

A PLOT UNMASKED.

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

Views and Opinions.

A Plot Unmasked.

EVER since the B.B.C. instituted its Sunday services I have protested against the Corporation setting itself up as an avowed Christian propagandist, and excluding any deliberate criticism of Christianity. And now it has just dawned upon me that I may, after all, have made a huge mistake. Instead of the B.B.C. being a friend of Christianity it may actually be one of its most deadly enemies. Its aim may not be the preservation of Christianity but its destruction. Sir John Reith may not be the first class bigot I have so often taken him to be, but a master of supercraft undermining the power of the Christian religion through the agency of its own advocates. He may be using them as Plutarch says the Spartans used their drunken slaves—to impress upon the youth of their people the beauties of sobriety. He may even be an agent of Moscow, and with Viscountess Snowden working hand in glove with the atheistic Bolsheviks.

I am attracted to this conclusion because of the most recent announcement of the B.B.C. in connexion with Christianity. It intends launching a campaign in favour of the abolition of pulpit English. It says that parsons must be brought to read the Bible and to preach and pray in the English of properly educated men and women. The English of the pulpit must be the English of the public platform, of the home, of the conduct of everyday affairs. On the face of it the proposal seems harmless enough; but, then, so doubtless did the Spartan's slaves while enjoying the delirious happiness of being made drunk fail to realize that their exhibition was intended as an aid to abolish drunkenness. So did the Russian Bolsheviks launch their crusade against the Church in the name of the uplifting and purifying of public life. It is an old trick of the devil to appear as an angel of light. Harmless, even praiseworthy as Sir John Reith's action appears to be, it may yet be one of the most deadly attacks on the Christian

Church that has been made since the establishment of the Copernican system.

* * *

A Pretended Reform.

Consider what it is that makes the parson distinguishable from other men. He is not marked out from others by being wiser, or better, or wittier, or better educated, or as being more useful. He comes among us as the representative of a party unknown, he acts as a leader to a land also unknown, and he writes his own credentials. Let him dress as other men, and speak as other men, and he will be judged as other men, with some risk of being classified among the sellers of gold bricks, confidence operators and hawkers of Spanish treasure. So, in virtue of that instinct of self-preservation which leads individuals and institutions to fight for their perpetuation, parsons have been driven to elaborate a particularistic technique of speech and manner and dress. If a parson is to talk as do other men, how are we to distinguish him from other men, and, more terrible still, are we not likely to judge him as we do other men? Of course, there is left the dress, but we take it that once the priestly lingo goes the dress will not be long before it follows. For dress and speech have been evolved together, they go together. The speech goes with the dress, the dress matches the speech. They fit in with each other as the fool's cap fits in with the fool's bells. For the clergy to speak as do other men and to dress as do other men, would be as devastating as it would be to put the members of the House of Commons through a stiff intelligence test. Even the people who can be fooled all the time must be surrounded with the machinery of illusion.

* * *

The Hand of Moscow.

I see by last Sunday's *Weekly Dispatch* that their Moscow correspondent (who probably lives permanently in the neighbourhood of Streatham) has discovered that the League of the Godless intends launching a large scale atheistic propaganda in Great Britain. But Moscow is nothing if it is not artful, and the British people—according to the picture of them drawn by our "patriotic" press and our leading politicians are nothing if they are not simple and easily gulled. And I am left wondering whether this move of Sir John Reith's may not have been at the direct orders of Moscow. For it strikes at the very life of religion, and in a way that is quite in keeping with the scientific methods of Atheistic Russia. The condition of life for every organism, social or individual is harmony with environment. If the natural state of things is such as to provide a suitable environment, as is the case with wild animals in their native habitat or religion under primitive conditions, then artificial culture is unnecessary. But

if the environment is not primitive, if the conditions are not such as the wild animal has been habituated to, then artificial forms must be provided. In the case of animals this is done by modification of temperature, etc., in the case of religion by the creation of an environment which approximates to the original one. This is the whole significance of the special dress, the special language, the peculiar enunciation of the clergy, or the retention of an archaic form of language, all of which figure in religion. One sense of the word "sacred" has always been that of something set apart, and in modern life the farther removed religion is from scientific ideas and actual knowledge, the more significant becomes the use of "sacred."

Now consider the tremendous influence of an excision of a peculiar enunciation, of special forms of speech, of special dress, in a word, of a special "atmosphere" where religion is concerned! Think of what a dropping of even all the "thees" and "thous" and "thys" in religious readings and in prayers would mean. It is one thing, for example, to pray:—

We who are this day gathered together in thy holy house pray thee that thou who hast out of thy loving-kindness so often in time succoured thy erring children will again take mercy on them and will send down upon the parched earth the gentle and fructifying rain, so that our crops may be restored and the hearts of thy servants gladdened. And if this thing be done it shall be as a sign of thy goodness and greatness, and thine shall be the glory for ever and ever.

And this, spoken as it would be spoken in an ordinary gathering of ordinarily educated men and women:—

This meeting has been called, Lord, to consider the question of the shortage of rain. We all believe that the control of the weather rests with you, and we are asking you that in view of the wide distress prevailing over large areas of the country in consequence of your withholding the necessary rain, that you cause it to fall in suitable quantities where it is so badly required. The whole country would be delighted if this matter received your attention, and it would be used to advertise your goodness and so make your own position more secure.

Let anyone take any prayer he likes and translate it into ordinary everyday language, and see how soon the glamour will be lost. Religion if it is to live must act as a drug, not as a stimulant. It must, so far as it is believed in, lift the believer, temporarily at least, out of the present environment and give him an environment more suitable to religious beliefs. That is why a scientific, a philosophical, a political meeting may be held anywhere, dealt with in ordinary language and criticized in the ordinary way, while religion must be taught in a special environment, talked about in a special language, and enforced by men who are specially marked off from the rest of community. The B.B.C. appears to be attacking religion under the disguise of preserving it.

* * *

The Aim of the B.B.C.

In the light of my suspicion that the B.B.C. handling of Christianity is part of a Bolsheviki plot to discredit religion in this country, other things against which I have previously protested wear a different aspect. There is, for example, the Sunday sermons. Never in the history of preaching has there been a *selected* series like them. Of course there have been foolish preachers, as, for example, the Bishop of London, who even when he slips into sense never allows the hearer to fail to realize that he is by nature silly.

But this kind of man has not been *picked* out to the extent of fifty-two every year. The subtlety of Sir John Reith in his attack on Christianity lies in the fact that he has so arranged things that he has forced upon all the preachers the inevitability of stupidity. The preachers had to represent all Christian sects, with the result that each one was prohibited from saying anything with which any of the others might disagree. The consequence has been a series of platitudinous sermons, a Sunday cascade of clotted nonsense unbroken by a single gleam of anything approaching intelligence, that is unique in the whole Christian record. Preachers have been forced to dwell upon such valuable things as assurances that there will never be peace in Europe until the nations stop fighting, that the way to have generosity common is to do away with greed, and that the world can only be saved by following Jesus. Now it is odds against this being accidental. The law of probabilities seem against it. There are plenty of parsons who could have given better sermons. Why were they not selected? Or if they were selected why were the conditions of the preaching such as made it impossible, or difficult, for them to give a sermon to which even an intelligent non-believer might listen with interest?

I can see, at present, only one satisfactory explanation. Sir John Reith found himself in possession of machinery which would enable him to enter the homes of hundreds of thousands of people, large numbers of whom do not read the *Freethinker*, and who never come into actual contact with Freethought. There is nothing in their immediate environment to set them doubting the truth of religion or the value of the clergy. So, probably bearing in mind the way in which the Spartans used their slaves to educate their children into sound habits, the B.B.C. saw the opportunity of using the clergy to the same end. It has been saying to the public at large, and under guise of helping Christianity, "Here are selected representatives of the Christian Church of to-day. Look at them, listen to them, note the stream of sheer vacuity which flows from them, weigh their addresses against the intellectual quality of the speeches you hear from sociologists, scientists, artists, etc., and then say whether placing in positions of authority such men as the Christian clergy of to-day is not a slur upon our civilization?"

The more I dwell upon this theory the more probable it becomes. It might even explain the letter of Viscountess Snowden with which I dealt the other week. For that letter was so naked in its evasiveness, its shallowness, and its showing up of the religious apologist, that on reconsideration it might easily be taken as an endeavour to discredit the religious case. We ought also to bear in mind that Viscountess Snowden is a Socialist, and thus has a plain affinity with Socialist Russia. But I do not think Russia will welcome so clumsy an advocate. It demands something more subtle—something in the line of Sir John Reith. I must confess that for a long time he deceived me, but that article in the *Dispatch*, that Moscow is planning a large scale Atheistic propaganda in Great Britain opened my eyes. If I had not written against the B.B.C. I might in the interests of Freethought in this country have remained silent. But I desire to be just above all things, and therefore I wish to put the truth of the B.B.C.'s religious Sunday services before the public. For note that after some years getting the clergy into line, the B.B.C. publicly proclaims its intention of trying to strip them of their artificial aids and holding them up to the public as they are. It is brutal as only Moscow can be brutal. It is like presenting

a faded beauty using either paint or powder and forcing her to stand before the public under a strong electric light. The B.B.C. proposes stripping all defences from religion and parading it before the public in all its primitive savagery. It is too cruel!

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Holy Men and Housing.

"Society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him."

Emerson.

"We may be so much in the habit of bowing as at last to be unable to stand upright."—*Landor*.

"Vain are the thousand creeds."—*Emily Bronte*.

SPEAKING in the House of Lords on the debate on the Sunday Entertainments Bill, the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose salary as Primate of the English State Church is £15,000 per annum, with two palaces and a town-house, spoke the following soothing words:—

It is no use urging the desirability of a quiet Sunday at home to people who are cribbed, cabin'd, and confined in one room.

It is quite apparent from this outburst that even folks in the most exalted ecclesiastical positions do sometimes gain an inkling of the happenings of the real world around them. "Fine words," however, as the farmer's wife remarked, "butter no parsnips," and it is the more to be regretted that His Grace's utterance was that of a voice crying in the wilderness. Far otherwise are the raucous calls of those thousands of the "Lord's anointed" who urge their congregations to oppose Sunday relaxation, in any form, and who profess to believe that the world is but a vale of tears.

The unpleasant fact that so large a proportion of their fellow citizens are forced to live in single rooms at exorbitant rents does not appear to interest the bulk of the clergy at all. Overcrowding is a most terrible evil, and should never be tolerated in a civilized country. But the thousands of priests never bother their saintly heads with such matters. They interest themselves with jealous and hysterical girding at every other institution which caters for the leisure hours of working people. Sunday cinemas and charabancs, golf and gardening, are anathema to them, and excite the whole wide vocabulary of theological abhorrence. But the recent utterance of His Grace of Canterbury lets a very large cat out of the bag.

Only a month ago the Bishop of London's Housing Committee's Report was presented to the London Diocesan Conference, and from this document we learn of the large and rapidly increasing income drawn by the State Church of England from ground rents in Paddington, London. This is one of the blackest spots in darkest London, and the housing conditions in this district have been described by the Bishop of London himself as "ghastly" and the legal conditions described by him as "unfair," neither of which are overstatements.

Slums exist only because somebody makes money out of them. All the beastliness and filth associated with overcrowding simply springs from greed on the part of the owners. In this particular instance the owner is the formidable and wealthy corporation known as the Ecclesiastical and Church Estate Commissioners. Who are these persons? They include the two Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican Church, three deans, five Cabinet Ministers, the Lord Chief Justice, three other judges, and a few laymen nominated by the Crown and the Archbishop

of Canterbury, the whole forming a pleasing mixture of Church and State. Their revenues are vast and variable, ranging from coal royalties and tithes to ground rents, the gross capitalized value not falling far short of £100,000,000. These Ecclesiastical Commissioners came into existence by the will of Parliament, the Act being passed in 1836. All the old endowments of the bishoprics and cathedral chapters of the Bad Old Days were transferred to these Commissioners, and they, out of these enormous revenues, pay the stipends of the present-day bishops, deans, and chapters. The balance, a large one, is paid into a common fund, and this is partly used to assist parishes where assistance is required, and partly in payment of pensions to the clergy.

During the past two generations bishoprics have been multiplied at a really alarming rate, and the higher ecclesiastics of this State-manufactured Church form a very much more numerous body than was needed in the Ages of Faith, when the entire population was forced into places of worship by harsh penalties in case of absence. This pleasing anomaly is due to the fact that the town properties controlled by the Church had generally and enormously increased in value, and the priests, true to type, were anxious to share the spoils. This is not to put the case too strongly, for it is idle to pretend that a Church having a large interest in the tyranny of the tithe, and also a financial interest in slum property, would be squeamish in such matters.

The Medical Officer of Health for the London County Council, has estimated the number of unhealthy underground tenements in the Metropolis at not less than 30,000. It is a grievous thing that so many of these insanitary dwellings should be in property owned by the State-aided Church of England. It is the bitterest of all comments on one of the wealthiest churches in all Christendom that its priests should make a comfortable living from the misery of ordinary citizens.

It is idle to talk of the bare pittance of the wretched clergy. What right has this Anglican Church to make its priests rely for their income upon royalties on coal, upon ground-rents of slum-property, and upon the tithe-tax upon agriculture? This particular Church is "by law established," and by law it can equally be disestablished and disendowed. Parliament made it and Parliament can also unmake it.

In the Ages of Faith practically the whole population of this country was professedly Christian. To-day only one person in ten attends a place of worship, more or less regularly. Of this number only a percentage can be claimed by this so-called Church of England. Its vast revenues are actually increasing in value owing principally to the rise in value of urban property, and this extra money is shared by thousands and thousands of priests. The Church of England has outgrown its usefulness, and outstayed its welcome. Soon it will be a Church of priests, rather than of the people, whom it, hypocritically, pretends to represent. Parliament imposed this State-aided Church upon the people of this country. Some day Parliament will devote its attention to the drafting of an Act disestablishing and disendowing this relic of the Middle Ages. There is need for it. Unless priests can teach and practice humanity, they are worse than useless in the modern world. The Bishops and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners could take advice from Shakespeare's lines:—

"Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel;
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just."

As it is, these professed descendants of the legendary "twelve disciples" resemble the greedy boy with the apple, who, when his brother asked him for the core, replied: "Get out! There ain't going to be no core."

MIMNERMUS.

The Gospel of Pain.

"Decadence conquered *in hoc signo—God on the Cross*—is the frightful concept behind this symbol not as yet understood? All that suffers, all that hangs on the cross is divine . . . Christianity was a victory, a nobler type of character was destroyed by it—Christianity has been the greatest misfortune hitherto of mankind." (Nietzsche. *The Antichrist*. p. 326.)

ACCORDING to modern exponents of Christianity, especially among the Protestant Churches, the most characteristic and distinguishing quality of Christianity is love. It is claimed to be *par excellence* the religion of love.

So sedulously and persistently has this view been expounded, by innumerable sermons and books, that it is now regarded, by Christians, as unquestionable as the multiplication table. It was by love—so it is claimed—that the early Christians overcame the ancient pagan world, sunk in sin and iniquity.

But the truth is that this view of Christianity, at least, to the extravagant extent to which it is now carried, is very modern. It practically, in its full development, coincides with the decline in the belief in eternal punishment. When people could no longer be driven to Church by the fear of hell, then they must be attracted by the candy of love. The substitution has not been a success as the progressive falling off of Christian believers testifies.

What was it, in the first instance, that this new religion came to teach the ancient world? It commences with the sudden apparition, from the wilderness, of the uncouth savage John the Baptist, clad in camels hair, girdled with a leather belt; crying "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2) and adding the sinister warning "flee from the wrath to come." Fitting forerunner, and symbol, of the coming doom of that immense achievement, after ages of endless toil, of the great Græco-Roman civilization with its aftermath of a thousand years of Christian Dark Ages.

Then we have the advent of Jesus Christ. Now what was there, in the teaching of the Gospel, to cause it to spread over the Roman Empire and prevail over the many other competing religions that came flooding in from the East at that time? The Christian answer to this question is that Christianity triumphed because of its superior ethical teachings, especially as regards its command to love one another.

Now there is nothing new in the moral teachings of the New Testament, except when they go to ridiculous, or wicked extremes, such as the command to love your enemies, which Jesus did not practice, and the command to hate your dearest relations, which apparently he did.

But there was something new in Christianity that distinguished it from the others, namely, that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and that the world would shortly come to an end. In fact, some of those who stood listening to the discourse of the new prophet, so he asserted, would witness, and take part in the affair. Then there would follow the Judgment Day, when the righteous, the few who had chosen the narrow and difficult path, would be rewarded in Heaven, while the great majority who had chosen the broad, easy, and pleasant way, were des-

tinued to dwell for ever in eternal torment with the devil and his angels.

It was to the terror inspired by this terrible picture of the after life, that Christianity owed its success. None of the other competing religions had anything half so effective as this. Terror seized upon the ignorant multitude, among whom it was first propagated. There was a *saue qui peut*, a panic spread, everyone rushed to the new faith to save themselves from the horrors of the red prison house. It was not love, but fear, that gave Christianity the victory. As Lange, briefly, but accurately summed the matter up, the teaching of Christianity "unhinged the ancient world."¹ Gibbon, in the famous fifteenth chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, observes:—

The careless polytheist, assailed by new and unexpected terrors against which neither his priests nor his philosophers could afford him any certain protection, was very frequently terrified and subdued by the menace of eternal tortures. His fears might assist the progress of his faith and reason; and if he could once persuade himself to suspect that the Christian religion might possibly be true, it became an easy task to convince him that it was the safest and most prudent part that he could possibly embrace.

As the same great historian further remarks; with mordant irony, when the only condition attached to the gift of eternal happiness, was that of adopting the faith and precepts of the new gospel, "it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman Empire. The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us an adequate notion."

There is another doctrine peculiar to Christianity that has exercised great influence, namely, that the pain and suffering endured in this life will be compensated in the life to come. It seems that there is a sort of debtor and creditor account opened with every individual born into the world. On the creditor side is entered all the pain and suffering endured, and on the debtor side, all the happiness and joy enjoyed. If you have been well off, and have had a good time on earth, then you have had your share, and are in for it on Judgment Day. If, on the other hand, you have been poor and had a rough time, full of grief and trouble, then you are entitled to a mansion in the skies and live happy ever after. Jesus is reported as teaching, according to the sixth chapter of Luke: "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." Blessed are ye when men shall hate you . . . Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven . . . But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation . . . Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."

Again, when Lazarus, the beggar full of sores, dies, he is carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. But the rich man Dives, after his death, finds himself suffering torments in the flames of hell, and beseeches Abraham to allow Lazarus to bring him a single drop of water. "But Abram said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and otherwise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (Luke xvi. 25.)

This teaching, as to the sanctity of suffering, exercised great influence, not only upon the early

¹ Lange. *History of Materialism*. Vol. I. p. 170.

Christians, but right through the Christian ages down to the present time. It accentuated the lack of interest in life created by the expectation of the sudden approaching end of the world; and when, as time passed on, and this fear became less acute—although it never died out—the teaching as to the sanctity of suffering and pain remained to remind men of the uselessness and worthlessness of this earthly life, which should be regarded as a pilgrimage through a vale of grief and suffering and a preparation for the life to come. This has been the teaching of all the greatest of the Christian teachers through the ages.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Biology and Life.

We shall frequently find that in some schools of philosophy the nomenclature of science has quite a different meaning from that used by the scientist in the laboratory. Indeed, when the latter himself is drawn into philosophical discussion he, too, is apt to forget the lessons of his research, and to share in the jargon which has little or no connexion with it.

Take the term "life," for instance. In science life is a concept; in vitalist philosophy a principle. The difference is important. A scientific concept is a label for a class of properties which can be investigated; a principle is something beyond analysis, something final and irreducible, a basic existent, indivisible and fundamental. And in order to give life the semblance of such, "life" in the scientific laboratory becomes "Life" in the philosophical system. In the capital letter we see the twentieth century attenuation of what the Malanesians call mana.

"Life," says the type of philosopher we have in mind, "is individual . . . and each living being is indivisible, a whole not constituted of parts" (the quotation is from Wildon Carr).

Now if the words in italics were actually true, daily experiments by students in physiological and pharmacological laboratories would be rendered impossible, and the whole progress of biology has been made possible by the implicit rejection of Carr's doctrine. The physiologist

takes the living machine to pieces and studies the properties of its several parts. The experimental embryologist can put it together again. (Prof. L. Hogben.)

A well known example is the removal of a frog's heart from the body, perfusing it with a suitable saline to keep its heat, and then arresting, restarting and accelerating its rhythm by changing the constituents of the saline medium. Here is an organ displaying properties of living matter (*i.e.*, being "alive") when the rest of the body has ceased to do so. Similarly

it is possible to study properties of nerve, muscle, the cell membrane, absorption of food in the gut, oxidation of nitrogenous materials in the liver, etc., as isolated events (*ibid.*).

"But," pursues our philosopher, "you cannot re-assemble the living system, as you can a motor car." Yet even here the analogy with the machine holds, this despite the infancy of science. The work of Ross Harrison has shown that the head end of a tadpole of one species can be grafted on to the tail end of a tadpole of another species, while five-legged and two-legged newts are now manufactured in the laboratory.

Life, then, is not a unity; the organism not a finished product. Metamorphosis is a striking example, and is mechanically conditioned. There is

no need to resort to a purposive agency anywhere; at the will of the scientist tadpoles may be permanently detained in the larval state; at his will their change into the adult may be accelerated or prolonged.

In the normal tadpole the change is initiated by the liberation of the thyroid secretion. Thus the removal of the rudimentary thyroid gland in the frog embryo will produce a thyroidless tadpole, one which will never mature. A similar result can be obtained by depriving the tadpole of iodine, which normally is used by the thyroid gland to effect metamorphosis: again we have a permanent tadpole.

On the other hand, the American salamander, *Amblystoma tigrinum* has a characteristic larval state. It inherits a deficient thyroid gland, which cannot utilize the surrounding iodine, and consequently its form normally remains larval. The biologist can produce a mature, land-dwelling salamander in a few weeks by feeding with thyroid gland. Again the scientist interferes with "Life." He conditions external agencies which will modify, quicken, arrest; and the analogy holds good with human beings (dieting, etc.). Where is the inaccessible "principle of Life?"

Life, then, is not something permanently removed from scientific treatment: it is more and more found to be determinably conditioned. What, then, is it? The definition here used is from *The Nature of Living Matter*: the only intelligible significance of the word "life" in scientific discussion is to denote collectively the characteristic properties of living matter, such as receptivity, reactivity and reproduction. Life is thus treated as a concept; not as a principle or unity.

Is there any property of living matter which is intrinsically incapable of being imitated in the laboratory from non-living materials? The whole development of biology goes to suggest that there is not, and the onus of proof lies with the vitalist.

It is not so much a question of whether science actually will produce a *homo sapiens*, but whether there is anything to make such an achievement intrinsically impossible, *i.e.*, whether there is in "life" something inaccessible to scientific treatment. As Prof. A. V. Hill says:—

Although such experiments are not possible on men or animals or plants as may be made on non-living objects, there is little evidence—indeed, I would be bold and say there is no evidence—that such living creatures can in any manner or degree evade the ordinary laws of mechanics, chemistry and physics.

Thus, by refusing to accept a conception of life which removes it except in degree from the ordinary practice prevailing in the laboratory, the biologist is making an important contribution to philosophy, and one which may serve to correct impressions made by *physicists* like Eddington and Lodge, and by writers like Carr, who spent the bulk of his adult life on the Stock Exchange.

Modern biological progress is sufficient alone to demolish both the Vitalist type of philosophy and the Christian plan of survival. The question, "do the dead live?" becomes as irrelevant as "does an extinguished light burn?"

G. H. TAYLOR.

Be your character what it will, it will be known; and nobody will take it upon your word.—*Chesterfield.*

Education is a cheap defence of nations.—*Burke.*

I say discuss all and expose all—I am for every topic openly.—*Walt Whitman.*

Acid Drops.

The *Church Times* is very uneasy over the Stiffkey case. It thinks that instead of bringing all the cases of alleged misconduct before the court the Chancellor might have had just one or two only, since that would have been enough. It was also a mistake to bring the case to London, since that gave increased opportunities for publicity. Above all "a word of real sympathy from the judge for the ideal which, at least in the beginning of his career, Mr. Davidson had set before himself would have raised the *Church* in the opinion of the masses." The italics are ours, and it gives the reason for what the *Church Times* has to say. It means that if the trial had been accompanied by the usual sloppy and false talk about the high ideals of the Christian Church, and if the charges had been limited to one or two, or if the trial had not had so much publicity, nothing would have been done to lower the prestige of the Church. The imposture of the lofty moral influence of the Christian Church must be kept going at all costs. But if the accused man had been a layman, we wonder whether the *Church Times* would have held that the trial should not have had publicity, or the offences whittled down to one or two, or the judge have paid a stupid compliment to the high ideals which the accused man once held? We think not.

One important consideration the *Church Times* altogether omits. This is that the high ideals of the Christian Church, the all-saving power of Jesus Christ, does not, if the verdict be a sound one, appear to have had much power over Mr. Davidson. The power of Jesus for good appears to have, as usual, most influence over those who are able to do without it.

As we anticipated and predicted the Stiffkey case is followed by a demand by the Church and its press for new privileges for the clergy. The *Church of England Newspaper* urges that the Judicial Proceedings Act, 1926 (which applies only to matrimonial causes) shall be amended so as to "make it unlawful to print or publish indecent matter in any judicial cases." (The italics are not ours). The cause of this demand is not the interests of public morality, but, as our contemporary naively admits, "the grave effects on religion generally" of publishing the reports of clerical offences and trials. Dissenting ministers and Catholic priests have no privileges exclusively theirs by law. Parsons have many. One of them is that a clergyman may not be arrested during divine worship. It is obvious that this exemption could only assist a criminal to escape justice. The clergy have a coward's castle of legal protection as it is. It should be brought down, but now it is proposed to add to its fortifications by a gross interference with the liberty of the press. It is suggested in the article from which we quote that the National Assembly (of the Church) must "face the problem of Ecclesiastical Courts and clerical discipline," i.e., with a view to "hushing up" their proceedings and breaches.

Fortunately the press can be trusted to look after itself in the interests of "good copy." What is much less certain is that a Parliament which has already passively allowed the Government to give a pledge that it will not interfere with church revenues, and which has made new provisions to restrict the liberties both of Parliament and the public, may "give facilities" for some measure of the National Assembly to be smuggled through. Parliament cannot amend such measures, but can only reject or pass them. Quite a number of measures of which the public has heard nothing have been secured in recent years, everyone of them increasing the Church's independence of Parliament. In 1926 a Neglect of Duty Act (for parsons) gave a Bishop power to set up a court of six persons and, in effect, transfers powers of a judicial character (in the Church Discipline Acts 1840 to 1892) to an exclusively Anglican body. If there is an appeal from this body it is heard by the Archbishop of the Province and a judge of the Supreme

Court. If the Vicar of Stiffkey had been proceeded against under this Act, we gather that the "grave effects on religion generally" would not have followed. Thus, since the so-called Enabling Act was carried, the State Church has been steadily arming itself with new privileges and exemptions which are calculated to undermine the effective control of it which Parliament and the nation has a right to exercise so long as it is the established religion.

There is another aspect of this demand for control over press reports. What is "indecent matter?" In the clerical mind it may include all that is included in the Acts relating to Blasphemy and seditious libel, and any judicial proceedings against a clergyman no matter what their nature. "Indecency," according to some clerics, includes anything from a hatless woman in church to the grossest criminal offences. "Indecency" in print means anything held to be indecent by a policeman, and we learned from a recent case, to write what the police think is indecent, although it is not printed or published, may, and in this case did, end in six months imprisonment for the writer. There is more real indecency in the Sunday newspapers every week than policemen and common informers hunt out in twelve months. The Church is not concerned with that. It is only when religious opinions and religious persons are involved that leading articles appear in the pious press crying "Hush" "Hush." Interviews with murderers, ex-criminals, and persons who would never have been heard of but for some scandalous action on their part, these are all "good" and permissible "copy." But that reporters and press and cinemas photographers should attend the trial of a clergyman is "indecent," and must be stopped. We hope and believe it will take a lot of stopping.

At the Liverpool Builders Annual Festival the Dean of Chichester asked this question: "For ten years and more the leaders of the nations had been trying to erect the shattered fabrics of civilization. But impotence had marked all their efforts . . . while some piece of patch-work was attempted in one spot, the noise of some fresh crack was heard in another . . . the question might be asked 'was it worth while to continue the task of building the great cathedral at Liverpool?'" The answer of the Dean was that, "the shattered fabric of civilization" only shows that "a new age can be built upon the supernatural and upon the supernatural alone." The Catholic religion "called on men of all conditions, cultures and colours, and in the last hundred years"—including 1914-1918—"we have been slowly and steadily recapturing its exquisite qualities." We should like to know why if, as Dr. A. S. Spencer Jones said, "Hells gates are powerless when we build" French and Belgian Cathedrals did not escape its ravages? He was nearer the truth when he said that the reason for building cathedrals is that they are "arenas for adorning great national and civic occasions with ecclesiastical pageantry," and (as he did not add), securing good pay for the "adornment."

According to a pious spouter, Christ conquered not merely all that was vile, but all the greatest and best that the world could produce. Christ was greater than Cæsar, Plato, Napoleon, Darwin and modern science. This must be true, because tens of thousands of Christian priests depend for their livelihood on millions of people believing it. Meanwhile, we cannot help wondering what there would be left of true civilization in the world, if all that has been thought and achieved during the past 2,500 years by the greatest and noblest minds could be removed from the world. If the world had had nothing beyond the Holy Bible to illumine it, the world would not have travelled much farther along the path to civilization than Anno Domini 1.

The Rev. Thomas Tiplady suggests, in the *Methodist Recorder*, that now that cinemas are compelled by law to give a portion of their Sunday takings to charity, the same terms should be made, in justice to the cine-

mas, legally applicable to all other organizations which trade on Sundays, including railways, tramways, pleasure boats, public houses, golf clubs, tennis clubs, restaurants, shops, char-a-bancs, motor-buses. Also, motor-cars should pay extra for a Sunday licence. But as we are all compelled to pay taxes in order to relieve places of worship from paying theirs, why not make these special taxes over to the churches at once. We feel sure Viscountess Snowden would endorse this suggestion.

Mr. Hugh Redwood, who now writes the Lay Sermon in the *News-Chronicle* of a Saturday, took for his last text "then went Solomon . . . to the seaside." It is well known that "we all like to be beside the seaside," and Solomon was no exception. But when he asks how did Solomon pass his time at Eloth—the Margate of his country—and wonders whether he "paddled," Mr. Redwood must not expect people to believe that he does not know how, in fact, that "wise" man went for a blow between finishing "all the work" for the temple, and picking up four hundred and fifty talents of gold from Hiram on the way to his pow-wow with the Queen of Sheba. She gave him "an hundred and twenty talents of gold and of spices and precious stones great abundance, neither was there any such spice as the Queen of Sheba gave to Solomon." It is not to be wondered at that Solomon "gave to the Queen of Sheba all her desire whatsoever she asked" before she "turned and went away to her own land." Mr. Redwood says "Solomon earned his holiday," and pictures him walking by the tideless waters of the Red Sea thinking of all that had happened since "God brought the Israelites over dryshod." It is well that Solomon's thoughts are not recorded for if they were like some of his conduct they would have given Mr. Redwood a nasty shock.

The *Sign*, a magazine localized in many Anglican parishes quotes some interesting figures published in 1814 by one, Mr. Wright, Secretary to the Bishop of Ely. At that time "6,311 incumbents were non-residents," and some of them "were constantly seen at routs, card parties or the theatre, and in the summer at the fashionable Spas." Bishop Tomline of Lincoln (1787-1820) presented his three sons to thirteen livings between them. Of 11,164 parishes only 4,412 had a resident parson, and the curate-in-charge was paid, on an average £40 per annum. This has all been altered according to the writer (Rev. T. Dilworth Harrison) by the "Catholic revival," which, he says taught that the Church of England "is neither the creature of the Reformation nor of the Government." Thus, it is to be supposed, The Clergy Residence Bill, and the measures abolishing pluralities which were passed by Parliament before the "Catholic" revival started, and the Prayer Book Measure of 1928, nearly one hundred years after its birth, which was rejected by Parliament, are convincing proofs that the "Church of England has always possessed a Catholic and Apostolic basis, and is neither the creature of the Reformation nor of the Government!"

A West-end Vicar, whose parishioners figure much in the social columns of the papers, complains that he often "leaves from twenty-five to thirty cards" in a single afternoon and only sees one person. They are "out" to him. The majority of them he thinks "do not believe in the church and intend to have nothing to do with it." Even "appeals from the Bishop" remain unanswered, and although the church is said to be "always well filled," it is "not with parishioners." In a letter to the *Church Times* this clergyman says that he has "noted a change in the attitude of the parish during the last five or six years," but, unless all the available data as to church attendance is wrong, he might have noticed it long before. The average Londoner never thinks of himself as a "parishioner," and if, as is undoubtedly the case, he cannot be got to vote in any numbers at a municipal election concerned with matters affecting his pocket, it is not very likely that "appeals from the Bishop" will trouble him. Among the many

anomalous features of the Establishment none is more conspicuous than the complete breakdown of the parochial system both in town and country. It has no relation to reality.

The Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty seem to have made no impression, except one of disgust, on Tithe-payers. In a trenchant statement, the Berks, Bucks and Oxen Tithepayers point out that as stabilized by the Act of 1925 the tithepayer was "stuck" for eighty-five years to come to pay at the rate of 15 per cent more than the average value of Tithe for the previous eighty years. In addition he had to pay, under the same Act, £4 10s. per annum for every £100 for eighty-five years to redeem the tithe. This, it is pointed out, will eventually endow the Church with a sum of over £70,000,000. No wonder there is anxiety about disendowment. Of the £3,000,000 per annum now raised by tithes upon agricultural land, in return for which the tithepayer gets nothing—for, even if he is a churchman, it does not exempt him from voluntary obligations as such—goes to the income of the State Church. The tithe-payers say, if the nation wants to pay for a national church the nation, and not only agriculture, should pay for it. Such a proposition is of course unthinkable; but the Church, entrenched in legal privilege, can use the machinery of the State to collect this money which, in these days of supposed national necessity, might as well be thrown into the sea for any good it does to the nation.

The unctious and naïveté with which the Church trims her sails to the prevailing wind is notably exemplified in two items in this week's news. First the Archbishop of Canterbury, finding that people cannot be compelled to go to church in these days—although it is still the law that they should—make a virtue of necessity, and thinks people who wish to go elsewhere would be a doubtful addition to the worshippers even if they went. There is not, according to His Grace, "any form of healthy recreation which is not preferable to Sunday loafing!" The second case comes from America, and on the reliable authority of Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, who, stating the reasons for the likelihood of a revision of the Prohibition law, notes that "what was for twelve years a closed issue in the Protestant Churches has now been sharply re-opened." Why, and by whom? Mr. J. D. Rockefeller Jr. is the first American layman to declare Prohibition a failure and his decision "is a decisive event," not because of his money—but because it coincides with what is obviously the popular view on the subject. We do not wonder that Mr. Ratcliffe concludes his article thus: "If I am asked whether any known political or spiritual leader is offering a programme of escape and recovery from lawlessness and want, my answer, unhappily, is no!" Comment is unnecessary.

At the Conference of the Museums Association of Birmingham, the other day, they were discussing how to popularize Museums. One lady, Mrs. L. M. Pheysey (Bristol), advocated "exhibitions of herbs illustrating primitive belief in witchcraft and love potions." She said, "There are thousands of women in England who believe to-day in witchcraft and love potions," and they must "appeal on physiological grounds to anything which interests women." We are glad it was a lady City Councillor from Bristol and not us who said that the point of view of these women must be approached "as you would approach somewhat aboriginal minds." We do not object to exhibits illustrating primitive beliefs—the more the better—but we notice that nothing is said about the character of the information which accompanies such exhibits. If they merely pander to the superstitions of these "aboriginally" minded ladies in order to increase the attendances at museums we hope the Curators and Committees will be wary. To inform the ignorant is one thing and a good thing, but to cater for credulity is another. There are plenty of parsons and mediums to satisfy those who prefer scares and horrors to information.

At the Priests' Convention, the other day, in Oxford, the parsons who read papers had the time of their lives discussing why people don't go to Church. They all gave different reasons, of course, few of which had anything to do with the case. In fact, it was obvious that a more bewildered crowd of clerics never got together in holy conclave. One rev. gent. got a tremendous burst of applause for this: "One of the two things necessary to fill our churches in the evening is Benediction." When the applause had subsided, he added: "Benediction of itself will never do any good. It must be received in that spirit of faith which can only be aroused by efficient preaching." Well, we'd like to bet a bottle of holy water that you can serve up Benediction in any spirit you like, it won't make a ha'porth of difference. A good rollicking sex film will attract a thousand people where Benediction would not attract one.

Another vicar came to the conclusion that one big reason why people don't go to church is the B.B.C.—"not because the wireless is unchristian, but because the B.B.C. is Christian as far as it can possibly be!" Really there's no satisfying these holy people. They have captured Broadcasting almost entirely and forced religion on to its hearers, and just because "hundreds and thousands are now taking all their religious teaching through the B.B.C.," they want to blame it for the lack of Church going. Our only hope now is that Sir J. Reith and Viscountess Snowden and all the other religious people who settle for us what we ought to hear, will sit up and take notice. Stop giving us religion on the wireless and the people will flock back in millions to the Churches. Perhaps.

Then another good Christian, the Rev. G. D. Rosenthal, described the harm done by religious controversy: "The discordant syncopation of a hymn of hate sounds from all our fiddles while both Rome and Canterbury are burning." What a sweet confession! In our innocence we always thought that the claim made by Christians was that "true" Christianity, whatever that was (we've never been able to find out), simply could not engender a "hymn of hate." Mr. Rosenthal insists it comes from "all" their fiddles, and we would not dispute his word. But he certainly shed no light on the problem why people don't go to church. Now if the priests' convention had only asked us . . . !

We do not know what lies behind the recent Papal order prohibiting the sales of candles in Churches, the Church does not usually let go very easily anything in the shape of revenue. And the sale of candles represents a regular income to Roman Catholic Churches. The *Montreal Star* points out that hundreds of thousands of candles are burned in Montreal, and these represent a considerable revenue. It says that in some churches as many as ten thousand candles are burned weekly. Still, we expect some way out will be found. Probably electric light will be installed, and the pious will be invited to put the money in a slot and so set an electric candle alight. There are more ways than one of killing a cat, there are very many more ways of fleecing the foolish where religion is concerned.

Dr. Orchard has now told us in the *Universe* why he joined the Roman Church, but we doubt if anybody will be the wiser. There's only one reason really—the belief that Rome holds the veritable keys to heaven given by Jesus to Peter, the first Pope. The only evidence for this is that the Church says so, and it's as good a reason as any other. Dr. Orchard, however, does seem to have had some qualms in giving up body and soul—"the final issue," he says rather sadly, "was with the terms of subscription which seemed to be uncharitably harsh and unnecessarily exclusive." Just so; but as he swallowed the lot, there's an end of that. And in the whole of his article we could not find a trace of that

"joy which passeth understanding." Dr. Orchard did not have that magnificent thrill of freedom which comes to all of us who leave the shadow of religion for the light of Freethought.

The Rev. Donald Soper ("the famous Wesleyan preacher") says "I get very close to everyday humanity . . . I do not wear my dog-collar, and I'm sure that is a help." He doesn't explain why or how. Perhaps the reason is that "everyday humanity" has a healthy prejudice against a symbol which advertises that the wearer believes he is a pet of God Almighty. Mr. Soper also volunteers the information that "a minister is 99 per cent man and only one per cent clergyman." We don't quite get what Mr. Soper is trying to convey. Does he mean that the parson is only one per cent superior to ordinary men, or that he is only one per cent inferior? Whichever is the case, the parson would appear to possess little entitling him to presume to lecture, exhort, counsel or guide those who are 100 per cent human beings. He is inspired by impudence, and trades on ignorance.

Ecclesiastical trade being bad, custom has to be encouraged by any promising expedient. Hence, some parsons profess to see no "sin" in games on Sunday, provided the participants also attend divine service. Others offer free teas to "hikers" on the vicarage lawn. Various other bright wheezes are under trial, the keynote of these advertising stunts being "broadmindedness" and "tolerance," because the modern mind is believed to have a weakness in these directions. The parsonic mind has not. It is merely assuming the virtues of broadmindedness and tolerance for business reasons. As a popular weekly paper with a circulation over the million mark says: "The parsons are playing a wiser game . . ." Wiser? Yes, if wisdom and cunning are synonymous terms.

A pious reporter who attended a Methodist mission at a seaside resort refers slightly to "the strings of ugly little girls who marched about" the promenade, "wearing boys' clothing." "What kind of mothers they are going to make I don't know," he exclaims. We suspect that the reason why the pious reporter disliked the girls and called them ugly was that they ignored the pious exhortations to come and be "saved." We don't quite see in what way the wearing of "shorts" affects a girl's capacity for motherhood. But seemingly the male of the Puritan species imagines that girls, by the dispensation of God, are born with skirts on and cease to be females when they wear anything else. We hope our pure friend has now recovered from the shock of discovering that girls have knees.

Fifty Years Ago.

(No issue of the *Freethinker* appeared on the corresponding date of this one (July 24, 1932). The printer was frightened by the prosecution, and at the last moment refused to print. How it was met is best described in a special note which appeared in the issue for the following week.)

THE *Freethinker* did not appear last week, in consequence of the sudden break-down of our printing arrangements. We made almost superhuman exertions to retrieve the disaster, but without avail, although we got so far as to prevent the actual discontinuance of the paper by pulling enough copies for a legal issue. We have been obliged to take a shop and to set up a printing office of our own, in order to carry on our enterprise and keep our flag flying. All this has been done in a week, and in the face of tremendous obstacles. The counsel for the prosecution said in Court last week that the *Freethinker* was dead. Nothing of the sort. Like the founder of Christianity, it disappeared late one week and reappeared early the next.

The "*Freethinker*," July 30, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. MALCOLM.—Received. Will publish as soon as possible.

S. MILTON.—Naturally we share your opinion of the quality of Viscountess Snowden's defence of the religious policy of the B.B.C. But we suppose the lady had to make her position good somehow or the other, and those of her friends who see the shallowness of her defence will probably excuse her on the grounds that she means well.

IL. J. MINNION.—We receive, as we suppose do most householders, many of these missionary begging circulars in the course of a year. These missions are among the many legalized impostures in this Christian country.

MR. C. W. STYRING writes, "I am asked by several Leeds readers of the *Freethinker* to write you in appreciation of your article on the Vicar of Stiffkey. It is quite the best exposition of all that can be said on the matter. Philosophic, deadly and accurate. *The Revenues of Religion* just to hand is a fine weapon for propaganda."

"NAMELESS FREETHINKER."—We should be the last to cast aspersion, or even to think slightly of an "illegitimate" child, and we should feel ashamed of any Freethinker who took any other attitude. It has been one of the scandals of English law, under the influence of religion to punish a child born of unmarried parents, although they might have been married in the best and truest sense of the word.

J. PETERSEN.—Pleased to hear from you and to learn of your undiminished affection for the *Freethinker*. As you say, the general outlook is not very cheerful.

G. BURGESS.—Very pleased to learn of the success of Mr. Clayton's lectures in Stockport, and that the intolerance previously manifested is dying down.

W. H. HASTINGS.—Thanks for paper. The poor clergy are ready to find any excuse for people not attending church save the one that really explains their staying away. They have mostly given up believing in Christianity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

How clear and simple things are when we are judging other people. Commenting in a leading article on the riots in Germany the *Daily Telegraph* says that:—

Parties which organize themselves on a military model are soon persuaded that the actual possession of arms is a necessary compliment to their training. The Hitlerite leaders have been threatening to arm their bands and weapons excite a desire to use them.

We fancy we have said much the same thing many times in connexion with wider issues, but without any endorsement from the *Daily Telegraph*. All the same we wonder if the *Telegraph* would agree with our slightly altering the above cited passage thus:—

When we train school cadet corps and similar bodies on a military model, those who are so trained are persuaded that the actual possession of arms is a necessary compliment to their training. And when nations establish huge armaments as a necessary part of their national life these armaments excite a desire to use them.

If the first statement is true, what is it that makes the second one false? We do not expect the *Telegraph* will reply. In such cases silence is the wiser policy. A reply might open the eyes of those who read, and it is curious that the same issue of the *Telegraph* which

contains the comment on Germany, has an illustration of a British General reviewing a regiment of schoolboys in full khaki uniform.

When a Trade Union official ventures into a public discussion to champion Christianity as the solution of the world's difficulties, obviously there is a catch in it. In two guesses we could always state the nature of the catch. When discussing with Mr. R. H. Rosetti in the Hendon (Mixed) Adult School last Sunday, Mr. H. H. Elvin, Secretary of the National Union of Clerks, tried to show how Christianity would solve the world's troubles, his Christianity began and ended with the ethics of Christ. Beyond that he would not trust himself or the scriptures. That game is safe enough in the pulpit, or at a Labour Party political meeting, but not in a public discussion with a Freethinker.

Woolwich and District Freethinkers are informed that a meeting for the formation of a Branch of the National Secular Society will be held on Tuesday, July 26, at the Queens Arms, Burrage Grove, Woolwich, at 7.30 p.m. The movers in the formation are keen and energetic, and have arranged open-air propagandist meeting on Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, full details in the Lecture Notices column.

The tiresome reiteration that modern science has made short work of what the clergy and a large section of the press call "materialism" is the best evidence that exactly the opposite is the truth. In *Osiris and the Atom*, Routledge, 5s., Mr. J. G. Crowther, who is an able expositor of "science without tears," that is to say science made as simple as sound knowledge and clear language can make it for the lay reader, deals with some of the most remarkable of recent advances and discoveries. His view is that "if a substantial section of society could come to approach all problems, especially social problems, in the manner that scientists approach the problems of physics and biology and all sciences, the profound difficulties of modern society might more easily be solved." These essays, addressed to a popular audience, are as useful in their exhibition of the temper and manner in which these problems should be approached, as in their treatment of the problems themselves.

The biological section of the book is very typical of these qualities. Mr. Crowther points out that we have an expenditure of £10,000,000 on the treatment of mental illness, but only £15,000 available for essential research as to its nature and hence its cure. Bio-chemical research has made some progress and offers hope of great achievements in this direction. A simple blood-test, which enables the emotional tension of a patient to be recorded and estimated in relation to his liability to recurrence is a case in point. The malaria treatment of general paralysis of the insane seems likely to remove that condition from the category of incurable diseases. Many, and permanent cures have been recorded. In this, and in many other of the practical departments of science, much depends on getting rid of fantastic and superstitious beliefs and ideas which, as Mr. Crowther says, "are repellant to modern times" but "still common in the popular mind."

With many examples of the immediate and practical uses of new discoveries, in astronomy; hereditary and environment and the proportion they each play in character-determination; new alloys in metals; purifying water electrically, and many other interesting matters, Mr. Crowther shows also how great is the range and possibility of modern science and the grounds of his belief that many hitherto unsolved and in some cases apparently insoluble problems are like to be on the way to their unravelling. With a minimum of technical phraseology and many excellent diagrams and illustrations, and in English which is all as good as that chapter written in Mr. Ogden's *Basic English*—a vocabulary of 850 words sufficient, it is thought for all normal purposes—this is a most fascinating and informative book.

Masterpieces of Freethought.

XIII.

BIBLE MYTHS.

By T. W. DOANE.

I.

STRICTLY speaking, this work is not a masterpiece in the sense of it being an original treatise on some aspect of Freethought. It is really a compilation and one of the best, if not the best, I have so far come across. It is not as well known as it should be among Freethinkers, particularly among those who lecture and debate. For them it should prove one of the finest works of reference in the whole of our literature. Indeed, I know of none which gives so illuminating an explanation of the subject it deals with—Bible Myths.

I have been unable to discover any personal details about the author, as he is referred to by neither Wheeler, McCabe nor Robertson. His name appears in Mr. George Macdonald's *Fifty Years of Freethought* once only—when he died. This took place in 1885, when Doane was but thirty-four years of age, and that is all I can find about him.

My own copy of *Bible Myths* is the third edition published in 1884 by J. W. Bouton of New York, but as the preface is dated 1882, one can thus gather that the book sold very well. It was published anonymously—at least the author's name is not in my edition. I think, however, a later one appeared with Doane's name as the author. Bouton was obviously a liberal-minded publisher as his list includes Freethought works as advanced as those of Payne Knight, Inman, Godfrey Higgins and many other of those older writers whose courage in attacking established beliefs and elucidating many of their "mysteries" we should never forget. Doane used their works almost exclusively, and he says in his preface:—

In pursuing the study of Bible Myths, facts pertaining thereto in a condensed form, seemed to be greatly needed. Widely scattered through hundreds of ancient and modern volumes, most of the contents of this book may indeed be found; but any previous attempt to trace exclusively the myths and legends of the Old and New Testament, published in a separate work is not known to the writer of this. Many able writers have shown our so-called Sacred Scriptures to be unhistorical, but have there left the matter, evidently aware of the great extent of the subject lying beyond.

Doane never claimed his work as original, but he put many years of research in compiling it. It does require a great deal of perseverance and intensity of study to take up a myth and try and find its origin, and Doane gives a list of authors and books to whom he was indebted in the main. He mentions 165 names, and apart from Gibbon, Herodotus, Huxley, Darwin, and similar world-famous names, Doane mentions men like Dupuis, Ernest de Bunsen, S. F. Dunlap, Ignaz Goldziher, Thomas Inman, J. P. Lundy, Volney and a host of lesser men, all of whom wrote more or less valuable theses on religion and myths, and who were volubly quoted by Doane as occasion required. There are forty long chapters and hundreds of useful notes, and in almost every case Doane gives chapter and verse for every statement made. Of course many of his authorities have, in these days of more rigid scientific knowledge and more accurate research, been discarded or could be if necessary. On the main facts they have certainly been proved right. On minor small points they may

have made mistakes. Christian opponents, who have had occasion to look into *Bible Myths* never, if they can possibly help it, admit that Doane and his authorities were nearly always right. They do not read such a work, of course, with any other object than to find out if, perchance, the author has slipped into some error. If one error can be found, then, the whole book is, naturally, "worthless."

Some years before the war, a member of that body of advanced thinkers, the Christian Evidence Society, whose speciality has been to claim that there is some evidence for the truth of Christianity without ever having been able to find it, produced a gentleman of the name of Nash as the author of a book supposed to be a crushing reply to *Bible Myths*. Mr. Nash's objective was really *The Churches and Modern Thought*, that extremely clever *resumé* of the case against Christianity, and Mr. Nash was very angry that its author went for some of his facts to *Bible Myths*. In a pamphlet entitled *Pagan and Christian Parallels*, Mr. Nash delivered what he thought to be an annihilating onslaught on both books, but it should be a rule with us never under any circumstances to accept a quotation given by a Christian from a Freethought work without verifying it oneself. Over and over again in my early days I accepted the Christian's quotation, and it was only bitter experience which proved to me that in defending their faith few Christians can be trusted in any way whatever. I think it worth while to give one or two examples from Mr. Nash's deservedly forgotten book to show how faithful he was to Christian tradition.

Mr. Vivian in his *Churches and Modern Thought* quoted Rhys David's *Buddhism*.

"A wise man," Buddha is reported to have said, "should avoid married life as if it were a burning pit of live coals." Mr. Nash taking up a late edition of *Buddhism* found the author had "inchastity" instead of "married life," and therefore concluded that Doane had deliberately falsified the quotation, and Mr. Vivian had simply repeated the falsification. It was therefore "not the reputable work of Rhys Davids," that was quoted, but "the obscure and worthless *Bible Myths*." Yet in front of me lies *Buddhism*, the sixth thousand, dated 1878, with the words "married life," and not "inchastity" in it! In other words, the "obscure and worthless" *Bible Myths* quoted accurately chapter and verse from the "reputable" work. Nash never took the trouble to find out the truth, and was confident his Christian readers would not either.

Far worse is the Christian "author's" reference to the death of Christ. Doane very clearly points out that the accounts of the "deaths of most virgin-born Saviours are conflicting" (p. 184). He felt he was justified in saying that Christ was "crucified" because more than one distinguished authority insisted that "a remarkable and convincing tradition makes Christ perish on a tree." After all, the same is said of Jesus, "hanged on a tree," which all Christians claim means "crucified on a cross." Nash says: "It is invention pure and simple. Christ's death as narrated in the Puranas was caused by the hunter Jara shooting him with an arrow." We are, the reader will notice, being instructed by Mr. Nash. Yet Doane actually says (p. 184) "The Vishnu Purana speaks of Christ being shot in the foot with an arrow, and states that this was the cause of his death."

We can now leave all the wretched little tribes of Nash's severely alone and get on with our muttons. Each of the forty chapters in the book deals exhaustively with such subjects as the "Creation," the "Deluge," "Samson," "Jonah," "The Miraculous Birth of Jesus Christ," the "Temptation,"

the "Miracles," the "Trinity," "Antiquity of Pagan Religions," "Explanation of the Myths," and many other equally fascinating subjects.

Although Doane often gives his own ideas on these things, he far more often leaves his authorities to speak for themselves, and we are taken backwards and forwards through Pagan antiquity, through Egypt and Persia and India and Assyria, and shown where the Blessed Revelation of the Lord or "our Lord" came from. No one can read the carefully selected quotations made by Doane without seeing how the Bible has taken up an astronomical myth or a quasi-historical legend or indeed a complete fiction and transformed it into "Holy Writ." That the final editors may not have seen that the legend or myth never had any basis of historical fact is beside the point. It is quite possible some of them failed to understand the real meaning of the original story. Others, however, must have known that the stories they were putting into shape and translating into the "sacred" language of Hebrew were packed with symbolism, symbolism which dominated what Bacon called "the Wisdom of the Ancients." Some of the early Jewish Rabbis certainly knew that many things taught the "vulgar" as historically true were not true and never could have been. Many Christian fathers admitted the allegories, they saved their faces by claiming there was an exoteric side to the Bible as well as an esoteric one, and there can be no question that some of the greatest Jesuits knew that the Bible contained myth, legend and symbolism. When pagan religions were scientifically dissected, when the stories surrounding Pagan deities were traced back and compared with each other, when it was seen how man in all countries and in all ages had made gods and how and why he had made them, the Bible was seen, once for all, to be a repository of the same kind of development that characterized the books and stories of Paganism. The wonders of Judaism and Christianity were not always exactly like the wonders of Paganism, but the same tale was found behind both when carefully examined. The difference, if any, was due to a variety of circumstances, and the works of people like Dupuis, Volney, Kircher, Bullfinch, Dunlap, Higgins, Inman, Payne, Knight, Goldzhier, King, and many others proved conclusively that myth was myth the world over even in the Bible.

Now, how many of us can collect a library of 160 authors, a few of whose names I have given when, apart from the fact that their books are very expensive to buy, they are for the most part out of print or extremely difficult to get? Moreover they are by no means easy to digest, and one has to tread warily. Even Freethought authors often have their pet theories, and one cannot and need not accept conjecture or speculation. But leaving aside fanciful ideas, these men left some marvellous work behind them which, sifted properly, has led more than a flood of light on the Bible and ancient religions. Doane collected as many of the gems as he could, grouped them in regular order, and an orthodox reader would be shocked and amazed at the cumulative proofs and irrefutable arguments brought to bear with such methodical and deadly care on Bible "history."

H. CUTNER.

(To be concluded.)

Criticism and the Bible.

WHO WAS THE OLD YAHWE?

I.

If Yahwe during the Nomadic Age of the Hebrews was in no sense a national god, who was he? How did his worshippers think of him in the pre-Canaanite period? That is a question which is by no means easy to answer. What the oldest Hebrew documents tell us about those times, are conceptions and traditions which only arose many centuries later in Canaan, and which, furthermore, were in many ways "corrected" and adjusted in the interests of the Levitic-Judaist priesthood. Notwithstanding, some of the older traditions offer us at least a foothold for further exploration.

In the second Book of Moses there is presented a report of a journey to Sinai of the Hebrew tribes, where they received a revelation of Yahwe. An account is given of his legislation and of the general institution of his cult in Israel.¹ It is necessary, in the first place, to emphasize the fact that this legend is taken solely from the Elohist authority. The Yahwist knows nothing at all about this episode.

According to the Yahwist version, Moses, who had fled to Midian,² returns to Egypt. On the way, Yahwe appears to him in a flame of fire out of a bush of thorns, and commissions him with the liberation of Israel from the Egyptians.³ Moses carried out his orders. The twelve tribes depart from Goshen, pursued by the Egyptians. Yahwe terrifies the latter with his fiery glare⁴ and throws them into a panic. When they attempt to retreat over that part of the Red Sea which had been temporarily laid dry through an east wind, they are taken unawares by the returning waters and drowned. But this Yahwist report knows nothing of the myth that the children of Israel earlier on had negotiated in safety the dried-up passage over the Red Sea.

Continuing the Yahwist account, we find that Moses marches from Goshen to Massah and Meribah in the oasis of Kadesh, strikes the "rock in Horeb" to provide water for the thirsty Israelites,⁵ and then sets himself up as the chief justice in Israel. He appointed administrators and judges, and impressed upon them the legal maxims according to which they should discharge their functions.⁶

But there is nothing in the Yahwist report about a journey to Sinai, about the giving of the law by Yahwe on the mountain, etc. It represents Moses as a kind of legal representative of Yahwe, who makes all the legal arrangements and institutions himself, in the oasis of Kadesh. This point of view of the Yahwist chroniclers is confirmed by other legendary traditions. In a much later time, the well-spring of Meribah was characterized as the old, sacred fountain of justice. Likewise in other passages as, for example, in the Judaist-Levite hymn which, as the "Blessings of Moses," became tacked on to the fifth Book of Moses, Yahwe is represented not as a god enthroned on Sinai, but as "him that dwelt in the bush."⁷

It follows as a consequence of this radical difference in those two reports, that at the time when the

¹ Exodus xix., xx.

² North West Arabia.

³ Exodus iii., iv.

⁴ Exodus xiv. This chapter represents an attempt to amalgamate two different reports.

⁵ Exodus xvii. 8-13. Battles between nomad tribes are invariably fought for possession of these oases.

⁶ Exodus xviii. 13-26.

⁷ Deuteronomy xxxiii. 16.

Let us all seek truth as if none of us had possession of it.—Volney.

Freethinking leads to free enquiry.—Abner Kneeland.

Yahwist—a Levite of Judah—had composed his narrative, the legend of the journey to Sinai and of the subsequent announcement of the divine laws at this place, could not have been a matter of general knowledge in Judah or, at least, could not have been regarded as credible and worthy of notice.

In conjunction with the fact that, according to the one tradition, Yahwe was originally a god who had his abode on Sinai, and from there issued his commands to the people of Israel, but according to the other, had dwelt in a fiery pillar in the midst of a bush of thorns in the neighbourhood of the oasis of Kadesh,⁸ where Moses imparted the law to the judges appointed by him, there is still another important fact, namely, that in a large number of passages in the Old Testament there is contained a reminiscence of a violent quarrel which took place among the Hebrew tribes in this oasis by the waters of Meribah,⁹ and which culminated with the defeat of the tribes of Levi and Simeon and with the dispossession of their claims to political independence.

The first of these allusions is to be found in the so-called "Blessings of Jacob," a very old hymn which describes the merits of the tribes and the characteristics of their territories, and which, together with the so-called "Song of Deborah," is one of the oldest fragments of speech in the literature of the Bible.

In the fifth, sixth and seventh verses of the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis, the hymn runs:—
 "Simeon and Levi are brethren;
 Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.
 O my soul, come not thou into their secret (plans)
 Unto their assembly, mine honour, be thou united:
 For in their anger they slew a man,
 And in their self-will they digged down a wall (literally they desecrated a steer).
 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;
 And their wrath, for it was cruel:
 I will divide them in Jacob (among the posterity of Jacob).
 And scatter them in Israel."

This passage can have no other meaning than that the tribes or rather the totem-groups¹⁰ of Simeon and Levi drew their swords against the other participants in the expedition, slew a number of them and mutilated the steer, *i.e.*, the steer representation or image of Yahwe—centuries later we find this representation of Yahwe in the form of a steer—for which conduct they brought the curse of Yahwe upon their heads. They were dispossessed of their rights and dispersed among the other Hebrew tribes.

The above interpretation is corroborated by one of the Elohists reports—a variation of the above, written at least two hundred years later. According to this account, Moses, blazing with anger at the sight of a golden statue of a young steer (usually translated in the English Bible, "golden calf") which had been set up in the camp, appeared at the entrance to the camp and called out: "Who is on the Lord's (Yahwe's) side." Then the report continues: "And all the sons of Levi, gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate, throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.' And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."¹¹

A further allusion to this episode is furnished by the Levite passage in the so-called "Blessings of

⁸ Kadesh means holy place.

⁹ Meribah means strife.

¹⁰ Simeon and Levi are totem names and not names of tribes. Beni-Simeon signifies children of the wolf-hyena; Beni-Levi signifies children of the wild cow.

¹¹ Exodus xxxii. 25-28.

Moses." It says there *apropos* of the gens of Levi:—

"Thy Thummim and thy Urim¹² be with thy holy one
 Whom thou didst prove at Massah
 And with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah."

Here, according to this reference and in contradistinction to the Elohists version, Levi had not fought for Yahwe but against Yahwe by Meribah in Kadesh. That is the sense of the passage from the "Blessings of Jacob."

There is, however, still another version of this old legend which is given in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Numbers. There, the Israelites got at loggerheads with Yahwe at Meribah, not because they had "fallen away" from him to serve other gods, but because he had cut off the water supply. That this is a later interpretation is evidenced by another passage which is found further on in the very same chapter:—

Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah."¹³

In this sentence, Aaron is condemned to death because he had made a steer-image or golden calf at Meribah. The same fate overtakes Moses because he had gone astray with Aaron at Meribah and become disloyal to Yahwe. His sentence of death is announced in the following words:—

And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people: as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people.

Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.¹⁴

There are a number of such passages in the Old Testament¹⁵ The episode of Meribah stands out in this legendary story of the Hebrews in the pre-Canaanite period, as an event of decisive importance. The many allusions to it, prove how widespread and general—however differently coloured these allusions were—in later times was the circulation of this tradition of a one-time struggle among the tribes of Israel.

W. CRAIK.

(To be continued.)

¹² Oracle paraphernalia.

¹³ Numbers xx. 24.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy xxxii. 50, 51.

¹⁵ Psalms lxxxi. 7: xcvi. 8, 9: cvi. 32: Ezekiel xlvi. 19: xlvi. 28.

Let There be Light.

THE present writer recently observed in these columns that Protestants in general must be chastened by the precarious position in which modern Protestantism stands—between the Devil of Free-thought and the Deep Sea of Roman Catholicism. Since he wrote these words we have read a remarkable outburst from the Head of the Roman Catholic Church, which clearly shows that the Holy Father has also got the wind up. The steady advance of Rationalism has put the doves of Rome and Protestantism alike in a flutter. The wisdom of Papa's violent tirade is questionable. It could only have been produced by a profound sense of the growing menace that Freethought now really is to the Christian tradition and to the whole lying pretensions and propaganda of Supernaturalism in every shape and form. But Papa's heated apprehensions have run away with his discretion. Calmness, self-possession, presence of mind and coolness are the essentials in meeting the onset of a formidable enemy.

There is no evidence of these in the Pope's dam-natory effusion. The walls of Supernaturalism are beginning to tremble. The sappers and miners of the army of Freethought have done their work well. It is highly significant that a Pope at this time of day should broadcast an appeal to all who are super-naturalists, and not only to his own followers, to engage their united energies in fighting Freethinkers. The fact is that ecclesiastics of every denomination are gradually being found out. Priestcraft has lost its influence with vast numbers of thinking people. Even on the second-hand book stalls the bulk of vol-umes for sale or the penny stands are works of theo-logy, prayer books, hymn books and copies of the Holy Bible. "Facts," as the Scots say, "are shields that winna ding."

It is unlikely that Protestant clerics who know enough of the past history of Roman Catholicism to form an opinion on the matter will derive from this appealing outburst any hope of co-operation with Rome in the oft tried attempt to establish some coherent basis of Christian Re-union throughout the world. Before the Pope's thunderbolt was launched the May number of the Church of Scotland's official magazine *Life and Work*, was published; and its opening article written by one of its most eminent D.D.'s, the Rev. Millar Patrick is entitled, "What is the Catholic Church?" It consists of an argument against the claims of Rome and Canterbury. Un-fortunately for Dr. Patrick his article in the main resolves itself into a quibble about names. If the Presbyterian Church believes itself to be the true Catholic Church, why should it not plainly call itself Catholic? The section of Protestants who call them-selves Catholic Apostolics had no difficulty or hesita-tion in doing so. Dr. Patrick sets out to prove that by the employment of the name "Roman" the Roman Catholic Church limits itself and shows itself to be but a section of Christendom. Even if that be conceded, what a huge section of Christendom the Roman Catholic Church is as contrasted with any one of the other sects calling themselves Christian! But there is a fundamental fallacy under-lying Dr. Patrick's argument. He does not seem to appreciate that right down from its institution the Roman Catho-lic Church has never abated or waived, or wavered in its claim to be the only true universal or Catholic Church of Christ, merely adopting St. Peter's at Rome as the geographical centre from which its supernatural essence radiates to every part of the world. Rome claims to hold the Divine warrant which was delivered to St. Peter. All else is heresy and falsehood in the view of the Roman Catholic priesthood. "Upon this rock I found my Church." The symbolic rock is situated at Rome. That is the spiritual significance of the matter. There must be some definite centre to which the eyes of all the earth may turn for religious guidance, and that centre by the institution and ordinance of Christ himself is Rome. Does it avail Dr. Patrick to contend that the Reformation caused by disorders and abuses within the Roman Catholic Church had the effect of restrict-ing and narrowing the Catholicism of Rome? I throw not. Has any religious sect been free of dis-orders and abuses in all known history? And how are the numerous educated converts from Protestant-ism to Roman Catholicism in the last fifty years to be explained away? No, it will not do.

Dr. Patrick says Roman theology is fixed and makes no room for development. Really he ought to see that this stability of doctrine is the very thing that appeals to many who feel they need a religious faith—a belief in a supernatural being who is omni-potent—and which has drawn myriads from Pro-Testantism to Rome. He is driven by evidence to

concede that the Roman Church alone fulfils the con-ditions required to be fulfilled to justify a claim to Universalism—namely a common faith and a com-mon government. It is just because of late years Protestant sects have been emphasising their differ-ences and coquetting with advanced modern and liberal thought that those who want a simple easily understood and unequivocal faith which will put their minds at rest—a rock upon which they can set their feet—have deserted Protestantism and embraced Roman Catholicism. Dr. Patrick makes much of the idea that the Church Visible is to be distinguished from the Church Invisible; but surely that is no ele-ment of disease as between Rome and Protestantism. Rome believes in the redeemed who are asleep in Jesus; but the dead redeemed are only those who have entered by St. Peter's Gate at Rome and are now in Abraham's bosom. Everybody else Rome declares is now suffering the pains of everlasting punishment.

Probably in their heart of hearts many Protestant clerics do not assent to this grim aspect of the faith which has been accepted by multitudes for centuries. There is a number of sentimentalists among leading Protestants who though they shudder at the Old Testament character of their God—at his wrath, jealousy, vindictiveness and brutaltiy—are concerned to prove that with the advance of knowledge and civilization he has become a reformed character; though certainly the evidence is not copious or con-vincing that he loves mankind and is solicitous about their welfare. The existing economic conditions of this world at the present time, granting that Jehovah has sloughed off his primitive savagery, do not serve to persuade anybody that his capacity for giving effect to his better nature is very conspicuous or active.

IGNOTUS.

(To be concluded.)

DOUBT.

If it is correct to say that curiosity is the mother of knowledge it must be equally true that doubt is the parent of intelligence. For doubt of existing know-ledge, or what is believed to be knowledge, is the instru-ment which tests accepted beliefs. Doubt is the be-ginning of real wisdom, it is the acid test of everything that is established.

Doubt is not, as some would have, sheer waywardness, it indicates a lack of confidence in respect to certain ideas, or the value of particular institutions, it is an in-dication of suspended judgment until more knowledge is available, an illustration of the Freethinking spirit, and proof of honesty of purpose.

Doubt is thus the conflict between thoughts aroused by experience of the fallibility of human generalizations. Demanding that all belief shall be a logical inference from known facts it is the direct antithesis of religious faith. Under the influence of doubt man has been per-suaded from time to time to revise his beliefs and to test the religious explanation of the origin of the world and of the forms of life which people it. It has been the condition of his rejection of the idea of a universe controlled by a supernatural being and of a number of subsidiary religious doctrines. Positively it has led to the establishment of the various sciences and the eman-cipation of man from the grip of gross superstition.

The road to freedom and progress lies through the portals of doubt, but unfortunately it is only the minor-ity that have crossed the threshold. The vast majority have always been content to let matters rest as they found them on the principle that "what was good enough for our parents is good enough for us." Yet doubt in some form is probably a mental state through which most pass. More than likely this has occurred

with greater frequency in youth, for as E. D. Starbuck assures us in his informative work *The Psychology of Religion*, "Doubt seems to be the natural heritage of youth," and it may safely be said that it is during adolescence that the majority of people are troubled by doubts concerning the established beliefs to which they are asked to give allegiance. One may go further and say that but for religious influences this tendency of youth to question and criticize might develop and become one of the most potent factors for the general advancement of mankind.

The truth of this may be easily demonstrated. Every religious organization recognizes the importance of controlling the mind of youth. Beginning at an early age religious organizations impress upon all the importance of mere belief. Doubt is denounced as a sin, and every endeavour is made, positively and negatively, to surround youth with an environment which will prevent the questioning spirit finding free expression. Certain books must be avoided, strange doctrines may not be listened to, heretical companionship must be avoided. The great virtue is belief, the cardinal sin is doubt. Religion aims at creating an environment in which doubt is as nearly as may be non-existent.

Scepticism, said Buckle, is the condition of progress. All history confirms that generalization. It is a sentence that should be displayed in every educational institute in the country.

TOM BLAKE.

Correspondence.

THE B.B.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Re your article in last week's issue, my committee ask that our efforts may be followed up by all the Branches. We are of the opinion that if all Secularists who are licence-holders of the B.B.C. had made a strong stand at first even the mandarins at Broadcasting House would have had to give way.

We are sure your readers have no idea of the astute dictatorship that emanates from the B.B.C. Headquarters. We ask for a united effort by all Freethinkers by protest and local agitation, as we have done, to bring these dictatorial methods from Broadcasting House to an end.

G. BURGESS.

Envy is the attendant of the empty mind.—*Pindar*.

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FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): 7.30, Saturday, July 23, Messrs. C. Tuson and E. Bryant. *Freethinkers on sale*.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, July 24, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, July 25, Mr. C. Tuson. Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Thursday, July 28, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Sunday, July 24, Mr. C. Tuson. Wednesday, July 27, Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Friday, July 29, Wren Road, Camberwell Green, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mrs. Grout—"The Christian Revelation."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Wednesday, July 20, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. Thursday, July 21, at 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Friday, July 22, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, July 24, at 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square, Woolwich): at 1.0, and 7.45, Thursday, July 21. "The Ship, Plumstead Common, 7.45, Friday, July 22, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Beresford Square, Woolwich, 7.45, Sunday, July 24, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Lakedale Road, Plumstead, 7.45, Monday, July 25, Mr. S. Burke. Tuesday, July 26, meeting for the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. at the "Queens Arms," Burrage Grove, Woolwich, 7.30. All Freethinkers interested invited to attend.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Civilization and the Leisured Classes."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Picnic ramble Sunday, July 24, Sutton Park. Members will meet at main entrance, Park Road, Sutton, at 3.30. Tea provided at small charge. Profit to Branch funds.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): Friday, July 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

CLITHEROE, Thursday, July 28, at 7.45, Mr. J. Clayton. DARWEN MARKET, Sunday, July 24, 3.15 and 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL (Mer eyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Paths): 8.0, Messrs. H. Little and J. V. Shortt. Tuesday, July 26, Edge Hill Lamp, 8.0, Messrs. H. Little and P. Sherwin. Thursday, July 28, corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Messrs. A. Jackson, D. Robinson and S. Wollen. Mr. G. Whitehead will be holding meetings from July 31 to August 6. Current *Freethinkers on sale* at all meetings.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—An Outing to Lyne Park. Disley, July 24. Train leaves London Road Station at 10.15 a.m., calling at Stockport at 10.30 a.m. Return fare 1s. 5d. Lunch and Tea to be carried. All Freethinkers and friends invited.

NELSON (Chapel Street): Tuesday, July 26, at 8.0, Mr. J. Clayton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.30, Sunday, July 24, A Lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, July 27, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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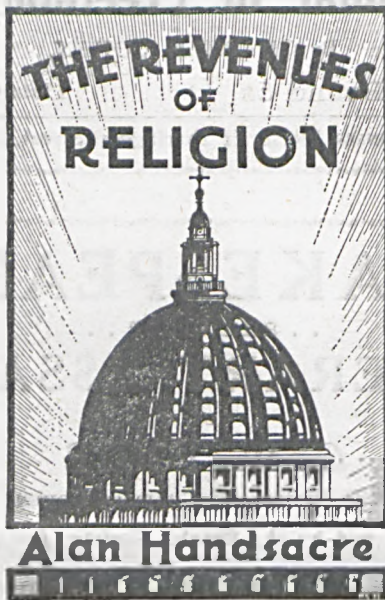
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