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

Views and Opinions.

*Are we Religious?*

I RECEIVED last week a letter from that veteran reformer Mr. H. S. Salt which I would have published in the last issue of this paper, but I wished to pay it more attention that a mere insertion in the correspondence column would indicate. Mr. Salt has lived a long life, but anyone else may do that. His life has been a useful one, and that is true of a minority, and a brave one, which is true of a still smaller number. He has worked for many humanitarian causes in his time, and for none with any sense of self-seeking. I say these things because while in dealing with his letter I may have to say, in order to make my case complete, certain things which do reflect upon some people, I say it with a due sense of Mr. Salt's demonstrated courage and high character where public opinion is concerned.

Two or three weeks ago there appeared an article in these columns criticizing the title "A religion for All," which Mr. Salt had used. Mr. Salt now writes as follows:—

Interested as I am in your remarks on my use of the term "religion," I cannot feel that Rationalists should allow the word to be monopolized by their opponents. Seeing that any genuine reverence for beautiful things may be spoken of as a religion, and that Freethinkers in that sense are usually more religious than the church-goers, I do not think that to look forward to the possibility of a natural and humanitarian faith, in the far future of mankind, is to play into the hands of the enemy. However great be the craft of ecclesiasticism (and I fully share your hatred of it) it would seem to me good policy, better than mere negation to tell them that their religion is not only a fraud but a failure, and that a time will come when that word will be devoted to nobler uses.

I readily admit that in some cases it is both possible and advisable to rescue a word from wrong and misleading connotations. One may take as an example a word such as "Patriotism." This is primarily an expression of the social sense, and finds its highest

and widest expression in humanitarianism. What it often stands for is nothing better than a very narrow and ignorant form of nationalism, accompanied with a positive hatred of other human groups. But no one who understands the fundamental nature of patriotism wishes to kill it because of its distortions. The aim here is to educate it, to widen it, and to make plain the truth that the welfare of one's own group can never be best served while leaving out of sight the reactions between that and all other groups. The education and purification of this expression of the social sense is one of the greatest needs of our time.

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What is Religion.

But this need to make clear the true sense of "Patriotism" is determined by the fact that it stands for a reality. Can we say this of religion? What reality does this stand for? Mr. Salt says that "any genuine reverence for beautiful things may be spoken of as a religion." Well, I admit that we may call this or anything else we please "religion," but I know of no historical justification for doing so, and there are very strong reasons against it. Can we say that any religion the world has yet seen has ever meant to those who believed in it a reverence for beautiful things? Does any primitive religion mean this? Does the Christian, or the Jewish, or the Mohammedan, or any other religion mean this? To ask the question is to answer it. Always and everywhere religion has involved as an essential part of its structure a belief in ghosts or gods, a double or a soul, in a world apart from what we know of the natural world—in a word, a belief in what is known, later than the very primitive stages of religious belief, as the supernatural. Take away these features of all religions, and we have nothing left that is specifically religious. We are not, as with Patriotism, clearing away misunderstandings, or lifting a conception from a lower to a higher stage; we first of all empty a word of all its vital meaning and then proceed to give it a meaning which belongs to other terms.

Mr. Salt questions the wisdom of the policy which would allow "religion" to be monopolized by our opponents. I differ from him here very strongly. Far from objecting to the Churches and the Creeds having a monopoly of "religion" I would force that monopoly upon them, and would resent sharing it with them. For it is precisely in the readiness of the Churches of to-day to share with others the word "religion" that the danger lies. If religion, naked and undisguised, were offered to the world to-day its rate of decay would be far more rapid than it is. But it is camouflaged as ethics, as social aspiration, as a love of the beautiful, as a sense of duty, of anything but what it really is. The perpetuation of religion—real religion, is to-day being carried on precisely because it is permitted to masquerade as something which it is not. Religion is no more a love of the beautiful, or

an aspiration after the ideal than forgery is a love of penmanship or cat-burglary an aspiration after an ideal architecture.

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#### Social Pressure.

Looking at the historical associations connected with the word "religion," remembering what it still means in all the established religions of the world, putting on one side those who with elaborate ineffectiveness try to make it mean something it never has meant, there is cause for enquiry, and some cause for wonder, why this anxiety to preserve a word which serves no useful function that cannot be better served by other words free from the evil associations of religion. After all, a country that becomes a republic does not call its elected chief a king.

In my opinion there is in this desire to have something called a religion a striking example of the compelling power of that social consciousness which modern religion strives so hard to exploit. In primitive communities there is no force of which man is conscious that is quite so dominating as religion. The gods rule everywhere and to offend them is the gravest of social offences. The revolt against this belief takes, historically, three forms. It is competitive, restrictive, or reformatory. In the first place there is a pitting of certain gods against other gods. In the second, there is an elimination of the direct action of the gods in directions where the operation of natural forces is understood. In the last, there is an attempt to "purify" religion by discarding some of its aspects and incorporating others. It is this last phase which is the most prominent, and the most dangerous, to-day.

Children, said Mr. Augustine Birrell, would rather be wicked than singular, and in this respect the average adult is really a child of larger growth. For thousands of generations man has been drilled by the social mind—necessarily and profitably. But the price he pays for the benefits conferred is the want of courage manifested (by the vast majority of men and women) to defy the commands of the social mind. During all these generations, religion has been an established fact, to disown it has been to almost place oneself outside the pale of social consideration. The man without a religion has been treated as a pariah. The consequence of all this is that to the vast majority of men to have some religion is essential to their retaining a social status, and in large numbers of cases where the intellectual perception of the stupidity or inutility of established religion exists, there is a mixture of the competitive and reformatory stages in order to retain the social status which a profession of some religion gives. Established religion is rejected, not because it is inevitably and incurably stupid, but in the name of another "religion" that is of a better type, or because priests have diverted religion from its better and purer state. The fox may have lost his tail, but he calls his brother foxes to witness that his tail muscles are still in a state of unimpaired activity.

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#### Words as Tools.

On this point there are two considerations I wish to suggest to Mr. Salt—and to many others. First, it is a mistake to treat words as though they were dead things, to be handled as if they were incapable of any reaction of their own. Words are living things. They come to us as a product of evolution, and loaded with implications and suggestions they have acquired in the course of their development. Language is indeed the chief aid in creating that form of the social environment which is the one thing that sharply separates human from animal society. It is language which enables the thoughts, the institutions, the be-

liefs of one generation to be handed to a succeeding generation. A word is a tool, but the value of a tool depends upon two things, first upon the temper of the tool itself, second, upon the skill and precision with which the tool is used.

Now one of the chief functions of words is to define. And a word is valuable and important just in proportion as it defines sharply and clearly. For example, to say that an object before us is a thing, is to say little more than that it exists. To say that it is a living thing, gives us more information because we can exclude it from the non-living group. To say that it is an animal, a vertebrate, a mammal, a human, a black or a brown, a yellow or a white human, is by successive stages to further define by limitation. To define is to limit. Definition must exclude as well as include. To make a word mean *anything* is to virtually make it mean nothing at all. Outlines seen through a fog are always deceptive.

Now it is simply impossible to take such a word as religion, in either its historical sense or in the sense in which it is used by the Established Churches and by all the genuinely religious people in the world, and continue its use without keeping alive all its evil associations. The policy is particularly bad, when other terms may so easily be found by means of which one's meaning can be expressed. What other conclusion can the religious man draw from this hanging on to "religion" save the one he does draw—that religion is a most valuable thing in human life, and that even though some distortions of it may have taken place, it is yet fundamentally a sound thing.

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#### Clear Thought and Plain Speech.

I suggest it is time that all who value clear thinking made up their minds what it is they are fighting for. Are they fighting for the purification or the "rationalising" of religion, or are they fighting the religious idea? For my own part I am not fighting to make religion reasonable, or to purify it, but to destroy it by making its actual nature and its consequences clear to all. I no more wish to devote religion to nobler uses than I wish to purify "trickery" and "falsehood," and devote these words to nobler uses. Ignoble things should be described so that their nature is made plain, and in no other direction save in that of "religion" is this policy called in question. To act otherwise is to, consciously or unconsciously, tamper with the moral coinage of mankind. So I do not say that I have a better religion than have the members of the Church of England or of any other Church, I do not say that my religion is "purer" than theirs, because I believe that the religion of the ignorant Roman Catholic peasant is much purer than that of Bishop Barnes. But I say plainly, and without any qualification whatever, that I am without religion, and I say that on the simple ground that I do not believe in any of those things which make up the essentials of every religion the world has known. Neither do I talk about "pure religion," because I know that religion is only pure on the lower intellectual stages of social life. Amid the higher phases of social existence religion is only tolerable so long as it is adulterated with other and better things. To-day the excellence of religion depends upon its impurity. I am not, therefore, fighting to prevent the Churches having a monopoly of the word "religion." On the contrary, I am insisting on their retaining a monopoly of it, and I regard it as part of my work to see that they do not foist it on the public and pretend it is something that it never has been and never can be. I have as great an objection to helping the Churches foist upon the public religion as something which it is not, as I have to assisting in

the circulation of bogus bank-notes.

It is a constant complaint that Freethinkers in this country are not accorded the consideration they should receive. No one is more conscious of the truth of this than I am. At the same time I am convinced that they will never receive that consideration until they are strong enough, and determined enough, to demand it. Heretics of any kind have never won respect by submission, least of all in the field of religion. It is also a complaint that religious people look down upon Freethinkers. That also is true. The Christian has all the arrogance of vested ignorance and all the impertinence of established inferiority. But I cannot escape the conviction that so long as Freethinkers are content to look up to Christians they are providing an essential condition for being looked down upon themselves.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Our Sacred Showmen.

"Vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."

*Swift.*

"Jesus is said to have died upon the cross, doubtless many men live on it."—*Voltaire.*

"The difference between a church and a theatre is that you pay to go in one, and pay to get out of the other."—*Mark Twain.*

SOME of the clergy are getting "cold feet" at the prospect of reduced business during the coming winter. Faced with a beggarly array of empty benches, and with a plentiful lack of threepenny bits in the offertory, they are seeking new methods for attracting customers into their gospel-shops. The old methods are too threadbare to be of real use in the present dark days of commercial unrest.

Gone are the happy times when the Bishop of the Cannibal Islands could thrill crowded congregations with stories of dusky happenings on dirty nights in the gory Pacific. Even the appearance of a converted burglar or a reformed police-sergeant, no longer fills a petty parish hall. Large posters, threatening a very hot time to non-church-goers, appeal to unresponsive eyes. It is all "too deep for tears," but something must be done, or the wearers of the surplice will have to line-up at the local Labour Exchanges.

Perish the thought! There must be a way out! Two noblemen are going to save the Church of England, and ensure for themselves gold harps of exceptional brilliancy when they reach heaven. One is the portly Lord Derby, who lined-up the recruits in the late war, and the other is the Right-Reverend Father-in-God, Dr. David, Bishop of Liverpool. After much prayer and searching of hearts, they have, severally or jointly, hit on the very bright idea of substituting films for sermons in the Anglican Churches.

The suggestion is to make film versions of Bible stories, and the promoters hope to make full use of modern cinema methods for purely religious purposes. The plan would start a new profession of devotional actors, drawn from the clergy of this country, for the men-of-God seem to imagine that the "pulpit-voice" is necessary to such presentations, and they regard purely theatrical assistance with high-sniffing contempt, and with more than a suggestion of jealousy.

The clergy have always proved themselves good showmen. They have kept the Christian Circus going for twenty centuries, and amassed wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. But this latest suggestion is far nearer the ridiculous than the sublime. And it may prove too near laughter for their liking. It is also likely to stir up trouble in the cinema business.

The clergy have always regarded the Sunday cinema as a trade rival, and, with the idea of frightening

their flocks from "the movies," they have exhausted the vocabulary of abuse in attacking this trade. According to them, the cinema was the most damnable thing in existence, except Freethought, and the naughty newspaper-men published their tiresome tirades. These saucy slanders were not gratefully received by the cinema folk, and they have not been forgotten. The cinema proprietors may even go so far as to insist that the gospel-shops showing films should be compelled to pay entertainments tax, and even rates.

As for the "Biblical" films, what subjects will the clergy select? The story of "Samson and Delilah" is good material, but most people would prefer to see Miss Tottis Twinkletoes in the female part rather than some young curate with an Oxford lisp. Regarding the "twelve disciples," are the whole dozen to speak with the "pulpit voice?" And who, by the way, is to have the honour of playing the loquacious donkey to the "Prophet Balaam." There ought to be a free fight among the Lord's anointed for so signal a position. Are the clergy going to the Natural History Museum for the whale in the "Jonah" film? And is the Whipsnade Zoological Gardens to be emptied for the making of the film of "Noah's Ark?" Maybe, Moses's whiskers will be borrowed from Mr. Willie Clarkson's establishment, for no Greek Church patriarch would part with his face-fungus except at an exorbitant fee.

Another point that arises is that no audience can stand unrelieved tragedy all the time. Shakespeare knew this, and introduced his clowns and jesters. But where is the comic relief to be introduced in these sacred films. Will the clergy introduce "shorts" depicting Sir Herbert Samuel singing "Abide With Me," or Messrs. Lansbury and Macdonald in a duet "Ain't it Grand to be Blooming Well Dead." Mr. Bernard Shaw is fond of advertising. He might consent to be filmed as the wicked Voltaire being "forked" into the bottomless pit to the music of the "Valkyries' Ride."

All this would cost a mint of money. Are the clergy going to show all their film talent on the bare chance of a beggarly denarius or a brace-button in the alms-bag at the finish? Or, are they going to charge 3d. near the altar, and a "bob a time" further back. The Christian Superstition has undergone many changes, but one of the most amusing would be to see posters outside St. Paul's Cathedral: "All this week. 'Lot and His Daughters.' The Dean as the 'Old Man.' Free List entirely suspended."

If this film stunt succeeds financially, the Anglican Church will soon have a host of imitators. There are over a hundred bodies in this superstitious old country of ours, ranging from the Anabaptists to the zanies who miscall themselves Spiritualists. And some of them, like the Salvation Army, possess the attraction of brass bands, which, from the point of view of showmanship, is an additional asset. To see a film of the "Ten Plagues of Egypt" whilst a half-trained band was bringing blood from one's ears would be as stimulating as a visit to the Chamber of Horrors. There ought to be money in it, particularly as the music halls are under a cloud, and so many persons in the doldrums.

For centuries priests relied for public support upon their own ritual and their own abracadabra, but now, fallen upon evil days, these sons-of-God are imitating the methods of the modern theatrical impresario. There is, however, an essential difference between the two forms of entertainment. Cinemas and theatres are primarily intended to amuse, whilst the priests' show is designed to instruct. There's the rub! The sacred showmen are heavily handicapped in this respect, and the game may not be worth the candle.

Still, the idea of films in churches instead of sermons is an intriguing one. Already, one has visions of His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury taking part in the Salome dance, with a cardboard head on a plate. Why not? Salome is a Biblical character, and the Archbishop has such a beautiful "pulpit voice." His Brother, of York, might even essay the part of the prophet Daniel, surrounded by a circle of doped lions, and faced with a doped audience.

A few generations ago a man went to church to save his "soul." Indeed, he was so scared that he took his wife and children with him. At a later period, people attended places of worship because it was the fashion. To-day, the priests have to bribe adults to attend church just as they have bribed children with excursions and gifts to attend their Sunday schools. The suggestion of films to replace sermons is just another example of the astuteness of our witch-doctors.

The so-called Church of England is like a decaying oak tree, putting up a brave exterior but with no real vitality. Deprived of its State aid, and of its ancient endowments stolen from the Roman Church, it would at once sink to the level of its Nonconformist rivals. This Protestant Reformed Church, as by law established, is a creation of Parliament, whose members have included Atheists, Parsees, Roman Catholics, and followers of a hundred other sects. Such an assembly should have no more real interest in the quarrels of Protestants and Catholics than in the Wars of the Roses. Some day Parliament will reconsider its position with regard to this purely sectarian body known as the Anglican Church and will release millions of money now devoted to the furtherance of a moribund superstition, and devote the money to worthier purposes.

MIMNERMUS.

## Criticism and the Bible.

### HOW DID YAHWE BECOME A NATIONAL GOD?

ALTHOUGH in the northern territory of Palestine the intruding Hebrew tribes settled down much earlier and had made progress in the development of tribal federations and commonwealths, than Judah, it was only later that the Yahwe cult reached them. There is an interesting Egyptian record which belongs to the reign of Thutmosis III., which relates that the Egyptian possessions in Palestine were continually being attacked by the desert tribes of the "Chabiri," a name which, it seems, the Egyptians at that time gave to the Hebrew nomads. It would appear that the Canaanitish tribal princes had themselves called in these hordes out of the desert to assist in getting rid of Egyptian domination. They succeeded in doing this. However, the allies from the desert found life much more attractive in Canaan than in their old haunts. Instead of withdrawing from Canaan and returning to the wilderness, they stayed and settled down there. In some places they pushed the Canaanites out of their native land. In other cases they intermixed with the native population by taking in parts of the residentiary tribes and gentes into their kinship organizations, which they had brought with them from the desert. There was evidently a good deal of shuffling backwards and forwards, many colonizations and a lot of internal strife. Out of all this there emerged, west and east of the Jordan, different little commonwealths divided into thousands and hundreds (districts) under the rulership of "judges" or chiefs, and "elders," i.e., under a kind of president and a council.

According to the Books of Moses, the later tribes of Ephraim, Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, etc., were already formed and completed in their separate identities while in the desert. Nothing of the kind. They first of all grew into shape in Palestine, out of the gentile organization of the intruding Hebrew hordes. That is proved by the names of those tribes as well as by different and distinct traditions of later times. Some of those names were unknown in the desert. They are not derived from old Hebrew names, but from the places in which the tribes installed themselves.

The name Benjamin, for example, is not a personal name but rather a place-name, and means "the southerly," i.e., the southerly part of the tribe. It denotes the situation of the land taken into possession, and accounts for the fact that this district had become colonized by a part of the tribe Ephraim-Manasseh<sup>1</sup> who came from the north, apparently as a military expedition, and settled in the south.

The later tribe, Dan, was in the beginning only a colony (a thousand) of Ephraim, which had its seat on the sea-coast west of the mountains of Ephraim. At a later time, owing to pressure from the Philistines in the south, it moved to the north of the lake of Gennesaret, into the land of the Hittites, conquered the land from Leshem, possessed it and made themselves an independent people.<sup>2</sup>

The name Issachar<sup>3</sup> is not a personal name, but denotes "the serving," and accounts for the fact that this northwardly-pushed part of the Hebrew intruders lived for a long time under the rule of the South-Phœnician nobility, and had to render compulsory service to them. It is said in the Blessings of Jacob, one of the oldest bits of speech in the Bible:—

"Issachar is a strong ass  
Crouching down between two burdens:  
And he saw that rest was good,  
And the land that it was pleasant;  
And bowed his shoulder to bear,  
And became a servant unto tribute."<sup>4</sup>

The little tribe of Zebulun, neighbours of Issachar, and who later on dwelt in the highlands of Tabor, north-west of the Kishon plain, appear also to have been closely related to Issachar.<sup>5</sup> It is reported that they carried on trade in common and offered up sacrifices together.<sup>6</sup> Both appear also to have been in the beginning only colonies or thousands of the old chief tribe Ephraim-Manasseh.

In accordance with the Biblical legend of Gad, the Gadites derived their descent from Jacob and his concubine Zilpah, the slave of Leah. "Gad" was nevertheless, an old goddess of the South Phœnicians. The tribe of Gad had accordingly worshipped a Baalat or female Baal as its ancestress-god. This implies that the tribe must have received a considerable influx of Canaanite people. The Gadites would otherwise hardly have worshipped a Canaanite deity as its tribal god. It appears also from the references to Gad which we find in the Old Testament, that it was far more mixed than any other tribe of Northern Israel.

We have said enough to show that the Hebrew tribes were relatively new formations, that they only took their separate shapes after settlement in Canaan and therefore had no existence as such in the nomadic stage of their desert life. We do not wish to be misunderstood as implying that in the desert the

<sup>1</sup> The "little Benjamin" appears to have been, originally, only a district (a thousand) of Ephraim.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua xix. 47, 48.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Biblical legend, Issachar was the son of Leah.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis xlix. 14, 15.

<sup>5</sup> According to the legend, Zebulun was also a child of Leah.

<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy xxxviii. 18, 19.

Hebrews were not divided into tribes and gentes. Kinship organization is much older than the settlement in Palestine. No doubt it existed with the "Chabiri" and their forefathers for thousands of years. Neither do we wish to give the impression that all the old kinship-organizations were completely destroyed in the wars with the Canaanites, that a complete re-shuffling of the mass of the people ensued, and that there grew up out of this entirely new tribes and gentes. The appropriation of the land and its occupation followed rather, as is clearly indicated, the old lines of distribution according to thousands and hundreds. But in some regions blood-related thousands and hundreds were broken up and dispersed into other quarters, where they combined and intermixed with the village and gentile communities settled there; while in other regions, again, many gentes settled down beside one another who originally had belonged to quite different tribes of the Chabiri. Through the coalescing of contiguous gentes into larger district unions, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, through the breaking up and dispersal of earlier gentes and thousands, there arose those *regional* tribes which, in the Old Testament, are reckoned as the twelve tribes of Israel.

Even for several centuries after the subjugation of the Canaanites, up until the eleventh century B.C., the internal bindings of the Hebrew tribes were very loose. There does not appear to have been as yet anything which could be strictly called the rule of princes or sovereigns. In the Old Testament traditions we hear only of "the elders of Israel," and "their heads," and "their judges," and "their officers."

If the central power in the tribe was weak, far weaker was the cohesion between the different tribes. Occasionally when danger threatened from the outside, the tribes drew together; but those alliances were generally *only* "for duration" of the war. About the year 1200 B.C., there appears to have been a military alliance of Hebrew tribes against some Phœnician tribes who were proving troublesome in the North of Canaan. There is a very old literary fragment in the Old Testament, indeed one of the oldest, called the "Song of Deborah."<sup>1</sup> In it we find one of the oldest historical accounts of a military coalition of Hebrew tribes for defence against an external enemy. Here is recounted with patriotic fervour how once the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, Naphtali, Issachar, Zebulun, and a part of Manasseh (one of its phraties, called Machir), united and defeated the Canaanites by the river Kishon, while the shepherd-tribes of Gad and Reuben on the east of the Jordan, and the tribes of Dan and Asher on the sea coast, stood aside and looked on. What of Judah? *Judah is not mentioned* in this "Song of Deborah." Why? For the reason that *at this time Judah did not exist within the knowledge of Northern Israel*, since between the latter and Judah lay purely Canaanite territory.

Those occasional military alliances were formed many times. But when the danger had passed, the "united front" also came to an end. Every tribe and every thousand again felt itself as an independent group, and free to dispute with any of its former allies. It was in order to suppress these rival feuds between the tribes and to concentrate the power of the Hebrew tribes against the external foe, that in the eleventh century B.C., the so-called popular monarchy arose, which as the Bible reports, fell to the tribe of Benjamin, or rather, strictly speaking, Ephraim, since at that time Benjamin was still only a colony of

Ephraim. It was not long, however, before the sovereign leadership passed over to the tribe of Judah, which, in the interval, through the conquest of the Canaanite territory on its frontier, became an ever greater and greater power.

While some of the theological critics of the Bible admit that the Hebrew tribes first arose in Palestine, they still maintain that the whole of the Hebrew immigrants had from the very beginning worshipped Yahwe as the common national god. Furthermore, they explain that the cults of the elohim, teraphim and household gods, spoken of in the oldest "original" pieces of literature, *i.e.*, polytheism, represented a general turning away or apostasy from the cult of Yahwe. They even assert that the religion of Yahwe must have already dominated among the immigrants since, according to the Books of Judges and Samuel, he was the potent force which time and again brought the Israelites together, and finally bound them together in a kingdom of God, a theocracy. This is the luscious fruit of their famous theory: first, the god of the nation, then, the religion of the nation, and only thereafter the nation. We are far from denying that the idea of a national god can exercise a binding effect upon a people. The ideology of a given epoch, arising out of the economic and social relations and needs of that epoch, reacts back upon the structure of society and exerts an equilibrating influence, but *only in as far as the conditions and relations which gave birth to this ideology continue to develop in the same direction*. The ideology of the cult of Yahwe exerted this sort of clamping influence upon the political sides of Israel, only to the extent that out of the new economic relations of the people, the need for central government became imperative and the development of the State had begun to advance.

The above theory of the theologians, which reverses the actual order of development, appears still more absurd when we find that there is no trace of any close association between the northern Hebrew tribes and those of the South, *prior to the immigration into Canaan*. The tribe of Judah, with the gentes of Simeon and Levi, advanced into its later tribal domain, west of the Dead Sea, from the south-west via the country of the Amalekites and Edomites. On the other hand, the northern Israelites passed into Palestine over the Jordan, from the north-east; and when centuries had elapsed they were still unaware of the existence of their southern relatives, as the "Song of Deborah" shows. Such matters, however, are of no account for our theological historians. It is quite sufficient for them that, *more than five hundred years later*, the Levite priests of Judah, for political and religious reasons, represented this view, that from the outset Israel had been a unitary people, with the same sort of social institutions and worshipping the same Yahwe. But this is not "criticism." That is simply Biblical reproduction!

W. CRAIK.

(To be continued.)

#### IN PRAISE OF ANIMALS.

They do not screech and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God.

Walt Whitman.

Wholesome, honest and mannerly pastimes be as necessary to be mingled with sad matters of the mind, as eating and sleeping is for the health of the body. As rest is for labour, and medicines for health, so is pastime at times for sad and weighty study.

Roger Ascham (1515-1568).

<sup>1</sup> For example, compare Joshua xxiii. 2 : xxiv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Judges v.

## Two Coming Centenaries.

THE general public might be forgiven for forgetting that a centenary only occurs once in a hundred years. Centenary celebrations seem as frequent as flag-days. Yet, if one person is born every second, few are the subject of oratorical, literary and official commemoration a century after their births or deaths. The law of averages cannot be blamed if it does not work infallibly in this case; it may apply to persons, but nowadays centenaries, like that celebrated the other day of the British Medical Association, are held not only to "praise famous men," but also to extol the work of professions, parties and even publications.

The routine of grateful remembrance often involves much rodomontade, and an output of belated panegyric highly charged with bunkum. Records of organized bodies, like the bodies of persons long deceased, rarely justify exhumation. In the case of personal centenaries we see a mingled flood of complimentary epithet and condescending criticism, and, on occasion, appreciation so superior as to amount to aspersion. We recently beheld the pundits of the literary world going into raptures over Lewis Carroll and explaining that the Rev. Mr. Dodgson was really a dullard and a prig. The centenary of Newman (last year) was hardly noticed although all reading men are still his debtors, not for his piety but for his prose; but the centenary of the Oxford Movement, the basis of which he demolished with unanswerable logic when he left it behind him, is, even before it is due (next year) the subject of general ink-spilling. And this brings us to the theme proper of these lines.

It is an ironic coincidence that the Centenaries of Charles Bradlaugh and of the Oxford Movement should fall together. Both were born in 1833, Bradlaugh at Hoxton, and the Oxford Movement, according to its first historian, at Hadleigh, Suffolk, the county of the Bradlaugh family although its most notable member was not born in it. Suffolk also is known as "silly," a corruption of "saintly," Suffolk; but the saints thus unhappily commemorated were of a different variety to those with which the readers of this journal are most familiar.

The Oxford Movement was born in a Vicarage; Bradlaugh in the humble home of a lawyer's clerk; but a London Vicar, the Rev. Mr. Packer of St. Peter's, Hackney, is known, and only known, for the results his intolerant zeal produced in one of his youthful parishioners; and an Oxford Vicar, John Henry Newman, of St. Mary's in that City is mostly known for his noble English and for his intellectual influence. Newman founded a movement and left it to join a Church. Bradlaugh left a Church and founded a movement. Newman took with him all the eminence he had conferred upon the movement he left. Bradlaugh brought to the movement he founded dialectical and dynamic powers that it lacked. Newman became a distant and introspective dignitary in an ecclesiastical hierarchy; Bradlaugh became the practical champion of the rights of the people.

These two movements and these two men were fundamentally poles asunder. To Newman, Sir Leslie Stephen has said that "the atmosphere breathed by the Free-thinker" was "as a mephitic vapour in which all that is pure and holy droops and dies." Of Bradlaugh it might be said that to him the atmosphere breathed by the theologian was as a poisonous virus fatal to thought and liberty. The Oxford Movement that survived Newman's departure to Rome was, before and after that event, a movement to preserve and advance Divine authority in Church and State. The Secularist movement—a much greater thing of course than the local organization of it—was and is a movement to secure and extend the supremacy of human reason in every realm of thought and action. The outstanding difference between the two centenaries to be celebrated next year will assuredly be that one will be concerned with defence and the other with advance.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

The unspoken word never does harm.—Kossuth.

## Modern Superstition.

IT is over sixty years ago since the Education Act was passed, making compulsory the education of every English child in the three R's (Reading, Writing and 'Rithmetic): and yet the great mass of our population believe in charms, amulets, fortune-telling by cards, palmistry, crystal-gazing and horoscope casting.

People are still afraid to occupy houses or bedrooms numbered thirteen, and a bonesetter who has become famous had to conform to popular fears and have his house in Park Lane numbered 12a. Yet Freethinkers are constantly being told that they are flogging a dead horse in attacking the current superstition from which these lesser ones derive their nourishment and support.

But if one forgives in the common herd this acceptance of superstitions even after two generations of compulsory education: what is one to say to the leaders in education who advertise in their official organ (*The Schoolmaster and Women Teacher's Chronicle*) the following:—

*Astrology.*—Your horoscope cast by astrologer of thirty years' world repute. Life's prospects, Possibilities described. Health, Marriage, Finance, Business Guidance, Events, changes, etc. Send P.O. 1s. Birth date, stamped addressed envelope for expert delineation, the accuracy of which will amaze you.

And this:—

You can test this Indian astrologer's skill free. Learn the truth about yourself.

Then follows a testimonial from a nonentity of New York, "who believes that the Bombay expert must possess some sort of second sight":—

Send full names and address, date, month, year and 1s. stamps to pay postage and miscellaneous expenses.

This advertisement gives a drawing of the self-styled pundit and his address in India.

As the first advertisement has re-appeared it is obvious that some teachers are sending their shillings—possibly to know if another cut is coming in October—and this makes a fellow-teacher wonder at the mentality which encourages these silly superstitions. For it is inconceivable that the editor of this paper believes such rubbish, or that he is responsible for the appearance of the advertisement. Yet he has a slogan nicely squared off from the other matter. "It will repay you to read our advertisements."

The cultured Sir James Yoxall would never have allowed such an exhibition of folly during his editorship of *The Schoolmaster*, for he would have realized at once how much such advertisements belittle the teaching profession, and in especial the National Union of Teachers, whose official organ *The Schoolmaster* is.

One can only hope that as these advertisements appeared during the silly season they escaped the eye of the editor: and that he will see they do not re-appear. What a glorious opportunity this blunder is for those reactionaries who despise the people's schools and all connected therewith. "If your teachers are like this after sixty years, what must the education they offer be worth?" Such will be their comment and rightly so!

DOMINIE.

'Tis well when life and love is done,  
'Tis very well at last to be,  
Beyond the scope of any sun.

Ernest Dowson.

## Acid Drops.

A Montgomeryshire reader says: What the Editor of the *Freethinker* called The Rule of the Sabbatarian is still flourishing in Wales. If one wishes to post a letter for despatch on Sunday from this village one has to walk ten miles. Sunday buses and trains are taboo in the rural areas. Anyone trying to sell Sunday papers on Sunday in these villages might be mobbed. In Barmouth prosecutions for Sunday selling of newspapers, sweets and tobacco are, and have been a regular custom for years. There, and at Aberystwyth, if you want a Sunday paper you must queue up at the only available place. A hotel proprietor in this county asked a local carpenter to call on him about some repairs on a Sunday—the only day the former was there. The carpenter at first said he dare not be seen calling or “going for a walk”—he lived in a neighbouring village—but ultimately agreed to try and “creep over the mountain” where he might proceed unobserved. These are only a few examples of the black hypocrisy of the nonconformist chapels in Wales—as bad, if not worse, than that of the Irish priests.

The *Cambrian News* (Aberystwyth) features a Lay Sermon of which a sample is before us. The “preacher” (Mart Merrion) desires to warn people against “fly-like retrospection and criticism of God’s great purpose,” and suggests that just as “poor little flies can never explain the mental processes and actions of man,” so man, a mere insect at the mercy of God, cannot fathom the “wisdom” of the Almighty. We have seldom encountered a more characteristic—and contemptible—description of God and man.

“Religion and Drink” is the theme of a correspondence in the *Daily Express*. The trouble began with a letter in which the writer (Mr. Eastwood) called upon Isaiah, Solomon, St. Paul and the Psalms to witness against teetotalism. He added: “Christ began his ministry with wine, Cromwell opposed Prohibition. Luther ran a brewery. Wesley said wine was one of the noblest cordials in Nature.” After this comes Mr. Evans with the usual Scriptural quotations about wine being a mocker, etc. It would be too much to expect the *Daily Express* to point out that the title of the correspondence is misleading. It should have been the Bible, or Christianity and “Drink”—for other religions, Mohammedanism and Buddhism are teetotal. The evils of drink are peculiar to Christian Churches and countries.

The Bishop of Durham (Dr. Hensley Henson) is a militant advocate of disestablishment for the State Church. The real object of those who oppose this measure are well shown in a letter to the *Times* by Sir Arnold T. Wilson. England, says Sir Arnold, is “a Christian country”—and proves it by observing that “Even Mr. Saklatvala (then M.P.), so often held up to scorn as a non-Christian Member of Parliament before he voted against the Revised Prayer Book, was at pains to consult the clergy of his constituency and found only one of them in favour of that measure.” Parliament was right, and therefore, argues Sir Arnold, the continuance of the State Church as such is essential to realize the great ideal of “a democratic theocracy.” Yet this very argument arises out of Mr. Kensit’s (apparently perfectly legal) removal of certain images from a Cornish Church. So “a democratic theocracy” means a democracy with a Parliament in which the religion of the majority, in theory enforced by law, can be enforced against anyone who rejects it by anyone who can contrive the necessary machinery. The State and the Church are alike made ridiculous by such a condition. Anything less “ideal” than a democratic theocracy would be difficult to imagine.

It is seldom we can agree with Editorial comments in Lord Beaverbrook’s *Daily Express*. Writing of the present position in Germany (August 24) our contemporary says: If the people of the Fatherland will not stop playing with guns they must steadily recede to a position of barbarism.” The “glorification of force” is

denounced. We recall the recent attacks of this journal on the ideas of the League of Nations, and its violent hostility to international conceptions of world order, and we wonder whether it has occurred to Lord Beaverbrook, or to the writer of this leader, that what is said of Germany is equally true of all the nations who are still unable to get any nearer to rationality than the consideration of the limitation of armaments. Yet another Conference is ahead but we doubt if the lesson the *Daily Express* is so anxious to teach the citizens of Germany will not prove to be as much needed by other nations as it is obviously needed in that country.

The Churchwarden is nowadays of as little account as the churchwarden pipe. In the past the former had as much to do with the irritation of men as the latter contributed to their solace. Modern legislation has made an end of much that used to be associated with “The Parish”; and the Enabling Act has turned the Churchwarden from a civil into a purely religious functionary. With disestablishment in the offing it is interesting to observe some tendencies to the secularization of civil government. The old Guardians took over many of the duties of churchwardens, and the abolition of Church Rates (1868) continued that process. The “Parish” and its officers, as Dickens so caustically depicts them, are no more; and the time may come, and not be long delayed, when the parson will be relegated to the harmless category to which the Vicars’ and Peoples’ Wardens are already securely retired. The Public Assistance Officer of to-day, his faults notwithstanding, is a great advance on Mr. Beadle.

“Politics in the Pulpit” is a recurrent theme of religious contention. Its defenders split fine hairs as to the difference between party politics and politics; but, in fact, in politics as in theology, orthodoxy is generally my “doxy,” heterodoxy anybody else’s “doxy.” A nice way out of this controversy is suggested by the Hon. F. A. Henry in the *Expositor* (Cleveland, Ohio). “Religion does not fetter the Christian with many statutes, but teaches instead the basic principles of righteousness, and leaves him free to apply them to the complex problems of life.” Thus, for Mr. Henry, “any hortatory discourse from the pulpit in either side of a secular controversy inevitably seems to be spoken *ex cathedra*, and seems to me as malversation, even when I agree with its sentiments.” As the only useful controversies are of secular import this is only another way of saying that pulpit oratory is useless for practical purposes. It sure is—as a compatriot of Mr. Henry’s might say.

The latest religious optimist is the Rev. Lionel Fletcher, who says, “I believe that this old world is right on the brink of the mightiest revival since the days of John Wesley.” You will notice he says “I believe.” That should arouse suspicion right from the onset. For so many of the things in which a parson believes range from just ordinary silliness to sheer, unadulterated nonsense. In the meantime, we haven’t observed any marked change in the people’s indifference to religion, nor in their “paganism,” and they still happily lack the parsons’ artificial product, “the sense of sin.” If it be a fact that a religious revival is on the point of eruption, why are the bigots making such strenuous efforts to prevent the people of this country from enjoying themselves on Sundays in irreligious ways?

A woman reader of a religious journal has been criticising the methods of pious “Temperance” Societies. She suggests that they should direct their attention entirely to rearing a generation who would not want to drink alcoholic beverages. She adds that: “Were half the zeal at present expended in trying to limit and regulate the drink traffic, given to teaching young people the plain facts of its dangers, I believe that in a few years the victory would be won. The many plans for State ownership and regulation, the half-way pledge, the futile attempts at dry public-houses and counter-attractions, the money lavished on opposing licences, will all be needless if our young people were properly guided into the straight path of total abstinence.” We feel sure the pious type of Temperance Society will not

take kindly to these suggestions. For one thing, it seems incapable of giving young people a really temperate statement of the case against strong drink. So much of its output in this direction attempts to brand drinking as a "sin," and thus attaches a glamour to drink, which tends to make it attractive to a certain type of mentality. Gross exaggeration also has an effect, the opposite of which is intended by the propagandist. Then, again, pious teetotalers are often of a Puritan persuasion, who believe in opposing alcoholic drink because it gives pleasure to other people, and because they enjoy interfering with the right of the non-abstainer to drink what he chooses. This Puritan type of abstainer will never consent to forego the righteous enjoyment of interference.

The Vicar of St. Hilary, the Church from which Mr. Kensit recently removed some "ornaments" ordered to be removed by the Consistory Court, points out that that Court is "a civil Court," notwithstanding that it may "retain the name and employ the language of the old Spiritual Court." We drew attention to this fact in the Davidson case in view of the attempt to make such proceedings private. The Vicar argues soundly that "the nature of a Court is determined by the nature of the Court of Appeal." As a citizen he "deeply regrets having to place himself in conflict with the law," but as "a Catholic priest" he is "bound to defend the spiritual rights of the Catholic Church in this country." The layman who so places himself has to pay the penalty, but to punish a law-breaking clergyman would be "persecution"—hence Mr. Walke, and innumerable other "Catholic priests" of the Protestant Reformed and Established religion, are immune. Who can say that Disestablishment is not urgent?

A pamphlet entitled *An Answer to a British-Israel Question*. (price 1d.) proves from the Scriptures themselves that the British Commonwealth is not "the mighty nation" and "a company of nations," of which the Bible speaks, and of which so much is read in British-Israel publications. Thank God for that! After all, the British Empire doesn't deserve the distinction awarded it by the pious lunatics of the British-Israel Society.

A newspaper has been explaining that John Locke (born August 29, 300 years ago) was England's greatest moral philosopher, who was a "preacher of toleration in an intolerant age." It might well have said that Locke was a preacher of toleration—with certain limits—in a typically Christian age—an age which believed in intolerance without any limits.

The Archbishop of York has been advising the world at large that "it is good to be sensible, but it is better to be heroic." One must, of course, accept the Archbishop as an authority on such matters. His job is the heroic one of drawing £10,000 a year for exhorting all and sundry to believe in Holy Fairy Tales.

Mr. Douglas Jerrold declares that "We are not here to express ourselves but to help other people." One would remind Mr. Jerrold that his guess concerning what human beings are on earth for is merely a guess, and not as he states it, an undeniable fact. Furthermore, one may suggest that the more people learn how to express their inborn qualities, the better able will they be to help others.

Canon Montague Dale, writing for the pious, says "What we want to know amid all the ups and downs of life with all its perplexities is that there is Someone in control. Someone whom we can trust." Well, we can assure the pious that the Canon doesn't know. He can only guess. Nor is the truth of his guess established by the Bible. All that the Bible does is to record the fact that many centuries ago the Hebrews were making the same kind of guess.

Clergymen in the Canterbury diocese are begging for £50,000 to build churches for the new housing areas at Croydon and in other parts of the diocese. Presumably it won't occur to pious folk to wonder whether God, as a

specialist in self-sacrifice, might not rather forego the pleasure of having these new churches, the chief purpose of which is merely for despatching cajolery to Heaven, and might prefer the £50,000 to be used for erecting houses for the homeless, and thus make large numbers of people happier.

In the September issue of the *Sentinel*, a supplement for parish magazines, appears a brief account of the tragedy of Jephthah's Daughter (as recorded in Judges xi.), with the following explanation:—

Nowadays if a man acted like Jephthah he would be arrested as a murderous criminal, and if he pleaded that he had acted for religious motives he would be accounted a lunatic. But in the olden time many things were believed and practised which are now shocking to the moral sense developed by centuries of Divine revelation and discipline.

For the type of person who reads parish magazines, no doubt this is quite satisfactory as an explanation. There is no harm in suggesting, however, that the "moral sense" of Christians wouldn't be quite so advanced as it is to-day if there had been no sceptical criticism of the Holy Book, which was for many centuries universally believed to be inspired from cover to cover. On the above-mentioned hypothesis of "Divine revelation," it would appear that God finds some use for sceptics.

Dr. Henson, Bishop of Durham, in a letter to the *Times* (August 29) boldly declares that the Church of England is the Church of "only a petty fraction of English citizens. The majority neither acknowledge its authority nor conform to its rules." Its existence as a "national" church, in such circumstances, "stirs an involuntary repugnance." An "incapacitating weight of discredit" burdens and hinders it, and, realizing, as it appears, that disendowment must accompany disestablishment, Dr. Henson thinks "the heavy material cost" will have to be faced, and that freedom from the State will release the Church from its "paralysis." Even those interested in ecclesiastical funds may come round to this view when the collection of them is resisted. A Feltstead farmer who was distrained for £30 tithe; who had a bailiff in custody of a field of his wheat valued at £80 for which—owing to sympathetic boycott—the only offer was £10, left the tithe-owner to collect one guinea of his £30 after paying the expenses of the distraint. If tithe was generally so resisted the opponents of disendowment might be sooner brought to reason.

### Fifty Years Ago.

THE West African Mail brings a brutal instance of how Christianity is propagated at Sierra Leone. It appears that a missionary in the service of the Church Missionary Society, named Fortunatus John, had in his service two young girls. For some reason they ran away, were caught, and punished by their master and another missionary, John Williams. The girls were tied back to back, and then flogged with branches of pine trees, and afterwards with cane rope. "They flogged us strong," says the survivor in her evidence. "Our flesh was cut in many parts of our bodies, and blood came out." Then came the second and most terrible part of the punishment. "They rubbed pepper upon us. Male prisoner John ordered the pepper to be brought, male prisoner Williams mixed pepper with oil, and rubbed it in my eyes. It was ground pepper. Male prisoner John ordered Imajuroo to rub pepper all over our skin and . . . Pepper was rubbed all over my skin. I don't remember how many times pepper was put upon us that day. When the pepper was rubbed on us we rolled our bodies on the ground." In the intervals of punishment the girls were left bound and baking under an African sun. One died; the other survived to give evidence against the Christian fiends who had so tortured them.

The "Freethinker," September 10, 1882.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. FERRIER.—Sorry we cannot place it for you. It is of those sayings that have become so common that no one thinks of asking where it came from. It has been attributed—among others—to St. Augustine.

F. E. MYERS.—We should be the last to say exactly what things are possible where even known forces are concerned, and should certainly not say what unknown forces may exist and how they may operate. What we protest against is (1) the assumption that because the cause of a given phenomenon cannot be given any preferred explanation must be accepted, and (2) and that the vitalistic, or religious, or spiritualistic explanation must be correct because "we don't know how these things are done." Thanks for your high opinion of the *Freethinker*.

A. G. PYE.—It is impossible to say who was the Freethought speaker to whom you listened so many years ago. If we knew the name we could say if he was still alive. But it is good for any speaker to know that what he then heard has had such a lasting and beneficial effect on your life. It must occur with many speakers, and all of them should feel heartened by your acknowledgment.

C. J. HARRISON.—The question of the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Liverpool has already been dealt with.

C. HARPUR.—Next week.

A. E. G.—Thanks for Annual. These books are useful for comparison with recent statements.

J. D. MACDONALD.—Copies of the Oaths Amendment Act, 1888, can be purchased from H.M. Stationary Office, Stamford Street, London, S.E., or could be ordered through any bookseller. The cost is only a few pence.

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.

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

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

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

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.

We get many letters about the *Freethinker*, and not all of them complimentary. For instance: Mr. A. Nicholson, of Banstead, Surrey, writes that he "picked up the *Freethinker* with interest, and put it down with disgust." It is "the product of small minds," and the writers should "study the character of Christ." Well, if there is one thing we like more than another it is to keep the heads of our contributors from swelling. So we hope that these small-minded writers will bear in mind that while they may deceive others into thinking that they write reasonable and readable articles, there is one man in England who is not taken in by them. Mr. Nicholson is on his guard, and we should not be surprised if he brought a quantity of the issue in which this paragraph appears in order to circulate them, and awaken others to the character of what they might think are interesting and enlightening articles.

The Brighton Branch N.S.S. although not a large one continues to give a good account of itself. Mr. G. Whitehead will be in the district for a week commencing to-

day, and a list of lectures at different spots are announced in the Lecture Notice column. There is plenty of work to be done in Brighton, and plenty of room for more members in the Branch, full particulars may be had of the local Secretary, Mr. G. de Lacy, 136 Lewes Road, Brighton, Sussex.

An attempt is being made to form a Branch of the N.S.S. in Prescott, nr. Liverpool. Some open-air meetings are being attempted, the next one is fixed for Monday, September 12, at 7.30, on the Waste Land, Station Road. The speakers will be Messrs. Little and Sherwin. Local Freethinkers who would care to lend a helping hand should write Mr. W. B. Laurie, 19 Kemble Street, Prescott.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald sent a message to the World's Sunday School Convention which was held at Rio. The Prime Minister says "the distractions of modern life pervade all things, even Sunday." It must be admitted that it is no fault of the National Government that Sunday is pervaded by "distractions." We seem to remember a Cabinet meeting held on a Sunday not many months back—doubtless it was after or between Sunday-school hours.

A writer in the *Christian World* (Mr. E. B. Storr) has had a brain wave. "No revelation would be any use to us if we did not understand it"; and "a South-Sea Islander may be as truly religious as a Christian scholar." It is not everyone who can turn out profundities like these.

A horrified contributor to the same journal who has been making enquiries about Sabbath Observance declares: "I personally know eighteen children who never enter a Sunday school (not slum children.) I lately enquired for a Bible in a house where I was staying; they had not 'such a thing.' Very kindly, an effort was made to borrow one; not a neighbour had one, but 'The — and The ' (Sunday newspapers) "could have been borrowed in bundles!" If only one of the neighbours had been a Freethinker he would probably have been able to oblige.

The Executive Committee of the World Conference for International Peace through Religion has set up a Committee to inquire "what has been the historical attitude of the religions of the world in regard to Peace?" There will be no need for enquiry as to the Christian religion. It came (as its supposed Founder is reported to have said) "to bring not peace on earth, but a sword."

One of the plausible arguments against disestablishment is that many "national monuments" now in ecclesiastical ownership might not be preserved if they ceased to be so owned. Dr. Macalister, Professor of Celtic Archaeology of Trinity College, Dublin, lecturing in Wales recently, pointed out that when the Irish Church was disestablished "cognisance was taken that there were certain ecclesiastical buildings not suitable for their original purpose but suitable for preservation as ancient monuments." They were visited by the Secretary of the Board of Public Works, who was made a trustee for that duty, and "one hundred and thirty-seven ecclesiastical buildings were visited and scheduled." Money taken from the disestablished Church was made available for the maintenance of these buildings; and now, Ancient Monuments Acts, passed by both Parliaments, are working well. It is significant that in Ireland, according to the Professor, "nothing was done until the middle of the last century" to "record and preserve the antiquities" of the country.

The poetry of earth is never dead.—Keats.

You must love the light so well  
That no darkness will seem fell.

George Meredith.

## Does God Exist?

IN the bad old days when Christianity was advancing towards the height of its power and had little or nothing to fear by way of outside criticism, it was only the Holy Fathers-in-God and equally learned clerics who dared to squabble with impunity over the vital problems of religion. Whether God the Son could be of the same age as his own Father; whether a man's nail-parings would be reunited to his body at the resurrection; these and similar matters of high importance were debated with a fury which did credit to the sincerity of the protagonists, if not to their intelligence.

Nowadays, however, these thrilling questions have ceased to arouse their erstwhile enthusiasm, and we have reached a stage in which the clergy sedulously avoid all public debate on essentials. Hot discussion is confined to subjects which leave everyone else cold—subjects such as ritual and organization—while God, though his name is occasionally mentioned with strict reservations, has been pushed well into the background. It is only the great (and titled) religious scientists who now venture to propound fascinating theories as to whether our old friend Jehovah has developed into a Master Mathematician, an Abstract Architect, or just an Emergent Entity. Meanwhile we common folk have drifted sadly out of the stream of theological controversy. And as the editor of this paper rightly pointed out, if there is any question which interests us at all, it is not whether this or that idea of God is the more correct, but whether any kind of belief in any kind of deity is possible to intelligent folk.

The difficulties which arise in any attempt to answer the question: "Does God exist?" are largely due to the fact that (as far as my information goes) there is not one educational establishment in the whole of civilization which undertakes to teach students the nature and proper uses of language. The consequence is that most people do not know what they are doing when they use words, and have not the remotest idea what end of the stick to take hold of when a problem of this sort is set before them.

It will be admitted that the question: "Does God exist?" is a form of words, and that in the absence of speech this question can neither be formulated nor answered. Even were it possible for me to conceive of this problem without words, it would be useless for me to expect a solution to it by sitting mute for any length of time in, let us say, St. Paul's Cathedral, or even in the presence of the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury. If the proof of God's existence were a matter which did not necessitate the intervention of language, then the Bible is supererogatory and missions a waste of time and money. And the fact remains that however much the earnest Quaker may believe in the value of silence, or the ardent Fundamentalist in the power of miracles, not even these have faith enough in God's ability to prove his own existence without some verbal support from themselves or their miraculous Book of Words.

Herein, then, lies the clue both to the origin and the solution of this problem. It is primarily a linguistic matter—a matter of understanding what words are, how they function and do not function. Without the word "God" in our language (or one of its several synonyms) there could be no dispute about the existence or non-existence of that to which the word is supposed to refer. I might be utterly convinced of the reality and existence of something which I called Whoosh. But unless Whoosh were able to prove his existence to others who did not believe in him, or unless I were able to do so for him with the aid of language, I would stand in danger of being

classed amongst those who declare themselves to be Jesus Christ, Julius Caesar or a reincarnation of Cleopatra. An illusion or a creature of the imagination is not real, nor is its existence proved, because we have a firm belief in it. Nor does the presence of a word in our language—such as God or Jehovah—prove that the word refers to something which exists or is real. We have our satyrs and hippogriffs, our Jupiters and Ju-Jus, our philogistons and other fantasies of the imagination. Yet these are facts which persons readily overlook, who are ignorant of the functions and limitations of language.

The question: "Does God exist?" is equivalent to two statements, one of which must be true and the other untrue. These statements are: (1) God exists, and (2) God does not exist. To prove the truth of either, we must be clear in our own minds as to what we are referring to when we use the words "God" and "exist." If we do not begin by providing ourselves with clear definitions, we shall simply be indulging in that favourite pastime of philosophers and kittens, namely, chasing our own tails. At one moment the word "God" (whether spelt with a capital or a small letter is immaterial) may be used to refer to a traditional idea, at another to the Universe, at yet another to an Ultimate Cause, and so on. While the verb "to exist" can easily be slithered about between such contradictory meanings as "to be real," "to be abstract," "to be in the mind," or just simply "to be" without any qualification or meaning whatever. Confusion becomes worse confounded and we are compelled to abandon the problem as insoluble.

Now it would be impossible to give a complete list of all the various meanings which have, at one time or another, been given to the word "God." It would be difficult, though not impossible, to give an adequate definition of the Christian God. But space prevents. A similar difficulty applies to the manifold uses of the verb "to exist." But a careful search for all the meanings most commonly used has led me to the following analytical conclusions.

Definitions of the word "God" can be divided into three groups, of which:—

A. Contains all those acceptable to most God-believers, such as Creator of the Universe, Omnipotent (or Omniscient, or both) Being, Spirit, Ultimate Cause, etc.

B. Contains all those which refer to things admittedly real and existing, such as, an idol, a person claiming to be a deity, any material object of worship, etc.

C. Contains all those which refer to things admittedly unreal and non-existent, such as a mythical being, a traditional conception, the deity of some dead religion, an abstraction like "power" or "the belly," etc.

It will be noted that groups B and C contain definitions, none of which are acceptable to God-believers as being applicable to their "God."

Definitions of the verb "to exist" can be divided into four groups, of which:—

D. Contains the *metaphorical* sense as applied to words like Socialism, patriotism, poverty, hate, life and abstractions in general. These words are merely linguistic conveniences used to describe relationships between or conditions of things which are admitted to be real in a literal sense. In the absence of these real things the relationships and conditions could not be said to exist; and even in their presence they do not necessarily exist. Thus "poverty" is a term dependent upon the real things "persons" and "property"; but even where persons and property exist it does not necessarily imply the existence of "poverty." Hence to refer to such things as "existing" or "having existence" is a metaphorical

use of these words.

E. Contains the *qualified* sense as applied to words like illusion, fantasy, fiction, and phrases like "product of the imagination," etc. These words refer to things which are admittedly unreal, though they may seem real under certain conditions.

F. Contains the *limited* sense as applied to words which refer to specific bodily sensations, such as colour, taste, weight, heat, etc.

G. Contains the *literal* sense as applied to words which refer to things admittedly real and existent, such as trees and towns, boots and babies, sugar and sharks, etc.

Having decided which of the first three groups we wish to use, and which of the last four groups we intend to equate it with, we may next proceed to enquire whether the equation so formed can be verified by experience. It will then be possible to determine what sort of God exists in what sort of way; or whether any sort of God, other than those in group B, can be said to exist at all.

C. S. FRASER.

### The Eucharist.

In the thirty-fifth chapter (Vol. II.) of *Under the Syrian Sun*, by A. C. Inchbold, there is described the arrival of crowds of Russian pilgrims, after weary journeyings, at the waters of the Jordan. Many are old, nearly all are ill-clad, and few, if any appear to be other than worn out by fatigue. The conditions on arrival are anything but what might be considered conducive to the betterment of humanity, from any sane standpoint. Yet there is religious fervour such as the world has seldom known. There is expectation and a "wave of movement" is seen to stir the crowd when the priests appear to perform a ceremony. A great washing away of sins is to take place when the pilgrims immerse themselves in the sacred river. "Here and there in the heat of religious fervour several had advanced knee-deep into the river, and were standing with ecstatic mien awaiting the ceremony of consecration . . . Behind this multitude in white was a dense crowd of spectators and other pilgrims, whose immersion was to take place at the midnight ceremony of the same day." p. 497.

At p. 141 (Vol. I.) of the *Wonders of the World*, there is a picture bearing the legend, "Millions of Hindus Bathing in the Sacred River Ganges." While a note informs us that, "at Benares, where the river is of a greenish tint and somewhat thick with mud brought down from the mountain, Hindu pilgrims bathe in it to cleanse themselves from both disease and sin"; and we are told that there can be witnessed few religious scenes more remarkable than this of the Ganges.

In both these cases a newspaper writer could have made much out of the "religious fervour" by telling how the spirit of the Lord had visited mankind in a way never before witnessed by the world. Provided there is "great manifestation of the Lord," it matters little whether the washing away of sins takes place in the waters of the Jordan or the Ganges, if only something happens to remind us that God Almighty is still alive.

In the *News-Chronicle* of June 20, 1932, we are told "a drab railway station on the outskirts of Central London was the scene yesterday of one of the most impressive demonstrations of religious fervour this country has ever known." In fact, "Girls and women cried, laughed and sang; men shouted and wept, completely losing self-control"; and it was thought at one moment that Cardinal Lauri who repre-

sents the Pope, who represents Christ, who represents God the Father was likely to be crushed. All this was but a prelude to scenes, manifesting religious fervour, that would "be remembered for a lifetime." A prelude to the Eucharistic Congress, held in Dublin, at which a further washing away of sins has since taken place. On this occasion the washing was done by rivers of the blood of Jesus being taken inwardly, in true cannibalistic fashion, accompanied by a great feasting at which the body of God was eaten by everyone at table.

These incidents, which are far apart in respect of both time and distance, may be taken as a refutation of the idea, so largely "boosted" by our newspapers, that there was something extraordinary about the religious fervour, expressed by thousands prior to and during the Eucharistic Congress. The emotionalism was the same in each case; and required only the appropriate means of excitation to cause it to give expression to itself. In each case crowd psychology could explain much; while added to this was the respective religious upbringing, with its own environment, of each class of devotee. No supernaturalism is required to enable one to understand the outbreak of "religious fervour" even in connexion with the Eucharistic services held in Dublin, during the much advertised Congress.

If any difference is to be detected between the washing away of sins on the banks of the Ganges or the Jordan and the similar ceremony at a Roman Catholic Mass, it is one of ritualistic setting and ecclesiastical machinery. There is no social advancement indicated in the ceremonial performances of the Catholic as against those of the Hindus, even if the chief celebrants of the Mass do use the latest in wireless to make known to the world what they are doing.

It is remarkable that the clergy are giving away so easily to the popular habit of making use of man's wireless, instead of relying more and more upon God's own wireless—prayer.

There is no doubt that the average Roman Catholic would be surprised if he were told he is helping to perpetuate a savage rite and custom when taking part in the ceremony of the Eucharist. His surprise would be exceeded only by shock. The same applies to the various types of Protestants who celebrate the Communion or as it is often called the Lord's Supper.

Under whatever form of refinement it may be celebrated, the Eucharist is a religious survival of savage rite and ceremony; but the Roman Catholic ceremony may be taken as the more clearly indicating this. Especially with its doctrine of Transubstantiation according to which the whole of the God-man Jesus Christ is contained in every particle of bread and in every drop of wine.

This should bring out the savage and, indeed, cannibalistic nature of the Eucharist to every unprejudiced and thinking mind. It must be remembered that the Saviour God Jesus is represented as having been on earth in the form of a human being; and that it is his flesh that is partaken of, and his blood which the recipient drinks. Just as the savage or barbarian eats the body and drinks the blood of his slain representative of his god.

All the mysticism and symbolism in the world does not do away with the fundamental conception of the rite—the partaking of the god as a means of fellowship with him and with fellow worshippers. Even if the wine and bread are thought of as but symbols as in many Protestant services the central idea is the same. The worshipper desires to receive into himself the qualities of the man-God Jesus so that he may become a worthy member of the body of Jesus in the eyes of the God to whom the sacrifice is offered. No savage could wish for more than this whether his desire were

to make himself the possessor of the physical or of the moral qualities of his god, by means of eating and drinking at the sacrificial feast, whereat the god was present.

In the Roman Catholic Eucharist, however, the eating of the actual body and drinking of the real blood of the Saviour God is candidly admitted, and the fact of thousands of intelligent Catholics, not seeing any relationship between the Mass and a savage religious feast, is a fitting testimony to the value of Catholic education. In an age when research into the history and evolution of religious beliefs, and ceremonies has gone on apace, such an education keeps from many the actual facts concerning religion, and prevents many who do come across the facts from seeing the wood for the trees.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation has not even the merit of originality, as a mystic attempt to "explain" how the bread and wine are transformed. To quote Sir J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*: "We learn that the ancient Mexicans, even before the arrival of Christian missionaries, were fully acquainted with the doctrine of transubstantiation and acted upon it in all the solemn rites of their religion. They believed that by consecrating bread their priests could turn it into the very body of their god, so that all who thereupon partook of the consecrated bread entered into a mystic communion with the deity by receiving a portion of his divine substance into themselves. The doctrine of transubstantiation, as a magic conversion of bread into flesh, was also familiar to the Aryans of ancient India long before the spread and even the rise of Christianity." ((I Vol. Ed. p. 490.)

That Roman Catholics should look upon their taking part in the Mass as a means to help them live a better practical life, is no doubt too much to expect. With all the fellowship that was effected between the worshippers and their Saviour and thereby between themselves, at the Eucharistic Congress, their is no doubt that life amongst Catholics has been no better since than it was before the Congress. Evil doing, in all its forms, has gone on very much the same as of old. No Catholic asks why, if the effect of the Mass is so wonderful as represented, it should have to be repeated for the same persons. The explanation lies in the fact of the Eucharistic washing away of sins and receiving of divine qualities being a process in magic. A fact that is not realized by any Catholic or any other partaker of the Eucharist.

Magic plays a very important part in religion, and it is not surprising that it should be used for the washing away of sins. Sin is religious wrong-doing and religious means must be used to free the believer from his sinfulness. Mere good living is not enough. He must be brought into contact with his divinity, and thus be enabled to obtain something of the divine qualities. This can only be done by magic, in one form or another, and there is no more approved way than that of the Eucharist which makes it possible for the devotee to partake, actually—as the Roman Catholic believes—or symbolically, as others believe, of the divine being.

Obviously, there are no natural means by which bread and wine can be turned into the flesh and blood of someone who is believed to have lived hundreds of years ago. Consequently magic constitutes the means by which the sacramental elements are, at every Mass, transformed into the body and blood of the Saviour-God Jesus. Writing of the "Elevation," the "Sacramental Words," and the doctrine of the "Real Presence," one Roman Catholic says: "It is but a simple recital of the facts of the supper at which the Mass was instituted, and of the command then given; and as the Church has always believed, the mystery of the

Divine Presence comes to pass, and the miracle Christ wrought is wrought again, when the solemn words are uttered. Therefore we bow down and adore." ("The Mass," by B. F. C. Costelloe, M.A., in *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 470.) Doubtless the simplicity lies in the capacity to believe that a divine being can be recreated out of bread and wine by the utterance of certain sacramental words. No savage medicine-man could have worked magic on a more colossal scale than this. While the acquisition of the divine qualities by those who partake of either one or other of the elements with its consequent cleansing from sin, is but a continuation of the effect of the magic influence set at work by the priest.

Even if we take Article 28 of the Church of England the idea of magic presents itself. "The Bread which we break is a partaking of the Blood of Christ . . . The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith."

In this Article there is an attempt to get rid of the idea that the body and blood of Jesus are actually partaken of, while the doctrine of the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) being "a bare commemoration of the death of Christ" is rejected (*Tutorial Prayer Book*, p. 565), yet by means of faith the Communicant, if he is in a right state as regards his spiritual condition, is able to receive both body and blood of his Saviour. If the services of Communion is not a mere commemoration; if the Real Presence is not there; if the partaking of the Lord's qualities is but an act of faith, why is the individual Christian unable to receive the same blessings by breaking bread and drinking wine in private, and in faith? Why also is the wicked man who receives the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, at the same Communion Table as others, not a partaker of Christ? (Article 29.)

It is because the priest, as the holy man of God, must be present to exercise his influence. He carries with him, in his super-sanctified person, the magic influence which makes all the difference. Without him all the bread and wine in the world, with all the faith in Christendom would be of no avail. With the priest present the body and blood of Christ can be handed round and partaken of, while not being partaken of, at the same time.

In the case of the wicked man who communicates with all his sins upon him, the magic of the devil is too powerful for the magic of the priest.

Whether the Eucharist be in Roman Catholic or in Protestant form its central ideas are of savage mentality, and it belongs to the sphere of magic. The primitive conceptions and magic art of the Roman Catholic ceremony should be plain to all students of the evolution of religion; while it should not need much digging to find the same conceptions and magic beneath the so-called refinements of the Protestant ceremonies.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

#### A WARNING TO CHRISTIANS.

Every man is not a proper champion for truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cause of verity. Many from the ignorance of this maxim, and an inconsiderate zeal unto truth, have too rashly charged the troops of error, and remains as trophies unto the enemies of truth. A man may be in as just possession of truth as of a city, and yet be forced to surrender; it is therefore far better to enjoy her with peace than to hazard her on a battle . . . In philosophy, where truth seems double-faced, there is no man more paradoxical than myself; but in divinity I love to keep the rood."

Sir Thomas Browne.

## In A Cathedral.

"The use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices and follies, and also our fears.—Joseph Conrad.

BEING a profane person and filled with that modest doubt which is called the beacon of the wise, I found myself on a recent Sunday inside a cathedral, "astray, gone from the path direct." The lodestone which attracted me to the interior of one of those sanctuaries for lighting fools on the road to dusty death, was not piety, nor reverence, nor yet humility, but that spirit of charity which suffereth long, and is kind, enlisted on behalf of a young relative who was being ordained into the Established Church of this realm. It was a perplexing and alluring ordeal, prompting one to reflect on the folly and superstitious fear which abides in humanity.

I was unfortunate in my seat in that vast edifice, being posted at the western extremity of the nave, far removed from the *mise-en-scène*, and unable to glimpse the stately spectacle, owing to my view of the reredos and altar being obstructed by a massive pillar of stone. Nevertheless, I resigned myself to endure with fortitude and submission, whatever slings and arrows of misfortune were aimed at me.

The ceremony commenced with the slow procession of the bishops, priests, and smaller clerical fry, together with the choir, towards the chancel; I was impressed with the gorgeous vestments in which the bishop was clad, bright and shining, symbolical of the power and emotive appeal of the church militant. During the passing of this garish pageant, solemn music filled the air, and the sunlight streaming through the stained glass windows of the clerestory, created that mystic atmosphere of unreality which is so appealing to the devout children of God. The march of the Christian soldiers ended, the music ceased, and there was a profound silence while a grave and reverend padre ascended into the pulpit; from that lofty place he addressed the aspirants to Holy Orders—all of them decently habited, according to the rubric—adjuring them to renounce the works of the world, the flesh, and the devil, in the practice of that high and privileged vocation which they had chosen, not omitting to remind them, and presumably all others present, that they were, and ever would be, miserable sinners, and unworthy. To the mind of a simple servant of the sea, this allocution seemed unduly inquisitorial and harsh: it did not breathe that spirit of lenity, compassion and benevolence, which the occasion seemed to invite.

The preaching ended with the usual supplication to the Trinity, the oracle descended from Olympus, and soft harmonies flooded the sacred fane. Soon the melodious echoes died away, and from afar I heard an orotund voice—*vox et preterea nihil*—intoning the office, but I was too far away to hear clearly all the words voiced: assaults of the devil, pride, wrath and damnation, temptation, plague, battle, murder and other disconnected fragments of sentences reached me, but one invocation, propitious and appealing, was borne towards me from that invisible source; Endue the lords of the council, and all the nobility, with grace, wisdom and understanding. My impious and profane spirit moved me to the response, *sotto voce*, Hear, hear; of all the invocations, supplications, and prayers to the Deity that tickled my ears that day, surely that was the most ironical! It was a depressing performance, not tending to enchant valiant hearts with the glamour of life, or inspire in them a tranquil resignation to the common fate of all mankind.

The ritual dragged on, the dignitaries of the church pronounced their orisons, and the passive dupes of orthodoxy were sanctified one by one, the only bright interludes being those devoted to music. During one of the bright interludes, I resigned myself to speculating on the length of time it would take to consecrate a bishop, if so much were wasted with the ordination of a mere deacon! A sobering thought. Animated as I am by feelings of affection for my young relative, and desiring his welfare in life, I am not enchanted with the distant prospect of attending his consecration as a bishop: a remote possibility, of course, but as Napoleon

is reputed to have said that every soldier carries in his knapsack the baton of a marshal, so may it be presumed that every deacon carries a bishop's mitre in what the Americans call his gripsack!

The Choir and the congregation shattered into fragments my impious reverie by saluting the happy morn with a familiar hymn, while a Christian in a hurry, wearing an eager and irate expression, pushed into my hand a small bag, a mute demand for alms. The charitable man is the friend of Allah, so I deposited with stealth a sixpence in that bag, pondering on its ultimate destination, and the truth of the proverb concerned with a fool and his money! Prayers, invocations, and supplications were droned to a genuflecting and devout multitude, until at last the benediction was pronounced, followed by a triumphant hymn to the Holy Spirit. The picturesque procession of bishop, priests, and acolytes was reformed, and marched slowly and reverently to the vestry, their task accomplished, and the long day done.

The worshipping throng dispersed upon their lawful occasions, leaving behind a few stragglers, myself among them. I met my young relative in one of the Lady chapels, and offered him, in a subdued voice, my felicitations on his newly acquired dignity, but I was pounced upon by a minion in a black gown, carrying a silver-tipped wand of office, who croaked, "Don't let the bishop hear you talking while he is at prayer," at the same time indicating with his wand the altar of the chapel. I turned in the direction indicated, and observed a figure clad in a purple robe, prostrate before a graven image on that altar: it was the right reverend father-in-God, stripped of his shining vestments, humbling himself before the emblems of his Faith. Was it an act of precatory humility, or merely a gesture of pious pretence? *Cui bono?*

I departed from that temple of unreason and its odour of sanctity, free to inhale a breath of the fresh spring air. My mind was occupied with thoughts of the vain and pretentious function which I had witnessed, a fitting tribute to the mental degradation of the bemused devotees. I glanced up at the blue dome of the sky, flecked with swiftly-moving masses of fleecy white clouds, and pondered on the words of Fitzgerald:—

And that inverted bowl men call the sky,  
Whereunder crawling, cooped, we live and die,  
Lift not thy hands to it—for it  
Rolls impotently on as thou or I.

—and such is my spirit of scorn for the tyranny of shams and hypocrisies by which we are governed, that those words convey to me the only logical and rational attitude that the free spirit of man can adopt to prayer, despite the punitive sanctions enforced against those who refuse to conform to a creed founded on an absurd oriental fable. For myself, I remain an impenitent rationalist, unmoved by the theatrical pageant in that cathedral; in the fantastic tale of the magi, the star, and the stable, I find no tranquility of mind, no repose for the soul. When the shades lengthen, and the toil of this troublous life draws to a close, I cherish the hope of breathing:—

"Into the breast that gives the rose,  
Shall I with shuddering fall?"

F. G. COOPER.

## HEAVEN.

That paradise the Arab dreams,  
Is far less sand and more fresh streams.  
The only heaven an Indian knows,  
Is hunting deer and buffaloes.  
The Yankee heaven—to bring Fame forth  
By some freak show of what he's worth.  
The heaven that fills an English heart,  
Is Union Jacks in every part.  
The Irish heaven is heaven of old  
When Satan cracked skulls manifold.  
The Scotsman has his heaven to come—  
To argue his Creator dumb.  
The Welshman's heaven is singing airs—  
No matter who feels sick and swears.

From "The Bird of Paradise," by W. H. Davies.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### "HATLESSNESS" IN COURT.

SIR,—Your reference to the Magistrate's Order in Warwickshire leads me to mention a case at Aldershot, where a magistrate told a hatless woman her appearance thus was "disreputable" and a "contempt of court." Sir Edward Coke, who at least knew more law than most magistrates, held a contrary opinion, and affirmed (in 1615) "the countenance is often an index of the mind and all covering should be taken away from the face," *i.e.*, of a witness or person on trial. In the case before him, one of murder, the woman's hat was forcibly removed, whereupon she placed her handkerchief upon her head! This lady must have had a pious upbringing; but it is clear that you have good authority for saying "there is no law which says a woman must wear a hat when giving evidence."

CANDIDATUS.

### THE "ROMAN CATHOLIC MENACE."

SIR,—When dealing with Mr. Kensit, killed at Birkhead, "This feeling has almost entirely passed away." I can assure Mr. Mann that it has not, the bastard songs are still played, and round July 12, which is the great day here, in Liverpool, there was bother, and no doubt you read of it in the news.

Also "Fifty Years Ago" is a splendid article, but how about "The Freethinker, thus a politician and a Social Reformer," and the cry from the platform, "No politics?"

I am waiting to be convinced that the N.S.S. fight is not a political one. That is the repeal, annulment or reform of laws which are detrimental to our liberty and welfare. "Liberty consists in the power of doing that which is permitted by the law" (Cicero). Obey the law, and if not in favour of the law get it altered.

C.B.

SIR,—I think Mr. Mann (*Freethinker*, August 28) on the above protests too much, and incidentally makes one or two errors. "The Vast New Cathedral" has not just been finished at Liverpool. As is well known the rubble from the old buildings has not yet been cleared away, and at the rate of progress, fifty years won't see it completed, money is tight, "penny draws" have to be resorted to. As for the Roman Catholic population, according to the Roman Catholic Directory, it is 2,720,000. The estimated population of England and Wales being 40,170,000. G.K.C. has stated that the Holy Church is not increasing as it ought to do, those who have inside knowledge are very disappointed at the slow rate of increase. In fact, excepting the "Celtic Fringe" the remainder could be put into an ordinary excursion steamer.

What Freethinkers ought to do is to come out and stand up to the reactionaries and on Councils, Trade Unions, Co-op. Committees tackle them. This I find will make them more subdued and not so cockey.

GEO. BURGESS.

In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free—honourable alike in what we give and what we preserve.—*Lincoln*.

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Rebuilding a Community."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. S. Burke (Australia).

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Sunday, September 11, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Wednesday, September 14, Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Friday, September 16, Lewin Road, Streatham Common, 8.0, Mr. A. C. Dunn.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Wishart—"God: The Survival of the Savage."

WOOLWICH AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square): 7.30, Thursday, September 8, Mr. G. Whitehead. "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 7.30, Friday, September 9, Mr. G. Whitehead. Beresford Square, 7.30, Sunday, September 11, Mr. G. Mead. Oakdale Road, Plumstead, 7.30, Monday, September 12, Messrs. G. Read and S. Burke. Beresford Square, 7.30, Wednesday, September 14, Messrs. G. Read and S. Burke.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Wednesday, September 7, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood, Thursday, September 8, at 7.30, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and W. P. Campbell Everden. Friday, September 9, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, September 11, 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. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained outside the Park.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BACUP (Union Square): 7.30, Monday, September 12, Mr. J. Clayton.

BISHOP AUCKLAND (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, September 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level, opposite Open Market): 7.30, Friday, September 9, Messrs. Keast and Trory.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead will address open-air meetings on Sunday, September 11, The Level (Inside); Monday, September 12, The Green, South Monkscombe; Tuesday, September 13, Bottom of Elm Grove; Wednesday, September 14, Ann Street; Thursday, September 15, Bottom of Edward Street; Friday, September 16, The Level (Opposite Open Market), at 7.30 each evening.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps): 7.30, Friday, September 16, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.0, Thursday, September 8, Mr. J. T. Brighton. Sunday, September 11, Bigg Market, 7.0, Messrs. J. T. Brighton and Flanders.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.30, Saturday, September 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Town Hall Square): 3.0, Sunday, September 11, A Debate—"Is the Bible Account of Creation True?" *Affir.*: Mr. A. Barriman (Protestant Truth Society). *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton (N.S.S.) and at 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton, A Lecture.

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