opinion. There really is no lack of brilliant intelligence in the world, as the preliminary list of "famous men" would appear to imply.

The Rev. D'Arcy Rudd, of Leeds, calls attention to the "alarming" fact that since 1914, 600,000 children under fourteen years of age had been lost to the Churches. This is a terrible outlook. What on earth is the Christian Church to do if it is compelled to restrict its outlook to an appeal to the intelligence of the adult? Jesus Christ said it was only when adults became as little children that they could inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is no place for adults.

The Archbishop of Canterbury states a greater truth than he is aware of when he says of the revised Prayer Book, that it was altered to make worship more "consonant with the contemporary facts, conditions, and surroundings with which our prayers should deal." In other words, his Grace admits that the church, to live, must adjust itself to its surroundings. So much then, for Christian truth which is always the same, to-day and for ever.

In an Irish paper *Honesty*, it is refreshing to read that some of our neighbours are beginning to see clearly and write clearly on matters that influence Erin's welfare. A representative of the Irish Free State, Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, Minister for External Affairs made the following statement:—

This is a great Catholic country. Our future depends on ourselves, and we might use our present position to obtain recognition for this country as a great Catholic Power.

*Honesty*, in commenting on this pronouncement says that, "Nationalist Ireland has shut out the question of religion in a field which is solely political. The constitution of the Irish Free State has shut out the question of religion as determining the rights of citizenship." We trust that the Irish Free State will see that the priest is not let in again in affairs of this earth, and also that he will be politely told to mind his own business in the other world of which he knows so much and is so eloquent.



In Japan the police now supervise spring-cleaning. In England the police have the power to prevent a Freethought orator from spring-cleaning the soiled Christian trained mind of the man-in-the-street.

Out of 779 people placed on probation last year, says the Deputy-chairman of the London Sessions, only 39 were re-convicted and sent to prison. To make a good story of this, the 740 who kept out of prison ought, of course, to testify that they had all been "converted" to the religion of Christ. Then the parsons would be able to tell the world how wonderfully useful they were socially.

The biggest humanitarian development since the war, is how a Sunday School contemporary describes the movement to provide playing fields for all the children in the land, to enable them to secure—as our contemporary says—"the delight and health of wholesome athletics." For our part, we should describe the Sabbatarian movement to deprive the children of this delight and health every seventh day as the biggest anti-humanitarian edvelopment. We may, of course, be wrong. If so, the reason must be that our pious brethren have so far failed to convince us that wholesome athletics and other rational amusements are undelightful and unhealthy when engaged in on Sunday.

The Rev. J. A. Findlay, M.A., has been giving some talks on the origins of the New Testament. The following is a sample :—

It is vastly important to know that an attempt was made at Gospel writing even before the year 60. During two years Luke was collecting stories of Jesus. When he got to Rome he found Mark had been doing the same thing. The two compared notes. Luke overhauled his Gospel, and wedged in that which he got from Mark. That accounts for such incoherency and disorder as may be found in his Gospel.

The rev. gent. has a gift for story-telling. Kipling must look to his laurels.

Wanted, a new type of hymn. The Rev. W. H. Condy told a meeting of an Association of Baptist Churches that hymns which could be used from the older books became fewer ever year. The Churches would have to be much more careful about the common truthfulness of many things which they invited people to sing. The Churches had no right to ask people to sing false statements or false sentiments. In many hymns were to be found false views of sin, of the world, and of man, views that altogether misrepresented an intelligent view of the Christian faith. What was badly needed was a new type of hymn; a type which would actually be a reverse to the earliest models. It would seem from the rev. gentleman's statements that the God-inspired hymn-writers were inspired all wrong. Poor things, they had the misfortune to be born at a time when Holy Writ meant exactly what it said, and to be born lacking the intelligence to know that it really meant exactly the reverse of what it said. By the blessing of God, we have a Rev. Mr. Condy to correct the stupid hymn-writers foolishness.

Eighty members of the clergy and laity of his diocese have addressed a protest to the Bishop of Leicester against his intention to preach a commemoration service in a Baptist Church. This incident makes the Christian claim—that the teaching of the Nazarene Carpenter will unite the world in Brotherhood—look a bit cock-eyed. We fancy the Leicester Christians would exhibit more brotherhood if their education had been devoid of religious instruction.

Twenty million banana trees have been blown down by a hurricane. The Lord Most High is evidently unfavourable to the "Eat More Fruit" campaign.

A Chinese Christian writes (according to the L.M.S.): "We do not want to quarrel with the country that sent us the London Missionary Society." A rice Christian can always be depended upon to provide a grateful testimonial to the rice provider.

"All the world is a mirror; look pleasant, please," requests a Wayside Pulpit poster. We only wish we could. But now that the Lord's Day-ers have told us we are in danger of losing our Sundays, 'tis hard, very hard, to look joyful.

The Rev. P. M. Medcraft writes in the *Sheffield Independent* regretting that Goole Free Churchmen chose for a tableaux the story of Jephthah and his daughter. Mr. Medcraft finds the selection very distressing because it will give a handle to the critics of religion. "Distressing" is a very mild term to use concerning the story, which will be found in the Book of Judges, and many Freethinkers have suffered imprisonment for describing this story as what it is. Mr. Medcraft says to put this story before the people as part of the Christian faith is little short of blasphemy, and says it merely illustrates the "desperately crude" religion of the age to which it belongs. Quite so; but is it less crude or less revolting than the story of a crucified saviour, or of eternal damnation? Is it less crude even than the belief in gods and devils, of miracles, or the Genesiac story of creation? We quite sympathize with Mr. Medcraft's objection to having this story placed before people, but he should reflect that it is in the book which is placed in the hands of children as the word of God. And he might also add a word of thanks to those Freethinkers who have so far educated him as to cause him to protest against the public performance of, so brutal a tale.

The Bishop of Blackburn finds the outlook rather gloomy, so far as his particular religion is concerned. The other day he told a Darwen audience that people do not hate Christianity to-day, but millions ignore it. The bishop's distress is quite understandable, but we should dearly like him to explain how it is that so many people come to ignore something which is said to be so very valuable to everyone concerned? It looks rather as though these millions are discovering that Christianity does not matter so much after all. The one fatal disease that attacks all religions sooner or later is that of being found out.

In his Diocesan Magazine the Bishop also laments the shortage of clergy, although if there are fewer people who take an interest in Christianity it looks as though so many clergy would not be required. There are at least six parishes in his diocese, he reports, in which there is only one incumbent. We should be inclined to say at a venture that these six parishes have one incumbent too many. But, again, what we should like to know, is in what respect these parishes are worse off, morally or otherwise, than parishes where there are a larger number of the "Black Army"? The Bishop does not say that the people are worse, only that more clergy ought to be there. Which is only another way of saying that the Bishop would like to see more representatives of his firm there. That is an understandable business proposition, but it does not concern anyone but members of the firm in question.

Mr. Stephen Graham has written a book entitled *The Gentle Art of Tramping*, and as the clergy regard everything as grist that comes to the mill, they may find a compliment in the following extract :—

... Also we no longer wear cravats. In fact, a collar and tie may be secreted in a pocket of the knapsack to be unwillingly put on when it is necessary to visit a post office or a bank, a priest or the police.



## To Correspondents.

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

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—E. L. Bishop is; J. Robinson, 2s. 6d.

M. ROSENBERG (Melbourne).—A mere change of words would convert the philosophy of Spinoza into a completely Deterministic and Atheistic system. In the days when religion was less apologetic and less accommodating than it is to-day, this was seen, and on that ground Spinoza was attacked for his Atheism. The *Freethinker* can be sent you direct for 15s. per year.

E. L. BISHOP.—Thanks for name and address. The paper is being sent as requested.

F. G. PORTER.—We are always obliged to those of our readers who send us cuttings. We should often miss important items of news were it not for this being done.

V. NEUBERG.—Glad to hear from you. When next in London please give us a call, but send a card advising of your coming.

C. F. BUDGE.—We quite agree with the writer of the article that thousands of miners throughout the country would be happy to receive the salary enjoyed by the "poor clergy." We have no objection to the clergy being paid for their work—by those who agree with them, but it is curious to find these same parsons preaching the need for more religion to men who cannot earn enough to keep their families in decency, and crying for a minimum of £300 or £400 for themselves.

W. H. DEAKIN.—Subscription received. Christians are not likely to accept your offer to pay a guinea for every Atheist in prison on condition that they would pay a shilling for every Christian in the same institution. They would lose heavily. We have often pointed out that Atheists do not get anything like value for the prison rate they are compelled to pay.

J. CLOSE.—Excellent! We have marked it for reprinting.

R. P. DAVIE.—Received. Will publish so soon as is possible.

F. CLAWSON.—Mr. Cohen undertakes debates only when an opponent is forthcoming who is able to act in a representative capacity.

A. B. MOSS.—Hope you will have a pleasant holiday. Yes, the Conference was quite successful, and delegates and friends heartened for the work during the coming year.

F. G. MATTHIAS.—There were several journals with a title similar to our own during the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thanks for offer of books, but they would be of no use to us.

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

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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.

A lengthy, and quite sympathetic review of a new life of Thomas Paine, by Mary Agnes Best, appears in the *New York Times*, of May 29. We have not yet seen the book, but judging by the review it is one to be read. Miss Best sets herself to answer why it was that Paine, whom she describes as "a hard-working, courageous, public-spirited idealist, whose unalterable purpose was the betterment of mankind, and whose whole career was marked by an inextinguishable love for his fellow beings," was so blackened and blackguarded in both England and America? There are, she says, two reasons for this. English hatred which used every method to blacken the character of the man who despised tyranny, and the onslaughts of Christians who found the "Age of Reason" no less than the inspiration of the devil. Freethinkers have good cause to know what lack of scruple, and of even common decency there is about Christian malignity when it is aroused, and Miss Best's book is, judging from the review, one that should stand by the side of Conway's classic life of the great Freethinker and humanitarian. The work is published under the title of *Thomas Paine; Prophet and Martyr of Democracy*, by Harcourt Brace & Co., New York, at the price of 15s.

The *Chester-le-Street Chronicle* reports at some length a special meeting of the local branch of the N.S.S., in which the delegate to the N.S.S. Conference gave his report. We are glad to see this amount of notice taken of the Branch in the local press. The usual policy is to ignore anything that is done by Freethinkers, and to fill a part of the paper with Church and Chapel news.

Having finished his campaign in Glasgow, Mr. George Whitehead will, on Saturday, June 18, commence a series of meetings in the Chester-le-Street district. The new Branch is working with energy and enthusiasm, and in addition to a reading room, which is open daily, it has now a shop window at its disposal for the display of Freethought publications. Mr. Cohen has promised the Branch a visit during the autumn. Chester-le-Street district is one that he is well acquainted with, and good meetings are expected.

Vaccination is by law voluntary. We are the more astonished, therefore at a communication just received from the Anti-Vaccination Society. A Mr. and Mrs. Macbeth occupied rooms at Peabody's Buildings, E. He has now been given notice by the Magistrate at Old Street Police Court, that he will have to vacate his rooms unless he has his four children vaccinated within 28 days, dating from June 2. The man is unable to find rooms, save at a greatly increased rent, and the police have been granted an order to eject if the children are unvaccinated at the end of the period named. The Society is asking if any of its friends in London know of a family who would be willing to exchange rooms with Mr. Macbeth.

If the facts are as stated, the action of the magistrate is simply scandalous. When the law says that a man may refuse to have his children vaccinated if he believes it to be inadvisable, it is ridiculous to imagine that it contemplates punishing him because he has availed himself of his legal rights. There should be some way of bringing such magistrates to book, and legal advice might be taken as to whether the decision of the magistrate, on such grounds, could not be challenged in a higher court. Such magistrates bring the law into contempt, and if the action is legal, the law deserves the contempt it receives.

Man has the right to think all things, but not to impose his opinion on others.—Machiavelli.



## The Gift of Tongues.

A FEW years ago a Return was presented to the House of Commons, showing the religious beliefs of the prison population of these islands. That curious tribal faith denominated "the Church of England" naturally headed the list. Then there were the "R.C.'s," Jews, and a rag, tag and bobtail, including, if I remember aright, the Quakers. But one felon was returned as "Suffering from *Delirium Tremens*." Only that, and nothing more. But the mind of man is ever searching: his curiosity is insatiable. One legislator, who took his duties seriously (was it the member for Hackney before he "found Christ"?), enquired of the Right Honourable Home Secretary if he would ascertain the religious persuasion of this evil-doer. In due course the answer came. When the bacchic frenzy had passed, it was found that the reveller was not, as one might suppose, a worshipper of Dionysos, but professed a belief in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. On the little card affixed to his cell door would appear the formula "C. of E." I only hope that church was duly grateful that one more sheep, albeit black, was added to its flock.

It is curious, this interest of the state in the spiritual welfare of its reluctant guests. Every day these wards of the State are paraded in different groups and marched off to "Chapel." As far as possible, an attempt is made to cater for the various shades of Christianity, though those professing "fancy religions" do not, and cannot, expect to come off so well as the "C. of E.'s." In a prison where I cooled my heels some years ago, there was even a special chapel built for the "R. C.'s." And though we lacked in those days (conditions may be better now, for all I know) the elementary requisites for personal cleanliness (a tooth-brush, for example) we had all the accessories considered necessary for our devotions. Thus the C. of E.'s had the Authorized Bible, Hymns Ancient and Modern, the Book of Common Prayer, and an uplifting production (again, if my memory does not betray me) called "The Narrow Way." These books, of course, would never do for that other, and older, brand of Christianity called "Roman Catholicism." O dear, no. For these the Prison Commissioners had thoughtfully provided the New Testament only (Douay version), a Catholic hymnal, and a catechism by His Eminence, Cardinal Vaughan. In our solitary meditation in our cells, we thus had abundant "literature" to guide our erring footsteps back to the strait and narrow way.

Yet more curious is the fact that it is part of the punishment of the unruly prisoner that he be deprived of Chapel. One would have thought that this double evil-doer, so to speak, would need more Chapel. But, no: the prisoner who adds to his offence, for which he was convicted, undisciplined behaviour within the prison walls, is sentenced to "Bread and Water" for a certain tale of days. "Bread and Water" carries with it, deprivation of Chapel. And, in truth, it is to most men, already cut off from the majority of their kind, an additional punishment of some severity. Let us consider for a moment what the loss of prison "Chapel" means.

It means, firstly, the absence of the sight and hearing of your fellow-unfortunates. The loss of sight of them is perhaps no great hardship. The clothes of shoddy and drab colour; our rather unkempt appearance; add to the depressing aspect of our features. Fully half of us would not be there were it not for a certain sub-normality in our mental makeup. The face of the feeble-minded is not as a rule attractive. Yet man being a gregarious animal,

almost any human face is better than no human face. But we modern Trappists miss still more the sound of the human voice. Speech in prison is rigorously suppressed. What wonder then that even the more melancholy of the hymns A. & M. are rendered with a gusto that is not to be found in the churches of the unincarcerated. In my prison our chapel had a really fine organ for the C. of E.'s, but the R.C.'s had to be content with a harmonium, operated, not too efficiently I thought, by the prison librarian.

Most of all, however, Chapel is valued because it is there that we get news of ourselves and of the outer world. Some modicum of information we can obtain in the exercise yard. The man in front of you lags in his pace and you walk up quickly so that you are momentarily near each other. But there are risks in this procedure, and the bawling of the lynx-eyed warder soon acquaints you of your offence. In Chapel, on the other hand, though our warders sit among us in little high pews, they are powerless to prevent a real commerce in news.

How is it done? Nothing more simple. Let us suppose that we, 1,200 of us, are singing, led by a powerful organ, "Onward Christian Soldiers." When we prisoners worship our god there is "some" noise. Our guardians can watch us open and shut our mouths, but they cannot hear what each individual is singing. We all know Arthur Sullivan's stirring march. Even Mr. Bernard Shaw's Roman soldiers in his "Androcles" marched to that tune. Bearing, therefore, in mind the rhythm of the hymn, you will see how the trick works.

I look straight in front of me and sing, "What are you in for, mate?" The answer comes with the next line, "Breaking in a crib." "How long did you get, mate?" comes my stroph. Anti-stroph replies, "Eighteen months, with hard." The example I have given is in the nature of *personalia*, but more general news from the outer world reaches us with the new arrivals. Thus, while invoking the guidance of "great Jehovah," we learn that Steve has won the Derby for the third year in succession.

Yes, for us poor prisoners Christianity has its uses. On attaining our freedom, we shall, maybe, have no particularly kindly thoughts for the worldly chaplain, but we shall remember "Chapel" with gratitude. And the more thoughtful of us, regarding the small achievement of our established religion in almost every field, will perhaps be ready to "concede," as the Americans say, a small victory over Satan in an unexpected quarter.

BAYARD SIMMONS (C 2.12).

## Report of Annual Conference, N.S.S.

THE Annual Conference of the N.S.S. was held in the Kenilworth Hotel, Glasgow, on Whit-Sunday, June 5, 1927, the President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the chair.

The following Branches were represented:—Birmingham, Mr. and Mrs. E. Clifford Williams; Chester-le-Street, Mr. Frank Price; Glasgow, Mr. E. Hale and Mr. W. H. MacEwan; Liverpool, Mr. Albert Jackson; Manchester, Mr. Sam Cohen and Mr. F. E. Monks; Nelson, Mr. Jack Clayton; Newcastle-on-Tyne and North London, Miss K. B. Kough; Plymouth, Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook; Shotts, Mr. Charles Horn; South London, Mr. G. Whitehead; South Shields, Mr. Ralph Chapman; West Ham, Mr. R. H. Rosetti; West London, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook.

Among the visitors were:—Mr. P. Bradley, R. Crum and Mrs. Agnes Crum, Messrs. L. Campbell, W. T. Campbell, W. Casey, W. Cummings, W. S. Currie, J. Christie, J. Dodds, J. G. Dobson (Birmingham), T. W. Ewing, J. Flanagan, T. Gillespie, Mrs. M. A. Galbraith, Mrs. E. Hale, Miss Margaret Hale, C. Henderson, F. Lonsdale, H. Lancaster, J. W. MacClean, R. Muir,



J. M. More, J. C. MacKay, F. Mann, Miss Minnie McCall, J. McSeveney, R. Parker, T. Robertson, J. Robertson (Edinburgh), J. Rugg Raeburn, A. Shanks, H. Topp, P. Wilcock.

The President of the Glasgow Branch, Mr. E. Hale, extended to the Officials and delegates a cordial welcome to the City, and singled out for special mention the delegates from the New Branches at Chester-le-Street, Liverpool and Shotts.

The President made brief reference to the last Conference held in Scotland (Glasgow, 1907), and formally opened the meeting.

The Minutes of the 1926 Conference were approved, on the motion of Messrs. Clayton (Nelson, Lancs.) and Price (Chester-le-Street).

The Executive's Annual Report was read and approved.

The Accounts and Balance Sheet were submitted, and after several questions had been asked and answered, were passed.

On the election of the President Mr. Cohen vacated the chair, which was taken by Miss E. M. Vance, General Secretary. Mr. R. H. Rossetti (West Ham), moved: "That Mr. C. Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S." Councillor Monks (Manchester) seconded, and for the thirteenth time Mr. Cohen was elected President. In thanking the Conference, Mr. Cohen said, the Presidency carried a good deal of work and responsibility, and the man who hungered for the post must be peculiarly built. "When first elected I promised to do my best. I have done what I could."

Moving "that Miss E. M. Vance be re-elected General Secretary," Mr. Rossetti paid tribute to the value of her long experience. Mr. Geo. Whitehead seconded, and said that while a comparative new-comer he had been sufficiently long in the Society to appreciate her worth. Mr. Sam Cohen (Manchester) and Miss K. B. Kough (Newcastle) also spoke, and the motion was carried. Miss Vance, in thanking the Conference for her re-election, said that in all probability this would be the last time the Conference would do her that honour.

The President said he felt it his duty to inform the Conference that for some time Miss Vance had been contemplating resignation, and the state of her health with advancing years, had brought that resignation very close. In that event there was the future of Miss Vance to face, and he felt that the Conference, in view of her lengthy and valuable services, would wish the Executive to face its responsibilities in a just and liberal manner. In the event of her retirement the Executive would in due course appoint her successor, leaving it for the next Conference to confirm its choice. The President's remarks met with the warmest approval from all present.

The proposal "that Mr. C. G. Quinton be re-elected Treasurer," was briefly put by Messrs. Rossetti and Monks, and agreed to.

Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook (Plymouth), and Mr. J. A. Hornibrook (W. London), proposed the re-election of the Auditors, Messrs. H. Theobald & Co., and this was carried.

Mr. A. Jackson (Liverpool), proposed, and Mr. Price seconded, "that the nominations for the Executive be moved *en bloc*. This was adopted, and the Executive unanimously re-elected.

Motion No. 9.—"That bearing in mind the number of Freethinkers filling public offices or engaged in public work, this Conference is strongly of opinion that the time has arrived when united and persistent protests should be made against the preferential position given to ministers of religion, and the use of religious ceremonies in public institutions and in purely civic ceremonies," was moved by Mr. Rossetti, who condemned the silence of Freethinkers regarding the religious mummeries at public functions and in all kinds of Institutions.

Mr. Chapman (S. Shields) seconded. Mr. Clifford Williams (Birmingham) suggested that the N.S.S. should issue a pamphlet showing the privileges enjoyed by ministers and other religious functionaries, Mr. Clayton thought our Members of Parliament needed training in these matters. Mr. Hale spoke of the cruelty inflicted on poor people in Hospitals, etc., by the conducting of religious meetings in the wards.

The motion was carried.

Motion No. 10.—"That all Branches be requested to send, for the information of the Executive, a copy of the rules under which the work of the Branch is conducted," was moved by Miss K. B. Kough and seconded by Mr. Dobson (Birmingham), and agreed to. In the course of the discussion it was stated that some of the Branches had no rules. One Branch in this position had an "undesirable" in its ranks, passed a resolution excluding him and there was an end to it. It was suggested that the E.C. might draw up a set of model rules and circulate them to the Branches. This would be of assistance to New Branches.

Motion No. 11.—"That this Conference urges upon the National Secular Society's Executive, the need for a well organized literature distribution, postal and otherwise, which shall have the effect of bringing the objects of the Society before those who are at present unacquainted with them," raised a lengthy and healthy discussion, not on the terms of the motion, but on the best means of giving it effect. Mr. Easterbrook, the proposer, urged that the Society could easily be better known; no year-book, Whittaker's for instance, mentioned it, although it did mention many societies of only parochial importance. Mr. Dobson seconded and the discussion was carried on by Mr. S. Cohen, Mr. Price, Mr. MacEwan (Glasgow), Mr. Rossetti and the President. The question of printing special numbers of the *Freethinker* now and again, or local numbers as occasion arose, was put forward and recommended.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Motion No. 12.—"That this Conference requests the Executive to arrange a series of Freethought Demonstrations in the London area," bore also to the motion next on the agenda, said Mr. Hornibrook in proposing it. Mr. S. Cohen proposed to add the words "and in the provinces." Mr. Easterbrook seconded, and the amendment was, on a vote, carried. The amended motion was carried unanimously.

Motion No. 13.—"That this Conference protests against the repeated endeavours of the London County Council to make the conduct of public meetings in the Parks and Open Spaces under its control increasingly difficult, and regards recent regulations prohibiting the sale of literature and the taking up of collections as a deliberate attack upon the right of public meeting, and authorizes the Executive to take whatever steps it may find advisable to defeat this attempt to deprive the citizens of London of one of the oldest and one of the most important of their rights," was moved by the President on behalf of the Executive, seconded by Mr. MacEwan, and passed. The President said that this was only another move in the game of repression of all opinions other than those of the particular set of bigots who happened to be in office. He detailed the steps taken by the Council in recent years, and the successful counter-steps taken. It might be necessary to raise the question of the County Council's powers in the Law Courts. This had been done before and the L.C.C. had lost. This meant expense, of course, and if it had to be done, and no society was likely to do it other than the N.S.S. Whether it would be worth while remained to be seen.

Mr. Whitehead advocated joint action wherever possible. A good deal depended on the personality of the local police. He was "moved on" by a constable, who was asked, why he did not shift the Salvation Army, "Oh," he said, "they are doing good."

Motion No. 14.—"That this Conference desires to enter the strongest possible protest against the abuse of the machinery of Broadcasting in the interests of sectarian religion, in spite of the very numerous complaints by members of the public, and in spite of the B.B.C. being supported by public money, levied by the Government, and protected by Government regulations; it protests against the issuing of sermons, religious services, etc., by the B.B.C., that are an affront to a civilized intelligence, and asks Freethinkers everywhere to register their protest against this new form of religious endowment," was moved and seconded by Messrs. Clayton and Price, but raised no discussion.



Motion No. 15.—“That this Conference is of opinion that the time has arrived when every form of State endowment of religion should be abolished; it demands that Churches and Chapels shall no longer be relieved from the payment of rates and taxes, thus placing an additional burden upon the rest of the community, but shall be subject to the same taxation as other property; it further protests against the exaction of tithes, royalties, and other charges upon the public purse that are levied for the upkeep of religious establishments, and urges upon speakers the importance of keeping this aspect of the matter before the general public,” was moved by Mr. Clifford Williams. “Freethought is not insular, it is universal,” he said. Giving effect to a resolution such as this was only fair play. “We are not asking for preferential treatment, only for Freethought.”

Mr. Rossetti seconded, and in doing so quoted some striking figures. In West Ham the Chaplains for prisons, etc., cost £1,114 per annum. Romford Board of Guardians, at a cost of several hundreds of pounds, fitted up a place of worship for the Church of England, and were immediately met with a demand from the Non-conformists for a chapel for their people, and another four or five hundred pounds was spent. Turning to the schools, he said that one-seventh of each school-day was devoted to religious instruction. Taking the Teachers' average salary at the low figure of £3 per week, this meant over £22 per teacher annually. It would readily be seen that this cost the country over three million pounds a year.

Motion No. 16.—“That in view of the encouragement given to religious intolerance in this country, and as recent events have shown in our Colonies and Dependencies, and in the United States of America, by the continuance of the laws against Blasphemy, this Conference deplores the fact that no opportunity has presented itself for bringing the Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, introduced to the House of Commons by Mr. George Lansbury, to the test of a Parliamentary discussion, and urges upon Freethinkers of all shades of political opinion to impress upon their representatives, and upon all Parliamentary candidates, the urgency and importance of this measure,” was moved by the President, who described the House of Commons procedure with reference to Private Member's Bills, and especially to the power members have of preventing a Bill passing through the House.

Mr. Jackson seconded, and there was no further discussion.

Motion No. 17.—“This Conference desires to call the attention of Educationalists to the grave danger fronting the country, of a concordat being established between the Nonconformists and the Established Church, with a view to the strengthening of religious education in State-supported schools, and in the avowed readiness of the Government to support such an agreement if it can be reached; it reaffirms its conviction that the only just and wise policy is that of the complete neutrality of the State in all matters of religious opinion, and the complete exclusion of religious teaching from all State-aided educational establishments,” moved by Mr. Williams and seconded by Mr. MacEwan, was passed without discussion.

Motion No. 18.—“That this Conference regrets that in the Army, Navy, and Air Forces, compulsory attendance at religious worship is still the rule, despite repeated protests by many members of these Forces, against attending a religious service in which they do not believe, and calls upon the Government to give to those serving in His Majesty's Forces the same liberty of abstinence that is enjoyed by all civilians,” led to an interesting discussion in which Messrs. Rossetti, Price, S. Cohen and Whitehead took part. Army, Navy and Prison experiences were recited, and Mr. Whitehead's assertion that the greatest freedom was in jail, seemed to startle the audience.

This, the last motion on the agenda, was carried unanimously.

Mr. R. H. Rossetti read a paper on “Freethought in the Near Future,” which will appear later in the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Hornibrook opened the discussion. Conscription during the late war had led to a great extension of authority. Things done in violence have always to be done over again. Geo. Lansbury was only a sincere Christian, and although one was not impressed by the intellectual character of his religious beliefs, it was right to note that he was the first to go bail for J. W. Gott when he was remanded on a charge of Blasphemy. The Christians steal our thunder and we let them. Mr. Rossetti was correct in saying that Freethought had a powerful reaction on social affairs. This was so in such matters as Birth Control and the concern for physical health. During the course of a lecture he had eulogized the Human Body, and people who came to congratulate him were astonished to hear from him that he had got it from a lecture delivered by Ingersoll, in 1889. In Ireland, the Church took care that there was no Birth Control propaganda.

Mr. MacEwan said an endeavour should be made to link up all the bodies who were out for liberty.

The President explained that most parties were at fault. The Labour Party was not directly a Freethinking Party. When Birmingham Libraries banned Blatchford's *God and My Neighbour*, it was Mr. G. W. Foote who took up the matter, took it up in the interests of free-speech. Mr. Blatchford took it lying down! Authority was not restricted to high places. Some people had made party discipline a fetish. At present it ran strongly through every class in Society.

Forty years ago, after the display of military pomp at Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations, his predecessor, Mr. G. W. Foote, predicted that the country was at the beginning of an era of militarism and Imperialism, and subsequent Events had justified Mr. Foote's prophecy. Subsequent events had justified Mr. Foote's prophecy. Mr. MacEwan said Glasgow Trades and Labour Council had decided in favour of Secular Education. The National Boot and Shoe Operatives, had for many years advocated that education from Elementary School to University should be secular.

Mr. F. Lonsdale (Glasgow), said he was probably the only non-catholic in the audience of 3,00, who went to hear Father Ronald Knox in Glasgow, some four or five weeks ago. Father Knox told them that they had no room for *broad-minded Catholics*. Three questions divided them from other people, said the Rev. Father, the Divorce Law, Birth Control and Denominational Teaching.

At a recent conference of Co-operative women, a motion in favour of Birth Control was carried in face of bitter opposition by Catholic women. These instances proved that Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote were probably right in saying that the ultimate fight would be between Faith and Reason, between Catholicism and Freethought.

Mr. Geo. Whitehead addressed the Conference on “Allies of Secularism.” His experiences up and down the country showed him that Secularism was gaining ground. There was everywhere a lack of interest in religion. Two religious effects of the War were apparent. First, a growth in the belief in Immortality. This was encouraged by the Spiritualists, who had exploited the relatives of the men who had been killed, the wives and mothers, the sisters and the sweethearts especially. But this was largely spent. Secondly, the disillusion of war. Great numbers of men saw the sacrifices made, and came home disgusted with the mud, the filth, the waste, the crime of it all. There was a desire for amusement and a desire to make up for the wasted years. Then there was the rise of the Labour Party. In the nature of the case the life here had to be the key-note of the Labour Party's policy, and there was a consequent displacement of belief of God. This displacement was only incidental, it was not the deliberate intention of the Labour Party, nor was it their intention to displace the Freedom of the Will by Economic Determinism. But the displacement was there. The question of unemployment, however, offered the greatest contrast. Before the war, the man got the blame. Loafer, work-shy, parasite, idler, these were the names by which an unemployed man was described. Nowadays Society is alone to blame, the



man is not responsible. Here we have moved from one extreme to the other.

The Pope's infallibility had been displaced by that of a political party. There was great danger to free speech from both Labour and Communist extremists as well as from the Roman Church. You got free speech if you agreed with the other side. He was always being told that he was flogging a dead horse, that Secularism was no use, but after all there was no personal freedom possible without intellectual freedom.

The President said it was the result of bad sociological training. There had been for centuries a tradition in England that minorities had rights and ought to get fair play, ought to get a sporting chance. It was at present being taught that a minority ought to seize power by force, and hold it if they could till they had set their system going and had made it the established order.

Mr. Rossetti was of opinion that all parties are equally guilty.

Mr. T. Robertson (Glasgow), compared the Communists with the Autocrats. He drew on his own experiences over forty years, and said that the conduct of opponents at election and other meetings was most obnoxious.

Mr. Hale said there was no tradition of fair play among the Catholics, from among whom a percentage of the Communist and Labour were at present.

Mr. J. W. MacLean pointed out that at the Glasgow Education Authority Elections (under the Proportional Representation system) the R.C. electors were "ordered" to vote first for the R.C. candidates and give second preference to the Labour candidates.

The President thanked the Glasgow Branch for the arrangements that had been made, everything had gone smoothly, and the visiting delegates had felt quite at home. The Glasgow Branch President briefly replied. There was a hearty response to Mr. Parker's call for a vote of thanks to Mr. Cohen, and another successful Conference was at an end.

### The God Idea—As Conceived by a Toronto Morality Officer.

On March 15 last, the Spring Assize Court at Toronto, Canada, assembled before Judge Coatsworth and a Grand Jury for the trial of one, Ernest V. Sterry, Publisher of *The Christian Enquirer*, for "Blasphemous Libel," and for which offence he was found guilty and sentenced to 60 days' imprisonment, with subsequent deportation. A brief report of this trial and the sentence imposed appeared in the *Freethinker* of April 10.

Inspector McKinney, of the Morality Department, gave evidence on behalf of the prosecution, and in response to one of the pleas put forth for the defence, viz., that the published matter complained of referred only to Jehovah, the God of the Jews, and not to the god as conceived by the modern Christians, declared that it was "all the same," and that "THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD."

Inspector McKinney did not define his personal conception of the Christian God: it would have been much more interesting had he done so, but for his education and enlightenment a list of gods, ancient and modern, was compiled by the writer a short time ago, and mailed to him. With the belief that this list may prove of information to many Deists and Orthodox Christians, it is reproduced below:—

- RA.—Egyptian Sun God.
- THOR.—Egyptian God (Creator of the heavens).
- NU.—Egyptian God (Creator of the seas).
- SEB.—Egyptian God (Creator of the earth).
- Authority: Papyrus of Ani: Egyptian Book of the Dead.
- OSIRIS.—God of the Egyptians and modern Supreme Deity.
- ISIS.—Goddess of the Egyptians called "the Goddess of departed souls."
- HORUS.—Saviour of the Egyptians and Son of Isis.
- BRAHMA.—God of the Hindoo Brahmans and Supreme Creator of the universe. Authority: Hindoo's Bible 'Upanishads.'
- CHRISTINA.—Immaculate son of Brahma: God and Saviour. Authority: Bhagavat Gita (Purana).

BUDDHA.—God of the Hindoo Buddhists. Authority: The Tripitaka.

AHARA-MAZDA and ORMUZD.—Supreme Beings of the Persians and creators of the heaven and earth. Authority: Zend Avesta.

MITHRAS.—Another God of the Persians, called "The Logos"—saviour of mankind.

ODIN.—God of the Scandanavians.

QUIRINIUS and BACCHUS, etc.—Roman gods.

ASTARTE.—God of the Syrians, and another creator of the universe.

ZEUS and DIONYSUS.—Gods of the Greeks.

CODOM.—God and crucified Christ of the Siamese.

AMARILLO.—God of the Mexican Indians, called "Stone spirit," or the God which could not be pierced with swords or arrows.

VITAOUENTROU.—God of the Patagonians (and another supreme creator of the universe).

HUITZILOPOCHTLE.—God of the Mexicans.

FO (alias Buddha), SANAPO, PATNOS, SHIN MOO.—Gods and Goddess of the Chinese and Japanese (other, of course than Confuscians), etc., etc.

Now, for fear, through bigotry, Christians may still persist that the foregoing are merely "titles," "names," or "nomenclatures," and that after all they still represent but one Diety, this contention falls to the ground as it is proven that they are in fact different, distinct and separate gods, because:—*Firstly*, the conception of them commenced to be evolved in the human pagan mind at different ages; and likewise, the conception of many were abandoned at different ages. *Secondly*, their natures, their works (or alleged works) and their temperaments, their laws, etc., widely contrast. For example:—

JEHOVAH (the Jewish God) is believed by all devout Christians to have commanded, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me"; whereas it is written in the Purana of the Hindoos (many hundreds of years prior to the Christian era) that the

SUPREME BRAHMA said "I am the same to all mankind; whoever worships any God, involuntarily worships me."

Then again:—

JESUS CHRIST (it is written in Luke xix. 27) said: "But those of mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

BUDDHA (according to the Tripitaka) said: "There shall be no blood spilt in my name."

Again, in the Brahman's version of the story of the Fall of man (to be found in the Hindoo's Bible, written between 3,000 and 4,000 years before the Canon of the Christians—instead of the former incident taking place in the garden of Eden, in Palestine, it purports to have transpired on the Island of Ceylon) the Supreme Brahma said to Adami, after Heva's frank confession to having yielded to temptation and persuasion soon after their being placed on earth, "I will spare you both and watch over you and your children for ever."—(Authority—Upinishads).

Whereas Jehovali (the god of the Jews), so we are told, said:—

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it,' cursed is the ground for thy sake; In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return."

And unto the woman:—

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow," etc.

Quite possibly, however, the Christian would prefer an authority from his own Bible as to the existence of a plurality of Gods, and on this assumption he is referred to the first verse of the 82nd Psalm, which says "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods."

Again, in Genesis iii. 22, it is written, "And the Lord God said, 'Behold the man is become as one of us,'" referring to Adam. So that if Adam could become a God, as we are told he did, surely it is feasible to assume that most any man might be liable to become deified with the aid of knowledge!

In the face of fact and reason, can the Christian still insist there is only one God?

Toronto.

STANLEY LLOYD.



## Society News.

## GLASGOW S.S. AND SHOTTS BRANCH N.S.S.

DURING the past fortnight the Glasgow Branch, for the first time, held a series of open-air meetings. The meetings were addressed by Mr. Whitehead, and were so successful that probably open-air propaganda will be a regular part of the work of the Branch in the future.

The meetings in Glasgow were held in West Regent Street, a few yards from one of the busiest streets of the city. The public was evidently much attracted by Mr. Whitehead's subject, and his advocacy of it. Out-door meetings in Glasgow usually start at about eight o'clock. There were some forty or fifty people waiting before 7.30 every evening for Mr. Whitehead to begin. When the meeting finished the crowd was seven or eight deep. Many persons, some of whom had never heard of Secularism before, came night after night. The sale of literature was good, and questions came thick and fast. The platform was twice occupied by opponents. Once, by an elderly man, who claimed to speak with personal knowledge of the beneficial work done by missionaries in China and elsewhere: once, by a young Bible-student from Africa. The opposition was courteously and adequately dealt with.

Mr. Whitehead paid a visit to the Shotts Branch. His audience was larger than any open-air speaker has lately had in the Shotts; and, in spite of the financial distress of the people there, the literature sold well.

During the fortnight many applications for membership forms were received, and some of these have already been handed back to be forwarded to the General Secretary. When the meeting each night was over, the crowd broke up into small groups, discussing what they had heard. The Glasgow Branch should be able to grow a fine crop of Secularists on the new ground Mr. Whitehead has prepared for them. There is much scope for propaganda in Glasgow and district, and the people welcome it. But Mr. Whitehead's visit was all too short.

Assistance at the meetings in Glasgow was given by Mrs. Galbraith, Miss Hale, and Messrs. Campbell, Christie, Cumming and Mackay. Their work contributed in no small measure to the success of the "Mission." The visit to the Shotts was arranged by Mr. Horn, the Branch Secretary. Thanks is due to Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie for their kind hospitality.—F. M.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.

## INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe, "Religion and Morality in America."

## OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Lecture by Leonard Ebury.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Lecture by Leonard Ebury.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30, 3.0 and 6.30, Speakers, Messrs. Saphin, Ratcliffe, Hart, Botting and Baker. Thursday, 7.30, Speakers, Messrs. Saphin and Botting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Lecture by G. Newton; (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Lecture by Mr. S. Hanson. Wednesday, June 22, at 8.0: Peckham Rye, Mr. S. Hanson; Clapham Old Town, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH, N.S.S. (Outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Lecture by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Darby. 6.0, Messrs. Jackson and Hyatt. Freethought Lectures every Wednesday and Friday from 7.30 to 9.30. Various Lecturers.

## COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (West Regent Street): Thursday, June 23, at 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY BRANCH of the N.S.S.—Ramble to Mearns Castle. Meet at Eastwood Toll at 12 o'clock prompt.

SHOTTS BRANCH N.S.S. (See local advertisements for meeting place): 6.30, Mr. Fred Mann.

MR. G. K. HALLIDAY, a member of the R.P.A., and of the N.S.S., is anxious to get in touch with the many friends and admirers of the work of Mr. Joseph McCabe. He will appreciate it if they will write to him at 82, Bridge Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

## HOLIDAYS IN FRANCE.

CENTRAL HOTEL, 43-45, Rue de la Marine, Le Portel, near Boulogne. Highly recommended. Excellent cooking. Modern Comfort. Good Bathing. Special Terms for June.—Valentin Picard, Proprietor. (Please mention this paper).

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Secretary :

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### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

**S**ECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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